

OTHER VOICES, OTHER ARTS

WHEN “ART OBJECTS”

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Abstract: By analysing G. Josipovici’s novel, *The Goldberg Variations*, this paper investigates the validity of a new critical perspective, namely that of applying pictorial language to the analysis of literary texts. The investigation draws on a number of critics, E.M. Forster among them, who have acknowledged the need to borrow terms from other arts to be able to “describe” certain aspects of a literary text when literary criticism is found lacking.

Key words: art, E.M. Forster, Josipovici, painting, pictorial language

1. Introduction

In this paper, I will start from “*une idée de recherché*”, as Barthes once put it (Barthes, 1980:35), and will try to propose a new critical stance or position. This, I will argue, is no foolish fancy of mine as it has, in different ways, already been suggested by Forster, Barthes, Marin, Clüver, and Ortel. If we take E.M. Forster for instance, in *Aspects of the Novel* (1990) he acknowledged the need to borrow terms from other arts to be able to “describe” certain aspects of a literary text, when literary criticism is found lacking.

Now we must consider something which springs mainly out of the plot, and to which the characters and any other element present also contribute. For this new aspect there appears to be no literary word. We will borrow from painting first and call it the pattern. Later we will borrow from music and call it rhythm.

Forster’s notions of pattern and rhythm – which nicely tie in with the overall project and thematic inclines of the text I will study entitled *Goldberg Variations* (Josipovici, 2007), in which music and painting play a major role – may help to define literature and its techniques for they need to do so the more the arts develop (Forster, 1990).

So, in a way, this intuition and proposal of Forster’s, among other critics, justify the following hypothesis of mine: literature and language have long been used to analyse painting, and painting has duly been assimilated to language. Endlessly, critics such as Barthes, L. Marin, M. Foucault, Hillis Miller, K. Varga, have questioned the relationship between language and painting: “La peinture est-elle langage, peut-on valablement lui appliquer le modèle linguistique?” (Marin, 1971:89). Now I propose to

envisage things the other way round, to turn the argument upon its head, and to see to what extent *pictura* may help to “criticize” *poesis*, when no “literary word” exists while pictorial parlance or idiom is necessary to “open” the eye of the text. Let it be remembered that *krinein* means to open, to separate, to judge. At least, this might be a way of envisaging criticism. And perhaps a whole critical system may be grounded on the study of previous literary discourse, realizing this discourse often “defines” literary effects by resorting to pictorial techniques or mores. When critical language falls short of its object, the other arts have come in to the rescue, a practice which runs deep as we shall see.

Therefore, let me focus on a particular example of painting-in-text that will help me to prove my point thanks to a case analysis. Then I will see if my critical proposition is valid and, if it is, what the consequences are, what the issues at stake are when the literary text resorts to painting, picture, image, i.e. the visual at large, and does not limit its scope to language about things or about language. In short, when different semiotic systems are put to work together, how can critical theory observe and analyze what happens? Conversely what does the visual *do* to the text? How does it *affect* the written dimension and the vision as conveyed in writing? The medieval diptych articulating two painted panels will serve as a model or “pattern” in more ways than one as I will try to show.

2. First panel of the diptych: “Containers”

Chapter 11 of G. Josipovici’s novel, *Goldberg Variations* (2007), is entitled “Containers”. It consists of a sole autonomous section, as it is the case with other chapters, such as “The Sand”. It displays, over 82 lines, a very particular kind of description which finds a brief but significant echo some thirty pages later.

The text purports to provide a very detailed description by a heterodiegetic narrator of several objects under the pantonym “containers” as indicated by the title (for this definition and modes of action, see Philippe Hamon, 1981). By the end of the description, in the reader-viewer’s mind, “une image s’est levée” (a picture has arisen), as D. Arasse put it (2000). It evokes the ghost of paintings and in particular of a genre of painting. If this intuition of mine is confirmed (as a consequence of the text “affecting” the reader), conversely the nature of the object must “affect” (I shall come back to the term) the nature of the text and turn it into an *ekphrasis*, possibly that of an existing painting to be found in our world. The reader-viewer then turns detective, a function in keeping with textual and hermeneutic analysis.

This text is particularly interesting as it asks and partially answers some of the critical questions I addressed above as well as a few more such as: What are the stylistic devices which provoke such a vision? What triggers the reader's feeling that this description is that of a picture and of a particular genre of painting first thanks to textual elements, then to art history? How can a text (after a painting) fool the eye? What are its diegetic and metatextual functions? Its anthropological and phenomenological stakes?

2.1. The art of describing objects: Objects and objectivity

"The art of describing" objects is a phrase that obviously alludes to Svetlana Alpers's seminal book (1990) mostly dedicated to Dutch Painting, which is in keeping with my subject. What strikes one when first reading the eleventh chapter with an "innocent" eye is a kind of obsessive dedication to the location of objects, testifying to a kind of maniac precision or accuracy, to an apparent – although quickly belied – objective point of view, and eventually to the uncovering of an inner yet fruitful contra-diction. Let it be remembered that Josipovici's first novel was entitled *The Inventory* (1968) and chapter 11 of *Goldberg Variations*, truly is one: the repetition of "below", "above", "the further edge", "in the middle", "in the centre", "to the left/the right hand side", "bottom", "next to", etc., literally madden the reading eye, making the reader feel she is being made a fool of.

The text is replete with terms related to mathematical precision, fractions, and measurements (size, height, width): "within an inch or two", "a/three quarter(s) of", "one third of", "half of", "a few inches away", "three reddish-brown threads", "two containers". Eleven objects, "two books, a round box, seven bottles and jars, and a fruit", their sizes, shapes, colours, material, are presented in the mode of an enumeration: "They are disposed in the following fashion : at the bottom, on the left flush with the left hand wall, lies a large book bound in dark leather, its white pages facing us." The result of this descriptive choice is that objects strongly come to the fore as in a list, in a collection, a catalogue or an inventory, testifying to the mastery of the narrator, for "lists are a form of power" as A.S. Byatt remarked in *The Virgin in the Garden* (1994:90). The syntactic choice is that of parataxis and juxtaposition: "This one identical to the other, except that it is shut tight, the bolt in place and the key in the hole. A large bunch of keys hangs", etc. The sentences are often verbless or the verb of the main clause is omitted and action rests on relative clauses: "A shelf in a shallow recess, above which is a cupboard with two small doors, one of which is partially open, but not enough to allow one to see inside, the other firmly shut"; or: "Next to it, a

little higher and hanging down just to the right of the lemon, a jar or bottle encased in a yellow wicker basket with a twisted wicker handle attached to the top edge, which is covered with a dark green cloth". The text displays an obsession with extreme nomination and the desire to focus on a close-up of the viewed objects seized in all their dimensions before any kind of action is taken. The eye takes in the object in its entirety (a bottle) together with its colour, material, then concentrates on smaller details. "God is in the details" Mrs Goldberg quotes (the famous phrase is actually ascribed to Aby Warburg, cf Georges Didi-Huberman (2000:92). Quoted in G. Josipovici, 2007 :107.) It satisfies the scopic urge more than the optic one. This tallies with what an "ob-ject" is, according to the Webster's Dictionary: "put in the way of some of the senses". But an object may also turn subject, as the ambiguity of the term testifies and as Barthes acknowledges too (1982: 175).

2.2. YET: the subjective description of objects: there is more to it than meets the eye

Although the description under scrutiny purports to be as "objective" as possible moving objects to the fore and insisting on material details, signs of a human presence or of a human gaze soon become identifiable: the precise location of the objects reveals the position of the viewer for everything is located in relation to his/her position: "to the right" (of her gaze), "to the left as one looks at it". Furthermore, a phrase such as "whitish brown" suggests that someone has determined what is *whitish* or not according to one's criteria. Adverbs of evaluation or opinion also contribute to the delineation of a human presence: "firmly", "probably" (twice), "partially".

Then, more importantly, because the rest is the result of the (now) more banal use of focalization, come the elements pinpointing indecision and the process of viewing as wavering: "three fainter lines", "made out", "indecipherable script", "another word just visible on the left", "suggesting that", "its base is invisible", "a label the writing on it is too small to be decipherable", "clearly visible", "impossible to be certain", "dimness", "just discernible in the gloom", "just visible in the gloom". The (more) discrete lexical field of uncertainty underlying that of control and assertion put to use in the minute description, plays the part of a symptom, revealing the importance of seeing/not seeing. The lexical field of uncertainty appears in conjunction with an attempt at de-scribing and also at reading or deciphering the objects and the inscriptions they are bearing. The hermeneutic code is at work. Appearing/disappearing, aphanasis/epiphasis,

reveals the importance of the gaze, the way it works, and the role of the place ascribed to the gazer by the work of art. It also speaks volumes about what a work of art is about.

Finally, the paradoxical quality of the text playing on object/subject, inhuman/human, is confirmed when the reader realizes by the end that if eventually human presence seemed absent and yet is present, at least one object is personified, i.e. “a clay water-bottle, whitish-brown, the marks of the potter’s wheel very visible”. No wonder for it is the only object bearing the visible marks of human creation: the text evokes its rounded “belly”, its handles “which give it the appearance of having square shoulders”, the bottle even has “a neck”, and “armpits”.

2.3. The text as a ghost: *Unheimlich*/Uncanny objects

The reader subjected to a text which both “clinically” de-scribes its object and conjointly imperils it by building up an undermining effect, is destabilized. The constant interplay between certainty (accuracy) and uncertainty (indecision) produces a “differance” of meaning and vision (as the adverbs proved for instance) and the blurring of the text and of its reference. Contra-diction and tension between what is too visible in a kind of hallucinatory way and what is partially or almost invisible culminates in an *unheimlich* effect in its true sense. For what is both visible and invisible actually is domestic objects and, in a kind of intermittent twinkling effect, the homely verges on the unhomely. The description of jars and containers as a composition – “they are disposed in the following fashion” – seems to acquire a life of its own while the door a/jar, almost opening onto its “dark recesses”, weirdly echoes other recesses such as in *Wuthering Heights* when the very first description of the house by Lockwood, who has just forced entrance into it, concludes thus: “and other dogs haunted other recesses” (Brontë, 1982:4). The dogs will attack the intruder as we know.

Later on in the book, the key is provided by Goldberg’s comment upon John Donne’s poem “A Nocturnal upon S. Lucy’s Day, being the shortest day”. According to him, the first stanza describes “the shortest day of the year [...] with *such a strange mixture of the subjective and the scientific* as to leave us feeling that the year and indeed the universe is in reality a huge beast whose hour has now come” (2007:113, my emphasis).

Furthermore, visual and aural textual echoes produce unsettling sliding and slipping effects, thanks to such signifiers as strap (4 times)/strip, in a system of assonances or alliterations, eye rhymes and visual echoes. Other examples are lid (repeated 4 times) and rim; line (repeated 5 times), middle (3 times), thinner, script, fine. This visual and aural overlapping

culminates with: “the rim of the lid”, “the lines of the lid” confusing the senses, both of sight and hearing, in an effect of synesthesia:

Along the *rim* of the *lid* and the *middle* and bottom of the jar runs a delicate pattern of red *lines*. Between the *lines* on the *lid*, a series of reversed epsilons, the *middle* member of each pushing forward to touch the rounded back of the adjacent one. In the *middle*, also divided by two firm red *lines* above and below which are three thinner *lines*, is a word in a beautiful, very elaborate but indecipherable script, while a fragment of another word is just visible on the left, suggesting that the text runs round the jar. (2007:90)

The reader is overcome by vertigo when confronted with an enigma/ a riddle (“sieve” in ancient Greek). She has to stop her reading and discriminate between the signifiers, their signifieds and their referents. The plasticity of the signifiers is foregrounded when the rim of the lid of the lines of the lid (in Gertrude Stein manner) suggests that the rim and the lines share the same lid, that variations ensure the displacement of the text which nonetheless maintains its coherence and cohesion. The letter “i” is the only stable peg in the text. The unsettling effect of the description makes the reader feel her eye is being deceived, that she is being made a fool of, that delusion and illusion are at play.

2.4. “The Fooled eye”’s haunting/ed vision.

Fooling the eye, being deceived, not seeing the truth but illusion – the description finds an echo in the reader’s mind, awakening a kind of subliminal memory of a particular genre of painting. The title “Containers” already hints at a possible “contained” vision, or meaning, and the text irresistibly moulds itself on the genre of *ekphrasis* but never overtly. It details the objects as if they were three-dimensional ones set in the diegetic space, except that at the end of the description the term “surface” in “dividing its surface [one of the containers’] into two unequal sections” refers to two dimensions. It appeals to the knowledge of the viewer who first reads the description as a hypotyposis before suspecting it might be an *ekphrasis*. What may first appear as a “pictorial description”, a term I have had occasion to define elsewhere (Louvel, 1997), strikes the viewer as highly charged in pictorial elements redolent with art history.

By the end of it, the reader-viewer feels convinced that this description refers to a particular painting, that the text purports to describe a still life painting. A close scrutiny of the clues provided by the text is necessary to the hermeneutic investigation: What are the elements of/in the

text which suggest to the reader that “Containers” is an *ekphrasis* and not the description of a 3 dimensional object?

Strictly textually speaking, few elements do so: “and to the left as one looks at it” “returning to the left hand side” may imply that the description is 2D, that it is that of an image for it seems to suggest a flat surface. However, the insistence on plays of light and colour, as well as the static verbs of the description might also apply to a 2D description. Only the word “surface” in the very last sentence: “clearly dividing its surface into two unequal sections“, although applying to one of the two containers, could possibly overtly hint at the 2 D surface of a painting, as well as the fact that it seems impossible to move around the object to see what is written behind the visible surface.

On the other hand, knowledge, iconography and art history, are more helpful. The notation, “a window seems to be reflected” evokes the device used to suggest volume by signalling the play on light on a glass object. Ironically, it remained the case in art history and painting practice, even in the absence of a window in the represented room: the fine reflection of a window had become a dead sign emptied of its link with its referent.

Furthermore, the fact that only objects are being described as subjects of vision and are “disposed in the following fashion”, not as objects cast on a shelf in a haphazard way, points to an aesthetic will, both in represented and representing spaces, somewhat like what I defined as an “aesthetic arrangement”. These clues strongly suggest that we are in front of a still-life, a genre which made extensive use of books, jars, lemons, while cupboards and shelves also were staples of a certain type of *trompe-l’œil*. The vocabulary typical of art history also concurs to the same effect.

But although the reader has the feeling that this is the description of a still life, there truly is no actual confirmation in the text itself, except for the knowledge provided by the reader’s own culture. This description truly constitutes a “pictorial allusion” with its risks: the main one being that of not being recognized. Half revealed and half concealed, the painting appears/disappears as in the objects described: the cupboard doors, “one of which is partially open the other firmly shut”, and the two books and their two straps “only the left hand one performs this function, while the right hand one is loose and folded back over the top cover”. All this is encapsulated in the concluding sentence of the second paragraph: “The two books thus mirror the two doors above, the one ajar, the other locked”.

But the reader’s doubts are eventually dispelled by the key provided by a brief description “contained” in “Unterlinden”, a chapter situated some thirty pages later. There, five lines recapitulate the former description, bringing in “recognition”, and confirming that “Containers” was an

ekphrasis, that there might be such a thing as a still-life in the museum of Unterlinden more famous for its highly renowned Grünewald's *Crucifixion*. Then we can go back to chapter 11 in a recursive loop and check the list and enumeration. The next step for the reader will be to find the art object in question, the actual painting, if there is one in our world, and compare. Meaning becomes fixed after having erred and been endlessly differed.

This truly stages the return of a repressed painting, when the choice of the profane objects. The second of the "two unequal sections" (2007:69) appeals to the memory of the reader as "a site of memory", what still lifes may be also.

3. The second Panel of the diptych: "Unterlinden"

This time, the *ekphrasis* is a brief, minimal description, somewhat off-hand as it were, as the casual "a number of containers" instead of the former "eleven objects", reveals. It shows at the same time the difference of affect and effect between the two passages. More vague and general, the variation it offers echoes and mirrors the former very detailed description, sending in a distorted abridged version. Inserted within "Unterlinden", the name of the main "container", the famous museum near Colmar, it immediately sets the reader on a track to check information.

We strolled through the first rooms, the Rhineland primitives exuding a strong sense of trust in the world, their dark pictures glowing. Edith stopped in front of a strange still-life. Utterly different from anything else in the museum, it was at once self-contained and utterly mysterious. Divided horizontally into two parts, it showed a shallow cupboard, the top half consisting of two doors, one of which was partly open in *trompe-l'œil*, the lower half consisting of a shelf on which stood a number of containers, while more — bottles, flasks, and the like — hung from nails set in the wall.

We stood in front of it for some time, I was surprised by it but not really taking it in, was already in the big gallery with the Grünewald, and had indeed turned to move on, when Edith took my arm. (2007:101)

This second panel of the diptych retrospectively gives the first one its status thanks to its reference to art history: its genre, that of still life painting, is coupled with that of the *trompe-l'œil*: "partly open in *trompe-l'œil*", the English translation of which is "fooling the eye". What we felt as being its slightly unsettling homely/unhomely effect is confirmed: "a strange still life", "at once self-contained and utterly mysterious", "different from anything else in the museum". It is a profane and not a sacred painting, very different from Grünewald's *Crucifixion* and sacred painting for which the Museum is famous. After some research, the reader finds that this

painting is a wooden panel displaying objects linked to the art of medicine: books, a chemist's jar, a bottle on which the label "fur zanwe" shows it was used to cure toothache. The study of the panel proved that it was an autonomous work probably ordered by a barber or a physician. It has been dated back to 1470 and, according to Charles Sterling (1949), could be the very first still life in Western painting. Art history also comes to the rescue to correct one of the narrator's errors. Contemplating the round object – "Balanced on top of [the round box] is the fruit, probably a coarse skinned lemon, the light bringing out its grainy texture", the narrator-viewer is baffled, hence his use of "probably". Studies on the painting, particularly those of Charles Sterling, reveal that the round object is not a lemon but a bezoar, a concretion found in the stomach or intestines of sea mammals. It was believed to protect against all sorts of poison or/and to cure diseases. It used to be a valued component of *wunderkammers* and Rodolphe II possessed one of them (Falguières, 2004:40). And isn't this *Still life with Cupboard and Bottles* a sedate or profane version of the magnificent display of paintings of curiosity cabinets?

Now, we might wonder: Why choose still life painting in narrative economy, and not once, but twice? What is the function of this "diptych"?

The contemplation of the still life is the moment when Edith chooses to tell the narrator-writer she has "come to a decision": "I can't go on, she repeated, I'm going to take the train back.' 'You don't like to drive?' I said. 'You haven't understood,' she said. 'I can't go on. I've had enough.' she said." (Josipovici, 2007:101) The narrator's reaction is true-to-character, he did not see the crisis coming to a head and is at a loss: "'I couldn't believe this was happening. Edith' I said, 'we have been together half our lives. We have two children. We are happy. We are going to die together.' 'No we're not,' she said." (101).

In its composition and as a genre, the still-life mirrors the crisis the narrator undergoes. "We stood for a while longer in front of that still life. Well she said, goodbye, Gerald. She turned and walked away. I went on staring at the picture." His life is at a standstill. He is in a state of shock whereas he had just been planning to tell her *his* little secret: the book he had been painfully writing was at last on the point of being finished. But totally wrapped up in his thoughts he had not noticed there was something wrong with his relationship with Edith.

The difference between the narrator and his wife is revealed in the fact that he had planned to make his revelation in front of a sacred painting, whereas she chose a very mundane subject (unique among the other *œuvres* exhibited in the museum), a still-life. The characters are defined by their choices and decisions (informants). Like his choice of painting, "The

Rhineland primitives”, he “exuded a sense of trust in the world”, i.e. trust in what he chose to see as true concerning Edith. Their life together was a still life, doomed to end, no longer curable, beyond medicine and its objects. His eye truly was fooled when he thought everything was all right, never truly looking at her or taking her in as a subject but more as an object. *Trompe-l’œil* points to the mirror effect between the pictorial genres and the revelation concerning the nature of the characters’ relationship and beyond, the themes of non-communication, half-told/half-hidden truths and lies, illusion and reality, life and death. The destabilizing effect of the text wavering between extreme objectivity and subjectivity gives the thematic structure its coherent shape. They are part of the same “pattern”.

3.1. Lies/truth, reality and illusion

The “reflection” about lies/truth, reality and illusion, actually doubles as a reflection about representation, duplication and variations. The text openly suggests its metatextual programme. This is when the endings of the three paragraphs composing the eleventh chapter reveal one more concern of the text. The last sentence of the first paragraph: “The two doors clearly mirroring each other when they are shut, establish a play of similarity and difference now one is partially open” (17-19) is mirrored by the last sentence of the second paragraph: “The two books thus mirror the two doors above, the one ajar, the other locked”. Meaning is half veiled/half revealed. Eventually they both are varied in the last sentence of the third paragraph: “a belt some two thirds of the way down, clearly dividing its surface [that of one of the two dark angular containers] into two unequal sections”. This reads as a comment of the text upon itself bearing on its structure as an exercise in variation, its “pattern”, as Forster would have put it, a pattern resting on doubles and duplicity, as “similarity and difference”, “ajar and locked”, and the “two unequal sections of the book” point out. The textual variations on the same/the other, in which the second occurrence already is the double or other of the first one, shows that time has passed in-between, both phenomenological time, and reading as well as textual time. Repetition with a difference, this echo, as system, as pattern, is staged in the text, by the episode of the disease affecting young Westfield, which truly has an uncanny ring:

His head would lift as he stepped out into the woods on a bright summer morning, and he would laugh aloud for sheer joy, and then at once the image of himself laughing and the sound of the words his heart would lift as he stepped out would fill his head and drive the happiness from his heart and the laughter from his throat.

The way he put it to himself was that everything had developed an echo.
And just as continuous echo destroys the initial sound so it was with his life.
(Josipovici, 2007:14)

The hermeneutic questions of seeing/not seeing, deciphering/indecipherable, are all related to the description of the painted books, lines of writing and unreadable inscriptions: “the writing on it too small to be decipherable” (line 74), “a word in a beautiful, very elaborate but indecipherable script” (line 50). The description then passes a comment on writing itself, a celebration of writing as *tour de force*, for art “au second degré”, at second remove from art and “the endless transferability between the subject and its representation” (Lloyd, 2005:123). The still life as a partial *trompe-l'œil*, as a verbal equivalent of a visual forgery unveils the fake relationship between the two characters. The object transformed into a *trompe-l'œil*, into a verbal representation, is then projected onto the reader's mind, producing a pictorial effect till the reader finds the true incarnation of this still life. Then the infinite flux and flight of the visual and of the sign comes to an end. The text mixing word and image is a hybrid like the picture itself. The narrator also plays on a wish to cheat or fool the eye of the text, to cause to see, to create a verbal equivalent of the painting in a “painting effect” creating the virtual illusion of a painting. The eye, is engaged in a double task, that of looking at the visible and that of reading the readable, for when reading, one sees and hears, the eye and the breath are combined. Synesthesia is the word.

4. Consequences: when “art objects”

Let me move on towards a broader outlook and conclusions after this detailed case study. In her series of essays entitled *Art Objects* (1996) Jeanette Winterson tells the story of her first true encounter with a painting which literally called out to her from a shop window. She insists on art as affect and event. “That puts me on the side of what Harold Bloom calls ‘the ecstasy of the privileged moment’. Art, all art, as insight, as rapture, as transformation, as joy.” (Winterson, 1996:5-6)

We know that the universe is infinite, expanding and strangely complete, that it lacks nothing we need, but in spite of that knowledge, the tragic paradigm of human life is lack, loss, finality, a primitive doomsaying that has not been repealed by technology or medical science. The arts stand in the way of this doomsaying. Art objects. The nouns become an active force, not a collector's item. Art objects.

The cave wall paintings at Lascaux, the Sistine Chapel ceiling, the huge truth of Picasso, the quieter truth of Vanessa Bell, are part of the art that objects to the lie against life, against the spirit, that is pointless and mean. The message coloured through time is not lack, but abundance. Not silence but many voices. Art, all art, is the communication cord that cannot be snapped by indifference or disaster. Against the daily death it does not die. (Winterson, 1996:19-20)

L'art comme rempart qui objecte, art is a buttress against death, even under the spectral shape of the repressed element. I like to hear this phrase when the form of the signifier is the same for both noun and verb for only the stress dispels doubts: “art objects”, when art raises an objection, when it stands in-between, not only us and death, our “daily death”, but in-between us and submission. It is subversive, it says “no” to what would like to deprive us of our dignity and status as human beings, that would ruin us, make us crumble away. Art objects, indeed. It objects through and thanks to its objects and subjects.

This tallies with one of the possible answers to the question: why the choice of a still life in *Goldberg Variations*? What does it do to the text, how does it “affect” it. That it affects it is also acknowledged in Josipovici’s novel when the narrator-writer decides to let Edith go on her own to see Holbein’s *Christ in the Tomb*, to concentrate on the second meaningful picture of the book, Klee’s *Wander artist*:

I decided to spend the day in our hotel room, working on my book. A way had opened up for me in the past few days, when what had seemed intractable suddenly became possible, and seeing the Klee in the flesh, as it were, after having lived with a postcard of it for so long, had made such an impression on me that I wanted to have the day to myself to savour it and work out *what it would do to my book*. (Josipovici, 2007:95, my emphasis)

What is acknowledged here is how painting may *affect* writing, what it may do to it. Klee’s *Wander Artist* truly does something to the book, but this would require another study. Let it be noted that the link between affect and effect is questioned from within the novel itself. And we have also seen that the still life “affected” the text both structurally and thematically.

Moreover, the still-life and trompe-l’œil, with its recesses and dimness, its *unheimlich* effect offers medicine to cure, to fight death. Edith is the one who fights their too still life, i.e. motionless life, for motion *is* life. This painting can be read as an anti-*vanitas*, an “antitype”. It is also a way of defeating the death of the object by fixing its representation forever in an (anti?) *memento mori*. After all, the unterlinden still life probably was a panel ordered by a barber or a physician, so it was meant to advertize the

curing properties of art. It was also a portrait of a physician or of a barber through the tools of his art, the tools of his practice in 1470, including the bezoar, (belief not science) plants, drugs, fluids, liquids.

Genderwise, still life as a domestic genre refers to a domestic space defined as “contained” (Lloyd, 2005:158), traditionally in keeping with women’s role. In the conclusion of her book on still life in writing, R. Lloyd develops a gendered reflection triggered by the subservient nature of the still life. This reflects back on men’s and women’s roles and on questions of domination, subjecthood and objecthood which we broached in our study.

In all its manifestations, still life has demonstrated that it is a remarkably flexible device for exploring not just the domestic areas of human experience but also much broader areas of experience. It adds its own sometimes subversive, sometimes nostalgic, often wry and always energetic voice, a voice that proves to be just as potent in the written form as in the painted form. Above all, and perhaps precisely because it has tended to be overlooked in novels where other, louder modes of narration compete with it for our attention, it often acts as a subversive commentary on perception itself, on how we perceive reality and our place in it but above all on whose gaze is seen as dominant, on which gender is presented in control, on which individuals are to be assigned the role of objects and which will be elevated to subjects. And in the hands of many writers, both male and female, it throws into doubt those modes of thinking that refuse to grant subjecthood to anything designated as an object. (Lloyd, 2005:158)

The celebration of objects usually despised as too homely and of a long despised genre, turns out to serve a subversive project. This is what R. Lloyd called a reaction versus “male-centered art history” (2005:152). In *Goldberg: Variations*, Edith is the one who rejects conventions and material comfort. In front of the still life cum *trompe-l’oeil*, she chooses the solitude of freedom and truthfulness to oneself against mediocrity and lies.

Thanks to the energy it develops, which also reminds us of the ancient notion of *energeia*, the still life produces an effect and affects the viewer in diegetic space. It literally “moves” her. But it also “touches” the reader on another level for it causes a “reading event”, to use Louis Marin’s coined phrase “un événement de lecture” (1999:15):

Il m’est arrivé parfois, il m’arrive—et je pense que la chose est plus fréquente qu’on ne pense—qu’en lisant, soudain survienne ce que l’on pourrait nommer un événement de lecture. [...] un événement au sens très humble de ce qui advient, de ce qui arrive dans ce qu’on lit, sans s’annoncer, presque imprévisible.

When painting irrupts in a text, it disrupts it because of its heterogeneity. Therefore, it cannot be ignored. It may cause a shock or at

least may object, stand in-between the text and the reader's inner eye, as an art object, what I call "the pictorial third". The notion of energy, is developed by R. Loyd *apropos* Domenico Remps's *Art Cabinet Cupboard*: "the energy of this painting belies its categorization as still life, indicating the wonderful power inherent in the finest of these works" (2005:152). This *tour de force* is also an attempt at "capturing forces" (as Deleuze saw the work of art) and we find about Klee's *Wander Artist* from the narrator's telltale word: "I know that this is what I need to capture" (Josipovici, 2007:173). We know that he strongly reacts to this painting and hopes it will affect his work. Concerning Edith, painting also has an effect upon her, under the guise of a third painting (another variation as it were). In Basel, she goes to see Holbein's dead Christ:

And when she started to tell me about her day, about the effect on her of that extraordinary painting, two metres long and only twenty centimetres high which shows a gaunt bearded man lying in a coffin, the contemplation of which, said Dostoevsky in a letter, made him lose his faith, a sentiment he put in the mouth of prince Myshkin in *The Idiot*, I tried to show an interest, but my mind was with my book. (99)

But the irony of it, and this is not one of the lesser strengths of the book, in Edith's case, this lost opportunity – sharing one's passion "with those we love" – is the last straw. In the Unterliden too, irony reveals the narrator's own blindness.

I may now confirm what was "une idée de recherche" as offered in my introduction and I hope I have proved it is viable: my next more general proposition then, is to move on towards a poetics of the pictorial-in-text, of the iconotext (see Louvel, 2010). W.J.T. Mitchell had already called for an iconology of the text, though he thought it was only a possibility: "a thorough re-reading or reviewing of texts in the light of visual culture is still only a hypothetical possibility" (1994:240). R. Lloyd already used the pictorial to account for textual and thematic effects. In *Jacob's Room* she saw the description of letters as still lifes and ventures that: "By focusing so sharply on the written sign, Woolf is also raising questions about the nature of writing more generally and about the relationship between sign and suggestion, seme and implication" (2005:124).

In *Goldberg: Variations*, painting served to give a pattern to the text modelled on its working principles, on its function and on its composition. The dual text (with the two main narrators multiplied into several others) is duplicated in the two doors of the still life-as-description. It literally brings forth, under the eyes of the reader, some of its stakes. In doing so, it shows itself as ambiguous, double, pregnant with *unheimlich* potentialities.

Haunted by painting (several occurrences of which appear and reappear: Holbein's *Christ*, Klee's *Wander Artist*, Tinguely's installation), the text, in return, justifies the use of painting as a critical tool to account for specific textual effects otherwise "invisible" (or unaccountable for) without it. As "reading event", then, the pictorial energy, once acknowledged, offers its own critical idiom to fill in the gaps of literary criticism. And after all, this is what both critics and creators have been doing since the very beginning of their crafts. Once more Josipovici's novel stages it when several times Achilles' shield is the object of narration.

Forster's seminal notions of "pattern" (as composition, as structure) applied to still life, itself endowed with domestic energy, and its capacities for being subversive in its effects, require the appeal to art history to justify and also render even more visible the objects of description. Thus, still-life may be seen as part of a system I offer to further develop in which art truly objects when art mirrors art.

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THE WALTZ INVENTION, OR: HOW I LEARNED TO STOP WORRYING AND TURN JOYCE ABSURD

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Abstract: The paper will focus on The Waltz Invention, a 1938 play by Vladimir Nabokov, especially in connection with Kubrick's Dr Strangelove, Joyce's Ulysses and the Esslinian Theatre of the Absurd. Nabokov's skills as a playwright will also be examined, and parallels made with some of his prose works.

Keywords: drama, Joyce, Kubrick, Nabokov, Theatre of the Absurd

1. Introduction: Why Nabokov the playwright is not famous

When Vladimir Nabokov's name is mentioned, a casual reader, or even a non-reader, will, nine times out of ten, think of *Lolita*, the work that made Nabokov famous and whose own fame, indeed, eclipses that of its author. A more informed reader will know that Nabokov was a particularly gifted novelist and will possibly be familiar with some of his other novels – *Pale Fire*, *Ada*, *Despair*, *Invitation to a Beheading*, to name but a few. Nabokov enthusiasts, on the other hand, are typically aware of his poetry and short stories, but most of the time tend either not to know about Nabokov's forays into playwrighting, or to outright disregard them. Why is this so? The first and most obvious answer would be that drama was not Nabokov's forte – understandable, since the author is particularly known for his warm, sophisticated and complex prose expression, which does not translate well to the stage, where the idiom usually needs to be – Shakespeare and verse drama notwithstanding – stripped down and as non-extravagant as possible. Another, more mundane, reason for the lack of drama-focused Nabokoviana is the relative unavailability of Nabokov's plays – originally written in Russian, most of them were translated into English only as late as mid 1980s, and the Brace Jovanovich collected edition from 1985 remains the only one available to date. Most importantly, however, Nabokov himself believed that he was not a dramatist “by nature” (Nabokov, 1974:ix) and consequently discontinued his playwrighting career, focusing on his novels instead.

2. The Play: What Waltz invented and what invented Waltz

The last play Nabokov ever wrote (excluding the screenplay for *Lolita*, that is), *The Waltz Invention* (1938) is a brilliant example of both

good and bad sides of Nabokov's playwrighting. Translated in mid 1960s and staged in 1968 and 1969, in Russian and English respectively, the play was not particularly successful. Indeed, the anonymous reviewer of *Time* magazine wrote that watching the play felt "a little like discovering the prehistoric ruins of a writer before he has built the edifices on which his reputation rests" (*Time* 1969: web). The story itself is the most typically Nabokovian of all the author's plays, which makes it considerably difficult for it to adjust to a format typical of drama. The dream setting of the play resembles that of Nabokov's short story "A Nursery Tale", while its bizarre underlying logic reminds the reader somewhat of *Despair*. *The Waltz Invention* is set in the 1930's, in an unnamed European country, in which an inventor, Salvator Waltz, gets an audience with the Minister of War, during which he tells him that he has built a machine (named Telemort or Telethanasia) so powerful that it can destroy anything from any distance. The Minister has him dismissed as a madman, but promptly calls him back after the top of a nearby mountain gets sliced off at noon. In Act 2, Waltz has passed all the tests the Minister and his generals gave him so as to prove that his machine is really as powerful as he claims it to be, and is consequently offered a fortune for it. However, he refuses to sell Telemort, demanding to be inaugurated the ruler of the nation instead, and his first decree is to be universal disarmament. The Minister, the President and the Generals, naturally, have to accept this. Act 3 finds Waltz as head of state utterly vexed by all the unpleasant side-effects ruling a nation breeds, as well as a person grown jaded and ruthless (he wipes out a city of 600,000 when neighbouring countries refuse to acknowledge him). What he now wants is a Kubla Khanian palace and a harem; the women paraded before him, however, are not to his liking – he has chosen a particular girl, the daughter of General Gump, who refuses to hand her over, disregarding all Waltz's threats. This is the moment when Waltz's fantasy starts to collapse: Trance, a Mephistophelian transsexual figure, tells him that he has no machine, and the scene reverts back to Waltz's appointment with the Minister of War from Act 1. Only now does the interview really take place, and instead of being taken heed of, Waltz is simply carried away from the office, ranting (Boyd, 1993:489-490).

3. And now for something completely different: Dr. Strangelove

Even though the plot may seem to have been conceived as Nabokov's commentary on the growing uneasiness in Europe at the time, this is most certainly not the case. Anyone familiar with Nabokov's work will attest to the fact that the author was anything but politically or socially

engaged. In the foreword to the English edition of the play, he himself stated “most emphatically that not only is there in my play no political ‘message’ (to borrow a cant word from the jargon of quick reform) but that publication of its English version today has no topical import” (Nabokov, 1967:7-8). What is interesting, however, is another thing that the author himself comments on: “[T]elethanasia was, in the Nineteen Thirties, a considerably less popular subject than it is today: in fact, certain passages ... sound a prophetic, even doubly prophetic, forenote not only of the later atomystique, but of still later parodies of that theme – quite a record in its small dark way” (Nabokov, 1967: 7). It is plausible to conclude that by “later parodies” Nabokov probably meant Stanley Kubrick’s iconic film, *Dr Strangelove, or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964). Not only was *Dr Strangelove*’s direct predecessor in Kubrick’s oeuvre none other than his adaptation of *Lolita* (1962), but Peter Sellers, Kubrick’s Quilty, played three roles in *Dr Strangelove*, including the title one. It seems logical for Nabokov to have wanted to see what “his” director did next. These speculations aside, there are some similarities between *The Waltz Invention* and *Dr Strangelove*; among them, the stock character of the mad scientist, a fantastic almighty weapon that can destroy the world, and the highest state officials behaving like particularly obtuse children. Still, the differences are far more pronounced, in that one work uses the aforementioned weapon to parody the collective paranoia of the Cold War, whereas the other one makes that weapon a metaphor for the omnipotence of dreams and, in way, a continuation of the central character, who is, to quote Humbert Humbert, more “an artist, a madman”, than a threat to the world.

4. You may say I’m a dreamer, but I’m not the only one – there’s Joyce, too

Art and madness are, therefore, what Nabokov is really preoccupied with in this play – he is not writing a holier-than-thou political parable about totalitarian regimes, but a story that explores, in a way typical of its author, the relationship between reality and imagination, the nature of art, the extremes of human psyche, the world of dreams, creativity, and eccentricity.

Indeed, dream is, without a doubt, the operative word here. Nabokov referred to the play as a “bright demented dream”, and emphasised its oneiric nature in stage directions. Furthermore, in one of his essays on theatre, “The Tragedy of Tragedy”, he praised *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, and *The Inspector General*, plays he called “dream tragedies”, because “dream-logic, or perhaps better say nightmare-logic, replaces here the elements of dramatic determinism” (Nabokov, 1985:327). The eerie, dream-like aura

surrounding the plot is, of course, not Nabokov's invention. Andrew Field, author of *Nabokov: His Life in Art* (1967), identifies the influences of Shakespeare and Gogol, especially the latter's bizarre short story "The Nose", on *The Waltz Invention*, but fails to recognise another important literary predecessor – James Joyce.

Joyce's influence on Nabokov does not elude Brian Boyd, however. He states that "Nabokov avoids the ponderous symbolism of Strindberg's *A Dream Play* and comes much closer to the lucid phantasmagoria of Joyce's *Nighttown* (Waltz's dream, in fact, seems to derive in part from Bloom's brief role there as reformer of the world)" (Boyd, 1993:491). Certainly, there are many similarities between "Circe", the fifteenth chapter of *Ulysses*, and *The Waltz Invention*, particularly when one has in mind that Joyce (at least the pre-*Finnegans Wake* Joyce) was one of the few authors whom Nabokov admired. Both *Waltz* and "Circe" occupy two temporal planes – the subjective one that lasts longer, but is "all in the head", and the objective one which lasts only for a very short time. In "Circe", the longest part of *Ulysses*, written in the form of a play, Felliniesque hallucinations, both Steven's and Bloom's, take the shape of grotesque characters which are, arguably, embodiments of both their subconscious and their memories. Bloom, meanwhile, is shown as a harbinger of a new era and a messiah who will take his "beloved subjects" to "the new Bloomusalem" (Joyce, 1922:457). At one point, it is even said that "[h]e employs a mechanical device to frustrate the sacred ends of nature" (464). All similarities with Nabokov's *Waltz* are probably intentional, even more so when another important factor – "sex change" – is concerned. Both Joyce and Nabokov employ characters who change their gender – in "Circe" this role belongs to Bloom himself, who turns into a woman during one hallucination, while another character, Bella Cohen, turns into a man. In *The Waltz Invention*, the transsexual character is the already mentioned figure of Trance – the character who becomes Waltz's right hand and who, incidentally, informs him that his dream is about to end. The symbolism of the name Trance is self-explanatory, considering the dreamlike nature of the entire play.

5. Why Bloom doesn't Waltz

However, Nabokov's play is not a mere rehash of Joyce's novel. There are several important differences between Bloom and Waltz. First of all, Bloom has no direct influence on his hallucination, whereas Waltz can control his life only in his inner dreamworld – for a while, at least, for this turns out to be an illusion as well. Furthermore, even though Bloom is shown both as a wonderfully quirky and pathetically inept human being, his

inner world is mostly not sad and grotesque as Waltz's is, and he is, unlike Waltz, for the most part able to survive in "reality". Waltz, however, cannot function outside his own reality, and is hopelessly inadequate for "normal" life. His dream, or hallucination, is most probably a product of great misery and despair. And while Bloom is at the same time average and eccentric, he is not really a dreamer, and is certainly not a madman who relies on delusions to try and establish himself as someone important. It seems as if Waltz's whole existence is more hallucinatory than Bloom's phantasmagoric nightmare – and intentionally so, for Nabokov would often use a character's subjective reality as the very definition of that character, an obvious example being Charles Kinbote from *Pale Fire*.

6. If it looks like it is absurd, it still doesn't mean it actually is

Bizarre and oneiric nature of the play notwithstanding, *The Waltz Invention* is not Nabokov's prescient take on the Theatre of the Absurd. Still, as Paul D. Morris argues, the play's "grotesque combination of lyrical poetry, subdued emotional pain and manic, farcical activity, approximates the absurdist dimensions of an Ionesco or Beckett" (web). He goes on to explain that "the characters of *The Waltz Invention*, like the characters of much absurdist drama, are figures of radically indeterminate status", as well as to claim that "as in theatre of the absurd, language in *The Waltz Invention* occasionally slips the referential moorings tying signifier to signified" (Morris: web). However, despite all its similarities with absurdist drama, *The Waltz Invention* hardly qualifies as one. Martin Esslin, the "father of absurdism", teaches us that the authors of absurdist drama are "chiefly concerned with expressing a sense of wonder, of incomprehension, and at times of despair, at the lack of cohesion and meaning that they find in the world" (Esslin, 1965: web). The language of the Theatre of the Absurd, moreover, is bizarre and illogical because all language, all communication, has lost any semblance of meaning, as well. "In other words", continues Esslin, "from being a noble instrument of genuine communication language has become a kind of ballast filling empty spaces". And then he elaborates, "[i]n its critique of language the Theatre of the Absurd closely reflects the preoccupation of contemporary philosophy with language... [a]nd equally, in its emphasis on the basic absurdity of the human condition... the Theatre of the Absurd has much in common with the existential philosophy of Heidegger, Sartre and Camus" (Esslin, 1965: web). Nabokov, however, does not care about existentialism, and neither satirises nor tries to understand the world. Furthermore, language is, for Nabokov, a playground, not an instrument with which he will dissect the world of communication

for scientific purposes. All language concerns, thus, amount to sheer literary and artistic gymnastics – puns, wordplay, anagrams – something that can be seen from the very title of the play: *The Waltz Invention* can mean both the invention of the dance and an object invented by someone named Waltz. Moreover, some of Nabokov’s linguistic callisthenics resemble those that he would employ in some of his later works, for instance, play on the words *instinct*, *insect* and *incest* foreshadows a similar situation in his masterpiece, *Ada* (1969).

Nabokov, therefore, never uses imperfections of language to flaunt an idea or fuel an ideology. Quite the opposite, in fact. His hatred of existentialism is well-documented in several of his novels and in more than one interview, therefore it would be laughable if he were to have joined a movement that Edward Albee (the playwright who produced an absurdly butchered absurdist version of *Lolita*, by the way) defined as “an absorption-in-art of certain existentialist and post-existentialist philosophical concepts having to do, in the main, with man’s attempts to make sense for himself out of his senseless position in a world which makes no sense” (Albee, 1967: web). For an author who famously insisted that “reality” was one of those words which mean nothing without quotes and who is well-known for characters who inhabit their own little worlds, there is nothing further from the truth than saying that he was one of the authors who attempted to free the modern man “from illusions that are bound to cause constant maladjustment and disappointment” (Esslin, quoted in Albee, 1967: web). Indeed, the last bit seems to be a definition of what *The Waltz Invention* is not – because this drama is, as well as Nabokov’s entire oeuvre, based precisely on illusions, subjectivity and general indifference to the objective “reality” of the world. In other words, Nabokov’s proverbially maladjusted characters, Waltz included, do not feel the need to understand the world; instead, they feel a compelling urge to shape their personal, inner worlds in sync with their own, eccentrically oneiric or downright insane ideas about what constitutes “reality”.

7. “Reality” does need quotation marks

Paul D. Morris eventually reaches this conclusion as well, when he says that “[t]he intimations of tragedy suggested by Waltz are not the result of some inchoately felt existential angst, but the residual effect of painful experiences of deep personal loss. ... *The Waltz Invention* depicts not an irrational world, but a world gone irrational for one man, the poet-inventor Waltz” (web). The form and the plot of *The Waltz Invention* are most

probably the result of the fact that Nabokov believed – and again, Morris, too, points this out – that the grotesque and the tragic need to be mixed:

I doubt that any strict line can be drawn between the tragic and the burlesque, fatality and chance, casual subjection and the caprice of free will. What seems to me to be the higher form of tragedy is the creation of a certain unique pattern of life in which the sorrows and passing of a particular man will follow the rules of his own individuality, not the rules of the theatre as we know them. (Nabokov, 1985:341)

What is most important here is the phrase “rules of individuality”. Nabokov’s most memorable characters are strong, and, above all, unique, individuals: Humbert Humbert and Charles Kinbote are the first ones that come to mind, but there are also others, like Hermann of *Despair* and Vadim of *Look at the Harlequins!*. Salvator Waltz is not an exception. It is doubtful whether the entire play is, as Field argues, Waltz’s own invention (pun intended), but what happens during the dream sequence we as readers or spectators are exposed to is entirely his own creation.

However, the fact that the spectator is exposed to a double filter, to a twofold “willing suspension of disbelief” – by which I mean the stage and the dream – probably accounts for the lack of “oomph” on stage. In other words, one is left with the impression that a compelling story is shackled by the rigid dramatic frame. It is interesting, if somewhat futile, to speculate about what Nabokov would have done with the story had he written it in prose; nevertheless, as a play, it still possesses all the elements that usually draw one to Nabokov’s works: dreams, poetry, subjectivity, art.

8. Conclusion: Sometimes, you need to stop living and start dreaming

Waltz’s machine, thus, may be no more than a figment of an imaginary character’s imagination, however, that does not make it any less real than other parts of this flawed, yet extraordinary play. And if, reading the drama, we manage to feel “the poetry and the pathos underlying the bright demented dream” (Nabokov, 1967:10), then the author succeeded in creating what he wanted – not a brilliant show in terms of entertainment industry, but the idea that, even though something we consider real may be only a madman’s dream, that dream is still poetic enough to be dreamed through to the end, because, after all, it only lasts for a few minutes, after which we can return to all those things on which, perhaps mistakenly, we place too much importance.

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“THEY ARE THROWING TANTRUMS IN THE COFFIN”: GOTHIC MOTIFS AND STRATEGIES IN THE PLAYS OF MARINA CARR

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Abstract: The family in Irish playwright Marina Carr's work is portrayed neither as a peaceful shelter nor a source of psychic reassurance, but rather as a site of anxiety, loss, horror and abjection. The present paper aims to investigate how Carr applies Gothic motifs and strategies in four of her plays to demythologise certain phenomena of the contemporary Irish society, usually hidden but frightening nonetheless.

Key words: female subjectivity, gender, Gothic drama, Irish Studies

1. Introduction

According to most critics, since its late 18th century inception the literary Gothic has been the discourse of the Other, the feminine, and also of the shadow-like, the hidden. As such, it was favoured by a number of Irish (first mainly Protestant) authors as a mode of writing highly congenial to their troubled cultural experience, which developed in the context of self-generating colonial divisions and hierarchies. According to a critic,

[g]iven the strong supernatural elements already present in Irish writing from its earliest days, given the tortured, violent course of Irish history, and given the disinclination of Irish writing to follow conventional realist models, this penchant for the Gothic shouldn't come as a surprise. (Regan, 2005:77)

Steven Bruhm (2002:260) regards the vivid renaissance of Gothic writing in our time as a barometer-like sign of the variety of anxieties “plaguing” the respective cultures at this moment of human history. The central concerns of contemporary Gothic, he states, show resemblance with those of the classical Gothic, which Bruhm identifies as “the dynamics of family, the limits of rationality and passion, the definition of statehood and citizenship, the cultural effects of technology”. (2002:259) The first of the above, the family in the Republic of Ireland proves to be an area overdetermined by far-reaching tensions between public and private interests while it draws attention to contentious issues like gender and intergenerational relations and constraints.

The idealisation of family life and the emphasis on motherhood as a sacred duty of women belong to a long tradition, embedded in both

normative Irish discourses and individual mentality. It is also a tradition that has affected the ethos and practices of society all the way to the present. On the one hand, it is a residue of the coercive moral influence of Catholicism, which had been a native force to hold the community together in the colonial era and continued to play a crucial role after independence as the buttressing force of the conservative, exclusivist ideology of the state. On the other hand, the Irish nuclear family was instrumental in the transmission of values giving the country its distinctive moral strength that was thought to have been left intact by the corruption of its (former) colonizer. Discussing the issue, Kathryn A. Conrad argues that “the family cell, as both lifeworld and system, shapes and controls agency within and between the private and public spheres. The family cell is a regulatory ideology, one that defines roles and choices” (2004:14). Further she adds that in Ireland it has often functioned as “an exclusionary model of identity” prone to “reproduce[s] hierarchy, containment, and inevitable conflict” (19). The structures of Irish family life today seem to have retained recognizable traces of the divisive constraints of the internal colonisation of women dating back to the 1930s, present also in their die-hard bearing on the gendered aspects of personal freedom.

However, during the last two decades or so convictions about the firmly standing status and unshakable values connected with family, maternity and gender hierarchy have been challenged in Ireland. Pat O’Connor’s analysis of women in contemporary Irish society highlights that the advertized phenomenon of endorsing “individualism for men and women” coexists with what she calls “[t]he pattern of women’s identity absorption in the family ... effectively underpinned by custom and practice, by law and by the state” (1998:142). These two discursive forces often imply a basic contradiction for women who may feel entrapped by the gap between the still rather fragile lure of the one and the internalised demands of the other.

In contemporary literature, the disturbing facets of familial themes and gender-specific subjects have become central to the work of several Irish authors, both male and female. An essay by Anne Fogarty on women novelists examines the utilization of “aspects of Gothic narration and representation” to demonstrate “the uncanniness of the family” and the ways in which the “domestic space becomes a means in these texts to reflect on the divisions and conflicts within male and female identity as a result of the problematic renegotiations of gender roles in contemporary Ireland” (2000: 62). Seen in this light, the gothicised literary portrayal of the gendered inequities underlying and troubling the domestic sphere offers an insight into the state of nation and society from a particular angle.

Set in contemporary Ireland Carr’s major plays provide interrogations of the underside of the Celtic Tiger confidence fuelled by the results of rapid

modernization and an unprecedented prosperity for an increasing number of citizens. For Carr, progress in economic and sociocultural terms does not obliterate, even though it may deceptively conceal, the forces within the private life which destabilize complacencies through signs of irrational and even monstrous otherness. Characteristically, the family or small community in her work is portrayed neither as a peaceful shelter nor a source of psychic reassurance, much rather as a site of anxiety, loss, horror and abjection. *The Mai* (1994), *Portia Coughlan* (1996), *By the Bog of Cats* (1998) and *On Raftery's Hill* (2000) abound in ghostly images and scenes which involve taboo subjects, forms of transgressive behaviour and sexuality, while the setting often conveys a sense of stifling imprisonment. The plays offer configurations of female subjectivity deformed by obsessions, guilty conscience as well as anger felt over the lack of personal self-fulfilment in the face of the conventionally homogenizing view of woman as born lover of peace and dedicated home-maker. The objective of the present paper is to explore Carr's application of Gothic strategies to demythologise certain negatives of the contemporary Irish society, usually hidden but frightening nonetheless, through the depiction of family and gender relations.

Theorising the fantastic and related representational modes, Lucie Armitt identifies the Gothic text as one in which "the apparently fixed demarcations between the interior nightmare realm and the outside world of so-called daylight order are called into question" (1996:53). Liminality is a feature of Carr's dramatic arsenal as well, her female characters finding themselves captured in a limbo, the threshold between two worlds. The polarity of these, however, does not mean total separability with uncontrollable chaos on the one side and never shaken standards and on the other. In *Gothic in Ireland* Jarlath Killeen associates the Gothic with the temporary state when old forms break down and new ones are invoked (2005:21). Comparably, Carr's women appear to be caught up in a kind of suspension between opposite demands and states, not only psychic but also physical and corporeal, with varying degrees of awareness concerning the force of their tantalizing entrapment. *The Mai* (1995) stages female characters belonging to four generations, who are wedged between the dichotomy of reality and desire. The action of *Portia Coughlan* (1996) takes place on the borderland of the everyday and the supernatural, and also between life and death, which is characteristic of *By the Bog of Cats* (1999) too, along with the juxtaposition of the visible and invisible, rational and irrational, the marginalised and the settled. In *On Raftery's Hill* (2000), it is the "brutal loss of innocence" we discover at the heart of the play (O'Reilly, 2004:162), suggesting that the threshold territory here is constituted by the scarring movement from innocence to experience.

Introducing her study *Gothic forms of feminine fictions*, Susan Becker proposes that a ubiquitous characteristic of the Gothic is formal excess, understood as an “attack on classic realism” and the values of order the latter is generally associated with (1999:1). The emerging sweep of neo-gothic in the postmodern era harbours a new form of “gendered writing,” which tends to reflect the feminine dimensions of the ongoing cultural and literary change. After all, Becker continues, “gothic horror is domestic horror, and addresses precisely these obviously ‘gendered’ problems of everyday life. [...] This form, as I hope to show, highlights gender-constructions and the related constructions of culture” (1999: 4). The Gothic excess of Becker’s description complicates Carr’s dramaturgy in the use of entangled narratives, the negotiation of female subjectivity and its otherness, as well as the re-imagination of familial space and environment as entrapment in the four plays.

2. *The Mai*

The Mai presents its subject, forty-year-old Mai’s desperate efforts and failure to save her marriage, in a refashioned form of the memory play, which mobilizes levels of narration. Spanning across generations the stories proliferate and the narrators multiple. The central narrator is Millie, *The Mai*’s daughter, whose presentation of her mother’s story becomes interlaced with stories told by other women in the family about themselves and each other. Painful episodes, frustration and abandonment are invoked, shameful, deeply buried guilty feelings break to the surface. The “exchange of the multiple female life-stories,” borrowing Becker’s term in reference to the play’s narrative structure (1999:54), depicts a culture in which women continue to be bound by the need to define themselves and other females in relation to men. The shreds of personal histories, as well as the haunting of past failures evoke narratives which operate to counter the pain of reality by fairy tale and magic to give meaning to the women’s lives. The origin of this compensatory “escape into the realm of fantasy” (Becker, 1999:36) and the tendency to mythologise appears across generations. One hundred year-old Grandma Fraochlán describes her mother, “The Duchess,” as a woman already thriving on dreams about to make up for the social stigma suffered because the daughter “was the on’y bastard an Fraochlán in livin’ memory” (Carr, 1995: 60). Grandma’s picturesque stories about the love of her husband, the nine-fingered fisherman capable of swimming miles to arrive in her bedchamber, “his skin a livid purple from tha freezin’ sea” (69), are disturbingly contrasted by the hints that she was left “penniless with seven offspring” (38). Although sustaining and supportive, the ingrained penchant for mythologising personal life carries nevertheless the danger of cherishing too high expectations at the

expense of taking account of facts. The Mai claims that Granma's stories, "made us long for something extraordinary to happen in our lives. I wanted my life to be huge and heroic and pure as in the days of yore, my prince at my side, and together we'd leave our mark on it" (55). This influence impacts even the future, as the youngest of the line, Millie, feels being haunted by "that childhood landscape," the "dead silent world that tore our hearts out for a song" (71) and feeds her illegitimate son with stories about his exceptional origin.

The excess of memories, dreams and tales, the juxtaposition and layering of stories within stories, create a labyrinthine structure similar to that of Gothic fictions that textually display the difficulty of getting themselves told. Carr presents no clear motivation for The Mai's choice of committing suicide instead of changing her attitude; it is the multidimensional interweaving of stories that provides explanation. A revealing contrast is set up at one point late in the drama. The Mai confesses that although she knows about her husband's philandering she is not prepared to face its humiliating aspects. Immediately follows a story retold by Millie about her mother's drudging away in England to raise funds for building a house by the lake to win her husband back. There, in a hairdressing salon The Mai meets a little Arab princess "already betrothed to some Sheik":

The Mai and the princess were two of a kind, moving towards one another across deserts and fairytales and years till they finally meet in a salon under Marble Arch and waltz around enthralled with one another and their childish impossible world. Two little princesses on the cusp of a dream, one five, the other forty. (46)

In an interview Carr comments on the story: "she [the Mai] was a princess, she was in the wrong life, in the wrong country, in the wrong century" (Kurdi, 2003:98). The gap between anxiety felt over the experience of marital let-down and the sublime features of the exotic story underscores The Mai's attraction to a counter-reality, a world where the personally elevating dream is perpetuated against time, circumstances and fact.

3. Portia Coughlan

In *Portia Coughlan* the chief concern is the eponymous protagonist's psychic disintegration, which leads to her self-chosen death by drowning. Intricate forms of narrative excess abound again, manifest in the construction of stories that serve to mirror the heroine's trajectory, as well as to frame the revelation of deep-rooted family tensions and secrets. The legend of the origin of the river Belmont from the suffering of an outcast woman is related by the protagonist herself at the point in the drama when her isolation is intensifying.

Endowed with mysterious, Cassandra-like powers, the girl in the story is a magnified mirror image of Portia who, from early on in the drama, has a premonition of her own impending doom. The torture the legendary girl suffers from other people reflects the self-centred narrow-mindedness and lack of attention that Portia is confronting in the behaviour of most members of her family and close community. A parallel to the legend is offered by the episode involving her and a local barman. Because she changed her mind about flirting with him, he reacts in a way that evokes the treatment of witches without giving a thought to the possible reasons of the woman's withdrawal: "D'ya know whah you nade, Portia Coughlan? [...] Ya nade the tongue ripped ouh, an' tha arse flayed offa ya" (Carr, 1996: 295).

Domestic horror in Gothic fictions is usually shown to have roots reaching far back in time. A "secret plot from the past" (Becker, 1999:11) emerges in *Portia* too, with bewilderingly conflicting details of familial history. In a way the dead body of Portia hauled out of the water at the onset of act 2 has stirred the dirt not only in the riverbed but also under the surface of compromises and efforts to keep up appearances by the family. Jealousy, exclusiveness and hatred of the other come to light revealing acts of dehumanisation and festering emotional wounds, along with hints that the family has a history of incest and inbreeding hushed up in the name of pride and propriety. Carr's portrayal of family troubles defines the "domestic sphere [as] a site of danger and violation" (Sihra, 2003:22), providing a clue to the profoundly anxious feelings of Portia about her own maternal incompetence in such a destructive milieu: "When ah looks at my sons Raphael ah sees knives an' accidents an' terrible mutilations. ... An' ah have to run from thim, lock thim ouha tha room, for fear ah cause these awful things ta happen" (Carr, 1996:284).

To represent the female protagonist's subjectivity as liminal and entrapped, *Portia* deploys the Gothic convention of the haunting double. The ghost of her twin brother, Gabriel, carries a strange, atavistic power that lures Portia away from the binding realities of life toward the long-dead other, without whom she feels incomplete, a worthless split subject: "He woulda bin thirty taday as well ... sometimes ah thinche on'y half a'me is left, the worst half ..." (258). Characteristically, it is not the figure of the mother in the drama that would metonymically refer to a lost wholeness. Motherhood through Portia's mother, Marianne, allows itself to be perceived "as a patriarchal construction and [suggests] that the mother is an empty function with continued bondage to men and patriarchy" (Hirsch, 1989: 165). Portia hates Marianne, her matrophobia becoming exacerbated by the fact that even when the mother realizes that Portia is undergoing a serious crisis, she does nothing but preach the need for self-control. Portia's violation of wifely and

motherly duties will land her daughter in “th’asylum” (Carr, 1996:303), Marianne threatens, rehearsing the cure invented for transgressive women in the past. The horrific consequence of reinforcing the discourse of the normal through the phallic maternal is figured by Carr in the scene where the anger of the daughter finds an outlet in aggression and Portia raises a hand against her mother.

The maternal displaced in the drama, it is Gabriel’s haunting figure that constitutes the return of the repressed, the reminder of a pre-lapsarian harmony between self and other. The trope of separation as part of the Gothic is considered by Becker in conjunction with Kristeva’s term of “abjection” to define the experience of self-punishment and self-degradation that the concomitant loss entails (Becker, 1999:55-56). What the twin brother’s reappearance and Portia’s ambivalent attitude to it signal is that Portia has not managed to overcome the trauma of separation. A cluster of prophetic events, stories and shreds of memories are evoked to locate the moment when and how the symbiotic relationship of the twins became disrupted, but it still remains a missing link. Portia’s self-lacerating sense of guilt may derive from the fact that she had abandoned Gabriel by taking her feminine position in the heterosexual matrix as a woman choosing a lover well before the time when she did not follow him into the water. The reintegration of the separated has its price, since “only violence or magic, and both of a singularly threatening kind, can ever succeed in joining them again” (Sedgwick qtd. in Becker, 1999: 55). Portia’s suicide by drowning right at the spot of the river where Gabriel waded in and sank is the realisation of the violent, self-destructive option. Reanimating her in the final act gives the dramatist the opportunity to have Portia try out another way by trying to share with Raphael her memories of the unusual closeness between herself and Gabriel, and thus integrate the secret into her married life. However, the magic of receiving helpful empathy from her husband does not take place; the unspeakable becoming spoken is not for his limited powers to comprehend the darker nature of otherness.

4. By the Bog of Cats

Ghostly messages, supernatural signs, warnings and prophecies trail through the text of *By the Bog of Cats*, primarily in relation to the destiny of the protagonist, Hester. She is a forty-year-old traveller viewed as an alien in the Irish society. The Ghost Fancier appearing at the start is a lethal harbinger of impending demise; the strangely kind and polite ghost incarnates Hester’s “anxiety about and desire for death” (Bronfen, 1998:42), a confusion of feelings about her position and future. On the one hand, she considers death to be embraced rather than feared, as part of nature’s eternal cycle. On the other

hand, she has a sense of disintegration, an actual threat to her identity as a result of having lost her common-law-husband, Carthage, to another woman who will replace her in their bogside family home: “[M]y life doesn’t hang together without him” (Carr, 1999:16). The liminality of the protagonist is reinforced by placing her at the borderland of two worlds, nature and society, oppositional yet also overlapping. Evoking the Kristevan semiotic, the natural world is represented by the feminine space of the bog, “always shiftin’ and changin’ and coddin’ the eye” (15) with a keeper called Catwoman, who fuses the levels of human and animal as well as negotiates between the natural and supernatural. Physically blind but endowed with inner vision like her forebears in ancient mythology, her intuitive knowledge derives from reading the signs of nature: she has seen Hester’s fate “writ in a bog hole” (23). The antithetical world is that of the settled community, where laws and rules serve the symbolic order and where the patriarchal authority is embodied by Cassidy, a wealthy farmer exercising power over the weaker and those deviant from the norm.

Hester’s itinerant origin has always been a source of insecurity, feeding an uncomfortable sense of difference in her, now deepened into identity crisis by the trauma of emotional and physical dispossession. The magnitude of the crisis is expressed by a kind of split-mindedness which perceives the self as having a horrible and monstrous side: “[T]here’s two Hester Swanes,” she says to Caroline, Carthage’s bride, “one that is decent” while “the other Hester, well, she could slide a knife down your face, carve ya up and not bat an eyelid” (30). In Hester, Carr portrays a fated struggle to discover the limits to understanding and controlling the dark, secret otherness that disrupts the self’s integration into the symbolic system: “things goes through my veins besides blood that I’ve fought so hard to keep wraps on” (66). Hester’s defeat, however, can hardly be seen as only her own.

Caught between worlds, the individual is likely to seek a way out by realigning him/herself with one or the other side in order to erase or mitigate tension and anxiety. A direction of Hester’s efforts is to find the way back to her origin. This takes the shape of the quest for the maternal, the ultimate link with the world of nature. Hester’s obsession with the decisive experience of being abandoned by her mother, Big Josie, at the age of seven with the promise that she will return, shares a lot with other contemporary Gothic characters who, according to Bruhm (2002:267),

confuse their childhood experiences with their adult lives. This confusion results from the unconscious as Freud described it, a repository of prohibited desires, aggressions, and painful and terrifying experiences. As these psychological experiences mesh with the sense of loss that accompanies them ... they set up echoes of childhood in the

subject's later life. What was repressed thus returns to haunt our heroes [or heroines] with the vivid immediacy of the original moment.

Hester's case involves also the existential need to reconstruct the lost mother and thus recover a coherent identity and personal history. Although the bog is replete with memories of Big Josie, who lived there with her daughter in a caravan, it is mainly through stories heard from those who knew her that Hester can have access to her mother's character. These narratives tend to contradict each other, reflecting more the teller's attitudes and interests than their real subject, and the unfolding picture is that of a seductive, but also elusive and unreliable, woman.

The childhood trauma remaining unresolved, Hester feels excluded and exiled from both the world of the settled people and that of the maternal she has been clinging to for hope and comfort. This leaves her in a state of abjection, afraid and full of self-hatred at the same time. Understanding ghosts as the projection of the unconscious in a drama, the haunting of Joseph, her dead brother, has the role of revealing Hester's repressed knowledge that the cherished memory of Big Josie as a caring mother worth waiting for has been an illusion. Within abjection, Julia Kristeva contends, there looms "one of those violent, dark revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable. ... a vortex of summons and repulsion places the one haunted by it literally beside himself" (qtd. in Oliver, 1997:229). The uncontrolled transgressiveness and brutal deeds of Hester in the last act are committed in a state of extreme agitation, generated by threats of annihilation that come not only from the outside, from the ostracising community, but also from the inside, from the painful awareness of loss of self. Yet her infanticide, paradoxically, does not transform Hester into a terrible mother figure but signals love for her daughter, whom she kills to save her from the blow of losing her mother like Hester did at the same age. The gothicised representation of Hester's acquisition of a destructive agency works subversively, showing that by stigmatising and rejecting the gendered outsider the system wounds itself as well.

5. On Raftery's Hill

Female Gothic writing frequently exposes the horror of women's confinement in the family home, figuring the house as a male structure where the wife, daughter or sister experiences suffocation by norms and roles prescribed for her by the patriarchal order (Becker, 1999:36-37). The women of *On Raftery's Hill* (2000) live virtually bound to their father's house on a

hill, isolated from the surrounding settlements. Claustrophobia is further enhanced by the fact that the play's setting remains the kitchen of the house on the Raftery farm throughout, a space which has traditionally been metaphorised as the centre of the home, but here becomes one of suspicion, greed and also defilement. Unlike in *Portia* and *Bog*, "the natural world offers no consolation" in *Raftery's*," Melissa Sihra observes. "The violation of animal life "mirrors the inexorable suffering within the home" (Sihra, 2007:213-14), since Raftery has turned his farm into an "abattoir" (Carr, 2000:19) by leaving the animals he kills to rot in the fields. Parallels between animals and humans are presented by the play in two interconnected ways. On the one hand, the references to animals emphasise their innocent unruliness and vulnerability to acts of human cruelty. On the other hand, "animalism saturates the play's metaphors, pervasively undercutting every character and action" (Harris, 2003:224), which highlights that people are essentially ambiguous creatures and the border of what constitutes being human and civilized is highly unstable.

Stories, scraps of memory and hints are woven through the fabric of the play suggesting deeper secrets and covertly pointing to the unspeakable taboo, incest, which occurs repeatedly but remains unnamed. Thus a long history of intergenerational sexual abuse and cycles of violation unfolds, energized by the complicity of the family members themselves. All the characters are involved in the cycle except the eighteen-year-old Raftery daughter Sorrel, who, as a consequence, is too tightly surrounded by the jealousy and self-centred unhappiness of those already fallen in their own respective ways. As a patriarch, Red displays features of manipulative and pervert omnipotence, and exercises power over his household in a way which seems to be atavistic, independent of either secular or religious laws. His most brutal act, the rape of Sorrel does not so much happen out of lust but rather out of coveting her the personal freedom he himself lost when his father kept him at home so that the son remain "rough and ignorant like himself" (Carr, 2000:28). The destructive effect of complicity and trying to cover the unspeakable is represented by the women characters' gothicised language, "multifarious, duplicitous and paradoxical" (Williams, 1995:67) on the semantic and syntactic levels, undermining straightforward communication within and outside the family. They shy away from naming uncomfortable truths, make contrary statements and keep silent about obvious atrocities. Sorrel sends her fiancé away for good with the dubiously sounding blame that he "ruined everythin" (Carr, 2000:53) so as not to have to live in a lie with him. Her sister-mother, Dinah, encourages her that "[U]d's not lyin, ud's just not tellin him things. Ud's just sayin the opposite of whah you're thinkin. Most

goes through their whole life sayin the opposite of whah they think. What's so different abouh you?" (56).

Contrasted with the protagonists of the other Carr plays analysed here, Sorrel in *Raftery's* is not allowed to find escape in committing suicide – she remains locked up in the family cell where patriarchal domination over her is reasserted. Tellingly, in the final scene the father is shown cleaning his gun with a piece of material torn off Sorrel's soiled and never-to-be-used wedding garment. What may easily await the two younger female characters is prefigured by the grandmother's insanity, who, after suffering, witnessing and practising abuse herself, feels bound to her long-dead daddy more than ever and keeps on making futile efforts to go back to Kinneygar and rejoin him. Her mad reasoning, "[D]addy's never die, they just fake rigor mortis, and all the time they're throwing tantrums in the coffin, claw marks on the lid" (57) suggests the dual face of patriarchy: it keeps on surviving yet its compulsive operations are both physically and mentally imprisoning for victim, accomplice and aggressor alike.

6. Conclusion

Challenging the boundaries of the genre of family drama, Carr's works deploy Gothic strategies to reveal and negotiate how the female protagonists' acute personal dilemmas of integration are enmeshed in familial and gender issues, characteristic of and recurrent in the Irish context. I agree with Paula Murphy (2006:391), who claims that the plays "can be read as symptomatic of the unease" generated in the contemporary Irish social psyche by having to accommodate too rapid changes and cope with their frequently unexpected or shocking implications. However, it is far more than unease in my view. The excesses of representation in the plays show the heroines traumatized by contradictory forces, entangled with the ghosts of the past alongside the anxieties of the present. Carr stages unsettling, horrific signs and images of an otherness which lurks behind both the repressed heritage of the culture and the globalising, alienating developments of the present. Her female protagonists are confused, transformed and deformed by the paradoxical interaction of attractive values and inhibiting obsessions connected with the past. They face new ideas and ideals burdened with inauthentically rationalized compromises in the present.

Writing about the Irish theatre in the 1990s in relation to its predecessors, several critics contend that it has discernable affinities with the dramatic renaissance at the beginning of the last century. Carr's work certainly demonstrates the validity of this argument. A play of domestic horror, murder and death, as well as of compulsive repetition, W. B. Yeats's

Purgatory (1938) is a piece of Gothic drama with which Marina Carr's *By the Bog of Cats* has been found to have a "metaphorical conversation" through transforming "the function of specific Yeatsian apparitions" (Russell, 2006:159). Conceived amid the precarious transitions of the postindependence years, *Purgatory* represents a sense of haunting violence and inherited wrong undermining the life of the nation in familial terms. *By the Bog of Cats* and the other Carr plays hark back to this heritage in the different, but also double-edged and anxiety-laden, therefore potentially wounding, conditions of the moral crisis people tend to face in contemporary Ireland. Mixing realism with effects of the Gothic, Carr's plays envisage the depths of the multiple social and cultural origins of the psychic trauma, marginalization and damage foregrounded by the women protagonists.

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KICKING A DEAD HORSE: BURIALS AND RESURRECTIONS

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***Abstract:** Sam Shepard's *Kicking a Dead Horse* (2007) revisits the author's former themes as well as summons the ghosts of some great theatrical masters in whose shadows Shepard is composing this time around. The paper identifies the theatrical "corpses" (Miller, Beckett, and Shakespeare) Shepard resurrects, and attempts to find answers to the possible causes of Shepard's exhumation of these particular dead theatrical fathers. The dual motifs of burial and rebirth guiding the drama also determine the focus of this critical analysis.*

***Keywords:** authenticity, alter-egos, Beckett, minimalism, re-writing, forefathers*

The idea of dying and being reborn is really an interesting one, you know. It's always there at the back of my head.

Sam Shepard*

1. Introduction

Sam Shepard's play *Kicking a Dead Horse* (subsequently *Dead Horse*) opened to audiences in the Peacock/Abbey Theatre of Dublin in March 2007, it continued in the Abbey for a 12 performance run in September of the same year, and then it finally crossed the Atlantic for the first American showings in New York's Public Theater in June 2008. Critics were clearly divided about the play's achievements from the outset and evaluated this newcomer of Shepard's either as "classic Shepard...highly entertaining" (Elmer O'Kelly in the *Sunday Independent*, Web), others observed that "[...] the writing is razor sharp," as *The Irish Independent* did (Murphy, Web), or swept it aside as a failed attempt on Shepard's part. Among the voices in the last category, Karen Fricker insisted that "The entire effort is steeped in solipsism" (Web). There is no denying that Shepard revisits some of his familiar themes in this play, but as I will argue in the course of the essay, *Dead Horse* is different and more than a simple reiteration of past themes, or a flawed attempt to discard everything the writer seemed to be obsessed by earlier. Rather than a play that indicates Shepard's final demise as America's leading playwright registering his readiness "to give up the game" (Isherwood, Web) I will point out the author's bountiful involvement in parody, comic self-mockery and

intertextual plays, which might indicate avenues of self-renewal in this recent play, instead of a tendency for decline.

The analysis that follows is structured into three parts: 1. the first registers the extent to which Shepard rewrites in *Dead Horse* his previous oeuvre with a change; 2. secondly, I will enumerate some indebtedness to three theatrical masters that lurk as ghost-like shadows in the background of the play (Miller, Beckett, and Shakespeare); 3. and, finally, I will attempt to prove that Shepard defies his own burial (as artist and playwright) despite the manifold layers of these corpses, traditions, shadows and haunts he himself resurrects.

2. A note on the play

Dead Horse begins with the life-size body of a dead horse placed centre stage. As Shepard himself insists in the stage directions “[t]he dead horse should be as realistic as possible with no attempt to stylize or cartoon it in any way. In fact, it should actually be a dead horse” (Shepard, 2007:8). The equine carcass, created by scenic designer Brian Vahey with “startling accuracy” (Clark, Web), is a truly magnificent symbol. It is simultaneously shocking and powerful, and keeps shifting meaning, engaging the audience as well as the only actor on stage throughout the entire performance. The play is simple enough: Hobart Struther, the once-successful art dealer of New York, now in his mid-sixties, who made millions on buying famous American masterpieces in the saloons of Wyoming for \$20 and subsequently resold them with a large profit, is currently wandering in the deserts of the West to find his “authenticity.” The venture is ironically put to a halt on the very first day by the death of Hobart’s horse, which he feels compelled to bury. While the physically troublesome venture of the burial is literally taking place in front of the spectator, Hobart (like the gravediggers straight out of *Hamlet*) philosophizes about his condition, and recollects his passage to the present moment in time, then in conclusion descends into the grave of his own making along with the horse, his dreams, his past and his future. Yes, sighs everyone, this is Shepard giving in all right. Yet, before we hasten to jump to such conclusions, let’s examine the play in greater detail.

3. Dramatization of the self

Shepard’s dramatic oeuvre now expands over 50 years. The thematic range of this massive body of writing has a trade mark quality to it. From the decline of the once-heroic West (*Fool for Love*, *True West*, *Eyes for*

Consuela, Kicking a Dead Horse) through the falling apart of the American family (*Buried Child, Curse of the Starving Class, A Lie of the Mind*) along with the collapse of other great ideals/dreams of America as a nation (*States of Shock, The God of Hell*) to the classic duel-like confrontations between generations, siblings, or rivals (*True West, Fool for Love, The Tooth of Crime, True West, Simpatico, Dead Horse*), Shepard's concerns are uniquely interwoven with his native country, the geography, the people of this land, and their endless quest for who they are and what they are worth. It is really no surprise that when overall evaluations of Shepard are made he is oftentimes labelled as the foremost American playwright most intriguingly involved in the exploration of national mythologies. *Dead Horse*, of course, is no exception to the rule.

Although too familiar, the themes that Shepard revisits in *Dead Horse* are nevertheless lit from a unique angle, the rather overt perspective of introspection. Even though the autobiographical interest itself is not altogether new either (we could see instances of self-referentiality beginning with his family plays), Hobart Struther is unique in the sequence of Shepard's characters, because he is openly made to act, look and sound like the author himself. Struther is the typical Shepardian alter-ego, the author's well-known double, engaged in conversation with himself. Hobart's equation with the sixty-three year old writer, who is still in desperate quest for authenticity, originality, the penetration of false surfaces, is more than obvious on several points. Indeed, Hobart Struther, promptly described by a critic as an art dealer "who has grown wealthy from selling images of cowboy America to cosmopolitan America" (Ross, 2007:6), is a perfect replica of Shepard the playwright, who made his name in the theatrical world doing exactly that. Even the motif of getting stranded in the middle of the desert as a misfortune brought about by the character's private choice can be seen as the very metaphor of Shepard's fate as a playwright who got stuck in the western cowboy image he conferred upon himself by supplying recurring representations of the deterioration of the once mythic American West in a long line of plays. No wonder, then, that the prevailing tone of *Dead Horse* is tragicomic, and also at points self-ironical. The drama enumerates and reinvestigates the clichés of the classic Shepardian repertoire from the disappearance of the West along with the more extensive national mythologies that once supported its rise, to the representation of the self/the individual against all of these historical, political and cultural backgrounds.

4. Resurrecting the shepardian oeuvre

One of the pleasures of this recent Shepard text is to be found in the manifold layers of self-mockery and self-parody that the playwright simply cannot get enough of. The playfulness of this meta-discourse about Shepard-Hobart, the dealer in art, who stands demobilized at the edge of his own artistic territory, is furthered by the parody inherent in the dramatic events that transpire. Hobart's ride out to the desert is a symbolic visit to Shepard country, and his literal excavations serve to unearth the classic Shepardian subject matters. The West, as is usual in Sam Shepard, again stands as artificial rather than real, grotesque rather than heroic. The vast lands once ruled by western heroes are now shrunk to a pack of dirt in the middle of the platform. Instead of the wide desert-lands to roam freely on horseback, Shepard gives us a dead horse, fresh piles of earth just enough for a grave, and a melancholic grave-digger (whose greatest present adventure concerns the excavation of a deep enough hole, and hurling the giant of a carcass into it). In *Dead Horse* once more the grand shoot-out scenes of the wild west, where "good" stood against "evil," and nobody was ever puzzled as to which side was which, are turned into a schizophrenic interior battle through the outspoken interior monologue Hobart addresses to his alter-ego: the Shepard then and now; the once-ambitious writer and the burnt-out renegade of the present. Clearly the refined humour of these passages works only provided that the audience is familiar with the corpus that is being ironically subverted here.

The parody of the West and the western turns from humorous to somewhat more serious when Shepard-Hobart comes to perceive this setting as bearing historical and even political relevance. The heroic figures and national heroes, who once supplied inspirations for the pursuits of the likes of Hobart, who came west looking for new opportunities, are now represented as pitiable suicides. As Hobart reminisces:

Look what became of him, for example – one of them – Lewis, wasn't it? Mr. Meriwether – what in the world was *he* thinking? Shot himself with two pistols in some dark, slab-sided cabin on the Natchez Trace. Imagine that. A pistol to the head and a pistol to the heart. Wanted to make damned sure he was dead, I guess. What was he thinking? [...] after opening up all that great expanse of country – maybe he realized something. Maybe he saw exactly what we were going to do with it. (24)

The dreams of the great explorers are dead and empty along with the legends of the West. There is a history, a connection Shepard seems to be saying, between all those great personalities who aimed for expanding the

country. The ideal of territorial expansion almost always brought along physical as well as moral devastation. Shepard's condemnation of American heroes stems from his lament for the genuine, the tribal, the authentic, which he perceives as having been sacrificed to the cause of territorial expansion, frequently referenced by him as "this possessive attitude" (qtd. in O'Toole, 2007:7). As the playwright stated in an interview:

There is this strange deal – from Lewis and Clark [who first explored the American West] to Iraq. It's very weird that we're continually trying to devour territory. It was about territory, and it is still about territory and ownership, and imperialism and conquering – taking it and doing something with it that we consider to be more useful than what's being done with it now. And consequently creating havoc and devastation. It's frightening, absolutely frightening. (O'Toole, 2007: 7)

Finally, however, the devastation of all that is considered genuine, complete, glorious and whole in the name of greed and possession, ties back in with private, personal and artistic matters. The icons and metaphors that connote the Old West – manifest destiny, cowboys and Indians – are all self-referential images that echo Shepard's own artistic concerns. The vanishing West, with its central icon of the horse carcass foregrounded, restates Shepard's almost obsessive anxiety about lost ideals and about the diminishing chances for locating and upholding the genuine for inspection. The endlessly repeated word "authenticity" becomes its own subversive echo in the play, whose validity is ironically undermined by the repetitive context it is introduced in. The private landscape that mirrors the deterioration and impossibility of great aspirations is staged as an integral part of the former Shepard canon, as well as the cultural and political landscape that Shepard-Hobart is to map out.

When the author allows himself to be self-mocking, perceiving the anachronistic nature and obvious ironies of the search for the genuine in the 21st century, the writing is brilliant; when he turns too serious, interrogating the political and historical contexts of this personal quest, the writing gets didactic. *Dead Horse* is really at its best when Shepard-Hobart is truly ready to laugh at himself. The preparation of the inventory of former themes and landscapes is vital, it is metaphorically a burial of the authorial past, an intimate portrait of the artist as he used to be, making the stage ready for his own rebirth. The play definitely has the aura of a final settlement where Shepard, the Pulitzer winning dramatist turned movie star and all-American hero, is finally ready to cash in.

5. Resurrecting the ancestors

Various commentators see various dramatic ancestors behind *Dead Horse*. The art-dealer or peddler has long been a traditional American character, and evokes Willy Loman as much as he does the old Jewish Solomon of *The Price* by Arthur Miller, but analogies from Shepard's own oeuvre such as the menacing salesman Welch of *The God of Hell* can also be seen as lurking behind Hobart. Just like Loman, Solomon and Welch, Hobart, too peddles ideologies along with the artefacts he is trading. But whereas Miller's salesmen disseminate humanistic lessons of changing times and values, Shepard's salesmen (both Welch and Struther) spread merciless accounts of shattered dreams and lives.

Quite unlike the easily identifiable salesmen of old that the protagonist shares his profession with, Hobart's "art-dealing" is also a strong in-joke, unveiling Shepard's ironic self-portrait (himself envisioned quite modestly, needless to add, as a dealer in art). More specifically, Hobart, who resells paintings of the West at a massive markup deals in "old masterpieces" which would "become like demons" (Shepard, 2007:21), trapping him in a life he had originally no desire for. To me this is Shepard in desperate quest for his own original voice, while consistently acknowledging the influences of those theatrical forefathers (both American and European), who he "rewrites"/"resells," recontextualizing them through the filter of his experience.

The obvious divide between the peddler and the artist, the one who merely deals in art and the one involved with the creation of art, is also brilliantly worked into Shepard's new play. Thus the drama's monologic elaborations/orations about "authenticity" or "originality" doubly make sense against the contexts of (a) Shepard's own writings recording the fading of the once true West, (b) the author's admitted history as one trapped by demons of the past, his theatrical forefathers (Eugene O'Neill, Edward Albee, Samuel Beckett, Harold Pinter, William Shakespeare, to enumerate just the most obvious parallels). It is no surprise that Hobart might be voicing Shepard's very own sentiments when lamenting about the life he feels at times he wasn't meant for. As Hobart puts it early in the play addressing the audience: "All I can tell you is that I had become well aware of my inexorable descent into a life in which, daily, I was convinced I was not intended to be living" (15).

The next author under whose shadow Shepard seems to be labouring in *Dead Horse* is Beckett. The motifs of the grave-digging, the absurdity of the too-small grave, the extended internal monologue have been likened by Patrick Lonergan to the inverse of Beckett's *Happy Days*, while the

unmoving figure of the horse has been interpreted by others as taking on a force quite similar to the tree in *Godot*. The circular quality of Hobart's monologue might find parallels in *Endgame*, and Struther also shares his existentialist weltanschauung with other lonely figures of the absurd. Even the fact that Shepard opted for an Irish showing first was attributed to his intended but nonetheless secreted reason to pay tribute to Beckett with this piece. His selection of Stephen Rea, Ireland's foremost actor-talent for Hobart's part further strengthened the Beckettian overtones the play obviously has/hides. Luke Clancy, one of the early reviewers of the play, analyzes the Beckett-echoes of *Dead Horse* in this manner: "More than usual here, Shepard seems to be writing in the shadow of Samuel Beckett, whose surreal stages the set here (...) recalls. Even the play's title, acted out with gusto by Rea repeatedly, has a Beckettian futility to it" (Web).

Stephen Rea, the man who excelled both in the Irish and in the American productions as Hobart Struther, relates the shared ground of experience between the Irish and the Americans Shepard seems to understand so profoundly:

As Sam has said, the Irish were the first people through the Cumberland Gap [the main route west through the Appalachians]. The language Sam uses relates very much to a North of Ireland mode of speech. I think any of us can understand the sense of a loss of history, a loss of a sense of certainty about the mythology that sustains a society. That's the kind of crisis that Hobart is embodying... It's about advanced capitalism, about using up resources as fast as you can. And to sustain the lifestyle, you're then moving on to invade sovereign nations. It's also personal to Sam because he's explored his own identity through the West before. He's asking – what is this authenticity? And we all have those things, those mythological supports. We've got to reinvestigate them – certainly in Ireland we have to. I find that it's an enormously brave play for that reason. (Rea, Web)

The play's and Shepard's indebtedness to Irish history, culture, and dramatic literature would certainly be worth exploring in greater depth. Whether it is the lost sense of certainty, the loss of history or the problem of misdirected mission/ideals, Shepard seems to be spot on, and the models he is picking out to show all this are the masters of 20th-century theatrical art.

Another author casting a long shadow over the play is, obviously, William Shakespeare. Clearly I have Shepard to thank for giving me inspiration to reread *King Lear*, and so discover the manifold allusions to this Renaissance author in *Dead Horse*. Hobart is to some extent a version of Lear; he too is an outcast, a man who used to enjoy great prestige and has fallen from grace. Even clearer is the parallel between Hobart's divided self and the Lear-Fool duo, where the Fool acts as a voice of reason and helps the king to achieve self-realization. This same tug-of-war between great

ideals/dreams/aspirations versus the realities of the present moment, which haunts Lear, raises difficulties for Hobart. His entire enterprise out West is essentially linked with issues of authenticity and its apparent absence and impossibility in the present world. Shepard's famous duos: Hoss and Crow, Lee and Austin, Vinnie and Carter, Earl and Ray, all dramatize the ancient conflict of knowledge vs. ignorance, centrality and margin/ periphery, rank vs. humility that *Lear* is also entangled in.

Even more apparent is the shadow that *Hamlet* casts over the scenes of *Dead Horse*. The rather obvious resonance between the gravediggers and Hobart's figure is not too far-fetched I believe. The gravediggers of *Hamlet*, too, are understood as playing the role of clowns, they approach subjects with a tone of dark comedy, make fun of the most serious matters, joke and pun and sing songs, just as Hobart Struther is caught up (probably despite his best intention) in a Shepardian clown show. Hobart's antics with the tent at the end of the play are very much in this vein. The grave-digging is literally transplanted from *Hamlet*, and the issues and concerns that usually appear in the context of death are shared by the two plays, as both contemplate the dissolution of values, morals and authenticity generally associated with a former, altogether happier era, located somewhere in the past.

Although Hobart can hardly be seen simply as clownish, he indeed possesses a tragicomic view of the world, and does act in a clownish manner at certain times (when he pities the loss of his hat, or when he is lassoing/kicking the dead horse; his antics with the tent are almost Chaplinesque). Just like the gravediggers of *Hamlet* or like the prototypical fool, Hobart, too, is the classic authorial mouthpiece. His semi-serious (and quite didactic) outbreak towards the end of the play bears relevance as a criticism of present-day politics, which would be almost insufferable without the clownish guise. The clown again is allowed to say things that the normal people cannot, and he makes complex messages available to the common folks too. Here is Hobart-Shepard's diatribe about contemporary US politics disguised as senseless rambling:

I do not understand why I'm having so much trouble taming the Wild. I've done this already. Haven't I already been through all of this? We closed the Frontier in 1890 something, didn't we? Didn't we already accomplish that? The. . . Iron Horse-Coast to Coast. Blasted all the buffalo out of here. An ocean of bones from Sea to Shining Sea. Trails of Tears. Chased the Heathen Redman down to Florida. Paid the Niggers off in mules and rich black dirt. Whipped the Chinees and strung them up with their own damn pony-tails. Decapitated the Mexicans. Erected steel walls to keep the riff-raff out. Sucked these hills barren of gold. Ripped the top soil as far as the eye can see. Drained the aquifers. Damned up all the rivers and flooded

the valleys for Recreational purposes! Ran off the small farmers. Destroyed Education. Turned our children into criminals. *Demolished Art! Invaded Sovereign Nations! What more can we possibly do?* (61-62)

6. Conclusion: the resurrection

While many are just about ready to bury Shepard as a writer whose playwriting talent seems to have been subsiding in the past couple of years, luckily, the playwright himself does not show any urgency to retreat. So, one might ask, why the dead horse, the inventory of past themes, the re-visitation of theatrical masters, why the extended burial, this long “inner” tug-of-war about the failure of “authenticity” as this play’s central lament, if indeed Shepard is not displaying in *Dead Horse* a great public farewell to his dramatic career. In a documentary entitled *Sam Shepard: Stalking Himself* (1998), Shepard stated that we are all compelled to acknowledge our roots, and to argue that we emerge out of thin air is in a way committing suicide. This play too is about acknowledging ancestors, the important lessons one can draw from the predecessors, and how you symbolically die if you are not ready to admit your roots (whether personal, cultural, or social). Shepard in *Dead Horse* virtually claims that true artistic authenticity cannot be assumed without bowing to the heritage of the past, including one’s own achievements. The metaphors of digging up the past, confronting the ghosts, and of burying the dead weight that drags you down assume importance as building stones in preparing Shepard’s artistic inventory, all of which eventually enable him to move forward to rebirth.

One person’s history and life make sense only in a sequence, and as Hobart Struther is burying himself alive, while trying to dig a big enough hole to get rid of all the stories, memories, and images that make him who he is, Shepard the artist survives. For his resurrection depends exactly upon whether he dares to face and acknowledge his artistic, theatrical and cultural heritage. Without this very personal, very private confessional no progress is imaginable. To a degree, *Dead Horse* is Shepard’s version of *Long Day’s Journey into Night*, where Shepard allows himself an honest look into his aspirations and accomplishments, the dreams he once dreamt and the realities amidst which he ended up.

That Sam Shepard is not quite ready to die as a determinant element of the contemporary theatrical scene is also attested to by the fact that his new play, *Ages of the Moon*, has already had its world premier at the Abbey this spring, with Seán McGinley and Stephen Rea in the cast. It is more than apparent that the exploration of his strong ties with Ireland as well as with

the Irish theatre and drama are just beginning, which is also confirmed by Shepard's dedication of the new play again to Rea. This, we have to admit, is indeed quite an admirable swelling of artistic energy from a writer who has been declared finished so many times before.

Note

* The quotation is used by Kenneth Chubb and the Editors of *Theatre Quarterly* in "Metaphors, Mad Dogs and Old Time Cowboys: Interview with Sam Shepard." In Marranca, Bonnie, ed. 1981. *American Dreams: The Imagination of Sam Shepard*. New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, p. 207.

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EUPHEMIZATION, VERBICIDE AND VIOLENCE IN THE “THE BIG LEBOWSKI” BY JOEL AND ETHAN COEN

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to discuss the linguistic strategies that are used by the Coen brothers in order to turn their film “The Big Lebowski” (1998) into an unconventional narrative that transcends the boundaries of genre. The movie takes as a point of reference the genres of Western and of film noir, but offers a narrative that only launches the theme of violence specific to such genres, without offering an actualization of the violent elements. The paper identifies linguistic strategies such as “euphemization” and “verbicidization” as means of defusing violence in the movie, turning it into a transgressive filmic narrative.

Keywords: dysphemism, euphemism, film studies, genre, verbicide, violence

1. Introduction

This paper proposes a discussion of the “The Big Lebowski”, a 1998 film directed by Joel and Ethan Coen. While initially a box-office flop, this movie ended up creating an impressive cult following, which materialized in publications or festivals. The current analysis seeks to present the manner in which violence, as a theme, is launched and subsequently defused by the narrative of the movie. More particularly, it centres on the linguistic choices upon which the movie dialogue is based, attempting to show how these linguistic choices support the initiation and subsequent suspension of violence. Taking as a point of reference Todd A. Comer’s idea that “The Big Lebowski” is a “traumatized filmic narrative” (2005:99), revolving around the theme of violence, the paper proposes to identify and investigate the linguistic strategies that lie at the basis of this narrative.

2. A Consciously Metageneric Movie

For an adequate identification of the linguistic strategies underlying the filmic narrative of “The Big Lebowski”, it is necessary to offer a discussion of the way in which such strategies function within the genre or complex of generic devices that this movie is based upon. This connection becomes all the more relevant in the case of an explicitly metageneric film such as “The Big Lebowski”, where the linguistic choices are means of supporting this explicit metagenercity. A preliminary discussion of the more

general issue of metagenericity in film will lead to a better understanding of the way in which the film functions as explicitly metageneric.

As Frederic Jameson underlines (1990:84-85), contemporary films are metageneric par excellence, due to the phenomenon of multiplication on a cinematic level. The standard that Jameson makes reference to is a Hollywood golden age where there was clearer genre/sub-genre delimitation. Ideally, such a standard made possible the fairly unambiguous identification of the iconography and conventions operating within the genre as such. The growing number of cinematic productions in the sixties led, as Jameson underlines (1990:85), to a phenomenon of multiplication, characterized by the emergence of a large group of so-called B-movies. In this manner, one could say that, beginning with the sixties, films can no longer be defined as constant and start functioning like bundles of conventions belonging to different genres/sub-genres.

Marking the fact that contemporary film is essentially heterogeneous, functioning as a bundle of conventions belonging to various genres, this paper is based upon the guiding idea that "The Big Lebowski" is not only metageneric par excellence, but also constructed on purpose as a cinematic narrative that playfully underlines the essential metagenericity of film. The Coens choose an array of easily recognizable strategies that lead viewers to immediately identify the various genres or sub-genres that are made to function stereotypically within the film. Like many of the movies of the nineties, "The Big Lebowski" is constructed on purpose as an ironic rendering of the metageneric nature of film in general.

"The Big Lebowski" takes detective fiction as a point of reference, choosing a stereotypical mystery scenario that is triggered by a case of "mistaken identity". The hero, Jeffrey Lebowski, otherwise known as "The Dude", is mistaken for a millionaire who bears the same name. The confusion, accompanied by an attack on the Dude by the thugs who mistakenly believe him to be the millionaire, is followed by a series of events in the style of Raymond Chandler's novels.

As the title and bare bones of the plot suggest, the point of reference is the *film noir*. An immediately recognizable source might be "The Big Sleep" by Howard Hawks (1946), a famous filmic adaptation of a Raymond Chandler novel (Comer, 2005:108). However, "The Big Lebowski" can function only as a pseudo-remake of "The Big Sleep" since there are various generic conventions that the directors explicitly make use of in order to prompt to the viewers that the film they propose is not only "just" a *film noir*.

"The Big Lebowski" is characterized by a playfully augmented intrusion of genres besides the *film noir*, the first of them being the Western.

According to Todd A. Comer “The Big Lebowski” “is framed as a Western and shot through with Western stylistic motifs” (2005:99). Naturally, the fact that the voice-over narrator is famous Western actor Sam Elliot contributes to reinforcing the Western elements of the film. The fact that the main character’s name is “The Dude” is also an ironic reference to Western stereotypes.

While initially unusual for a viewer still clinging to the prototypical genre delimitation of the Hollywood golden age, the connection between Western and *film noir* highlighted by “The Big Lebowski” is by no means unexpected. It is interesting to underline that many film critics emphasize the kinship between the *film noir* and the Western from the point of view of stylistic motifs: “The film noir, predominantly a B movie, is often referred to as a sub-genre of the crime thriller or gangster movie, although as a style it can be also found in other genres (for example, melodrama, Western)” (Hayward, 2006:149). Also, while the omniscient narrator whose voice we hear in the opening sequences of the movie is immediately identifiable as the voice of a Western character, the voice-over narrator is foremost a recognizable feature of *film noir*. In this manner, it is interesting to see that, by choosing to film “The Big Lebowski” “shot through with Western stylistic motifs” (Comer, 2005:99), the Coen brothers want to revive an older connection between *film noir* and Western, thus creating a film that explicitly retraces the origin of Hollywood thrillers. In this manner, the mixture between *film noir* and Western is only partially transgressive, as it relies upon an already existing connection between the two.

While it exploits an already existing connection between the Western and the *film noir*, the movie is not a combination that relies only upon these two components. Apart from the Western, there are sequences that send to pornographic movies or to early musicals. Interesting in this respect are, for example, the Busby Berkley musical sequences, which are integrated as part of the Dude’s oniric fantasies.

It is significant that the Coens have chosen detective fiction as a point of reference for their metagenic movie. As Peter Brooks shows (qtd. in Comer, 2005:108), detective stories are in many ways exemplary for the nature of the narrative, because the task of the detective is to reconstruct the *fabula* based upon the *sjuzhet*. The protagonist of this movie is forced to play the detective: he is faced with a mystery that he has to solve; however, as projected by the directors, the detective plot fails lamentably and the viewer is left with a pseudo-detective story. In this pseudo-detective story, the conflict is not solved and the story is not unraveled, which leaves the viewer to deal with a considerable number of hermeneutic blank spaces (Comer, 2005: 99-104).

The narrative proposed by the film could be seen as distorted or disrupted from a hermeneutic point of view. In this manner, the conflict which the movie centres upon is unsolvable because it is based only upon the threat of violence and not upon its actualization. It is important to see that a movie such as “The Big Lebowski” cannot be included in a classification such as Charles Ramirez Berg’s (2006:3), which opposes linear, classic Hollywood films to recent “Tarantino effect”, transgressive films. A film such as “The Big Lebowski” cannot be defined in total opposition to linear films, since its transgression can’t be identified on the level of the *syuzhet*. The film follows only one protagonist and a progressive temporal line, the only disruptions appearing when the oniric sequences are introduced. The transgressive nature of this movie is given by the very interaction between *fabula* and *sjuzhet*. The faulty interaction between these two dimensions can be described as a suspension of violence.

The movie is built as a transgressive, metageneric narrative, which centres upon the promise of incoming violence and not upon its actualization. The transgressive filmic narrative of “The Big Lebowski” is supported by marked linguistic strategies which help to create the suspension of violence. I have identified the repeated use of verbicides and the interplay between euphemism and dysphemism as the main linguistic devices in this respect. I have used the terms “verbicidization” and “euphemization” in order to label the main linguistic strategies based upon verbicide and euphemism/dysphemism. I will attempt to investigate how these strategies contribute to defusing violence in order to create a transgressive, metageneric filmic narrative.

3. Defusing Violence: Verbicides

As their name suggests, verbicides are in themselves the products of an act of linguistic violence. Descriptions such as those offered by Geoffrey Hughes (1988:73) state that “the problem with verbicide is that words no longer die: having been drained of their vitality... they become zombies” or that verbicides could be seen as “killing the living transformative energy of words” (Hughes, 1988:74). If we are to take such descriptions into account, we can interpret verbicides as undermining the classic ideal of a purely transparent language reflecting thought. In this manner, taking the ideal of a purely referential language as a point of reference, verbicides can be viewed as means of undermining the ideal of order. Their repeated use in the filmic narrative of the Coens emphasizes the lack of coherence or of transparency that underlies this narrative:

DUDE: I—the royal we, you know, the editorial. --!dropped off the money, exactly as per~Look, I've got certain ~Look, I've got certain information, certain things have come to light, and uh, has it ever occurred to you, man, that given the nature of all this new shit, that, uh, instead of running around blaming me, that this whole thing might just be, not, you know, not just such a simple, but uh-you know? (*Big Lebowski* 1998)

The fact that the main character is called “the Dude” is relevant for the contribution of verbicides to the process of suspending violence, since the term “dude” is an obvious verbicide. The fact that the word “dude” is used as a nickname underlines from the very beginning that the narrative whose main protagonist the Dude might be is essentially transgressive. The “Dude” contradicts the very idea of a “nickname”, which should be that of adding extra-connotations to its referent. Relevant in this respect is the dialogue in the film between the Dude and the character played by John Turturro, Jesus Quintana. The exchange below emphasizes the role of verbicides in the suspension of violence:

QUINTANA: Let me tell you someting, bendeco. You pull any your crazy shit with us, you flash a piece out on the lanes, I'll take it away from you and I'll take it away from you and stick it up your ass and pull the fucking trigger til it goes "click".

DUDE: Jesus!

QUINTANA: You said it, man. Nobody fucks with the Jesus. (*Big Lebowski* 1998)

The use of the prestige name “Jesus” as a proper name for an individual is yet another instance of verbicidization. It can be interpreted as an instance of commodification and in this respect one must underline the relevance of the way in which the camera pauses on the name tag on Quintana’s bowling costume, thus on the name as a label. This represents another ironic reference to the relation signifier/signified. In the exchange above, the Dude, the main character that hypothesizes non-violence, since he is a pot-smoking, white-Russian drinking unemployed pacifist, is placed in relation with a stereotypically violent character, who uses extreme verbal violence in the exchange. Moreover, Jesus Quintana is pointedly described as “queer”, an instance of the ultimate alterity.

The above scene, characterized by extreme verbal violence, gets defused to be ultimately interpreted as ironical, due to the very attempt of restitution of the original connotative force of the proper name “Jesus”. Dude uses Jesus as a pure verbicide in a stereotypical exclamation showing incredulity, while Quintana attempts to reinvest the word with violent connotations, which hint at the religious prestige with which the signifier Jesus is usually associated. The verbicidization of both the names “Dude”

and “Jesus”, followed by an attempt of re-verbicidization, is exemplary for the way in which verbicides contribute to the creation of a transgressive narrative which suspends violence.

As already noted by Todd A. Comer (2005:100), the Dude is apparently meant to be a hero *sui generis*, a sort of everyman, as the voice-over, non-diegetic narrator in the beginning of the narrative announces. However, Comer stresses that Dude cannot live up to the status of hero and his lacking in hero qualities ends up by undermining the narrative, which ends up as a “hero-less” story (ibid). As the verbicide used to label the main hero shows, while the promise of a hero *sui generis* is launched in the beginning of the narrative, this promise is suspended by the ironic lack of referentiality and hence of violence that characterizes the main protagonist. The undermining of the narrative is further suggested by the essentially ironic cinematic metaphor of the bowling ball used by the authors: the hero as the bowling ball, fortune’s fool, a piece in a game whose violence is purely mechanical.

The suspension of violence is also supported by the relations of homonymy and synonymy in the linguistic exchanges of the movie. The case of mistaken identity, a common theme in the film noir, is stereotypically triggered by a case of mere homonymy: both Dude and the old Lebowski share the same name. At the same time, the dialogue in the movie is characterized by an obsession with synonymy (*pee, micturate, urinate, soil; penis, Johnson, dick, rod*). As will be seen, these synonyms highlight the mechanisms of euphemization/dysphemization that the movie relies upon.

4. Violence and Euphemization

As already indicated by the synonymy relations exemplified above, the film relies upon an impressive number of euphemisms and dysphemisms.

It is relevant to note that, in the opening scenes of the movie, the main protagonist has in the background the famous declaration made by George Bush Sr.: “This aggression will not stand” referring to Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait (Comer, 2005:100). Both Dude, the pacifist, and his Vietnam veteran friend, Walter, use the woodenized sentence “This aggression will not stand” in order to refer to the event that triggers the whole plot, namely the fact that Dude’s rug has been peed upon. As Todd Comer shows (ibid), it is this event, blown to hyperbolic, geopolitical proportions, that triggers the whole series of events to follow. “This aggression will not stand” is an obvious example of euphemization, since it

is part of a woodenized discourse of political correctness.

As the definitions given by Stein show (1998:25), euphemism can be defined as something that “diminishes and distances, dehumanises and reifies, it is based upon mechanisms such as denial, the isolation of emotion from cognition, repression, rationalization, intellectualization”. What should be underlined here is the role of euphemism in the discursive power of a technopolitical apparatus, its role in the construction of violence (ibid). Paradoxically, as a means of controlling or of ordering, euphemism seems built to prevent violence, but what it does is draw attention to it and impose violence through a discourse of rationalization. The film presents euphemism as the source of violence: all the characters that prompt violence (Walter, who forces his friend to ask for reparation for his soiled rug), the Big Lebowski (who asks Dude to act as a bagman in the alleged kidnapping of his wife) and Maude Lebowski (who asks Dude to recover the money) are users of euphemisms. Dude parrots all these euphemisms, in the attempt to become a real hero, but he cannot use them with full confidence. The exchange below is relevant for the interplay between euphemisms and dysphemisms in the film. The Vietnam vet Walter, played by John Goodman, is shown as a main producer of euphemisms that trigger violence:

WALTER: Huh? No! What the fuck are you talking--I'm not--we're talking about unchecked aggression here--
DONNY: What the fuck is he talking about?
DUDE: My rug.
WALTER: Forget it, Donny. You're out of your element.
DUDE: This Chinaman who peed on my rug, I can't go give him a bill so what the fuck are you talking about?
WALTER: What the fuck are you talking about?! This Chinaman is not the issue! I'm talking about drawing a line in the sand, Dude. Across this line you do not, uh--and also, Dude, Chinaman is not the preferred, uh. . . Asian-American. Please.
DUDE: Walter, this is not a guy who built the rail-roads, here, this is a guy who peed on my--
WALTER: What the fuck are you—
DUDE: Walter, he peed on my rug--
DONNY: He peed on the Dude's rug--
WALTER: YOU'RE OUT OF YOUR ELEMENT! This Chinaman is not the issue, Dude. (*Big Lebowski* 1998)

The way in which euphemisms and dysphemisms combine in the dialogue is meant to have a cancellation effect: euphemisms and dysphemisms cancel each other, their effect being that of suspension of violence. Obviously, the interplay between dysphemism and euphemism creates a group of flouted maxims, which become a source of humour. Dude

himself uses a lot of dysphemisms. In one of the metafilmic sequences where Dude meets the omniscient narrator, Sam Elliot, the latter ironically asks Dude “Do you have to use so many cuss words?”, clearly hinting at the possible impact of dysphemism on the audience. The reference to “curse words”, hence to dysphemisms, transforms the scene into yet another means of suspending violence. Just as the use of dysphemisms in conjunction with euphemisms does, the metafilmic sequence puts the violence of the film in brackets, acting as yet another mechanism of defusing violence.

It is significant to point out that, through constant, repeated use, dysphemisms are subjected to a process of verbicidization, becoming devoid of their original connotations. Here one becomes aware of the strong connection between verbicidization and euphemization, as linguistic strategies meant to cancel violence.

The exchange between Walter and Dude is characterized by a register clash that opposes highly euphemistic terms to their dysphemistic counterparts. It is necessary to point out that Dude, who uses informal language and an impressive number of dysphemistic terms, comes into contact with characters such as Maude Lebowski. Maude is a source of register clash, because, unlike Dude, she makes frequent use of a formal, emphatic style, which contains even archaic terms at times:

MAUDE: Does the female form make you uncomfortable, Mr. Lebowski?

DUDE: Is that what that's a picture of?

MAUDE: In a sense, yes. Elfranco, my robe. My art has been commended as being strongly vaginal. Which bothers some men. The word itself makes some men uncomfortable. Vagina.

DUDE: Oh yeah?

MAUDE: Yes, they don't like hearing it and find it difficult to say. Whereas without batting an eye a man will refer to his "dick" or his "rod" or his "Johnson".

DUDE: "Johnson"? (*Big Lebowski* 1998)

In the exchange above, Maude makes use of a series of synonymous euphemistic terms. One has to note here that sometimes euphemisms can change their status to dysphemisms, the example here being “rod”. At the same time some euphemisms can become antiquated. A good example here is “Johnson”, a recurrent word in the film that contributes to the suspension of violence. “Johnson” is a reference to the fact that the group of German nihilists that blackmail Lebowski literally threaten to castrate Dude. The threat of castration is however defused due to the use of the antiquated euphemism “Johnson” (“We’re going to cut off your Johnson!”), which makes the whole scene humorous.

While using a synonymic series referring to male anatomy, Maude

tries to shock Dude by using the word “vagina”. The term “vagina” is one of those antiseptic scholarly terms which are seen by linguists as similar to euphemisms:

Antiseptically clinical scholarly and scientific terms are coined from parts of ancient languages and borrowed by nonscholars and nonscientists in the interests of delicacy. In this category belong "micturation," "defecation," "phallus," and "coitus." Then there are circumlocutions such as "in a delicate condition," "house of ill-repute," and "carnal connection," and mendacious evasions like "bathroom" and "sleep with". (Feinberg, 1985:255)

Obviously, the use of an antiseptically clinical term instead of a dysphemism had quite the opposite effect, which is not one of shock, but rather one of humorous surprise.

5. Conclusion

It is obvious from many of the exchanges in “The Big Lebowski” that the Coen brothers make conscious use of linguistic strategies that contribute to the undermining of the detective narrative through as suspension of violence. The repeated, conscious use of verbicide, euphemism, dysphemism or synonymic series parallels the hybridization of filmic conventions and iconography that the movie is based upon. The result is a movie that shows itself conscious of its metageneric nature, a narrative which becomes distorted precisely because it is built upon a promise of violence that is never fulfilled.

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*SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING
NEW*

**BLAKE, GINSBERG, EINSTEIN:
POETIC AND SCIENTIFIC PATHS TO COSMIC RELIGION**

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“I sit for world revolution”
Allen Ginsberg

(“Why I Meditate”, *White Shroud*, 1980-1985)

***Abstract:** Starting from a reconsideration of some of Ginsberg’s poems from the perspective of both William Blake’s writings and modern scientific theory, in particular Albert Einstein, this paper will analyze the nature of the passage to a “Cosmic Religion”, embraced by a “futuristic” “Homo Cosmic”, in Blake’s romantic programme, in Einstein’s system of thinking, and in Ginsberg’s postmodern revaluation of the nature of man’s mission on earth.*

***Key words:** Blake, Einstein, Ginsberg, religion, romanticism, science*

1. Introduction

In essence, Allen Ginsberg attempted to recapture human values via a “transplantation” – from England to America – of the mode of Blakean prophetic thought, a thought engendered during the Romantic Revolution as a necessity in front of a social medium that was becoming more and more oppressive, in large part due to the crisscrossing of the Scientific and Industrial Revolutions, and having as a result the rise of the cult of the machine, which in turn had as a consequence an increase in burdening life with artificiality.

A strong message pointing to this process of mankind’s dehumanization was given by William Blake who spoke of the “Satanic Mills” of the Industrial Revolution, but also by such writers as Mary Shelley, who, while giving a first powerful impetus to a science-fictional mode of thought, practically advocated the idea of a Trans-Scientific Revolution. This would be a revolution in science that invited all fields of science to fuse in a transdisciplinary way, with a view to creating a “trans-science”, which was supposed to unite the immanent with the transcendent, matter with spirit, earth with heaven.

2. Literature, religion, science

The result was catastrophic. The first consequence is that revolution in science must be matched by a revolution in the humanities. In other words, high science needs to be controlled by high conscience, otherwise man will surely become the victim of his own gadgets that, out of conscious control, will tend to dehumanize him. In terms of deontic logic, this means that high science must be matched by high art and religion. In this sense, Albert Einstein, among others, expressed this idea at best, pointing to the evolution from the religion of fear to the religion of morality, and finally to cosmic religion, the highest form of religious feeling (which also profoundly marked the romantic spirit) corresponding to the highest form of scientific consciousness:

I maintain that the cosmic religious feeling is the strongest and noblest motive for scientific research. (Einstein, 1954: 39)

In my view, it is the most important function of art and science to awaken this [cosmic religious] feeling and keep it alive in those who are receptive to it. (38)

To be sure, for Einstein this “cosmic religious feeling” appears in man when he “feels the futility of human desires and aims and the sublimity and marvellous order which reveal themselves both in nature and in the world of thought. Individual existence impresses him as a sort of prison and he wants to experience the universe as a single significant whole”. (Einstein, 1954: 38)

This is, no doubt, the expression of a romantic programme and philosophy in Einstein’s thought, since practically all Romantics defined their exemplary attitude as a tendency towards what they called “the unity of being” (Preda, 1995). Also, Einstein thought that “[t]he beginnings of cosmic religious feeling already appear at an early stage of development, e.g. in many of the Psalms of David and in some of the Prophets. Buddhism, as we have learned especially from the wonderful writings of Schopenhauer, contains a much stronger element of this. The religious geniuses of all ages have been distinguished by this kind of religious feeling, which knows no dogma and no God conceived in man’s image; so that there can be no church whose central teachings are based on it. Hence it is precisely among the heretics of every age that we find men who were filled with this highest kind of religious feeling and were in many cases regarded by their contemporaries as atheists, sometimes also as saints. Looked at in this light, men like Democritus, Francis of Assisi, and Spinoza are closely akin to one another”. (Einstein, 1954: 38)

We can thus readily identify in Einstein a fascination for Baruch Spinoza's pantheistic thought, the latter being an important source for many of the Romantics' pantheistic worldviews. By this essential kinship Einstein has strong affinities with romantic thought.

On the other hand, in Allen Ginsberg's case we are dealing with a complex combination of at least three major influences, all pointing to a hypertrophied "cosmic religious feeling" in Einstein's acceptance: 1) the prophetic mode, in the vein of William Blake's romantic writings and of the Old Testament; 2) a personal version of Zen Buddhism; 3) a personal version of Whitmanesque realism. Ginsberg invented a new poetics of dissension that tended to build a "system of defence" in front of the social and the scientific aspects of reality, a system that binds extremes into a major new synthesis, similar to that philosophically fulfilled by the Romantics.

Ginsberg offered a new "total" answer, based on the "total recall" as he called it in "Howl" (Ginsberg, 2001:50), or on what we could call the "globalization" of mind. This signifies the reawakening of Blake's Mental Traveller, announcing now the dawn of a "trans-revolution", i.e., a process meant to reveal the infinite web of interconnectedness governing and underlying the world of life, which is thus known to form one indivisible totality, as David Bohm (1995) repeatedly asserted.

In a social sense, Albert Einstein had observed as early as 1921, in the wake of World War I, that "[t]he last war has shown that there are no longer any barriers between the continents and that the destinies of all countries are closely interwoven". (Einstein, 1954: 7) In other words, a state of affairs that is true on a deep ontic level (namely, the infinite deep web of interconnectedness) becomes true, as civilization evolves, on the social level as well. The social level tends to correspond in structure to the deep levels of reality, namely the reality of the one indivisible totality having as a deep structure the infinite web of interconnectedness which so fascinated the Romantics in their vision of the universe as a living organism, opposed to the neo-classical view of the inertial clockwork mechanism.

Something similar to Ginsberg's journey into the heart of a nuclear reactor or modern "atomic hell", a journey undertaken by Ginsberg in the poem "Plutonian Ode" (Ginsberg, 2001:313), can be met in Blake, who offered the reader a terrifying initiatory voyage through the cosmos, whose purpose was the infinite rebirth of man's faculties of communication by which a perception of totality became possible. This is also Ginsberg's poetics of the "total recall", as he put it in "Howl", in which he searches the solution for the paradox of "the ancient heavenly connection to the starry dynamo in the machinery of night".

This paradox seems to refer to the Blakean equation of the universe as a sort of interface between spirit and matter, mind and body, imagination and reason, infinity and limitation. Interfinitude, i.e. the joining point between the two above mentioned categories of infinity and limitation, imagination and reason, is best represented by Blake in a famous illustration showing a man that has his head inside his chest, pointing to what in Hebrew mystique is known as *Makifim*, the “changing of lights”, i.e. the process by which reason descends to the heart/emotion, or the heart/emotion ascends to the head/reason, and what is small outside becomes great inside, while what is small inside becomes great outside. This is an essential process in man’s journey towards redemption as marriage of heaven and hell. (Blake, *The Book of Urizen*, 1794, copy G, plate 14, in Blake, 1979b: 24; ibidem, copy D, plate 16a, in Blake, 2000: 230; *The Gates of Paradise*, ca 1818, plate 4, in Blake 2000: 136).

The stars are for Ginsberg the sources of mental energy and corporeal energy, imagination and reason, spirit and matter. Moreover, the stars and the sun provide “the ancient heavenly connection”, being, as Blake had announced in *Vala, or The Four Zoas* (II, 266-267), the golden, i.e. intellectual, link between man and spirit: “Thus were the stars of heaven created like a golden chain / To bind the Body of Man to heaven from falling into the Abyss”. (Blake, 1998: 196-197)

Ginsberg searched for the old Great Chain of Being, the golden chain that connects, in Blake’s view, in a total interdetermination, the whole of reality. Ginsberg’s “ancient heavenly connection” is the stellar “transimmanent” gate (simultaneously transcendental and immanent), which connects matter to spirit: this is somehow similar to the Dmu “rope” of the Tibetans which connected man (the crown of his head) to heaven. A similar view of the role of stars was held by the German mystic Jakob Böhme, and is implied in the modern quantum notion of non-local connections (Bohm, 1995). This view implies that being is one, non-fragmented, and it was anticipated by the Romantics in their theory about the unity of being.

Ginsberg’s famous “starry dynamo” points at least to two significant ramifications:

- 1) the inventor of the dynamo, Michael Faraday, who demonstrated in 1821 that electrical energy can be converted into motive force, a reason for which he is credited with the invention of the electric motor. Thus, he can be seen as the father of ultramodern technology which was one of Ginsberg’s fundamental concerns, named by him in the poem “Death to Van Gogh’s Ear!” (Ginsberg, 2001:73-74). The “machinery of a mass electrical dream” produces the duality of “Money against Eternity”, whose result was

another kind of eternity (not with a capital E), where Blakean “strong mills grind out vast paper of Illusion!”

2) the fact that the concept of a “starry dynamo” implies a generalization of a well known geophysical theory, the so called “dynamo theory”, or “the dynamo model of the Earth’s magnetic field”, which was formulated in the 1940’s by the German-born US physicist Walter M. Elsasser. The dynamo concept explains the origin of the Earth’s magnetic field by the activity of electric currents flowing in the Earth’s fluid metallic outer core, these currents being magnified by mechanical motion. Ginsberg generalizes this geophysical theory into an astrophysical one, valid for the whole of the universe, suggesting, consciously or not, that the universe functions as a huge organic dynamo operated by electromagnetic laws, stimulated by “the machinery of night”, i.e. by the Newtonian clockwork mechanism, not only material in nature, but also organic, as the Romantics suggested.

A significant consequence of Ginsberg’s dynamo model is that the human mind with all its memories and energies is actually not contained in the material brain, but it exists in the invisible life fields around the brain/body, precisely as stipulated in the religion of the Native Americans such as the Lakota Sioux (the western Sioux), who believed that “a man’s mind (*tawacin*) and soul (*wicanagi*) is all around the man and reaches a great way off”. (Jahner, 1988:56-57).

The idea that man has the power to expand his mind is an important romantic paradigm, in which poets like Blake, Wordsworth or Shelley excelled. Life itself cannot be contained in matter alone; life is a reality that is analogous to the phenomenon of electromagnetism, best typified by the dynamo. Of course, in the background we can catch a glimpse of the story of Frankenstein and his monster, whose life’s origin is to be found precisely in the phenomenon of electricity coming from lightning. Even so, this conception of life as not being contained in matter alone comes close to the idea of the “Quantum Self”, i.e., the idea of conscience as a quantum phenomenon (Zohar, 1991).

Faraday also considered the nature of light, arriving in 1846 at a form of the electromagnetic theory of light that was later developed by James Maxwell. In this sense, light is in the material universe the equivalent of conscience in the mental universe. Through this element, the Ginsberg model of the mental/material universe as dynamo seems to be indeed complete, and seems to postulate the physical possibility for a “total recall” to actually take place in the human mind, comparable on a spiritual level to a great epiphany, a “cosmophany”, the result of which is the transcending of

the physical universe and the access to the spiritual infinite eternal worlds, which it was Blake's avowed mission to open, as stated in *Jerusalem*.

Ginsberg's poetry is, in short, the message of the new bard who attempts to fulfil through poetry and poetic language a total convergence of science, art and religion (with a view to reaching what Einstein called the "cosmic religious feeling"), and who postulates, as in "Footnote to Howl", that "everything" and "everybody" is holy, a generalization of Blake's idea in *America a Prophecy* (1793) that "every thing that lives is holy". This is Allen Ginsberg's poetics of the "total recall" of life, of the infinite awakening of conscience – this is the closest definition of a cosmic religion that we can find in his system.

Albert Einstein, as we have seen, spoke about the function of art and science as being precisely to awaken the cosmic religious feeling, to keep it alive in those who are receptive to it (Einstein, 1954:38). For Einstein, religion in itself was founded in the experience of mystery – a mystery of the kind that so fascinated the romantic mind with its profound notion of Nature as an infinitely deep web of cosmic "hieroglyphs": "The most beautiful experience we can have is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion which stands at the cradle of true art and true science. Whoever does not know it and can no longer wonder, no longer marvel, is as good as dead, and his eyes are dimmed. It was the experience of mystery – even if mixed with fear – that engendered religion. A knowledge of the existence of something we cannot penetrate, our perceptions of the profoundest reason and the most radiant beauty, which only in their most primitive forms are accessible to our minds – it is this knowledge and this emotion that constitute true religiosity; in this sense, and in this alone, I am a deeply religious man". (Einstein, 1954:11)

This mysterious dimension of reality appears to be in Ginsberg related to his idea of the "total recall" as the process of recovering integral past memory with all its deep labyrinths of long forgotten mysteries which actually causally make the present possible, supporting it from the very foundations of time. For Ginsberg the "total recall" was thus the starting point for man's realisation that "we're golden sunflowers inside", as he prophetically, and in an unmistakable Blakean voice, announced in "Sunflower Sutra" (Ginsberg 2001:61). In other words, man's inner world is a world of luminous energy and eternal forms in their deep structure akin to the eternal divine and "wild" patterns found in Nature, about which the Romantics believed to contain the infinitely deep and mysterious web of cosmic "hieroglyphs".

This powerful poetics of "mystical visions and cosmic vibrations" – as Ginsberg announced in the poem "America" (Ginsberg 2001:62) –

pointing to a “cosmic religion” of deep mystery of the kind Einstein believed in, derives its hypnotic force also from a negative side, constituting what could be called an “anti-poetics” of fragmented states of mind (having as a correspondent in his texts the technique of aposiopesis), the total opposite of the poetics of the “total recall” which presupposes simultaneously a cascading of the mind back to the lost past and a rushing onwards to the future not yet experienced. When Ginsberg states in the poem “The Change: *Kyoto-Tokyo Express*”, like a genuine Romantic troubled by the self-referential nature of reality and solipsism, that “In this dream [of life] I am the Dreamer / and the Dreamed” (Ginsberg, 2001:135), Ginsberg, consciously or not, points to Werner Heisenberg’s famous “indeterminacy principle”, whose crucial consequence was the realization that the observer (Ginsberg’s “Dreamer”) and the observed (Ginsberg’s “Dreamed”) form one indivisible totality, the scientific method and the object explored by that method forming one inseparable whole.

In fact, Blake’s influence on Ginsberg and on modern America in general is so deep that he has come to be considered by high-ranking scientists such as Freeman Dyson (1989) as one of the three intellectual ancestors of the United States, the other two being according to him Richard Hakluyt and Jules Verne. The fact that Blake is one of the most representative romantic spirits of all time – called by Jacob Bronowski (1981) “the greatest romantic” – is from this perspective the more relevant for the American spirit that professedly searches for infinite freedom and happiness: only a cosmic religion in Einstein’s acceptance seems to be appropriate for this tremendous task.

Ginsberg’s contribution to modern culture is precisely his new “total” answer postulating the “total recall”, the new total awakening, the “globalizing” of memory and of the human mind. This is similar to what the Romantics searched for when they tried to regain the spiritual treasures of eternity, of transcendental reality, and when they found the principle of infinity as a crucial fundament making possible the scientific theorization of freedom, conscience, and the paradoxical nature of cosmic man and cosmic reality.

Prophets of cosmic religion are needed because they have access to the keys of “linguistic vortices” thus creating, as Blake put it in *Jerusalem* (1998:31), time and space according to the wonders divine. Ginsberg sees language as a vortex of time-space, or a “wheel of syllables” (see “Plutonian Ode” III, 60, Ginsberg 2001:313), the function of poetic language being to wash “the windows of Life” (as Ginsberg put it in “City Midnight Junk Strains”, 2001:191) and to “break” “through iron doors” and “iron walls”,

just as Blake's art was meant to cleanse and open the "doors of perception", so as to reveal the infinite that lay hid.

In this genuine cosmic religion (the word becomes a cosmic creative force, as in the Christian doctrine about God as Word, akin to the Egyptian religion built around the god Ptah who also creates by the power of his breath), science and religion meet in a powerful convergence. That is why in "Plutonian Ode", Ginsberg, like one crying in a new modern (technologically burdened) wilderness, echoes Blake's prophecies when he refers to the dangerous technology of nuclear reactors.

In *Mein Weltbild* (1934) Einstein spoke in the same vein precisely about "the religious spirit of science", making a point that "you will hardly find one among the profounder sort of scientific minds without a religious feeling of his own". (Einstein, 1954: 40) Einstein explains his point: "the scientist is possessed by the sense of universal causation. The future, to him, is every whit as necessary and determined as the past. There is nothing divine about morality; it is a purely human affair. His religious feeling takes the form of a rapturous amazement at the harmony of natural law, which reveals an intelligence of such superiority that, compared with it, all the systematic thinking and acting of human beings is an utterly insignificant reflection. This feeling is the guiding principle of his life and work, in so far he succeeds in keeping himself from the shackles of selfish desire. It is beyond question closely akin to that which has possessed the religious geniuses of all ages". (ibid)

Einstein thus answered the longstanding "war" between science and religion with a profound view of their interrelation and mutual necessity. His point was that science brings us to objective knowledge, a "knowledge of what *is*", which, however, "does not open the door directly to what *should be*". There is a simple reason for this: "One can have the clearest and most complete knowledge of what *is*, and yet not be able to deduct from that what should be the *goal* of our human aspirations. Objective knowledge provides us with powerful instruments for the achievements of certain ends, but the ultimate goal itself and the longing to reach it must come from another source (...) The knowledge of truth as such is wonderful, but it is so little capable of acting as a guide that it cannot prove even the justification and the value of the aspiration toward that very knowledge of truth. Here we face, therefore, the limits of the purely rational conception of our existence". (Einstein, 1954:42) Science, in other words, cannot demonstrate in purely rational terms the very necessity for its existence. This is the point of inflection which connects science with a different realm, which is irrational: namely that of religion and emotion. Thus, for Einstein "mere thinking cannot give us a sense of the ultimate and fundamental ends. To make clear

these fundamental ends and valuations, and to set them fast in the emotional life of the individual, seems to me precisely the most important function which religion has to perform in the social life of man". (ibid)

Moreover, Einstein comes uncannily close to William Blake's philosophy when he tries to answer the question regarding the authority of such "fundamental ends": "if one asks whence derives the authority of such fundamental ends, since they cannot be stated and justified merely by reason, one can only answer: they exist in a healthy society as powerful traditions, which act upon the conduct and aspirations and judgments of the individuals; they are there, that is, as something living, without its being necessary to find justification for their existence. They come into being not through demonstration but through revelation, through the medium of powerful personalities. One must not attempt to justify them, but rather to sense their nature simply and clearly". (Einstein, 1954: 42-43)

It was precisely the principle of "demonstration" of "cold philosophy" (mechanism) that William Blake fought against, because it attempted to "demonstrate" the "unprovable", life itself, whose mysterious meanings and ends were to be explored only through "revelation" or "sweet science" (as he announced at the very end of the poem *Vala, or The Four Zoas*). Also, when Albert Einstein singles out "powerful personalities" as the medium of such revelations regarding the ultimate purpose of reality, he comes close to the thinking of Harold Bloom, who explored the very heart of literature precisely in terms of powerful versus weak poets/authors, powerful versus weak literature.

Mankind forgot the language of angels – although men are all angels, as Ginsberg announced in the "Footnote to Howl". Mankind forgot the dialogue with the cosmos and with God, it lost the keys of access to the transcendent, so a new kind of prophet is needed in the new technological, postindustrial, trans-scientific society, one that should necessarily advocate a "total recall" of cosmic religion in Albert Einstein's acceptance. Allen Ginsberg's call to "destroy this mountain of Plutonium" ("Plutonian Ode" III, 64, Ginsberg, 2001:313) is thus a giant call for life. Life gives birth to prophets-poets who play a role similar to that of antibodies in a body invaded by death principles, which must be sealed away. The American poet accompanies the reader on a dreadful journey into the heart of a deadly nuclear reactor – thus making poetry, that is, thus creating the key of access to the transcendental world – with a view to the reader's spiritual total awakening and realization of the dangers of man's artificial creations, such as bringing plutonium into the world, which, on another level, is, lastly, a Frankensteinian act.

Such acts are possible when, as Albert Einstein suggested, science is separated from religion: then “science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind”. (Einstein, 1954: 46) To this could well be added the fact that science without religion is blind to the ethical consequences of its actions that can well be directed against life without even realizing it. Moreover, a religion without science would surely be a lame institution at any time capable of returning to the condition of the old Inquisition.

3. Conclusion

If man is to reach in the future the condition of a “homo cosmicus”, as Blake, Ginsberg and Einstein would seem to suggest in their combined writings, a cosmic religion is needed coupled with a visionary science reconciled in the quest for truth and knowledge and in the quest for understanding the nature of the ultimate foundational ends of reality. Such a “homo cosmicus” of the future, as hinted above, could emerge only by a programme close in spirit to Einstein’s: “The highest principles for our aspirations and judgments are given to us in the Jewish-Christian religious tradition. It is a very high goal which, with our weak powers, we can reach only very inadequately, but which gives a sure foundation to our aspirations and valuations. If one were to take that goal out of its religious form and look merely at its purely human side, one might state it perhaps thus: free and responsible development of the individual, so that he may place his powers freely and gladly in the service of all mankind. There is no room in this for the divinization of a nation, of a class, let alone of an individual. Are we not all children of one father, as it is said in religious language? Indeed, even the divinization of humanity, as an abstract totality, would not be in the spirit of that ideal. It is only to the individual that a soul is given. And the high destiny of the individual is to serve rather than to rule, or to impose himself in any other way”. (Einstein, 1954: 43)

As a corollary of this programme, Einstein was clear about the fact that the existing religions form a non-relativistic unity with a moral foundation: “I do not think that the so-called ‘relativistic’ viewpoint is correct, not even when dealing with the more subtle moral decisions”; “divested of their myths” the existing religions do not “differ as basically from each other as the proponents of the ‘relativistic’ or conventional theory wish us to believe. And this is by no means surprising. For the moral attitudes of a people that is supported by religion need always aim at preserving and promoting the sanity and vitality of the community and its individuals, since otherwise this community is bound to perish. A people

that were to honor falsehood, defamation, fraud, and murder would be unable, indeed, to subsist for very long". (Einstein, 1954: 51)

Likewise, a humanity honouring and supporting the creation of substances as poisonous to life as plutonium is bound to be unable to survive for very long. The same is true for a humanity that would honour the destruction of its "Canon" in the Bloomian sense of the word: a society advancing towards total relativization of its values – such as the Postmodern paradigm has been trying to accomplish – is surely one advancing towards total disintegration of its moral foundations, thus cutting off the very springs of its sanity and vitality. As Harold Bloom had brilliantly put it, without the Canon, we cease to think (1994); the Canon – corresponding to Einstein's idea of the complex of "powerful traditions" – is the spring of vitality, the space we always wish to visit again and again in order to drink at the fountains of more and more life. The condition of a "homo cosmicus" of the future, of the kind implicitly envisaged by Blake, Ginsberg and Einstein – grounded in a deeply moral sense of life in the community as an island in the vast expanses of the immeasurable universe – will never be reached by the blind destruction of the "Canon" or by the blind promotion of a "high" science and technology devoid of any regard for the innate human cosmic religious feeling – in the Einsteinian view – which lies buried deep in the springs of human life.

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BETWEEN THE GOD OF DICE AND THE SKELETON'S LIFE: WALLACE STEVENS'S FICTION OF CONCORD

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Abstract: By drawing on Frank Kermode's approach to "fictions" (in particular, the "fictions of concord"), this paper proposes a framing of the Stevensian dichotomy "imagination-reality" against the background of the dialectic relationship between two seminal scientific theories of the 20th century – Einstein's Relativity Theory and the principles of Quantum Physics.

Key words: anthropic principle, concord, dualism, imagination, Stevens

1. Introduction: close upheavals of the third kind and the question of positioning

It has become almost a commonplace in discussions of Modernism and the spirit of modernity to build critical arguments around the key-concept of *fragmentation* and the tensions it entailed in most areas of human activity, from philosophy to arts, social life to science. Bradbury and McFarlane in their now classic essay "The Name and Nature of Modernism," starting from the vantage point of *cultural seismology* (1991:19), provide a description of the spirit of Modernism in terms of the nature of the complex set of mutations that led to the emergence of this "new art" (20) and with deference to the magnitude of the "dislocations" it was conducive to in its own turn. The twentieth century, the authors explain, is indicative of an upheaval of the "third kind," involving "overwhelming dislocations" and "cataclysmic upheavals of culture" conducive to the questioning of former values and the search for "rebuilding" the toppled edifices of both science and arts (ibid.). Such a "convulsion" of the "third degree" (25) forces humans to acknowledge the "discontinuous" nature of reality, and thus the experience of this gap-dotted world calls for the need of *positioning* and *re-positioning*. In the case of artists, this means relating to an aesthetic system, questioning its validity, asserting or denying its values, or searching for alternatives whenever the subject is forced to admit that "I cannot bring a world quite round/Although I patch it as I can", as Wallace Stevens put it in "The Man with the Blue Guitar" (1984:165).

Yet, as Stevens's case proves, this tremendously difficult task of making sense of a forever-changing reality and setting up a vital space in it is not confined strictly to aesthetic preoccupations. Polarised along dichotomic pairs of the kind *imagination-reality*, *mind-matter*, *interior-*

exterior or *subject-object*, the question of positioning has represented for the poet a lifelong effort, occasioning a trajectory which can best be described as an *undulatory space*. This sinuous path, analogous with another central 20th century dichotomy, the quantum concept of the *particle-wave dualism*, unfolds along the extremes of two antagonistic drives. On the one hand, the poet's search for "what will suffice" (Stevens, 1984:239) finds expression in the belief that complete, unmediated knowledge of the Kantian "ding-an-sich" is possible, and thus his interest rests with exploring the world of the perceived, through methods closely affiliated with those of the realists. This is Stevens's *deterministic-dualistic* stance, counterbalanced, on the other hand, by the moments when the object, like the poem itself, "resist[s] intelligence almost successfully" (1984:350), making the poet embrace the consolations of *solipsism*, *idealism* and *observer-relative perception* in an appraisal of the virtues of the percipient subject and its greatest asset, the imagination. Between these disjunctive co-ordinates, Stevens's poetry is marked by a *reductionist impulse*, one which the poet never fully acknowledges and which he will relinquish only at the end of his literary career, through a subtle shift towards a more holistic perspective resulting in integration, by "responding to a diviner opposite" (1984:468), in a world of potentialities where subject and object may both be and not be at once, a metaphorical counterpart of yet another quantum notion, that of *superposition*.

2. Wallace Stevens, "today's character" and "the snow I have forgotten"

In light of the points made above, I shall refer briefly to two cases which exemplify Stevens's "disjunctive moods," belonging to different periods of the poet's oeuvre: his late piece "As You Leave the Room" (1947-1955) and the early "Tea at the Palaz of Hoon" (1921).

Offered in the form of a dialogue between two characters, "As You Leave the Room" (1972:395-396) emerges as an example of what Stevens has often felt as a failed quest to match opposites. Faced with the prospect of physical extinction, the poet envisages here the figure of a "skeleton" come out of its closet to remind us of the futility of all human enterprise. The looming possibility that this apparition might transgress into the realm of contingency forces the poet to question its personal relevance by attempting a review of his own creation, seeking consolation in the figures that populated his verse, "the pineapple," "the mind as never satisfied," "the credible hero," or the "summer." The central problem the poetic mind is faced with at this point is not so much the "whither next," as the "whence from." Stevens's speculative drive, induced by the interlocutor's assumption

that “Today’s character is not/A character out of its closet...” (395), folds back onto itself. If nothing can escape decay, the poet suggests, then only the evidence produced by the pensive mind can suffice. Poetic ideas, as constructs of the mind, are no less real than the world of material forms. Thus, as he concludes elsewhere in “The Planet on the Table” (1984:532-533), it does not import if one’s world survives, as long as what one has experienced will “bear/Some lineament or character” (1984:532) thereby becoming “[p]art of a major reality, part of/An appreciation of a reality” (1972:396). Although the mind may fail to recuperate the landmarks of one’s existence, the “forgotten” snow, having once been a vital living space, has left its imprint on the otherwise insensitive landscape. It is the “elevations” of reality to which we have contributed, rather than our fragile selves, our “unreality” subject to continuous changing, that stand a chance for survival, the poet concludes.

In contrast to this diffident view, “Tea at the Palaz of Hoon” (1984:65) reverberates with an excessive solipsistic stance, whereby the world of the pensive subject is confined exclusively to the boundaries of the mind, and the percipient, with its host of experiences, emerges as the sole justification for the existence of the thing perceived. Built on a similar dialogical framework, this poem begins with the categorical denial of any valid alternative to the experience of the percipient: “*Not less* because in purple I descended/The western day through what you called/The loneliest air, *not less* was I myself” (1984:65, my emphasis). Here, as opposed to the previous scenario, the private world of the self proves to be not only the *sine qua non* condition for validating the physical universe through sensorial perception (“the ointment sprinkled on my beard,” “the hymns that buzzed beside my ears” or “the sea whose tide swept through me”), but the sole guiding agency, “the compass of that sea,” that which imbues the world with life and motion. The feeling of dispossession and relinquishment of the self pervading the other poem is replaced here by *integration*, leading to a discovery and renewal of the subject (“and there I found myself more truly and more strange”).

Juxtaposing these two radically different images of the role of the mind raises the fundamental question about both the sources of *displacement* and the answers provided by the poet. As we shall see further on, distinguishing between problem and solution is not always possible with Stevens. What’s more, the poet is not unique in the problems he was forced to face. Thus, in what follows, I shall attempt to provide a framing of the Stevensian world of dialectical pairs by referring to an analogous scenario which emerged in the wake of the dialectic of two contending perspectives, Einstein’s Relativity Theory and Quantum Physics. It is hoped that such an

endeavour can open up possibilities for alternative interpretive exercises to complement the efforts of those Stevens scholars who have adopted more traditional paths of exegeses, which E. P. Ragg, in an interview with Richard Rorty (2002), describes as “the language of the poet’s own verse and prose,” and which have often overlooked the benefits that could result from “recourse to more useful, non-Stevensian vocabularies” (2002:386-387).

3. The revival of solipsism in contemporary scientific thought: case study, critique, and reactions

The answer at the end of “Tea at the Palaz of Hoon” is not unique, nor is it an angle of approach employed by writers exclusively. The revival of solipsism, one of the Modernists’ reactions to the sense of fragmentation caused by the aforementioned “upheavals,” has not been foreign to the world of scientific thinking either. In this sense, an analogue of the perspective expressed in the Stevens poem can be found in a theory which has been steadily gaining ground among the advocates of a human-centric universal design. The *Anthropic Principle Design Argument*, (APDA), as Stephen Gould (1990, passim) explains, has its roots in Sir Alfred Russel Wallace’s view of a Universe pervaded by intelligence. By examining the earth’s blueprint and the then known working laws of the solar system and the universe, Wallace concluded that the universe must have been designed by an intelligence, since all observable data suggested a finality directed at the creation of life. Without such a primal source, the very processes that generated the multifarious manifestations of intelligent life exhibited in the present conditions would have been utterly impossible. Hence the assumption that the laws of nature not only create the favourable intelligence-forming circumstances, but are in fact justified and explainable on their basis. Later proponents of such views came to corroborate Wallace’s theory. As Gould further explains, physicist Freeman Dyson formulates his own anthropic theory by building on the premise that the harmony between the structure of the universe and the needs of life is indicative of the existential necessity of a mind in the general constitution of the physical world. Other advocates, such as Kuzin (1999:9), speak of an “idea” behind the entire evolution of matter from the simplest to the most complex forms of organization, to be seen in the fine symmetries that characterize the equations describing certain fundamental physical parameters, enough in themselves to be conducive to the appearance of intelligent life.

Yet, despite the scientific arguments employed by supporters, the various anthropic interpretations are not exempt from criticism, due to what, upon closer inspection, proves to be a basic logical twist lying at the core of the matter. Thus, as Raskin (1999:49) explains, Kuzin's argument is based exclusively on the *teleological belief* in the "self-tuning" capacity of the Universe so as to make the appearance of life (particularly, of human life) the inevitable focal point of all physical laws. However, Raskin notes, to argue like this involves not only a reversal of the logic of determinism, but a blurring of the distinctions between the methods of science and of non-positivistic thinking. Hence Raskin's dismissal of Kuzin's anthropic explanation on the grounds that it "is neither a principle nor part of science, but a quasi-religious belief disguised as scientific argument" (50). It is in a similar fashion that Gould (1990, *passim*) refutes the arguments proposed by both Wallace and Dyson, noting that they are rooted in hope, rather than reason, echoing the long line of Western preoccupations to justify the supremacy of one single type of intelligence, the human one. Still, Gould observes, our experience of a fragmented world, allowing for sensible variations, deviations, and eventually plurality is not in line with the creed that physical laws somehow "conspire" to permit the creation of life, whether intelligent or not.

Yet, despite what the aforementioned authors see as the apparent logical shoddiness of anthropic arguments, the problems addressed by them have not remained without echoes in the scientific community. According to Kane (2002), opinions regarding the applicability of the *APDA* are divided. On the one hand, a number of scientists have expressed their dissatisfaction with its lack of explanatory power, debunking it on the basis of its quasi-religious (or quasi-philosophical) affiliations. Others, such as politician and writer Vaclav Havel, have aired their sympathy for its greatest merit, namely that of bringing to light the need for reconsidering the centrality of the human factor in contemporary experience. The latter is an incontrovertible reality that 20th century science cannot ignore and the recognition of a state of affairs to which it has contributed itself. Its more recent origins are twofold and reveal both the failure of the scientific mind to come to terms with its own postulates and the subsequent search for humanly acceptable alternatives. On the one hand, it is to be found with Einstein, whose search for a *theory of everything*, was firmly rooted in an atomistic and materialistic worldview, expressive of the belief in the harmony of a universe which can be revealed by the scrutinizing gaze of the scientist. Einstein's reaction to the dissolution of the certainties provided by the former deterministic *weltanschauung*, as a result to Heisenberg's explanation of indeterminism, his "Gott wurfelt nicht" (German for "God

does not play dice”), has become anecdotal in this respect. But Einstein’s fervid search for an all-encompassing theory eventually went beyond mere declarations and led him to adopt the path of the idealist who, lacking a firmer ground, was forced to come up with a fictional construct to mediate between the object of scrutiny and his own personal beliefs, as exemplified by his mathematical representation of matter. As he declared in his last lecture in the Relativity Seminar delivered at Princeton on April 14, 1954, “[t]he representation of matter by a tensor was only a fill-in to make it possible to do something temporarily, a wooden nose in a snowman.” The second such example comes from Einstein’s rival theory, Quantum Physics, in the form of Bohr’s *principle of complementarity*, according to which the state of a system is explained only partially, allowing for accurate observations, on a mutually exclusive basis, of either the position or the momentum of a quantum object. Such a concept, similar to Einstein’s “tensor,” is felt as a necessary compromise which alleviates the task of the scientist, but at the same time introduces the human factor in the object of investigation, allowing thus for an idealistic component in an area where it has previously been considered to be entirely impractical.

Thus, as the above examples illustrate, positioning the percipient in relation to the perceived is a necessity recognized by modern science. In this sense, the validity of the anthropic principle remains to be verified. Indeed, as Kane remarks, for the sake of impartiality anthropic questions should not be altogether discarded as irrelevant, but rather approached with a cautious, unbiased attitude which pays attention to their inherent warning, so as not to seek meaning and finality in a universe whose evolution may be entirely independent of the human element, despite the irrefutable truth that, in all likelihood (at least as our present knowledge about intelligent life indicates), its explanations may be singularly human.

The contradictory reactions to anthropic questions are in effect a sign of a certain *dualism* which characterizes the present-day debates about most approaches to explaining reality. An illustration of this state of affairs is offered by Tegmark (1997, *passim*), in reference to the impact of the postulates of quantum mechanics on modern consciousness. Thus, Tegmark sums up, we can identify two basic viewpoints that describe our modes of understanding reality. On one hand, there is the *outside view*, or the way a mathematician thinks of the world, which within a quantum framework would be reducible to the concept of the evolving wave-function of every physical particle. On the other hand, though, we are faced with the *inside view* of everyday subjective perception, essentially removed from the scientific method. In its turn, this first distinction, closely related to the *position* of the percipient-raisonneur, is responsible for what Tegmark calls

the diverging “paradigms” circumscribing our knowledge of physical reality, which, in quantum jargon, may be said to be *complementary*, leading to mutually exclusive conclusions about their objects of investigation. If the outside view ultimately proves valid, then the inside perspective and the sum of all human descriptions will remain nothing more than useful approximations for interpreting the host of our subjective perceptions. Conversely, should the subjectively perceived inside view demonstrate its sufficiency for comprehending the physical, the outside view and its subsequent mathematical abstractions will be reduced, in their turn, to the status of the same useful approximations.

In Stevens’s translation this dichotomy finds its equivalent in the central opposition between questioning and asserting, as the above-mentioned two poems illustrate – the lament occasioned by acknowledging the failure of the subject to match its “diviner opposite” (“I wonder, have I lived a skeleton’s life...”) in contrast to the stout belief in the noetic strength of the human mind (“Out of my mind the golden ointment rained”). Yet, approaching Stevens with a view to his purported “allegiance” to one or the other of these paradigms, as apparently exhibited in many of his poems, is not an easy task. As Hillis Miller (2005:200) remarks, Stevens’s poetry cannot be inscribed in a single referential scheme. Despite being marked by tensions which arise from its central preoccupation with dialectical relationships of dichotomic pairs, Stevens’s poetry is not itself “dialectical,” since it is not based on a progression which involves transition through several hierarchical “stages” analogous to the Hegelian sequence of *thesis-antithesis-synthesis*. In Stevens’s world the opposites are given equal importance, thus forcing the poet to find “a way to write poetry which will possess simultaneously both extremes” (ibid.). Thus, as Hesla (1985:258) notes, the force behind Stevens’s undulatory universe could be more adequately discussed in terms of the Heraclitean *flux of things*. Affected by this flux, on numerous occasions Stevens’s poetry becomes expressive of a “yearning for the transcendent, the stable, the permanent” (ibid.). As a consequence, Stevens’s concern with epistemology becomes inseparable from ontological preoccupations, as his excursions into the nature of the act of knowing eventually converge towards a scrutiny of the very essence of what is known, reality (ibid.).

At this point it is pertinent to make a further distinction, between what Hillis Miller calls “fluctuation” and the interpretive framework I have proposed, that of “spaces of undulation.” The main reason for Stevens’s poetry exhibiting a penchant for opposing drives is, in the critic’s opinion, ascribable to the acute sense of lack pervading his verse and his approach to the real, in its turn occasioned by the disappearance of the divine and the

experience of “impoverishment” or “dispossession” ensuing from it (2005:199). The death of God confines the poet to the world of “two elements: subject and object, mind and matter, imagination and reality” (200), without the possibility to reconcile the “inner nothingness” (imagination) and “the barren external world” (reality) (ibid.). Whether such a reconciliation was altogether impossible for Stevens is, however, questionable. The peculiar mode of Stevens’s late poetry is a characteristic remarked by many critics, and Hillis Miller is no exception here, noting that Stevens’s later poems display an increased tendency toward “open-minded improvisations,” in contrast to the “finished unity of his earlier poems” (200). Yet, for Hillis Miller, “fluctuation” remains the tagline of most of Stevens’s poems, a latent force to be given expression at any point of the poet’s oeuvre.

In contrast with this punctiform, localised understanding of the oscillatory nature of the poet’s drives, describing Stevens’s vision through the more inclusive term “spaces of undulation” may facilitate a better way of tackling his later verse, in the light of which the despondent mood pervading a piece like “As You Leave the Room” could be seen as a mere belated echoing of the greater amplitude of the wave-like trajectory along which Stevens has progressed for a significant part of his literary career. The undulatory pattern is broken in his later verse, and the wave-like movement is levelled by the emergence of a different, holistic view which denies neither the positivist-realist perception, nor the idealist-solipsistic stance, but recognizes the interconnectedness of all things, interior and exterior, a world that has not yet become but one which keeps “coming constantly so near,” as the poet admits in “The World as Meditation” (1984:521).

Indeed, the search for *reconciliation* and the inevitable experience of *in-betweenness* seem to be more adequate descriptions of the poet’s efforts. Though forced into co-habitation with incompatible extremes, *transition* becomes an assertive act, for, as the title of another Stevens poem implies, through “the pleasures of merely circulating” (1984:149-150) not only does the subject get knowledge of the world, but makes its presence known to the objects and by interacting with them fills the gaps of the fragmented, discontinuous universe. In line with this observation, the remainder of this paper will focus on Stevens’s own understanding of in-betweenness and his conception of the role of imagination and poetry, an exercise which is intended to shed further light on the poems discussed above.

4. Conclusion: of “men in the midst” or imagination as a fiction of concord

As Kermode (1968:22) notes, an essential attribute of modern times is the sense of *crisis* experienced by subjects in all their efforts to comprehend the world they live in. As part of the meaning-making process, “men in the midst,” as Kermode (7) calls the subjects of transitional periods, resort to *fictive concords* which can reunite “origins” and “ends,” and thus the *myth of transition* appears both as an epistemological and ontological necessity.

For Stevens, the material for such a fiction of concord was represented by the imagination, which was meant to ensure vitality through its capacity to adapt to the changes affecting the world outside the subject’s intimate spaces. As he noted in “The Noble Rider and the Sound of Words” (1965:22), under “the pressure of reality,” the imagination is forced to find ways to “attach” itself to the novel conditions, continuously “adhering” to the changing surfaces. Thus, paradoxically, the imagination functions both as the liaisory element between subject and object, revealing the latter to the former when the veil of appearances cannot be lifted, and as an alternative to what, at times, turns out to be “the malady of the quotidian,” when one is forced to admit that “time will not relent” (Stevens, 1984:96).

Due to this double function and to the ever-elusive structure of the real, it is inevitable that the imagination “is always at the end of an era” (Stevens, 1965:22). In fact, as Kermode clarifies, if the imagination “adheres” to reality, it is not by accident or pure necessity, but through an act of will, “choosing” to be “at the end of an era” in order to ensure the finding of “a correlation between the end of centuries and the peculiarities of our imagination” (1968:97). In Stevens’s case, the “fiction of the end” is similar to the class of scientific fictions (as for instance the mathematical concept of “infinity plus one”) whose primary application is both ontological and empirical, a “something we know does not exist, but which helps us to make sense of and to move in the world” (ibid.). A case in point, Kermode notes, is Stevens’s concept of *mun-do* (a compound of reality and imagination, as illustrated in “Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction”). But whence the need for a “mun-do,” if we may admittedly *escape* the pressure of the real whenever necessary and then attach ourselves back to it at will? For Stevens, the poetic mind has to destroy “[...] romantic tenements/Of rose and ice” (1984:238), without losing contact with the ground it is rooted in. Thus, the poet cautions against misinterpreting his conception of the role of the imagination and feels the need to clarify that “resisting” or “evading” the pressure of reality should not be seen as a form of romantic “escapism” (1965:31).

“We keep coming back and coming back/To the real...”, Stevens writes in “An Ordinary Evening in New Haven” (1984:471). Still, it is exactly these “intensest rendezvous” (1984:524) that may increase the momentum of the undulatory movement. In particular, as Kermode explains (1968:166), such renewed contacts with the real end up impoverishing us, and maintaining concord becomes an increasingly elusive task, since the fictions can no longer be abstracted from the reality that has originated them. Our “loving-hating affair with reality” makes us fall “at odds with the concords we have achieved” and thus our freedom of movement becomes more and more limited (ibid.). Hence the need to review the ends, to “revise” our “apocalypses” (analogous to the role of the skeletal presence in the Stevens poem), in a never-ending process of imagining both past and future (8).

In the particular case of the Stevensian concord fiction of reality infused with imagination, the latter becomes a “form-giving power” (144), involving both de-creation and the making of “orders and concords” so as to “mitigate our existential anguish.” We constantly interact with the “forms” it might engender in a manner similar to our way of “collaborating” with language in our expressive and communicative efforts (ibid.). In conclusion, we may argue that, as source for a fiction of concord, the imagination is necessarily endowed with a compound of functions which acquire relevance beyond the epistemological, pragmatic, and ontological applications, incorporating further, aesthetic and cognitive uses.

Whether rooted in the desire to engulf the physical world or springing from dissatisfaction with it, only in its *complementarity* with both solipsism and realism does the Stevensian imagination show its full potential, disclosing a sensibility which illustrates the paradoxes, achievements, and failures of the 20th century quest for the knowable, the creative counterpart of the compound of dualistic and idealistic drives that imbued science itself, in its relativist and quantum preoccupations as well as their sibling theories.

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THE AVANT-GARDE VIRUS: HISTORICAL AVANT-GARDES FROM THE POSTMODERN PERSPECTIVE

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***Abstract:** The paper examines the legacy of the 20th century Avant-Gardes from the perspective of the paradigm shift immanent in the formation of the Postmodern era. Examining the historical Avant-Gardes from the current position, I intend to show how their major strategies provided the basis for the formation of a culture and art no longer functioning according to the Cartesian principles.*

***Key Words:** historical Avant-Gardes, Modernity, institution of art, paradigm shift, postindustrial capitalism, Postmodernity*

1. Introduction

In this paper I intend to briefly present a rather complex observation on the relevance of the historical Avant-Gardes, an observation which I came to make during my investigation of the Avant-Garde status of the Avant-Pop movement, a 1990's self-proclaimed Postmodern Avant-Garde. From the perspective of literary history, both terms – Avant-Garde and Avant-Pop – require a very careful inspection, as they are generally used arbitrarily in artistic as well as in pop-cultural contexts. A successful theoretical justification of the first term automatically reveals the nature of the second. For if the entire literary machinery concerning the phenomenon of the Avant-Pop evades the metaphysical framework of the Geistesgeschichte paradigms specific to the Modern Age, then the Avant-Pop is the first truly Postmodern literary movement, and, as such, Avant-Garde in the ahistorical sense.

The problem with the Avant-Pop usage of both terms is that the manifesto and the theoretical activities of its protagonists rely heavily on the vocabulary and the strategies of the historical Avant-Gardes. As I will show on the following pages, the latter were essentially conditioned by the institution of art as developed by the metaphysical mechanisms of Modernity. Therefore it seems somewhat paradoxical that the hypothetically first movement of Postmodernity should lean upon approaches primarily designed to re-establish the core values of Cartesian metaphysics. When the paradox is probed from the perspective of the Avant-Pop's social, economic and cultural environment, as well as its literary production, the role and the relevance of the historical Avant-Gardes are revealed as decisively more

significant to the shift of paradigms signalling the beginning of the Postmodern epoch as it has hitherto been suggested.

2. Avant-Pop and Postmodernity

From the point of view of Geistesgeschichte, postmodernism as the ultimate realisation of metaphysical nihilism disqualifies the last remaining category defining the understanding of the world specific to the Modern Age, namely the immediate reality of the psychical contents of consciousness. Consequently, the literary period succeeding it should be defined by paradigms which would not only separate it from preceding literary movements and periods in the sense of rearranging relations among the basic Modern Age categories, but would change the very content of those categories and thus render them obsolete, at the same time indicating the rise of a new epoch.

Searching for instances of such literature is highly problematic due to the lack of historical distance and of comparable patterns. However, certain guidelines can be established on the grounds of the processes that governed such major transitions in the past, and by applying ascertainable common mechanisms that work broader social, cultural and economic changes upon the notion of literature. In this respect, I concentrated upon the Avant-Pop, a literary movement formed in America at the beginning of the 1990's. Emerging within the reorganised Fiction Collective writers' co-op publishing original, non-commercial works, the Avant-Pop's main objective was the production of independent, innovative literary and literary-theoretical works criticising and undermining the ubiquity of corporations and consumerism in general. Their tactic, emphasised both in Mark Amerika's manifesto *Thread Baring Itself in Ten Quick Posts*, published in 1992, and Larry McCaffery's introductions to the two Avant-Pop anthologies (1995), could be summarised as the (ab)use of pop-cultural segments, which we are, due to their ubiquity, no longer aware of, and which represent the *sine qua non* of our social memory, with strategies articulated by the historical Avant-Gardes. Just as popular culture absorbs everything that is new, fresh and interesting, so does the Avant-Pop employ everything that is innovative and exciting, while foregrounding and using the characteristics which reveal popular culture in all of its artificiality and subservience to the mechanisms used by capital to control the masses.

This approach anticipated an intimate knowledge of popular culture and an efficient means to accumulate, transform and spread information faster than the pop-cultural media. The formation of the Avant-Pop was simultaneous with the spreading of the World Wide Web and the irruption

of the logic which conditions the functioning of the computer into the social sphere via the technological sociability enabled by the Net. Internet hypertext was, of course, the medium best suited to such aspirations, enabling both rapid accumulation and exchange of information, as well as easier access to like-minded individuals, who with their active participation further accelerated information production, manipulation and transfer. As Amerika points out in the manifesto, the medium also drastically changed the traditional, capital-conditioned distribution formula, reducing it merely to a network relation “authors – interactive participants”, in which the two roles were in constant flux. (Amerika, Olsen, 1995:4)

If we consider the phenomenon of the hypertext in the broader context of social, cultural and economic changes following the Second World War, the medium seems to correspond to the mechanisms pinpointed by all major theoreticians of Postmodernity as the defining paradigms of contemporary society and culture (Krevel, 2005:152-154). The structural principle and the functioning of hypertext are in fact implicit in the systems developed by such diverse theoreticians and thinkers as Jameson, Lyotard, Debord, McLuhan, Deleuze and Guattari, and, as George P. Landow shows in his study of the hypertext from the perspective of existing, primarily poststructuralist, critical theories, even by Foucault, Bakhtin and particularly Derrida (Landow, 1997:33-35). However, the electronic medium most notably coincides with Jean Baudrillard’s notions of hyperreality and fractal subject as they are all essentially network systems of differential signs that can be arbitrarily combined, dismantled and shifted according to one’s preferences (Baudrillard, 1994:66).

Artistic works produced within the environment of hyperreality correspond to his concept of the third order simulacra, copies without an original, models which anticipate and accelerate the (hyper)real world of Postmodernity. As such, they function like media, providing the material – information – for structuring the systems of our everyday hyperreality. In my analyses of the literary characters, literary worlds, and stylistic features of the most representative Avant-Pop works, I have established that the governing principle predominantly corresponds to Baudrillard’s notion of simulacra of simulation, forming hyperreal systems foreign to the Cartesian dialectics and principles of organicity, hierarchisation and linearity (Krevel, 2003:99-149).

The revolutionary novelties, however, do not result primarily from a conscious effort on the side of the Avant-Pop protagonists. Rather, they are an inevitable consequence of the fact that the Avant-Pop authors were the first generation of writers to have fully adopted and internalised the electronic medium in the sense of Marshall McLuhan’s (2001:8) famous

claim: “Societies have always been shaped more by the nature of the media by which men communicate than by the content of the communication.”

3. Avant-Pop and the Historical Avant-Gardes

A close inspection of the Avant-Pop manifesto and the theoretical writings of its protagonists reveals that the “avant” in the name is justified predominantly by its promoting the strategies, the rhetoric, and the examples of the historical Avant-Gardes. Taking into account the Avant-Pop’s determination to offer a productive – and lethal – alternative to the worn-out institution of literature as developed by the metaphysical mechanisms of Modernity, such close association with the movements from the first half of the 20th century seems problematic – if not point-blank naive. As it is hard to believe that the founding Avant-Popsters, many of whom are professionally involved with literary criticism, would have overlooked the paradox of striving to destroy and transcend a given state by relying upon the very tools of its creation, let us examine whether a productive connection with the historical Avant-Gardes can be made at all.

From a plethora of theoretical discussions on the historical Avant-Gardes, which establish the impact and the characteristics of the movements according to their authors’ respective ideological standpoints, I will focus upon those general findings which seem common and undisputed, and which seem in accord with the economic, cultural, and social processes of the first half of the 20th century. For that reason I will primarily concentrate upon the findings of the theoreticians who explore the essence of the Avant-Gardes in connection to the *Zeitgeist*, relying upon the *Geistesgeschichte* methodology and philosophical analysis. In this respect, there are two authors whose works encapsulate the two major views on the reasons why the Avant-Gardes failed to bring art back to life within the historical environment in which they emerged. The works of both authors, Peter Bürger (1984) and Janko Kos (1983), are founded upon Renato Poggioli’s seminal *Teoria dell’arte d’avanguardia* from 1962, but each explains the fate of the historical Avant-Gardes according to his own ideological provenance.

Literary history recognises historical Avant-Gardes as literary movements from the first half of the 20th century, namely Futurism, Dadaism, Surrealism and partly Expressionism, as well as movements appearing after the Second World War, the so-called Neo-Avant-Gardes. The main problem faced by literary science in its treatment of these movements is that the essence of the Avant-Gardes cannot be deduced from literature alone, since the major part of their production comprises

programs, manifestoes and performances which are semi-literary at best. Since the historical Avant-Gardes were – as the original meaning of the term suggests – primarily *groups* with a common goal, the essence of the Avant-Gardes is crucially connected with literary sociology. This already implies the importance of the social circumstances and processes which produced the movements for the detection of their common characteristics.

From a historical point of view, the Avant-Gardes are organised movements with the task of conquering new territories, which anticipates the provocation of conflict realised as a methodical destruction of the entities pertaining to the bourgeois tradition. The ‘violence’ involves employment of elements which are shocking to the society defined by that tradition. The common goal of these movements is to bring art back to life and the aesthetisation of life in general, which is also the point where the theories on the Avant-Gardes diverge – namely why this aim was never obtained.

In his study “K vprašanju o bistvu avantgarde” (“On the essence of the Avant-Garde”, my translation) Janko Kos (1983) emphasises the centrality of the ideas of progressivism. In the context of the historical Avant-Gardes, progressivism relates to the intrinsically Modern Age idea of individualism, which emerged already in the Renaissance. In his opinion the Avant-Gardes are crucially bound to the Modern Age understanding of subjectivity (in the sense of the romantic absolute Subject) by their belief that “the advancement can be accelerated especially by means of poetry and art.” (Kos, 1983:228) Since the historical Avant-Gardes articulate the Modern Age progressivism, in the sense of a total realisation of subjectivity, as a demand of bringing art back to life, the realisation of the subject within art alone is obviously impossible, which is also signalled by the demise of symbolism at the beginning of the 20th century. Thus the historical Avant-Gardes still retain the Neo-Romantic will to absolute subjectivism, but they no longer strive to achieve that goal within literary works alone. Rather, they employ literature as a special mode of social action, as a way of life which ensures the realisation of absolute subjectivity to their members.

In Kos’ opinion it was precisely this retrograde Neo-Romantic will to re-establish absolute subjectivity which caused the demise of the historical Avant-Gardes. The concept of subjectivity they were striving for was no longer feasible within the social, cultural, and economic environment of the first half of the 20th century. It is not surprising, then, that the primacy in literature was soon taken over by a movement formed parallel to the historical Avant-Gardes, namely literary Modernism. Emerging within the same historical environment, the new movement recognised the inadequacy of the metaphysical foundation of the Neo-

Romantic subjectivism, and based its literary production upon a type of subjectivity attested by the continuous production of the contents of consciousness.

In his 1984 *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Peter Bürger also focuses upon the Avant-Gardes' fundamental concern to bring art back to life. However, his explanation is based upon the change of production relations caused by the rise of high capitalism. The demand to bring art back to life, Bürger observes (1984:33), only makes sense when art becomes an autonomous institution and loses connection with life. Within the context of the bourgeois society, the autonomisation of art reaches its peak in Symbolism's absolute aestheticism, when art becomes the subject-matter of art. The process of autonomisation of art as a social subsystem in fact begins with the formation of the bourgeois society, but its origins have been implicit in the ideas of the Modern Age subjectivity ever since the Renaissance. At that time, artists already developed an awareness of the originality of their work, but as their creations still served to praise the courtly aristocracy, their function remained representational (47).

With the emergence of genuine bourgeois art, however, the representational function of art disappeared, for its content anticipated an "objectification of the self-understanding of the bourgeois class. Production and reception of the self-understanding as articulated in art are no longer tied to the praxis of life." (ibid.) At an implicit level, the process involved the development of mechanisms connected to the formation of the Neo-Romantic will to absolute subjectivity, which is the central notion in Kos' explanation of the historical Avant-Gardes. Bürger, on the other hand, explains the autonomisation of art from the perspective of work distribution typical of the developing bourgeois society. In the process, the artist became a specialist, and his or her experience within the specialised social subsystem of art could eventually no longer be translated into the praxis of life. For the first time in history, the conditions were met for the criticism of the whole institution of art, and not just its individual styles, which was the case at the dawning of the previous century. Historical Avant-Gardes are thus an assault on the very status of art in bourgeois society, an attempt to bridge the aestheticist gap between art and life, individual production and separate individual reception, for the purpose of establishing a new life praxis founded upon art.

Like Kos, Bürger ascertains that the historical Avant-Gardes fail to realise those tendencies. However, he explains their demise by the parallel emergence of the "false" levelling of art and life in the context of consumer mass aesthetics, promoted by the high and late capitalism. (1984:49) In other words, the Avant-Gardes were devoured by the institution of art they

were striving to destroy. As a proof, Bürger suggests the case of the 1950's and 1960's Neo-Avant-Gardes. Although founded upon similar premises and employing similar tactics as their historical predecessors, within a social environment that had already commodified and aestheticised the principles and the works of the latter, the new movements were received as any other traditional instance of art. This approach becomes evident from the fully developed critical apparatus handling their works, as well as their general reception.

4. Historical Avant-Gardes' Strategies and the Late Phase of Capitalism

Consistent with its fundamental logic of aestheticising all aspects of life for the purpose of their marketing, this parallel apparatus, which in Bürger's opinion proved lethal for the realisation of the Avant-Garde goals, ultimately absorbed the phenomena which were essentially Avant-Garde. What is more, it was this very logic which established some of the fundamental premises of the Avant-Gardes as the defining elements and the aesthetic foundation of most 20th century production, both in art and in the mass media.

I am referring primarily to the typical Avant-Garde levelling of all artistic means of expression, which is a consequence of treating art in its entirety, and not only its individual actualisations. The most emblematic example is, of course, the principle of montage. Used frequently as a stylistic device in pre-Avant-Garde art, it is now transferred to the level of the organising life principle. Within this 'montage logic' all the elements involved have the same inartistic value, while their collective effect – the inability to produce meaning – equates the aesthetic with the capability to produce shock. The fact that, as Bürger observes, "[n]othing loses its effectiveness more quickly than shock" (1984:81), on the one hand explains why the Avant-Gardes primarily promoted novelty, chance, and speed. On the other hand, it also explicates the changes instigated by the commodification of the montage principle in the fields of production and reception of the post-Avant-Garde art. At the level of production, we can observe alterations in the very structure of works of art, a transfer from the organic structuring, anticipating an impression of entirety, to the inorganic, where individual elements have a higher level of autonomy than the whole. The inorganic structure of a work of art, as well as its intended task to produce shock, also affects the reception, which is no longer directed to the meaning of the art work but rather to the principles of its construction. (Bürger, 1984)

The fundamental goal of the historical Avant-Gardes, generally recognised as an effort to break away from tradition by bringing art back to life, was therefore not achieved for twofold reasons. On the one hand, these reasons sprang from the basic motivations of their protagonists – striving for a model of subjectivity no longer enabled by the existing metaphysical frame. On the other hand, we cannot overlook the importance of the social and economic circumstances at the time of their formation, for it was the *modi operandi* of the latter which enabled the Avant-Gardes to become a subsystem of the institution of art. The Avant-Garde strategies, especially the introduction of the elements of reality into artistic concepts and the rejection of organicity, are in fact at the core of the new production relations. Within the then social and economic environment, the novelties introduced by the historical Avant-Gardes turned out to be the appropriate means for an artistic interpretation of reality conditioned by the very mechanisms against which the Avant-Gardes were directed. That is also the reason why the latter could absorb them.

From this perspective, the reason for the Avant-Gardes' failure to achieve their primary goal seems to be the inconsistency of their rejection of organicity. I am referring to the model of subjectivity upon which they centred their activities, the ultimately organic absolute subjectivity anticipated by the Modern Age metaphysics. Even though we may agree that it was utterly naive to attempt a radical, let alone productive, break with tradition by striving to reinstate the already obsolete segments of that tradition, the social, cultural and political situation at that time did not allow yet any major interventions within the Modern Age *Geistesgeschichte* models. Although Modernism did offer a new type of subjectivity, the latter was still firmly anchored within the Cartesian metaphysics.

The mechanisms governing the economy of that time, however, already implied a radically different concept of subjectivity, one better suited to the demands of high and especially of late capitalism. Its development after the Second World War relied primarily on the expansion of advertising, media and information technology, which, according to Jameson (2000:111), was reflected in the intrinsically Postmodern culturalisation of all aspects of social life, including economy and finance. Culture and society in general, in their turn, approached the economy by observing the laws of the market and by producing cultural objects of consumption. Postmodern cultural and social paradigms as established by the mechanisms of late capitalism are thus based on a *definitive* rejection of organicity, which is rendered possible only when individuals perceive themselves as systems of signs in the sense of Baudrillard's fractal subjects. The formation of the latter is completed with the hypertext becoming the

chief medium of communication and with the consequent irruption of its logic onto the level of the individual's experience of the world and of the self. (Baudrillard, 1981:12)

That brings us back to the Avant-Pop, the first literary movement to have adequately responded to the new situation, and the last chapter of the story initiated by the historical Avant-Gardes. When the logic of the Avant-Garde strategies becomes the logic of Subject creation with the subjectivisation of the hypertext logic, the historical Avant-Gardes are truly concluded and as such historical, at the same time serving as a foundation of a new Geistesgeschichte paradigm setting – a new historical epoch.

5. Conclusion

The Avant-Pop as a product of new metaphysical systems is thus an ahistorical Avant-Garde in the sense of a movement drastically breaking with traditions unsuited to the existing economic, social, and cultural conditions. As we have shown, it is furthermore established upon the premises of the historical Avant-Gardes, which explains the paradox mentioned at the beginning of the paper: their strategies are at the core of what the Avant-Pop signals as an ahistorical Avant-Garde. The fact that the Avant-Pop production can no longer be adequately either explained or evaluated by the existing literary-theoretical categories and tools, which rely upon clearly defined binarisms (Krevel, 2003:146-149), suggests destruction of the institution of art as developed in Modernity.

The fundamental Avant-Garde tendency to bring art back to life finds its actualisation in the literal merging of art and life in the context of hyperreality via third order simulacra. In an environment conditioned by the hypertext logic of reality and identity creation, literature assumes the status of a medium, generating information for the creation of hyperrealities, as well as facilitating their acceleration (see Krevel, 2007). As such it serves as a model for the actual existence of Postmodern individuals. The latter are the carriers of a subjectivity which essentially relies upon the principles of inorganicity and is as such in constant flux. Like hyperreality, this subjectivity is structured from information accepted by individuals (technically freely) within their systems of identity, which anticipates a much more productive and open concept of subjectivity than the previous ones (Krevel, 2003:99-114).

It is such subjectivity that can – falsely or not – appropriate and artistically manipulate *any* segment launched into the social sphere. With that, radical changes at the level of production relations as developed by Modernity and exhausted by the late capitalism seem inevitable. The current

global crisis we are witnessing may very well be the symptom of a terminal systemic disease, lethalsed – if not altogether caused – by the virus caught in the first decades of the previous century.

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BRAVE (?) INDUSTRIAL WORLDS DYSTOPIAN REPRESENTATIONS OF THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION IN VICTORIAN AND THATCHERITE BRITAIN

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***Abstract:** The 19th century, in particular its second half, is fundamentally marked by the Industrial Revolution that not only changed completely the face of England, but also shaped up a totally new frame of mind and unavoidably marked people's destinies, as well as the country's literary output. The aim of this paper is to discuss a few instances of the so-called Condition of England novel and its replica in the Britain of the 1980's, another period of economic surge and national pride.*

***Keywords:** Dystopia, Industrial Revolution, New Industrialism, social criticism, Thatcherism, Utilitarianism*

1. Introduction

The coming of Queen Victoria to the throne of England and her very long rule of about two thirds of the century (1837-1901) made England enjoy one of her most prosperous periods – great industrial advancement, surge of national pride, power and prestige never paralleled before, expansion of the British Empire and an increase in popularity of the institution of monarchy. This golden age represented a turning point in the evolution of English and British society and a re-evaluation of previous values.

Queen Victoria became one of the country's best-loved queens whereas Victoria's husband, Prince Albert, known for his interest in the arts, social and industrial progress, was an agreeable presence in the stiff atmosphere of the Royal Court and a constantly positive influence on the Queen.

At the onset of the Victorian era the Industrial Revolution had started its sweeping march forward and yielded effects that quite a lot of people considered miracles. Man seemed to have become the master of nature. Steam replaced the force of the arms, of traction animals, as well as of the wind. Machines took over as a prolongation of man's power and industrial production gradually replaced manual labour. The telegraph diminished the distances between cities and continents, and communication became easier and more significant in a country that was to establish itself as an imperial power over a large territory.

The result of this economic boom was significant rises in wages and share value. England soon became an industrial and commercial nation, one of the wealthiest, most prosperous and representative in the world. She was in the centre of world trade with one of the biggest fleets and the most accessible coal mines, and one of the most prosperous bourgeoisies that knew how to use the new inventions to its advantage.

The highpoint of Victorian Britain was the Great Exhibition opened on 1 May 1851 by Prince Albert in the newly constructed Crystal Palace, a “blazing arch of lucid glass” (Matthew, 2000:463). It was a good opportunity for the proud achievements of the nation to be displayed for everybody to admire (Delaney et al., 2003: 125), and to celebrate Britain’s economic progress and its place as leader of world market.

2. Written representations of the modern times

An important outcome of the age was the emergence of the new bourgeoisie and the middle classes as bearers of the standard of living of the epoch. In addition to that, for the first time an age gave the lower and middle classes – the greater part of the common people – real access to culture. Education was now more widely distributed and the result was that more and more people were able to read and write. Cheap editions – as a consequence of the improved printing techniques – found an unlimited reading public for the works of past and present writers, and the book reviews contributed to the wider diffusion of literature. Lending and circulating libraries appeared and became very popular. As work in factories became more efficient and women were freed of the traditional household chores, like for instance, the making of bread, there was more time for many to read and enjoy literature.

This age saw the creation of the modern newspaper as a vehicle of information and of popular education and provider of publishing space for the serial novel. The result was the rise in the circulation figures of periodicals, journals and pamphlets, most of them with a literary page as the public grew more and more accustomed to having their newspaper as part of their daily life.

The doctrine of the age was Utilitarianism with its focus upon the pragmatic finality of an act, rather than upon its intrinsic nature or the motives of the agent. The result was that the total benefit was maximised at all costs, and such terms as conscience, moral sense, right, love, sensitivity, affections, emotions or feelings were dismissed. The main attitude that Utilitarianism generated was ‘personal egotism’ and the belief that personal interest is the main spur in man’s behaviour. This principle of *laissez-faire*

made such private interest in economy or commerce enjoy unrestricted freedom to the detriment of their agents.

But what goes up must also come down and the prosperity of the Victorian Age and the improved living conditions could not last for ever, especially in the last 25 years of the century. By the fifth decade of the nineteenth century the Industrial Revolution had completely dislocated the traditional structure of English society, bringing riches to a few and misery to quite a lot. In spite of the displayed prosperity, in many cases the living conditions were sometimes unimaginably sordid: polluted drinking water, yards filled with filth where nothing grew, rooms in which as many as 20 people had to live, sick and undernourished children. The agricultural working class, deprived of subsistence on the land by the enclosures of the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, had to toil on other people's land or thronged to the cities of the Midlands and the North where the liberal policy of the government directed towards private interests, forced them to work long hours in almost inhuman conditions for miserable wages, and threw them out of employment altogether as soon as there was a downturn in the market.

British industry was threatened by the competition of the younger nations and the export trade ceased to grow. The overall economic activity of the country showed a decline. Unemployment and poverty were on the increase, strikes, as a result, grew more numerous; a chronic feeling of unrest set in and socialism, which since 1850 had practically disappeared, once again was seen as an active force. Happy expectations and easy victories were past and gone. This feeling of anxiety was widespread in the atmosphere of the century drawing to its end.

The workers' poverty-stricken working and living conditions, but also their lack of political power and representation made them attempt to defend their economic, social and political interests by forming trade unions, which was bitterly resented by the employers. The working class met even stronger resistance when they tried to secure the political representation which had not been granted to them by the Reform Bill through the Chartist Movement whose requests were embodied in the *People's Charter* published in May 1838, i.e. adult male suffrage, vote by ballot, annual Parliaments, payment of members of Parliament, equal electoral distribution based on equal electoral districts, and abolition of property qualification (Morgan, 2000: 442-3). The rejection of a petition with millions of signatures to the Parliament in 1839 was followed by a series of industrial strikes, demonstrations and repressive measures by the Government. Another petition was submitted in 1848, a revolutionary year throughout Europe. All these events led to the belief that Chartism would

bring revolution and terror to England. Therefore, any working-class militancy was perceived as a threat to the social order.

The previously discussed economic and social background of the country constitutes the substance of the so-called Condition of England Novels (named so by Carlyle in his essay "Chartism" (1847:web)) or Industrial Novels (as Raymond Williams calls them in *Culture and Society*, 1993), which treat the problems arising out of the Industrial Revolution and discuss the state of the nation. Among such novels, one could mention: Charles Dickens's *Hard Times*, Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley*, Mrs Gaskell's *Mary Barton* and *North and South*, or Benjamin Disraeli's *Sybil*.

Dickens is one of the Victorian novelists whose serious concern was to describe the appalling conditions of life in factory towns. He believed that the poor should be entitled to the same justice, the same healthy conditions, the same freedom, as the rich. Therefore, he attacked every kind of public institution whose main aim was to oppress the individual, especially those needy and miserable, every mentality which substituted scientific accuracy for imaginative reality.

Hard Times, is the result of the author's own observations of industrial condition in Manchester, which palpably shows Dickens's intention to use fiction for the purposes of social protest. The novel examines the two sides of the same coin of Industrialism (Williams, 1993:94), namely the Individual against the System, the Circus against Coketown as refractions of a lot of contemporary issues: education, divorce, the relations of capital and labour, the monotony of life in the new industrial towns.

The background against which Dickens exposes the wrongs of society to the conscience of his readers is the previously mentioned Coketown, a dystopian representation of an industrial centre. The brutal penetration of industry into Coketown is emblematic for the sweeping diffusion of the Industrial Revolution everywhere in England. This fictional town blackened by smoke, where life is dull and monotonous, stands for all the English industrial towns of the nineteenth century:

[Coketown] was a town of red brick, or of brick that would have been red if the smoke and ashes had allowed it; but, as matters stood it was a town on unnatural red and black like the painted face of a savage. It was a town of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves for ever and ever, and never got uncoiled. It had a black canal in it, and a river that ran purple with ill-smelling dye, and vast piles of buildings full of windows where there was a rattling and a trembling all day long, and where the piston of the steam-engine worked monotonously up and down like the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness. It contained several large streets all very like one

another, and many small streets more like one another, inhabited by people like one another, who all went in and out at the same hours, with the same sound upon the same pavements, to do the same work and to whom every day was the same as yesterday and tomorrow, and every year the counterpart of the last and the next. (Dickens, 2006: 26)

Dickens's Coketown fulfils most criteria of dystopias – it is indeed a place of miserable life, a possible replica of Manchester but also of other industrial centres of the age, like Preston, Oldham, Blackburn and Rochedale. Coketown is a no-place to exist, clearly one of the many bad places in industrial Victorian England. Structurally, it is constructed as a balancing of opposites: good versus evil; vital versus mechanical, sane versus insane.

This is where Thomas Gradgrind, whose philosophy is Utilitarianism, lives. The result is that for him, feelings, imagination and dreams have to be excluded from existence. His fanatical obsession is facts and statistics and nothing else:

'Now, what I want is Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plan nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon facts. Facts: nothing else will ever be of any service to them. This is the principle on which I bring up my own children, and this is the principle on which I bring up these children. Stick to Facts, sir!' (47)

In his school children have to be educated according to the same principles of facts, figures and exactness brought to the extreme, being nothing else than receptacles of pragmatic information.

Besides being a dystopian representation of the Victorian world of industry, *Hard Times* might also be considered a work of bitter utopian satire, since it looks daringly at aberrant aspects of the society in question, but, implicitly or explicitly, it also contains the potential belief that there might be a better society elsewhere.

Shirley by Charlotte Brontë is a woman's realistic response to the realities of the age. It is the first regional novel in English and one of the greatest, peopled with memorable characters (Alexander and Smith, 2006: 461); it is a social panorama having as its background Yorkshire characters, church and chapel, the cloth workers and machine breakers of her father's early manhood – the so-called Luddite Movement. According to Horsman (1990:180-1), in its examination of the relation between employer, employee and unemployment, the novel is much less romantic and melodramatic than *Jane Eyre*, it is an account as "cool, real and solid, [...] as unromantic as Monday morning" (Brontë qtd. in Traversi, 1969: 256).

As Horsman argues (1990: 181), Shirley shares much with Emily Brontë, whereas Caroline echoes Ann. Such characters, placed at the centre of the novel, are meant to illustrate the author's point that the female has the power to think of and for herself in an age of democratization of public life and thinking.

The main male character of the novel is Robert Gérard Moore, half English and half Belgian by birth. He is the owner of Hallow Mill who persists in introducing the latest labour-saving machines in spite of the vehement opposition of the workers. This attitude almost costs him the destruction of his own mill and his own life. The solution to overcome his financial difficulties is, just like in the case of many industrialists, a marriage to a rich heiress, impersonated here by the novel's main female character, Shirley Keeldar.

The novel's treatment of its social and political theme is ambiguous – on the one hand sympathizing with the workers, while on the other fiercely defending the property rights of the owners. However, in the end, it seems to deplore inequality and exploitation for both women and workers.

Besides being a study of how industrialism influences people's lives, this novel also gives expression to a robust but rather embittered feminism that Charlotte displays mainly when dealing with Caroline and, particularly, with Shirley.

Another Condition of England creation is Mrs Gaskell's *Mary Barton*, a sort of a documentary record, as Williams sees it (1993:87), in which she contemplates the industrial landscape of England, with its economic and social problems and reflects the echoes of Chartist effervescence. Together with the picture of the Barton family, the novel depicts the life of the workers in Manchester in her time against the background of Manchester of the Hungry Forties of the nineteenth century – as mentioned previously, a period of acute distress in the industrial districts. *Mary Barton* impresses by its realism and Mrs Gaskell's undisguised sympathy with the poor, the oppressed and suffering, a feeling that she directly experienced as a minister's wife. This genuine outlook and her tendency to place masters in an unflattering light made the novel unpopular in those days but did not harm its literary merits, in any way.

North and South – as anticipated in the title – is a study in the contrast between the inhabitants of the industrialized North and those of the rather rural South of England. From this perspective, it treats the serious theme of the struggle between capital and labour; as such, it is also a study of the relations of employers and employees in Milton, Mrs Gaskell's version of Coketown:

For several miles before they reached Milton, they saw a deep lead-coloured cloud hanging over the horizon in the direction in which it lay. It was all the darker from the contrast with the pale ray-blue of the wintry sky; for in Heston there had been the earliest signs of frost. Nearer to the town, the air had a faint taste of smell and smoke; perhaps, after all, more a loss of the fragrance of grass and herbage than any positive taste or smell. Quick they were whirled over long, straight, hopeless streets of regularly built houses, all small and of brick. Here and there a great oblong many-windowed factory stood up, like a hen amongst her chickens, puffing out black 'unparliamentary' smoke, and sufficiently accounting for the cloud which Margaret had taken to foretell rain. As they drove through the larger and wider streets, from the station to the hotel, they had to stop constantly; great loaded lorries blocked up the not over-wide thoroughfares. Margaret had now and then been into the city in her drives, with her aunt. But there the heavy lumbering vehicles seemed various in their purposes and intent; here ever van, every wagon and truck, bore cotton, either in the raw shape in bags, or the woven shape in bales of calico. People thronged the footpaths, most of them well-dressed as regarded the material, but with a slovenly looseness which struck Margaret as different from the shabby, threadbare smartness of a similar class in London. (Gaskell, 1998:59)

Besides being a work of fiction, *North and South* is also a historical document illustrating early Victorian attitudes to a social problem and the fear, which turned almost into hysteria, against the poor.

The clash between Margaret and Thornton is the symbol of the clash between the agricultural, feudal South and the industrial North. In no other novel do we get the feeling of a divided England. As Allen argues (1958: 185), to Margaret the North is barbarous, the negation of civilisation, totally opposed to her South. And the North has to be unveiled – this is what the novel does via the two main heroes, Margaret Hale and John Thornton. Margaret symbolises the mind, the sensibility and the culture – evidence of the more civilised south –, is inflexible in self-judgement, delicate and charitable towards the others. John Thornton is Mrs Gaskell's most convincing and successful male character. He is the creation of a woman who knows the world and is judged in the novel by a girl of high-spirits, intelligence and assured values. And Mrs Gaskell is particularly successful at rendering him in his public aspects, as mill-owner and leader of the masters.

The split between the rural South and the manufacturing North is given substance in Benjamin Disraeli's novel *Sybil, or the Two Nations* where the existence of two totally antagonistic communities that represent "two nations" is articulated with much candour. According to Kettle (2007: 174), the novel is an ambitious project to approach the total social situation of England at that time: the aristocrats, the industrialists, the proletariat and the rural poor. Disraeli saw the dangers of the North-South division, which is also the one between employers and employees, between manual and

industrial labour, between the rich and the poor. *Sybil* also deals with the horrific conditions in which the majority of England's working classes lived. The novel contains the key to Disraeli's mind and depicts the storms of Chartist agitation and social disturbance in England. In spite of all fears of the day, the Chartist movement – in which Disraeli himself became involved – is seen as a rightful working class movement that wished to bring about equal political and social rights for all classes by legal means.

The following dramatic exchange between the aristocratic Charles Egremont and a young stranger in *Sybil* is seen by many as one of the most important scenes of the novel, emblematic for the novel's theme. Egremont exclaims with pride that 'our queen reigns over the greatest nation that ever existed'. The interlocutor's response is immediate and cutting in its demarcation of what the Victorian nation, the greatest that ever existed, actually meant. "Which nation?" he asks and then continues:

[...] for she reigns over two'... 'Yes,' [...] 'Two nations; between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts, and feelings, as if they were dwellers in different zones, or inhabitants of different planets; who are formed by a different breeding, are fed by a different food, are ordered by different manners, and are not governed by the same laws.' 'You speak of –' said Egremont, hesitatingly. And the young stranger replies, 'THE RICH AND THE POOR. (Disraeli qtd. in Kettle, 2007:175)

3. Contemporary revaluations and concluding remarks

The common characteristic of these Condition of England novels was their authors' earnest implication in the shadows, problems and debates of the age by presenting the readers with a fictional counterpoint of the political, economic and social dimensions of Victorian England. But such novels only asked questions or proposed material for meditation, they did not contemplate and consequently, could not offer political solutions to the social problems, as David Lodge remarks in the fictional context of his novel, *Nice Work*, a modern revisitation of the Victorian Industrial Novels.

The time of Lodge's novel is about a hundred years later – Queen Elizabeth's Britain of the eighties, a period similar to Victorian Britain in many ways. According to Stone (1994:48), the Eighties in Britain was a period of underlying stability when Conservative Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister, when a lot of political, economic, social but also 'cosmetic' changes took place, when Britain tried to restore itself to its former Victorian grandeur and national pride.

The Eighties was a period of thorough-going social, economic and cultural changes, an age of consumption with the slogan "I consume,

therefore I am,” when money became the overriding criterion for the judgement of most things. The real boom business were financial services. The emphasis is now laid on free-market individualism and disinterestedness in class matters.

The ideology that dominated the whole decade was Thatcherism, whose aims were to re-create a real democracy in Britain and bring to country's economy back to a viable standard. The government encouraged a free market and propagated right-wing economics, dominated by the privatisation of the state-owned enterprises. The result was New Industrialism, a sort of second Industrial Revolution, when factories were modernised, productivity improved, and the service industry was raised to a higher level of efficiency. This was also accompanied by decentralisation of central administration – with its negative side effect: cuts in power and finances of local authorities, reforms in the Health Service and education in schools and universities, and introduction of the controversial Community Charge.

On the moral plan it was an age of restoration of self esteem, of national pride, an age when hard work became a virtue and a matter of personal pride. Socially, the Eighties witnessed an unprecedented development of the middle class and emergence of the underclass (i.e. the inner-city poor and single-parent families), as well as an increase in popular support for and acceptance of popular capitalism with its postulate stocks and shares for all.

In spite of the fact that the overall image of the age tends to be positive, just like the Victorian epoch, the 80s had not only lights but also shadows. This was largely due to the new monetarism and commercialism, when buying and selling became the dominant activities and when money was the supreme ruler of the world to the detriment of the human.

The government's liberalism led to inadequate funding of social services and discontent of large masses of the working population. This resulted in social unrest which culminated in 1984-1985 with the miners' strike as a result of the Government's decision to close down the mines, once one of the emblems of Britain. This was followed by a national strike, when the working class women became active in support of the miners.

The Eighties was also a period of political unrest mainly in Northern Ireland and a violent decade at home because of huge rises in crime (against the person, property and community).

During the Thatcherite era dependency culture was replaced with enterprise culture, whereas the academic world was faced with cuts – many times painful and undeserved. The result in the case of many intellectuals was indifference, fatalism and isolation.

The plot of David Lodge's previously mentioned novel, *Nice Work*, is a cunning modern pastiche of the industrial novel genre, particularly referencing *North and South* by Elizabeth Gaskell. The split here is no longer that between Industry and Agriculture, but between Industry and Education, targeted on the university campus. The place is now the city of Rummidge from the Dark Country region, a survivor of the nineteenth century Industrial Revolution. Rummidge is Lodge's modern Coketown, a Thatcherite dystopia of what the New Industrialism had turned Britain into. But Lodge's dystopic vision can be extended to the whole Dark Country where, as represented in the fragment below, manufacturing nineteenth and the twentieth centuries merge temporally as one industrial landscape is replaced with another:

Vic Wilcox has now, strictly speaking, left the city of Rummidge and passed into an area known as the Dark Country – so called because of the pall of smoke that hung over it, and the film of coaldust and soot that covered it, in the heyday of the Industrial Revolution. [...]. Rich mineral deposits were discovered here in the early nineteenth century: coal, iron, limestone. Mines were sunk, quarries excavated, and ironworks sprang up everywhere to exploit the new technique of smelting iron ore with coke, using limestone as a flux. The fields were gradually covered with pitheads, foundries with factories and workshops and rows of wretched hovels for the men, women and children who worked in them: a sprawling, unplanned, industrial conurbation that was gloomy by day, fearsome by night. [...]

The economy and outward appearance of the area have changed considerably since those days. As the seams of coal and iron were exhausted, or became unprofitable to work, mining and smelting diminished. But industries based on iron-casting, forging, engineering, all those kind of manufacturing known generically as 'metal-bashing' – spread and multiplied until their plants met and merged with the expanding new suburbs of Rummidge. (Lodge, 1988: 31-32)

The novel's main female character, Robyn, is an updated version of Shirley or Margaret Hale, an academic and a fiercely feminist representative of the intellectual world who accepts the hand of fate to turn the industrial world into an acceptable contemplation of life and a suitable gold mine for the benefits of education. The main male character is now Vic Wilcox, a perfect product of the industrial society, a younger Mr Bounderby, Robert Gerard Moore and John Thornton reorganized on modern grounds. In the hands of Robyn, the wished-for mission of many Victorian women writers to be able to elevate the female to a serious social position has now almost reached its target line despite the ridiculous race in which it is engaged.

Conclusions to Victorian and modern times are transparent in Robyn's famous lecture delivered in front of her students at the University of Rummidge. As she sees it, the solution the Victorian novel offered its

characters when facing social problems is a mere narrative one – a marriage, an unexpected legacy, emigration or death; a way out still valid today and not only in narrative format.

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THIS BE THE LIGHT VERSE: THE ELSEWHERE OF LARKIN'S INFAMOUS POEM

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Abstract: This paper discusses how Larkin's well-known poem "This Be The Verse" has been re-written by four contemporary poets: Maurice Rutherford, Roger McGough, Adrian Mitchell, and Benjamin Zephaniah. Each of them went their own ways: Rutherford domesticated the image, McGough wrote an angry pamphlet, Mitchell turned the meaning upside down, and Zephaniah wrote a piece of propaganda in a postcolonial context.

Key words: light verse, parody, poetry, postcolonialism

1. Introduction

When Philip Larkin published his last volume of verse, *High Windows* (1974), he was already a widely celebrated poet, inevitably a part of the Establishment (Tolley, 1991:xii). This meant having more to enjoy (mainly reputation itself), but also more to be afraid of (particularly being a living monument, as we can see in the powerful self-satire of "Posterity"). The feeling of uncertainty and the representation of frustration caused by this duality are well known. As Andrew Swarbrick has pointed out (1995:122): "Forces which in *The Whitsun Weddings* were held delicately in tension can be seen disintegrating in *High Windows*". One sign of this "disintegration" is that the tone is bitterer than ever before; the speaker of most poems is a cynical, supercilious, or even rude man. This is also the volume in which, in accordance with the previously mentioned features, "bad language" becomes an aesthetic force. This does not, however, mean that the poems are variations on a theme; actually, in Larkin's words, every poem has its own "freshly created universe" and atmosphere. The tone ranges from humour to sarcasm and the grotesque, and these always signify a peculiar relationship between the poet's persona and his contemplated experience. The persona is always a verbal construct, not to be mistaken for the actual poet, but it is a construct mediating Larkin's real-life experience.

2. What is the verse? Larkin's infamous poem

Therefore, one should carefully distinguish between the speaker and the real poet when reading the shocking opening of "This Be The Verse",

probably unparalleled in world literature. What the reader can hear is the same angry voice as at the beginning of “The Old Fools”, and even the syntax is the same: the linguistic form of topicalisation (i.e. explaining the pronoun with a noun phrase) creates a casual and colloquial style. The reason for the speaker’s anger is also the same: he is aware of being one of the people the poem is about, although he sticks to using the pronouns “they” and “you”. The obscene phrasal word “fuck up” in the first line is ambiguous in a dramatic and poetic way: it refers to begetting a child and spoiling something simultaneously. This follows from the immanent logic of Larkin’s worldview: if all changes are changes for the worse, begetting children is a case in point. This could hardly be said more concisely than with this obscenity:

They fuck you up, your mum and dad.
They may not mean to, but they do.
They fill you with the faults they had
And add some extra just for you.
(1988:180)

But there is much more to this text than just being shockingly and poetically vulgar. Oliver James, a clinical psychologist, has written a thoroughgoing analysis of this poem (1997), pointing out that every element in it can be justified psychologically and genetically. As the second line says, leaving genes to one’s children is, of course, unintentional. The “extra” mentioned in the last line of stanza 1 is “achieved” by the mistakes made in the process of education.

If one wants to explore the reasons of general degradation, one must go back in time, as far as the previous generation. This is what the speaker does in stanza 2:

But they were fucked up in their turn
By fools in old-style hats and coats
Who half the time were sippy-stern
And half at one another’s throats.
(ibid.)

We can only become what is coded for us genetically and culturally. This is human misery itself, as the last stanza says:

Man hands on misery to man.
It deepens like a coastal shelf.
Get out as early as you can,
And don’t have any kids yourself.

(ibid.)

In James's reading the implication is that the children of aggressive parents will become aggressive themselves, since bad characteristics are indestructible (1997:16). The geological simile of the second line suggests that traumas can be expected in older age, too. As a result, an innocent and "intact" young child can still be distorted as an adult (17).

This is how far the clinical psychologist got in tracking down the ideas of the poem. His only remark about the last line is: "Larkin's idea of the best solution was not very helpful" (18). One should, however, remember that this text is a poem, not just a document of social psychology.

As I mentioned earlier, the speaker uses an extremely cynical and vulgar tone in discouraging the reader to beget children. The poem suggests that since man can leave only misery to his posterity, both lovemaking and begetting children are immoral. What makes Larkin disillusioned is the lack of profound human consciousness. But the title, borrowed from Robert Louis Stevenson (Motion, 1993:373), gives this message a different meaning by changing the text into a credo. Larkin's conclusion is: *this be the verse*; that is to say, the poem should reflect this human deficiency. This is the implication of the tension between the title and the three stanzas of the poem. Whereas the text itself declares that human continuity is inevitable deterioration, the title says that poetry still needs to be written. As may be clear by now, I think this is a poem that invites the reader to read backwards. In my reading, the gap after the last line contains the instruction: go back to the title. What I mean by this gap is the empty space the reader finds after any poem in a volume of poetry, something that distinguishes poetry from prose. The white space we find after a poem always encourages us to think it over and/or re-read it before we go on to the next text.

Although Larkin denied any relevant influence of other poets and poems on his own poetry, intertextuality is significant in his life work. If we read "This Be The Verse" with Stevenson's once popular poem, "Requiem", the meaning will be richer: it will make Larkin's text another epitaph, which has a bitterly ironic relationship with its 19th century predecessor. Larkin's text constructs a speaker who can be described as a pagan prophet warning humankind against an apocalyptic future. Meanwhile, an emblematic poet signified by the allusion to Stevenson watches this figure from the outside, fulfilling the criteria of Bakhtin's sympathetic co-experiencing.

This is not a paper about literary theory; suffice it to say now that I agree with those who think that Bakhtin's terminology can be applied to poetry, too, not only to the novel. His term "sympathetic co-experiencing" (1990) describes the relationship between the author and the protagonist as

Bakhtin saw it: the author understands the hero's fate as that of the *other*. This way, s/he develops a dialogic relationship between two subjects. Rather than seeing a monologic declaration in Larkin's text, I have offered a dialogic reading, the two fictitious speakers being the cynical old man of *High Windows* and the father figure signified by the quotation in the title. A fictionalized Larkin and a fictionalized Stevenson play a game whose two sides could be identified as the id and the superego, the *anima* and the *animus*, the romantic and the disillusioned poet – and, of course, one could go on with the list.

3. Larkin recycled: what *should be* the verse?

The reader, of course, does not need to know Stevenson's poem to enjoy Larkin's. Exploring intertextuality is only one possible way of constructing the meaning of the poem, not the only one, and not more important than any other. However, the four poets rewriting Larkin count on the reader's knowledge of the "original". Their authors, Maurice Rutherford, Roger McGough, Adrian Mitchell, and Benjamin Zephaniah, all construct a different kind of intertextuality: instead of the ambiguity of Larkin's poem, they refer to the original in a playful way and establish a parodic relationship with it. As literary caricatures they all contain obvious references to the original. Their authors use the well-known method of light verse: they modify a famous and infamous text, and – by imitating the form line to line – aim at enhancing the pleasure of recognition in the reader.

Rutherford's poem, "This Be The Curse" (1994), like his other parodies of Larkin ("Mr. Larkin", "Rome Is So Bad") is based on the phonetic similarity to the original. The word *curse* rhymes with Larkin's and Stevenson's *verse*, but also offers an interpretation: begetting children is something fatal and it results in a change for the worse, but writing a poem is also a curse on the poet. The meaning of the title rhymes with Larkin, too. Changing the subjects and objects in stanza 2 does not change the idea. The continuity of the human race means distortion:

But they fucked me up in my turn
by handing their libido down
and setting me on course to earn
repute as Randiest Buck In Town.
(1994:57)

By giving a philosophical dimension to this stanza I have offered parody myself. Rutherford's text is meant to resist philosophical reading, since it actually does the opposite of what Larkin did: instead of opening up the

image in time, the poet narrows it down. Whereas Larkin spoke about genealogy, Rutherford creates mock-autobiography. Instead of the human history of generations, we are offered the story of merely one individual. Philosophy has become impossible, only life exists, and sexual fantasies are possible only

until Mum's voice calls up to bring
me down from dreams, and late for school.
(ibid.)

The obscenity of the poem has been shut into a dream. Larkin is respected, but the image is domesticated. What is bitterly ironic in Larkin is charmingly amusing in Rutherford.

Roger McGough went a different way in "This Be Another Verse" (2003). The word "another" in the title creates a space of plurality for Larkin's poem and his own, suggesting that the implied poet intends to enter a debate with the fellow-poet. It will be noticed that instead of writing "the real verse" or "the true verse", McGough wrote "another verse", a phrase suggesting equality. This is echoed by the word "multifarious" in the last line of stanza 2, recalling possible associations with other words beginning with "multi-": multicultural, multiethnic, and so on. The persona of McGough's poem says the opposite of Larkin's declaration:

They don't fuck you up, your mum and dad
(Despite what Larkin says)
(2003:291)

The reference to Larkin is in brackets, implying that his statement is only the starting point of McGough's argument. The whole poem emphasizes multiplicity: what may be true of some people is certainly not true of others. Whereas in Larkin the pronoun "you" is a universal "you" (the same way as "we" is frequently universal in Larkin), McGough speaks to a selected group of people who should not be afraid of being spoiled. He contrasts this with the "others" to whom Larkin's thesis should be restricted:

It's other grown-ups, other kids
Who, in their various ways

Die. And their dying casts a shadow
Numbering all our days
And we try to keep from going mad
In multifarious ways.
(ibid.)

The reader is invited to ask the question: what do the words “you” and “other” refer to? Although multiplicity is represented on the surface, the poem violates the idea of equality by dividing people into a majority and a minority:

And most of us succeed, thank God,
So if, to coin a phrase
You're fucked up, don't blame your mum and dad
(Despite what Larkin says).
(ibid.)

In McGough's perfectly legitimate misreading, Larkin says that all your faults should be blamed on your parents. McGough enters a debate with the deterministic view of this declaration, because he thinks that it would mean giving up the idea of individual responsibility. *You are in charge of your own life*, he seems to say. But while saying this, he gives up the idea of solidarity with all those who are not lucky enough to belong to the majority constructed in the poem. Whereas Larkin's persona says that human genealogy is hopelessly deteriorating, but verse must be written, McGough's suggests: I am not one of those that Larkin speaks about, and I do not care for them.

Adrian Mitchell, like Rutherford, also makes use of phonetic similarity in his “This Be The Worst” (2001), so much so that the title puzzlingly contradicts the text itself. What Mitchell does is to erase the obscenity from Larkin's text and turn the meaning upside down. The phonetic similarity of “tuck up” to “fuck up” creates a rhyming contrast between the two poems. Mitchell makes sure that the structure of the original is closely followed, but when a line is simply repeated, the meaning is the opposite of what Larkin said:

They tuck you up, your Mum and Dad
They read you Peter Rabbit, too.
They give you all the treats they had
And add some extra just for you.
(2001:53)

Of course, Mitchell's poem should be read as a literary joke, a text representing the wishful thinking of all those readers who want to turn a blind eye to Larkin's vision of genealogy. Surprisingly, if we read Mitchell's poem ironically, it appears to be a part of the reading that I offered earlier. This is what we would like, but cannot have:

Man hands on happiness to man.

It deepens like a coastal shelf.
So love your parents all you can
And have some cheerful kids yourself.
(ibid.)

It seems that Mitchell wrote the fictitious poem that could have existed as a target for Larkin's bitterly satirical wit. Out of context, it would probably be logical to think that Mitchell's poem was the original, and Larkin's a parodic response to it. Mitchell's poem can fruitfully be read as a playful reconstruction of an "original" that never existed. This is why it is a reading of Larkin's text rather than a poem in its own right.

If McGough made it plain that he wrote his poem "Despite what Larkin says", this ironic reading of Mitchell's text is much more a constituent of the cult of Larkin in general and "This Be The Verse" in particular. The relationship between Larkin and Mitchell is not unlike that between Thomas Hood's and Larkin's "I Remember, I Remember". Mitchell reconstructed the clichés that Larkin made ridiculous in his poem, and this way contributed to its interpretation.

Zephaniah's poem has the same title as Mitchell's, but that is the only similarity between the two. He uses Larkin's text as the raw material for his own poem. He recycles Larkin, and the result can only be a peculiar instance of palimpsest. Larkin, of course, shines through; the question is: why did Zephaniah need his poem?

As may be obvious from what I have written so far, in the discussion of these texts I am discussing role-playing. Larkin himself plays the role of an angry pagan prophet. Zephaniah is well known for his performances, but if one reads his texts, they also imply the role of a musician whose ambition is to make his audience support his political views enthusiastically. The only way to get close to Zephaniah's text (and, indeed, all of his poems) is by the suspension of disbelief: the reader needs to put her/himself into the community the poet speaks from. If we accept Stanley Fish's suggestion (1980) that the reader always *writes* the text, we ourselves will be the authors of this poem and make Benjamin Zephaniah the hero of a "freshly created universe". Or, to give it a theoretical framework, what we put into practice is Bakhtin's sympathetic co-experiencing: we understand the fictionalized poet as the *other*.

The role of a performer, however, is not the only role Zephaniah plays. In the introductory essay he wrote to the volume in which he published "This Be The Worst", we read about his enthusiastic love for Britain:

Above all the capital city shines magnificent through its pollution; it is amongst the heavyweights of cities: here it is estimated that over three hundred languages are spoken. But Britain is not just a collection of cities. The quaint beauty of the Lake District continues to inspire poets, and the grandeur of the Scottish mountains is famous all over the world. (2001:9)

This discourse is the opposite of what we can observe in the poem. The vocabulary and the cultural references of the essay suggest that their author has the ambition to occupy the language of the colonizer from a postcolonial position (similarly, for example, to Tony Harrison). The voice of the admirer of British culture, taking delight in everything he sees in the country, is matched by the voice of the other role: that of the cultural occupier. Needless to say, using Larkin's poem is also a form of emblematic occupation. What links the two discourses, that of the introduction and that of the poem, is their remarkable lack of irony.

Zephaniah (like the other poets discussed in this paper) follows Larkin's poem very closely. In the second stanza he replaces family genealogy with a vision of social genealogy:

But they were fucked up long ago
By tyrants who wore silly gowns,
Who made up what they didn't know
And gave the masses hand-me-downs.
(2001:30)

The ambiguity of the rude word has disappeared: Zephaniah's "fuck up" only implies oppression and causing harm. Therefore, the silly-looking, old-fashioned clothes have also changed: whereas in Larkin they allude to the grandparents' undressing to have sex, in Zephaniah they signify political power ("silly gowns") and a patronizing attitude ("hand-me-downs"). The last stanza uses the conventional imagery of the selfishness of the rich, and draws the conclusion that the poor can only trust themselves. Larkin's shocking suggestion provokes the reader's resistance, and if the reader wants to understand it, the only way is by constructing an ironic (rather than metaphysically acceptable) reading. Zephaniah's closure, on the other hand, says something that resists any ironic reading:

The rich give misery to the poor.
It deepens as they hoard their wealth.
They'll be fucked up for ever more,
So just start thinking for yourself.
(ibid.)

4. Conclusion

The four re-rewritings of Larkin's poem are by four very different poets, and they use Larkin's text in different ways, although all of them use the most important element of the mechanism light verse puts into motion: offering the pleasure of recognition to the reader. As I have shown, Rutherford kept the obscenity of the original but domesticated the image, McGough wrote an angry pamphlet against Larkin, Mitchell deprived the text of its original vulgarity and turned the meaning upside down, and Zephaniah wrote a political song in the context of postcolonial class antagonism. But all of them give evidence that Larkin's poem is a part of dissemination, and (no matter what the author's intention was) it also exists elsewhere: outside of the Larkin canon.

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**ROMANCE OR THE NEED TO PERFECT THE NOVEL:
18th CENTURY ENGLISH QUIXOTISM AS MORAL REFORM AND
LEGITIMATE PRACTICE IN CHARLOTTE LENNOX'S
*THE FEMALE QUIXOTE***

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Abstract. The present paper tackles quixotism in Charlotte Lennox's novel, *The Female Quixote* (1752), understood as a *forma mentis* which tries to impose a melioristic view upon the secular public sphere. The novel will be considered a formally orthodox quixotic narrative, which structurally discloses the good effects of romance reading, so much rejected by the patriarchal society. The analysis will also try to show how such readings are morally justified and badly needed in a value-free novelistic world dominated by Mandevillian "designs".

Keywords: empiricism, policy, quixotism, reform, romance, virtue

1. Introduction

When talking about the rise of the novel in England, we face a conundrum of strict boundaries in so far as the "new genre" is concerned. On the one hand, this is due to a major epistemological shift which took place in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, illustrated by the Scientific Revolution, Cartesianism, natural history, natural philosophy, all meant to promote a new *Weltanschauung* translated as the *disenchantment with the world*. On the other hand, the "New Species of Writing" – "intended as a Contrast to those in which the Reader was even to suppose all the Characters ideal, and every Circumstance quite imaginary, 'twas thought necessary, to give it a greater Air of Truth, to entitle it an *History*", as we learn from William Owen's pamphlet addressed to Mr. Fielding in 1751 – had the role of banishing "Romances, or Novels, Tales &c. fill'd with any thing which the wildest Imagination could suggest" (Owen qtd. in Williams, 1970:151, 153). Pointing out a problem of (mis)conceptualisation, rather than content, of the new popular genre at the time, the triad "New Species", "Novels" and "History" may be used deftly to decode the rhetoric of eighteenth-century English quixotic novel reduced to a chiasmic structure: the Quixotes' life is guided by the precepts of romance whose *history* teach them worthy yet obsolete values, if applied to contemporary society; the precepts of romance encourage misreading of contemporary society, assuming alternative scenarios in an effort to reform society without losing gentlemanly or gentlewomanly decorum.

The present paper focuses on an eighteenth-century English quixotic novel in order to catch a glimpse at how the Spanish model of the novel designed by Cervantes became a *method* of writing novels in the age. What I mean by *method* is *how* quixotism was appropriated at the time in terms of social and moral practices, as well as political discourse understood as a weapon with which Quixotes critique the modern, pragmatic, value-free world. I will also consider quixotism as morally and socially judicious, filtered through moral theory works of the time. I link this type of “normative”, “orthodox” quixotism (Gordon, 2006:3) to social institutions like the public sphere, to the parody of reason which “satirizes rational authority as a political fiction only as rational as the authority of Don Quixote’s lance” (Motooka, 1998:2) and to satire. There is an effort to retrieve lost moral values in order to maintain a sense of meaningfulness in a “post-epic” world in which “man is unsheltered, deprived of the metaphysical comfort of the gods or of access to a natural context of desire, yet hard pressed to derive any ultimate meaning from the world itself” (Cascardi, 1992:607). This effort inevitably turns into a *policy* and a “battle” for reason. This kind of policy is explicitly theorized by romances in Lennox’s *The Female Quixote*. The method used by Charlotte Lennox, among others, encompasses manners and the hero as such (Welsh, 2002: 80), and shows how this policy comes into force in order to reform the secular society depicted by satire or comedy and to turn the Quixotes into exemplary models that restore law and order and annihilate the “immanent meaninglessness” (Lukács, 1971:133) of ordinary experience.

2. Analysis

Preserving elements of romance with a view to debunking them in a pragmatic novelistic discourse, the eighteenth-century English novel promotes, as Martin Price puts it, “the implications of relativism, the suspension of authority that comes of seeing man as a natural creature, a product in a large measure of his peculiar climate, and of seeing the exotic and subject people as having their own cultural rightness”. (Price qtd. in Motooka, 1998: 19)

Charlotte Lennox’s novel, *The Female Quixote* (1998 [1752]), a perfect hypertext of Cervantes’s novel, reads quixotism as women’s will to power sustained by a firm political agenda. Many scholars of eighteenth-century English fiction have approached the novel from a wide range of perspectives, such as the politics of gender (of both the main heroine, Arabella, and of Lennox as a woman writer), the dangers of private reading, pedagogy, women’s education and learning or feminism. I only want to

consider this novel as a formally “orthodox”, according to Gordon, quixotic narrative which structurally discloses the good effects of romance reading so much rejected by the patriarchal society, metonymically embodied in the novel by the curate who talks Arabella into giving up reading romances because they seriously affect her mind.

In a review of *The Female Quixote*, Fielding, a fervent supporter of Lennox, argues that

Don Quixote is ridiculous in performing Feats of Absurdity himself; Arabella can only become so, in provoking and admiring the Absurdity of others. In the former Case, the Ridicule hath all the Force of a Representation; it is in a Manner subjected to the Eyes; in the latter it is conveyed, as it were, through our Ears, and partakes of the Coldness of History or Narration. (...) Arabella conceives indeed somewhat preposterously of the Ranks and Conditions of Men; that is to say, mistakes one Man for another; but never advances towards the Absurdity of imagining Windmills and Wine-Bags to be human Creatures, or Flocks of Sheep to be Armies. (in Jensen, 1964:280-281)

Though praising the epic quality of the text, Fielding makes no bones about underestimating the inferiority of the heroine’s adventures, especially because she misreads life as romance and “commands” the others to enter this world or at least, adopt its rules. The crystal-clear message conveyed by the novel is Arabella’s desire to acquire skilful techniques meant to help her conquer men both verbally and sexually. If we stick to this approach, we tend to oversimplify the economy of the whole plot and treat the novel as mere propaganda against the prevailing male authority. However, Fielding remarks that Arabella is not quixotic insofar as her senses are concerned. She puts the discourse of romance into practice in order to train her imagination, intellectual development and interpretation and also to hold the power of words, not only of agency.

Living in a countryside castle with her father, who isolated himself from the world after the death of his wife, Arabella reads bad translations of French romances which drive her mad. Though irrelevant to real life, the heroine learns romance values despite the sceptical ridicule of society “which threatened to debunk every aspect of the traditional genre” (Gordon, 1998:500). Transferred by her mother to her father’s library, Arabella has already performed the political act of recovering and allying with the absent mother in defiance of her father (Malina, 1996:279), who tries to free her from marrying her cousin Glanville. She strikes the attitude of a powerful *female* by echoing the world of her romances in order to reject any potential marriage. From this point of view, Arabella uses romance-reading to critique perverted eighteenth-century social customs like contractual marriage meant to provide social coherence. “The bad Effects of a

Whimsical Study”, as Margaret Dalziel puts it (Introduction to *The Female Quixote*, 1998:5), enable Arabella to mock empiricism (what is) as quixotism (what/how things ought to be) (Motooka, 1998:126). I relate this point to female education (Barney, 1999:259), meant to grant Arabella a respectable place in the public life and to urge her to negotiate the customs of romance and the customs of eighteenth-century English society. Read through this lens, I agree with James J. Lynch who opines that Lennox “advocates a fictional world in which the qualities of love and fidelity... find a more realistic though no less ideal, mode of expression” (Lynch, 1987:53). Thus, Arabella is one of those eighteenth-century English Quixotes who *make* rather than find the real and build it in order to reject the world by means of misinterpretation or overreading (Gordon, 1998:13). Contextually, quixotism, comically substituting local/historical realism by a blend of realism and epic (Hunter, 1996:9), was taken over by the Enlightenment, concurrently destroying the alleged universal character of the novel, “accessible to readers who lack knowledge of the cultural history they represent” (Cascardi, 1982:187). Eighteenth-century quixotism is a matter of both sentimentalism and reason. Wendy Motooka (1998:2) argues that John Locke’s and David Hume’s contribution made this “political” aspect

result from the coexistence of two conflicting cultural assumptions about the nature of rational authority: the first being that reason is universal, and therefore compelling to all rational people (a tautology); the second being that experience and the empirical method are the means through which individuals acquire this universal reason or general view. The first assumption (universal reason) limits the diversity of credible ways of thought, even as the second assumption (the importance of individual experience) frequently defies general principles. (...) Eighteenth-century quixotic figures embody individual madness, while reproducing the conditions of universal rationality: they staunchly believe that reason is universal, that it can be confirmed by experience, and that themselves already have it.

This means that Arabella sees what everybody else sees and, moreover, as a miss-reader of romances, she turns them into life as it is, as well as it should be. Unlike Don Quixote, she is deeply rooted in a protestant pragmatic background, touched by “empirical morality”, i.e., empirical feeling as a ground for moral sentiment. Quixotism challenges Reason, claiming that it is not uniformly distributed and, consequently, utopian. Through Arabella’s politicised discourse, eighteenth-century quixotism shows that Reason lost its univocal meaning, now disseminated into reasons, to paraphrase Motooka. Reason is dissolved into a diversity of subjective, private experiences, which allude to sentimentalism understood

as a form of empiricism (Motooka, 1998:2). Cervantes's hero's shaky reason and good-sense are the basics exploited by the eighteenth century English novel, not only pejoratively, but also as an instance of what has been imposed in the age as conversational politeness, art of conversation, gentleman's or gentlewoman's behaviour. Furthermore, the former ones are, in Alasdair MacIntyre's terms, men as they could be if they realised their essential nature, which implies the idea of *telos* (MacIntyre, 1984:50).

Without being a coquette, who only learns to gain power and *how* to gain it – in this sense, Glanville's sister, Charlotte, is such a one – Arabella abides by the principles of disinterestedness and laws of romance, “preferring [another's] Glory before her own particular interest” (Lennox, 1998:297). This is the manner in which she can reform men, by preferring adventures, not imposed marriage. Unlike the Mandevillian Charlotte, who cannot understand the laws of romance and prefers selfish action, Arabella sees plots everywhere and never perceives the actual plots in which others involve her. For instance, an unnamed gentleman gives her illusory control, “being extremely glad at having so beautiful a Creature in his Power, [he] told her she might command him as she pleased” (100).

Lennox's plot actually relies on the “cognitive and semantic dissonance” (Richetti, 1999:205) between the language of romance and the language of the novel. Words like “adventure”, “history”, “favours”, as depicted by romance, are at loggerheads with their contemporary counterparts displayed by the novel. In this respect, Arabella's conversation with the Countess is of paramount importance. Though well-versed in romance, the Countess, possibly anticipating the Doctor's cure, warns Arabella that romances do have a history but they no longer correspond to present-day social reality and taste. Echoing Locke, who perceives human behaviour as being governed by custom rather than by innate natural laws and morality as being different across cultures and historical periods, the Countess's strong argument does not refer to the unchanging nature of vice and virtue, but to what they represent across place and time, and these terms are often misinterpreted or misleading: “What was honourable a thousand Years ago, may probably be looked upon as infamous now” (Lennox, 1998:328).

As Sharon Smith Palo proposes (2005-2006:217), “Arabella's refusal to abandon her romantic notions of vice and virtue”, since the Countess cannot convince her, “indicates her belief that these notions represent enduring truths that are above the variances and the slow but inevitable changes that characterize social custom”.

Adventure for Arabella means escaping imposed marriage, far from the meaning of *ad-venire* (‘to come upon’) which, in Georg Simmel's terms,

is only a "special event that occurs outside the usual continuity of this life", an 'island in life which determines its beginning and end" (qtd. in Gilman, 1989:23-24). Adventure only means a small part of the self-empowerment plot hatched in order to resist patriarchal society and *judge* its vices. It seems to me that this is a crucial point when talking about the dichotomy romance and novel whose boundaries tend to be blurred only formally by Lennox's text. If Glanville, her cousin, acts in accordance with Arabella's romance desires, borrowing the model of "Heroicks" that are actually "mock-heroicks", or if Sir George, Glanville's friend, tries to court Arabella, staging romance plots and even becoming a character in such plots, yet unable to control them, then we may say that novelistic characters such as these question romance values via the novelistic discourse. They create fiction for the sake of entertainment, but, more importantly, for vested interests, which go with Mandevillian vested interests so much present in the novel as a genre. To put it differently, characters like Charlotte, Glanville or Sir George are driven by self-interest disguised as benevolence. The world of the novel in which they live strongly opposes Arabella's "romantic idealism" (McKeon, 2002:21), which corresponds to "aristocratic ideology" (ibid.) in that tradition forms the basis for knowledge whereby moral values remain unchanged and are deeply-rooted in human behaviour.

Unawareness is Arabella's major characteristic, since her beauty functions *mechanically* rather than *instrumentally* (for some purpose). She is not, as Charlotte clearly is, using her "Beauty" as a means to an end. Moreover, her beauty entitles her to *produce* behaviours without *intending* any of these consequences (Gordon, 1998:506). In order to control her destiny and preserve her identity, she must always negotiate between romance and real life and also cultivate her hermeneutic skills which, unlike Charlotte and her servant Lucy, for instance, "contribute to the development of her intellect" (Palo, 2005-2006:207). She succeeds by means of skirting or escaping the embarrassing conditions and limitations imposed on her by social custom and thus becomes a reformer of manners whose propaganda is invincible. She strongly believes *she* is subject to the laws of romance: "The Mischief I have done...was not voluntary, I assure you. My Power is confined by certain unavoidable Laws" (Lennox, 1998:182). The other characters despise romances for their "Arts of Intrigue" (381) because they have never read them while Arabella, as an exquisite *connoisseur*, guides herself by generosity, virtue, love, tenderness, sympathy and taste, all inculcated by the so much hated genre. This is why she finally resists the doctor's imperatives to come back to "her senses" because all these qualities are fully proven by Arabella herself who responds to the others accordingly:

I am afraid, Sir, that the difference is not in Favour of the present World...these Histories...if they do not describe real Life, give us an Idea of a better Race of Beings than now inhabit the World. (380)

One may argue that Arabella's "romantic Generosity" is not merely strategic. Her political strategy resides in her delusion which protects her from the Mandevillian (mis)readings to which others subject her (Gordon, 1998:511), associated with social customs she recognizes so well. Thus, she has the power to transform the public sphere, particularly when her "retro" dress is highly appreciated in Bath. If the eighteenth-century public sphere becomes a space of fashion and spectacle for women, Arabella transforms this space because her dress is not fashionable, and yet it "becomes" her. Therefore, the question of petrified custom is readily dismissed. By wearing an eccentric dress, Arabella performs the act of bringing and re-inscribing the past into a present suffused with history. She reiterates and recreates fictional history in order to create her own present, "therefore rendering that which has been marginalized as 'fictional' history" (Labbie, 1998:85). She affects the present by means of her mimetic performance, enacting a "metonymy of presence" "that undoes the histories she reads in the process of citing them" (Bhabha qtd. in Labbie, 1998:84).

3. Conclusion

Finally "united in every Virtue and laudable Affectation of the Mind" (Lennox, 1998:383) with Glanville, Arabella compensates for a pervasive assumption of universal interest – in fact, the satirical target of the novel – that, finding "Design" beneath the most innocent appearance, had made it difficult to credit the appearance of disinterestedness (Gordon, 1998:514). Romance morality, good nature and generosity turn Arabella into a superior being ready to face public life. Though cured of her madness understood as her refusal to obey otiose social practices and conventions, she eventually demonstrates "her ability to think and act beyond the limitations imposed by the codes of female conduct available to her" (Palo, 2005-2006:220). In other words, Arabella deals with the reformation of the others – the social self – through her genuine self, strengthened, not shaped, by romance reading. "Arabella's delusion rescues romance" argues Gordon (1998:508), "by producing a space within which we credit her romancing as nonstrategic," which means disinterested, and lacking "the Arts of Intrigue" practised by the other characters who have not read romances. Paradoxically, Lennox's novel narrates a romance by presenting a female

Quixote entrapped and deluded by romance, fuelled, at the same time, by the “interested” romances of the others.

We may conclude that Arabella embodies the ideal of justifiable moral precepts in a modern, disenchanted world that needs to preserve, if not to apply, means of individual, disinterested leisure pursuits meant to reshape social practices, protocols, manners, civility and decorum. More simply, romance, Arabella’s *modus vivendi*, could read life as the ordered and positive, not chaotic and negative, space (Langbauer, 1990:63) that exerted a great influence on the form of the novel.

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**AN EXPERIMENT IN ETHICS:
JOHN STEINBECK'S *THE GRAPES OF WRATH***

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*Abstract: What is John Steinbeck's philosophy in the *The Grapes of Wrath*? The meaning of the book is to be found in the minds of its readers who are invited to construct their own vision of their future, discover new possibilities of life, and imagine a new sort of "people". Steinbeck's approach – what he calls non-teleological thinking – is resolutely immanent.*

Key words: chance, ethics, immanence, interpretation, people, teleology

1. Introduction

Among other problems, John Steinbeck's 1939 masterpiece *The Grapes of Wrath* raises the question of the way the novel should be read. Perhaps a better manner of putting it could be: who are its readers? The answer we will give to this question has important implications. One thing at least is perfectly clear. The book describes the trials undergone by migrants who fled the South Western plains at the time of the Dust Bowl. A lot of them went to California and were there given the pejorative label of "Okies" owing to the fact that a number of them originated from Oklahoma, as indeed did the fictitious Joad family to which about half of the book is devoted. Did John Steinbeck write for these "Okies"? Maybe we could summarize our point by saying that everything depends on the way we construe the preposition "for". The novelist never imagined that his readership would be found among families of agricultural workers in California, or elsewhere for that matter. Migrants were barely able to read and write. Indeed the only book they usually had in their homes was a Bible. One anonymous family in the novel is an exception as they also (symbolically) possess a copy of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. John Steinbeck wrote "about" these migrants for a different sort of readers who had to be made aware of the intolerable situation that had arisen in California. It may however be also argued that in another way the writer wrote "for" the "Okies". In other words, he lent them his pen as they could not write themselves, let alone be published. To some extent, he became their voice. Such indeed could be one of the main functions of literature: speak "for" a people. (It will remain to define more precisely what is meant by the word "people".)

2. Audience and meaning

There is no doubt that Steinbeck could only conceive his novel for educated people who had both time and money to read it. He wrote to convince readers who hopefully would then – after having read the book – perform certain actions. We reach here, however, the limits of our study, that is the pragmatic dimension of fiction. Only an extremely minute fraction of Steinbeck's actual readers probably translated into reality some of the insights they discovered in the book. It is, of course, obvious that very few of them were in a position to wield some sort of political power. In addition, real readers are human beings and all human beings are different from each other. To simplify, let us say that we are all strange mixtures of singularities both good and evil, of liberalism and conservatism, etc. Consciously or unconsciously, some readers accepted fully or partially the very abstract moral and political implications of what happens in *The Grapes of Wrath*. Others did not. We will never know and, accordingly, the investigation that follows mainly concerns Steinbeck's book.

What is the meaning of the novel? Actually, the question has to be rephrased if we wish to determine what that meaning consists in. Where is the meaning of the book? It is unquestionably in the novel, as without the book, the question of its meaning would be irrelevant. The meaning, whatever it is, will have to be produced from the thousands of small details that make up *The Grapes of Wrath*, from their arrangements and the links we can establish between them, as well as from the implications we can derive from them. There is therefore a second answer to the question of where the meaning of the book is situated. As Gadamer indicated in *Truth and Method* (1975), it is in the minds of the readers who produce it, starting from the actual words of the book, selecting or neglecting details, undergoing the influence of their moral and political choices and prejudices. Readers, of course, have to reconstruct the plot of the novel. They also have to devise values, produce systems of oppositions, and discover implications. More generally, readers have to generalize, something that is all the more true in the case of Steinbeck's novel as 16 out of its 30 chapters do not concern the Joad family. These so-called "intercalary" chapters oblige us to consider that the book is not about a single family, but that we are dealing with a more general social and political problem. Can we go a little further? Our minds never stop producing abstractions: at a more general level, the problems addressed in the book concern America as a whole and its other groups of underdogs, such as the Indians (alluded to in the novel and victimized among others by... the Joads), African Americans, Jews,

Hispanics, etc. The novel provides us with intellectual grids and systems of values that are conceivably relevant in a great many contexts Steinbeck probably never suspected. *The Grapes of Wrath* still has readers in the 21st century; they live in America, but also in Europe, Asia, Africa, etc. Transferring Steinbeck's ideas to the contexts with which these new readers are familiar certainly makes sense to them. That is the central question this paper will be concerned with: what does John Steinbeck tell us about ethics as well as about politics, since, as we will see, our ethical principles cannot be separated from underlying political choices?

If we are to believe a famous pronouncement, the author was perfectly aware that reading is undeniably a very complex process and he seems to allude to the ancient art of hermeneutics which goes back at the very least to the Middle Ages. He said that "five layers" can be found in the novel. (Steinbeck, 1975) He also added that the reader "won't find more than he has in himself," which seems to suggest that ultimately what really matters is the way each reader individually relates to what he or she discovers when he or she reads the book. If one prefers, the true meaning of *The Grapes of Wrath* is to be found in the conjunction of the details of the book and of my true self. Steinbeck doesn't enlarge on what those five levels exactly represent. Maybe we should return to the old medieval hermeneutic techniques which classically distinguished only four levels. Read in this way, the novel can be considered in ascending order: (i) *literally*, as a book about a particular family, the Joads, and the way they react to their victimization in Oklahoma, on route 66, and finally in California; (ii) *allegorically* (a word that probably could be replaced by 'intertextually' in modern English), as a book that repeats Biblical patterns, such as for instance the Exodus out of Egypt, which give it a more universal meaning; (iii) *morally* (and we'd like to add politically, since, unlike our pre-Renaissance ancestors, we no longer live in a world in which history doesn't seem to exist) as a book about America as a whole, its fundamental values, what's wrong with them, what new attitudes could be promoted, and, more generally, its past and its possible future; (iv) *anagogically*: this non religious book admittedly is not about the ultimate Christian problem of the salvation of our soul, but we could probably adapt the category and consider that it is about problems of identity and that it raises the age-old question of what it means to be a human being. This fourth "layer" is consequently more general than the others as it certainly concerns not only American people but also all kinds of readers across the globe. If finally one insists on a "fifth" level, as Steinbeck apparently suggests, we will propose that the book is also about me, that is to say about what is most specific about the thousands of ways I am different from the others, and also about

what my possible relationship to the others could and should be. That is the way I have decided to interpret the quotation by Steinbeck who indeed leaves a large possibility of choice. It is thus our belief that the novel is mainly about ethics.

In Chapter 13, the writer seems to address the problem again when he has Jim Casy say, "It means more than the words says". (1939:97) Casy is referring to a line from a poem – presumably by William Blake – he has just quoted. The problem is important. In that particular chapter, the Joad family buries Grampa by the side of the road. They try to find a quotation from the Bible and they hesitate between three verses before deciding upon one that "might's well mean somepin" (96). Their problem here is to find something true to say about Grampa. In both cases, the meaning is not to be found in the poem or in the Biblical passage. In other words, the problem is not to read a quotation correctly (supposing that that were possible), but to read ourselves. We have to look upon it as a problem of implications: what can these words tell us about Grampa and ourselves? We know that the funeral is not a religious funeral. Indeed there is nothing Christian about it as Casy is no longer a regular preacher. Words, language, cultural and religious references are only important in so far as they offer us an insight about our situation and the possibilities that our future holds for us.

That is the way I propose to read *The Grapes of Wrath*. Possibly the book could be classified in the old tradition of the Jeremiad, so well illustrated in the 17th century by the Puritans. Something has happened to America, an intolerable situation has developed, traditional morality has been betrayed, and therefore we must re-establish the dignity of our people. Obviously, Steinbeck is not advocating going back to the values defended by the Puritans – or even to the ideas of Thomas Jefferson, or even Karl Marx, but he is clearly telling his fellow-citizens that America has reached a dead end and that the country has to change its priorities. Put it differently, the novel can be read as a mixture of present and future. The present is what is described. It is what is unbearable. On the other hand, the future is not described. What will Tom Joad and his sister Rose of Sharon do after the novel ends? We will never know. All we know is that, according to the author, it will have to be different from the present. More specifically, it is not described because it is not yet written. Tom and Rose of Sharon are still part of the present, even if they have begun to invent a different sort of future. By definition, the real future concerns the novel's readers. We have to recognize that we are moral and political agents in our communities, in the United States or abroad, in 1939, but also today, in the 21st Century. Such seems to be John Steinbeck's conception of art. Art and literature can be characterized as what resists. They resist evil, slavery, humiliation, etc.

They also resist repetition, the repetition of status quos in particular. At the same time as they help invent values for the future, they also invent their own form. *The Grapes of Wrath* is not just a realistic novel about the plight of a family. It is an extremely original work of art that unites the story of a family and the fate of a whole community. In other words, it is not just about individuals. It is a social and political pronouncement. In his book, Steinbeck repeatedly uses the word “people”. *The Grapes of Wrath* is about the invention of a new people. And, in the same way as the book represents the creation of a new form, it also heralds for Steinbeck the rejection of old, outdated frames of reference such as puritanism, capitalism, jeffersonism, communism, etc. The book is thus an invitation for us to write a different and better future. One consequence of this is that we have to accept that John Steinbeck was a thinker, almost a philosopher, something a great many of his critics since 1939 have seemed not to be aware of. I also propose to take Steinbeck’s ideas very seriously.

John Steinbeck’s way of thinking is first and foremost perceptible at the level of the plot, more precisely when we observe in what particular manner the characters’ attitudes to the family evolve. People change, they learn, at least some of them... Roughly speaking, we can distinguish three successive stages and readers are invited to evolve in their minds with the characters. Of course, it is only an invitation, not an obligation. The novel reveals possibilities we are free to follow depending on our conscious and unconscious choices. Besides, only a few of the novel’s characters go the whole way to the end of the third stage.

Stage one could be called selfishness. Literally, characters are only interested in their own selves, as if the others and the outside world did not really matter. At the beginning of the book, Tom Joad offers an excellent example of this stage. He is only concerned with two things: alcohol and prostitutes. He meets Jim Casy, who drinks some of his whiskey and confesses that for him too sex with women was an absolute necessity. Casy has started to change though. He has given up his activity as a preacher, which implies that he has also renounced sex. (After each religious meeting he held, he used to systematically sleep with one of the women attending). Tom’s educational process will start later. For the moment, as he says, “I’m still layin’ my dogs down one at a time” (117). His life is a pure present revolving around himself. His sister, Rose of Sharon, is characterized by the unrealistic dreams of middle class comforts she has discovered in the magazines she has been able to lay her hands on. For the moment, she doesn’t seem to have an identity of her own. She identifies with a number of objects that she (mistakenly) believes would make her happy: a small

apartment for herself, her husband and the baby when it is born, an icebox, etc.

Stage two coincides with the recognition that family is essential. Family here means the sort of extended family the Joads constitute, not the small nuclear unit Rose of Sharon keeps dreaming about. Uncle John is included, as is Jim Casy. For most of the book, once the Joads have left their farm, the car becomes synonymous with that new enlarged family. Ma indeed knows how difficult and also necessary it is to keep the family together and to fight back its enemies: natural enemies such as death that kills the dog and then the grand-parents the moment they leave the farm, but also human enemies: alcohol, sex, and money when these things are considered in an individualistic manner. Tom stops drinking, but Uncle John doesn't and he becomes a potential danger for the group; Tom and Al give up girls, though for different reason (Tom will become some sort of prophet, whereas Al gets married and starts a family of his own with Aggie); curiously enough, money is also a danger for the unity of the family and Ma gets extremely angry when some of the members suggest staying behind on Route 66 in order to make some money and catch up with the group later. Admittedly some people like Connie or Noah desert the family for various reasons (and Uncle John is often tempted to do the same), but the Joads keep moving forward. Indeed the family opens itself, including, as it does at one time, the Wilsons on Route 66, then the Wainwrights whose daughter Al marries at the end.

Stage three takes us beyond the family. Ma realizes that the family as it is, is not sufficient. ("The family was fust..." (306)). When in the boxcar she pulls down the blanket separating them from the Wainwrights, she invents a new name to describe what matters first and foremost: it used to be family, now it is "anybody". "Anybody" is the exact contrary of selfishness. Caring for your own family was still selfish as Ma discovered very early in the Hooverville where they first stopped when they arrived in California: she cannot not share the stew she has been cooking with all the unknown children that suddenly surround her. In the novel, "anybody" usually means first of all a question of food and hospitality towards people you don't know. It is a duty, one could almost say the new Law. The Joads invited the Wilsons on the road, Tom is offered breakfast by people he comes across by chance at the Weedpatch government camp, etc. You establish a new link and that link is essential, it is synonymous with caring for the other. In other words, identity is no longer defined by your vertical link with a piece of land as was the case in the popular sort of Jeffersonism prevalent at the beginning of the book. The new link is horizontal with the stranger you encounter on the road.

Is it absolutely necessary to pinpoint the origins of Steinbeck's philosophical convictions? He was a man who was extremely curious in an intellectual sense and he had certainly read a lot. Let us recognize that the ideas he put forward in *The Grapes of Wrath* are sufficiently general not to need a former proprietor... Emerson is certainly an obvious influence as he is present in the book through Casy's allusions to him and his concept of the Oversoul. However, rather than Emerson whose beliefs were mainly aimed at individual fulfilment, it would be more relevant to mention Walt Whitman, probably Emerson's greatest disciple. With Whitman, the Oversoul unquestionably acquires a political dimension. Steinbeck just like Whitman certainly believed very strongly in equality and democracy and more specifically in the need to refuse any form of exclusion. (Equality actually begins inside the Joad family with the collapse of the old patriarchal principles: Grampa dies the moment he leaves his land and in the last chapter Pa is the one who symbolically is now in charge of food.) We may also remember Tom's allusions to *Ecclesiastes* in chapter 28: "Two are better than one. (...) A three-fold cord is not quickly broken," etc. (288) In fact, the whole novel can be seen as a necessary shift from "I" to "we".

3. Endings and beginnings

The novel has two successive denouements as far as the Joad family is concerned: chapter 28 is devoted to Tom and chapter 30 to Rose of Sharon. To some extent, the two siblings turn into heroes or at the very least prophets. The novel certainly makes no attempt at being realistic as Tom and Rose become more than just human beings. Besides, we don't know what happens to them once the book is finished. Tom just says he will metamorphose himself into some sort of ubiquitous "soul". In their last scenes, both Tom and his sister undergo a re-birth process before going "beyond" ordinary humanity. (As we will see further down, "beyond" is a key word – almost a concept – for John Steinbeck.)

Tom goes into a cave through a narrow tunnel before leaving it for ever and consuming the final separation from his mother. There is here clearly no need to insist on the re-birth process. Besides, as we know that he has been wounded, Tom enters the world as a new man with a new face. In his last conversation with Ma, Tom explains that there is something wrong with "one fella with a million acres, while a hundred thousan' good farmers is starvin'." (288) That is the first difference between Tom's message and Rose's. It is political. (We said that if we are good followers of Whitman, there should be no differences between men and women, but it would appear that at the end of the 30's it wasn't conceivable for a woman to play

a political role. Not in a novel by Steinbeck.) We immediately note that there is no difference between morality and politics: if you are rich, you have a duty towards those less well-off than you are and you should help them get the food they need, and probably also contribute to their happiness. It is interesting to look more closely at Tom's agenda. In the speech he delivers in front of Ma, we can distinguish two parts: first, as could be expected, he stresses the notion of protest against social injustice. He then moves into what looks like a different dimension, stressing the fact that protest is not sufficient. Man has to go beyond resentment which remains negative. Through Tom's mouth, Steinbeck promotes positive values: hungry children who get their dinner and men building a new house. In other words, food, life, and home (and, one supposes, love) are what really matters and what the future should be like. In addition, Tom stresses the fact that it will be present "ever'where – wherever you look (...) I'll be there." (289) The passage is important. Tom doesn't choose; everybody, anybody is concerned without any exclusions or divisions between human beings. Rich people are not superior and have no special rights. We could perhaps resort to the term "utopia" to describe Tom's vision, except that Tom (and presumably Steinbeck himself) believes that such a state is possible in the (near) future.

As she enters the barn after she has crossed the rain, Rose of Sharon discards her clothes and stands naked under an old blanket. Like Tom, the character is symbolically re-born, or rather undergoes a new birth as we now discover a completely different Rose of Sharon. She goes one step further than Tom who spoke of the duties of the rich. Rose of Sharon will put into practice the essential truth Ma has just discovered and expressed through her famous pronouncement: "Worse off we get, the more we got to do." (306) Indeed, the family has nothing left, no home, no car, no money, no food. Rose will give the only thing she possesses: her milk. In this passage full of paradoxes, she is reborn and at the same time as she becomes a (symbolic) mother, she at last finds the identity she has been unconsciously looking for ever since the book began. She indeed discovers the essence of motherhood with its true meaning. She gives her milk to a man who is about 50 and could be her father. This scene was harshly criticized when the novel appeared and has regularly been condemned by critics who have chosen to display very little sympathy and understanding for what we can safely reconstruct of Steinbeck's intentions. The novelist repeatedly pointed out that such an ending was rigorously logical. It is. To begin with, all the men have left the barn (apart of course from the dying man). Women have taken over, a process which started much earlier on in the novel, the moment the family abandoned their farm. Men cannot cope and they have slowly lost

their power and their authority as they have proved unable to feed their families. It certainly was a stroke of genius for Steinbeck to show a young woman – almost a teenager – who gives life to a (failed?) father figure. Here again, as with Tom, the values put forward are food, life, and undeniably love. Indeed, the three words are here strictly synonyms. It would also appear that Rose of Sharon creates a sort of home in that derelict, weather-beaten barn. Secondly, the reader notes a marked contrast between the man and the young woman. He shakes his head as if to refuse the food offered. She says a deep “Yes”, and eventually the life force wins over the attraction of death and despair. (At least one supposes that is what happens, as the novel ends there and we will know whether the man survived or not). In any case, it is the beginning of spring, the rain finally stops during the passage, suggesting that the scene could be a sort of new Mount Ararat. (They have reached that barn located at the top of a hill as the flood stops.) Besides, it is seven days since the man last had some food to eat. Are we wrong to suppose that, with Tom and Rose, Steinbeck wanted to show that it was possible for a new mankind to be born? Do we witness a new Creation?

Tom and Rose of Sharon are thus clearly no longer realistic characters. They have almost become mythical types whose function in the novel is to embody the values and ethical choices John Steinbeck is trying to promote. These choices sound extremely modern to us. One is almost tempted to ask the question whether the novelist had read Emmanuel Lévinas’s seminal *Totality and Infinity* (1979). The answer is most probably no as the book appeared in French in 1961. After all, the question is not really important. Steinbeck did not need Lévinas. Yet he was able to discover and express similar intuitions to those of the French philosopher. All the same, if one is familiar with Lévinas’s thought, it is decidedly uncanny to read *The Grapes of Wrath* afterwards. It is almost as if we were reading the same text twice.

In a famous letter, Steinbeck explained that the Joads “have” to meet the dying man by chance (1975). The meaning of the scene is indeed inseparable from the fact that the meeting is an unforeseeable event. Lévinas could have used exactly the same words. Relationships between humans are not reciprocal. We have an absolute duty towards the person we encounter by chance, the stranger, in other words, someone who is now part of my friends or a member of my family. That is what we have been saying when we dealt with the family (which of course doesn’t mean that we have no duties towards our friends and our family.) Lévinas was a deeply religious thinker, and Steinbeck most probably would not use Lévinas’s words when he said that it is the stranger that carries the trace of God – not me, but most certainly he would have concurred: the other is more important than I (who

believe that I have been created in the image of God. Lévinas explains that that absolutely doesn't give me any rights over the others). Lévinas wanted here to insist on the important idea that humility is one of the most important of all the virtues. A consequence of that pronouncement is that I am the "hostage" of the other, that is to say that I am responsible for his or her welfare and happiness. To summarize what is at the heart of Lévinas's and most certainly of Steinbeck's ethics: (i) you give, you don't receive; (ii) you say "yes", never "no" to the other. In this respect, *The Grapes of Wrath* is one of the two great 20th century novels which (almost) end with a resounding "Yes". The other one is of course James Joyce's *Ulysses*. It is possible to prefer Steinbeck's book, at least from an ethical point of view. Molly Bloom's "Yes" is purely personal and one is tempted to say strictly selfish, as the character is mainly concerned with her own happiness, not to say her sexual fantasies. Rose of Sharon was probably selfish like most teenagers, she certainly enjoyed sex with Connie. (The passage when they have sexual intercourse in the car next to the dying grand-mother has caused much ink to be spilled.) At the end of the book, she has however reached a stage completely beyond that type of behaviour. She says "Yes" to life in a way about which there is absolutely nothing personal. The only thing she now cares for is life, the life of a complete stranger. She expects nothing in exchange. Thirdly, the other gives a meaning to my life. In other words, that meaning doesn't come from me, and it is not already present in me. I understand who I am and what possibilities of life lie ahead of me when I meet the stranger. That is the case for Tom whose life will acquire its meaning when he finds those unknown people who suffer and/or are happy "ever'where – wherever." It is literally the case for Rose of Sharon who finally finds herself the moment she sees the old man in the barn.

4. Conclusion

There is no denying that Steinbeck's book speaks to us today. We mentioned what sounds for us like echoes of Emmanuel Lévinas. We could also have mentioned echoes of Jacques Derrida, who voices the same ethical concerns in virtually the same terms in what is curiously and unquestionably his most political book, as if politics could not but be ethical (or ethics political?) In *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason* (2005:86), Derrida writes that "a discourse on human rights and on democracy remains little more than an obscene alibi so long as it tolerates the terrible plight of so many millions of human beings suffering from malnutrition, disease, and humiliation, grossly deprived of the rights of all, of everyone, of anyone. (This 'anyone' comes before any other metaphysical determination as subject, human person, or

consciousness, before any juridical determination as compeer, compatriot, kin, brother, neighbour, fellow religious follower, or fellow citizen.)” Derrida adds that, if we choose to promote democracy, “what basically has to matter for us is what Jean Paulhan called ‘le premier venu’, translated by ‘the first to happen by,’ anyone, no matter who.” (ibid) With these very simple words, Jacques Derrida says exactly the same thing as Ma when she replaced “family” with the word “anybody” to explain that there was only value which counted: hospitality, giving to those we don’t know but who cross our path.

Steinbeck’s ethical ideas have implications. It is once again pointless to ask where they come from. Had the novelist read Spinoza or Nietzsche? Had he just simply heard about them? Perhaps it would be better to suggest that the possibilities of elaborating an ethical theory are singularly limited. In other words, we have a number of choices to make at the outset and we then become part of great, ancestral traditions. When one reads *The Grapes of Wrath*, it seems certain that Steinbeck, consciously or not, chose to place himself in the continuity of men like Spinoza or Nietzsche. He probably re-discovered on his own their central intuitions, the way they problematized the world and revealed the logic behind our desires and our actions. Steinbeck did the same. He was a great thinker, he possessed more than a fair amount of genius, and his intellectual argumentation when he dealt with questions of ethics and politics proves completely convincing (provided one looks at it very closely of course).

The basic choice is between morality and ethics, two words that for a number of philosophers have come today to acquire a very precise meaning. Gilles Deleuze summarizes the opposition between the two terms in a very clear and handy manner. “Ethics, which is to say a typology of immanent modes of existence, replaces Morality, which always refers existence to transcendent values.” (1988:23) Presumably, Deleuze became interested in ethics when he read Spinoza’s *Ethics*, a book that develops a purely immanent conception of life. Steinbeck clearly possessed a deeply similar sensibility. Positing a transcendent level clearly appeared to him as too facile and especially more dishonest.

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**OLD ROOTS, NEW BRANCHES: MODERN IDENTITY QUEST
IN
Z. NEALE HURSTON'S *THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING GOD***

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Abstract: In 1937, Hurston published the Bildungsroman of an African-American woman looking for a place of her own. Race, gender, class determine Janie's journey into self-discovery. Community and individual self, oppression and freedom, stereotypy and originality, repression and expression are united by the blues. This paper aims to explore the novel's achievement as celebration of tradition and affirmation of modern consciousness.

Key words: community, ethnicity, identity, prejudice, race, stereotype

1. Introduction: Hurston Then and Now

The developing tradition of black women's writing nurtured now in the prose and poetry of such writers as Toni Morrison and Alice Walker began with the work of Zora Neale Hurston. Hurston was not the first Afro-American woman to publish a novel, but she was the first to create language and imagery that reflected the reality of black women's lives. Ignoring the stereotypes, social and literary, that her predecessors spent their energies rejecting, Hurston rooted her art in the cultural tradition of the Black rural South [...] Hers became the first authentic black female voice in American literature (Wall in Gates & Appiah, 1993: 76).

The opening paragraph in Cheryl A. Wall's overview of Hurston's work, entitled *Changing Her Own Words*, maps out the route to properly understanding the writer's crucial place in 20th century American literature. Moreover, it indicates the main lines along which her best-known novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, can be interpreted. It is, however, important to emphasize that this is a contemporary reading and that, at the original time of publication, the book was not exactly embraced as a masterpiece by the majority of reviewers and fellow writers. A glimpse at the critical response to the first edition might indicate various degrees of detachment and even possible bias.

Thus, Richard Wright, prominent figure of the militant African-American milieu, famous for his iconic *Native Son* (1940), found it hard to evaluate Hurston's novel. The reason was, presumably, the book's lack of

“a basic idea or theme that lends itself to significant interpretation”. Like most early reviewers, he reduced the book to its surface mixture of language and romance, going as far as to state that “Miss Hurston seems to have no desire whatsoever to move in the direction of serious fiction [...] Miss Hurston can write; but her prose is cloaked in that facile sensuality that has dogged Negro expression since the days of Phillis Wheatley. Her dialogue manages to catch the psychological movements of the Negro folk-mind, but that’s as far as it goes” (Wright in Gates & Appiah, 1993: 16-17).

Today, in light of complex investigations connected to issues of race, class, gender, status, such an approach to *Their Eyes Were Watching God* may seem limited, to say the least. On the one hand, it is, indeed, Janie’s maturing through her three marriages that shapes the fictional plotline. On the other hand, the novel steps out of the merely domestic sphere, to explore troublesome and troubling elements of the protagonist’s condition. The aim of the present paper is to go beyond the love-story, into the controversial territory of prejudice, discrimination and the double bind. I will examine passages of almost unexpected might and articulation in what such matters are concerned, which seem to come in total contradiction with reproaches such as Otis Ferguson’s. In the October 13, 1937 issue of *The New Republic*, the latter argued that

It isn’t that this novel is bad, but it deserves to be better. In execution it is too complex and wordily pretty [...] All this conflict between the real life we want to read about and the superwordly, flabby lyric discipline we are so sick of leaves a good story where it never should have been potentially: in the gray category of neuter gender, declension indefinite (in Gates & Appiah, 1993: 23)

Although such remarks may work quite effectively in the context of a snappy newspaper column meant to convey a certain first reaction and impress it upon the target audience, they will certainly lose ground within the framework of a more comprehensive type of analysis. One should also bear in mind the fact that the standard expectations of the late 1930s reviewer might still have been influenced by the rather traditional assessments of textual form and message that modernism was trying to replace with thorough investigations of the human mind and heart, of personal development within challenging psychological and sociological contexts.

2. Branches without Roots

2.1. Re-readings, Reconsiderations

The particular distinction between earlier and later readings of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* lies at the heart of this essay. It has been pointed out by a series of observers of the ‘Zora-phenomenon’ as a constitutive element in the gradual construction of a modern myth. While emphasizing the initial indifference and quasi-ignorance of the general readership regarding a work which did not benefit from proper attention and advertising at the time of its publication, one also needs to point out the fact that the last decades of the 20th century played an important part in what could easily be called ‘the Hurston revival’. Re-readings and reconsiderations of her work from new, updated perspectives – mostly connected to the various identity issues that the main character faces – have contributed to a spectacular change of critical mind and reading heart.

In *The Signifying Monkey*, one of the seminal African-American theoretical texts, Henry Louis Gates Jr. makes it a point to highlight this transformation, linking it not only to types of ideological approach, but also to the novel’s intrinsic depth and rich symbolic tissue, which early reviewers might have overlooked:

Zora Neale Hurston is the first writer that our generation of black and feminist critics has brought into the canon, or perhaps I should say the canons. For Hurston is now a cardinal figure in the Afro-American canon, the feminist canon, and the canon of American fiction, especially as our readings of her work become increasingly close readings, which Hurston’s texts sustain delightfully. The curious aspect of the widespread critical attention being shown to Hurston’s texts is that so many critics embracing such a diversity of theoretical approaches seem to find something new at which to marvel in her texts. (1988: 180)

2.2. Black and White Pictures

In what matters of race and racial determination are concerned, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* makes a series of clear-cut statements. Weaving racial concerns naturally into the pattern of the heroine’s evolution, it echoes a whole tradition of the “blackfolk”: a way of being rather than a lifestyle, a historical trajectory marked by indelible, traumatic episodes. It is not only Hurston’s famed and much debated upon inclusion of dialect and folklore into the background of her novel that is meant to increase awareness. It is mostly the chain of scenes and comments which might seem at times peripheral to the main course of action and which the anxious reader tends to skip in search of speedy plot development. Nevertheless, such passages openly act as reflections of individual and communal subjection to or defiance of stereotypical representations.

Janie is a woman whom the reader has the opportunity to follow as she grows into adulthood and self-appreciation. She handles her own narrative in a way which is meant to display both her innate and increasingly praised orator-qualities, and her inadequate stifling by circumstances and convention. The primary dimension of her existence seems to be connected to her defining relationship(s) with members of the opposite sex, therefore by the end of the novel she can be referred to as Janie Crawford-Killicks-Starks-Woods. Each of these names represents a different sort of label, a step forward in the creation of a self-standing individual.

This self is, however, problematic from the very beginning, in the sense of its uncertain appurtenance to rigidly defined categories. Janie is a mulatto girl whose skin color is one of the first things that trigger serious dilemmas. Raised by her Grandmother together with the four children of the Washburn family – whose employed ‘Nanny’ she was –, Janie is unaware of her difference and its consequences. While, on the one hand, managing to emphasize the open-mindedness and generosity of the Washburns, Janie’s description of her belated revelation is indicative of the degree of confusion and torment such artificial distinctions may inflict upon a child:

Ah was wid dem white chillun so much till Ah didn’t know Ah wuzn’t white till Ah was round six tears old. Wouldn’t have found it out then, but a man come long takin’ pictures [...] So when we looked at de picture and everybody got pointed out there wasn’t nobody left except a real dark little girl with long hair standing by Eleanor. Dat’s where Ah wuz s’posed to be, but Ah couldn’t recognize dat dark chile as me. So Ah ast, ‘where is me? Ah don’t see me.’ Everybody laughed (Hurston, 1987: 21).

This is the outset of an identity quest meant to stay with Janie throughout her entire existence. “Don’t you know yo’ ownself?” is the question immediately asked by the amused onlookers. It is a simple question with a complex answer, which will act as the implicit leitmotif in the subsequent stages of the girl’s evolution. Various ways of defining herself appear along her sinuous life-path; the most basic and least subtle of them are the first to be delivered by her evidently experienced Grandmother. Janie learns about a world in which the color of one’s skin dictates the access to or denial of speech and power, a world of masters and servants. It is race and gender which order an unquestionable hierarchy:

Honey, de white man is de ruler of everything as fur as Ah been able tuh find out. Maybe it’s some place way off in de ocean where de black man is in power, but we don’t know nothin’ but what we see. So de white man throw down de load and tell de nigger man tuh pick it up. He pick it up because he have to, but he don’t

tote it. He hand it to his womenfolks. De nigger woman is de mule uh de world so fur as Ah can see. Ah been prayin' fuh it tuh be different wid you (Hurston, 1987: 29)

2.3. Not All (Wo)Men Are Created Equal

To the Grandmother's mind there are unwritten laws which govern the surrounding universe of unequal chances. Although there is no clear statement as to the temporal placement of the novel's plot, there are various indications that slavery has not been an official issue for quite a while. It is, thus, Hurston's anthropological studies and her sense of tragically-imposed destiny that inform her characters' most plausible frame of mind. Nanny's description of the "blackfolk"'s condition in a supposedly free and unprejudiced environment stems from an overwhelming history of abuse and submissiveness, trauma and acceptance.

While many works focus on the Civil War and the Reconstruction as climactic points in what the fate of African-American slavery is concerned, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is an indirect, yet convincing account of the perpetuation of racist practices well into the 20th century. Henry Louis Gates Jr. comments upon the book in the context of similar literary approaches to the above-mentioned realities. He points out that

the abolition of slavery did not diminish the force of this impulse to write the race fully into the human community [...] Once slavery was abolished, racism assumed vastly more subtle forms. If slavery had been an immoral institution, it had also been a large, fixed target; once abolished, the target of racism splintered into hundreds of fragments, all of which seemed to be moving in as many directions. Just as the ex-slaves wrote to end slavery, so too did free black authors write to redress the myriad forms that the fluid masks of racism assumed between the end of the Civil War and the end of the Jazz Age (1988: 171).

It is such fluid masks that the novel under discussion recreates and investigates. The romantic plotline and the identity search feed upon the intricate web of discrimination, suspiciousness, accusation and bias that a long trail of antecedents knits. Relevant situations are numerous. When Janie is first exposed as a mulatto baby, the living proof of interracial intercourse (a rape, in fact) triggers violent reactions from the white party, who aggressively voices the Southern disapproval of miscegenation, deemed as a capital sin: "Nigger, wht's yo' baby doin' wid gray eyes and yaller hair? She begin tuh slap mah jaws ever which a'way" (Hurston, 1987: 33/34).

When Joe Starks makes a sweeping appearance in Janie's life, it is mostly his determination to succeed despite any physical or mental obstacle

that wins her over. However, it is relevant to notice that his subsequent success occurs in a walled-in environment, a ghetto *avant-la-lettre*: the all-colored town. “When he heard all about ’em makin’ a town all outa colored folks, he knowed dat was de place he wanted to be. He had always wanted to be a big voice, but de white folks had all de sayso where he come from and everywhere else” (Hurston, 1987: 48). On the one hand, this can be regarded as an open acknowledgement of white supremacy; on the other hand, it can equally be interpreted as an affirmation of independence.

Discussing *Codes of Conduct. Race, Ethics, and the Color of Our Character*, Karla F.C. Holloway operates a distinction which might prove helpful in identifying the forces involved in such a situation.

Race is a simplistic, political distinction that can support stereotype and prejudice. Ethnicity, on the other hand, evolves through a complex association of linguistic, national, cultural, and historical identities that affirm all of the shifting forces and hierarchies of modern life, but that is also continuously affirmed, created, and embraced by those who are ethnic. It is an issue of agency. Ethnicity is a self-determined and defined construction. Race is a politically conferred and simplistic abstraction that is easily co-opted into systems of abuse and domination. It is the characteristic feature of colonial imperialism as its most resistant practice and most fiercely articulated policy (1995: 105/106).

In the context of such specifications, Joe Stark’s fierce will can be seen as an example of agency. His mayoring the outstanding ethnic haven of Eatonville, the good business and civil harmony that follow, the rapid development of the establishment function as demonstrations of the shallowness of racial judgment. However, the newly acquired position breeds unwelcome change in the character’s personal profile, at least as seen from his victimized wife’s point of view. Janie grows into a sort of merchandise to be proudly displayed by its rightful owner, in his own, self-created copy of white capitalism (Willis in Gates & Appiah, 1997:126). Janie’s second marriage can thus be regarded as formulating a warning as to how obsession and extremism of any kind, even of altruistic and noble origin, may affect human behavior.

2.4. Shades of Black

Hurston does not stop here in her exploration of the nuances attached to the wide skin-color spectrum. The Negro as menacing alterity surfaces in the character’s consideration of (forcedly) changing locations. During Janie and Tea Cake’s debate upon their future, the following exchange occurs: “De white folks down dere knows us. It’s bad bein’ strange niggers wid

white folks. Everybody is against yuh.” “Dat sho is de truth. De ones de white man know is nice colored folks. De ones he don’t know is bad niggers” (Hurston, 1987: 255). Thus, one further distinction is added to this world of binary oppositions: personal attachment, closeness, proximity. The general case (“strange niggers”) stands under the badge of negative assumption (“bad niggers”), while the exceptions (“de ones de white man know”) actually take on human appearance and are treated and addressed as such (“nice colored folks”).

The implication of such conversations is indicative of the expectation of racial bias within the world Janie and her beloved third husband inhabit. Clichés precede and shape reality, opinions and reactions are habitually formed not on the basis of personal experience, but rather as results of hasty impulse and first impressions grounded in the futile surface of things and, even more dramatically, people. This is, however, not to say that the ‘blackfolk’ are exempt from misjudgments. Hurston is remarkably careful not to idealize the ethnic portrait. When the hurricane seems inevitable according to Indian predictions, the black community’s reactions are telling: “Dey don’t always know. Indians don’t know much uh nothin’, tuh tell de truth, else dey’d own dis country still. De white folks ain’t gone nowhere. Dey oughta know if it’s dangerous” (Hurston, 1987:231).

Coming from a different kind of victims of the white settler, such an inconsiderate comment upon Native-American history is rather surprising. However, dominant patterns are almost imperceptibly integrated into the community’s mentality and unconsciously adopted. By making this striking distinction between enslavement and colonization, the African-American characters appear to cross over to the side of the colonizer, whom they rather trust and admire, despite all previously formulated complaints. By turning the tables around, Hurston offers her readers insight into the complicated manifestations of racial prejudice as a component of the constant and unscrupulous competition for racial supremacy.

One of the most baffling instances of discriminative views in the novel is actually provided by the conversation between Janie and Mrs. Turner, a woman of lighter complexion who desperately hopes her features “set her aside from the Negroes” and who is won over as a friend not by any of Janie’s outstanding human qualities, but by her “coffee-and-cream complexion and her luxurious hair” (Hurston, 1987:208). The confessions she makes in the poorly disguised hope of separating Janie from her “dark” husband offer an astonishing example of self-loathing and subversion from within. She clearly mimics and embraces the white racist lingo of the time:

“You’s e very different from me. Ah can’t stand black niggers. Ah don’t blame de white folks from hatin’ ’em ’cause Ah can’t stand ’em mahself. ’Nother thing, Ah hates tuh see folks lak me and you mixed up wid ’em. Us oughta class off.

“Us can’t *do* it. We’s e uh mingled people and all of us got black kinfolks as well as yaller kinfolks. How come you so against black?”

“And dey makes me tired. Always laughin’! Dey laughs too much and dey laughs too loud. Always singin’ ol’ nigger songs! Always cuttin’ de monkey for white folks. **If it wuzn’t for so many black folks it wouldn’t be no race problem.** De white folks would take us in wid dem. **De black ones is holdin’ us back.**”

“You reckon? ’course Ah ain’t never thought about it too much. But Ah don’t figger dey ever gointuh wants us for comp’ny. We’s e too poor”

“T’ain’t de poorness, it’s de color and de features” (Hurston, 1987: 210; emphasis added).

2.5. “God don’t know nothin’ ’bout the Jim Crow law”

By inserting such views into her text, Hurston also addresses the issue of authenticity and the problems that may arise from the mixture of bloods. While Werner Sollors talks about the double consciousness which, “far from stifling American ethnic authors, alerts them to possibilities of playfulness in establishing their voice” (1986: 252), what one witnesses in this case is the burden of a multiply-determined type of consciousness. The double bind of African-Americanness is paralleled by the character’s difficulty in defining herself and accepting her position within the context of miscegenation. Mrs. Turner is not only a black woman living in a predominantly white society; she is a woman of mixed blood who strongly wishes she could deny the part of her heritage that ‘shames’ her and sets her apart from the larger community she desires to identify with.

Hurston’s text is structured in such a way that its parts call upon each other and circumstances seem to naturally flow from each other. Thus, probably the best response to Mrs. Turner’s complaint is the one given to another – this time male – character, who finds himself in a psychological impossibility to grasp communal emancipation:

That irritated Hicks and he didn’t know why. He was the average mortal. It troubled him to get used to the world one way and then suddenly have it turn different. He wasn’t ready to think of colored people in post offices yet. He laughed boisterously.

“Y’all let dat stray darky tell y’all any ole lie! Uh colored man sittin’ up in uh post office!” He made an obscene sound.

“He’s liable tuh do it too, Hicks. Ah hope so anyhow. Us colored folks is too envious of one ’nother. Dat’s how come us don’t git no further than us do. Us talks about de white man keepin’ us down! Shucks! He don’t have tuh. **Us keeps our own selves down**” (1987: 63; emphasis added)

The disastrous wake of the hurricane is the best moment for Hurston to expose and castigate the futility of racial prejudice. The force of nature has rendered some of the corpses unrecognizable, skinless and featureless. The message delivered in Tea Cake's apparently simple words is not at all simplistic: in death, on Judgment Day, all humans are equal, regardless of the color of their skin:

"Got orders from headquarters. They makin' coffins fuh all de white folks. 'Tain't nothin' but cheap pine, but dat's better'n nothin'. Don't dump no white folks in de hole jus' so".

"Whut tuh do 'bout de colored folks? Got boxes fuh dem too?"

"Nope. They cain't find enough of 'em tuh go 'round. Jus' sprinkle plenty quick-lime over 'em and cover 'em up."

"Shucks! Nobody can't tell nothin' 'bout some uh dese bodies, de shape dey's in. Can't tell whether dey's white or black [...]"

"They's mighty particular how dese dead folks goes tuh judgment," Tea Cake observed to the man working next to him. Look lak dey think **God don't know nothin' 'bout the Jim Crow law**" (Hurston, 1987: 253-254; emphasis added).

By making one more reference to the African-American historical record of humiliation, the writer also makes an acid comment aimed at the insignificance and pitiful unfairness of humans as compared to the final equilibrium of the divine justice. While piecing together these carefully-inserted hints at the author's preoccupation with the rights and evolution of her own ethnic community, it is essential to notice the positive drive which pushes the novel's plot forward. There is emancipation and evolution to speak of, there is transformation and hope; the final outcome relies on faith. "Nanny" provides the best example in the beginning of the book, prefiguring her granddaughter's fate as a survivor:

You know, honey, **us colored folks is branches without roots** and that makes things come round in queer ways. You in particular. Ah was born back due in slavery so it wasn't for me to fulfill my dreams of whut a woman oughta be and to do. Dat's one of de hold-backs of slavery. But nothing can't stop you from wishin'. You can't beat nobody down so low till you can rob'em of they will (Hurston, 1987: 31; emphasis added).

3. It's the Thought that Makes the Difference

Their Eyes Were Watching God has ethnicity at its center, while being a story of human debunking of stereotypes. Being black, being a woman, being well-off, being older in a relationship: these are the elements

that Hurston plays upon while constructing a character with personality, agency, stamina and voice attached to it.

The critical perspectives inspired by the black consciousness and feminist movements allow us to see Hurston's writings in a new way. They correct distorted views of her folklore as charming and quaint, set aside misperceptions of her characters as minstrels caught, in Richard Wright's phrase, "between laughter and tears". These new perspectives inform this re-evaluation of Hurston's work. She asserted that black people, while living in a racist society that denied their humanity, had created an alternative culture that validated their worth as human beings. Although that culture was in some respects sexist, black women, like black men, attained personal identity not by transcending culture but by embracing it (Wall, 1993:77).

There are several other layers to this multi-dimensional account of self-formation: the love-story, the gendered account, the unbreakable connection of the African-American community with folklore and its own cultural tradition, the mesmerizing usage of dialect (in terms of both lexical choices and indication of accents, pronunciation, intonation) which brings the characters to life and prompts them to march before the reader. Complex and enticing, eighty years after its publication *Their Eyes Were Watching God* remains a milestone of 20th century American literature, a thought-provoking piece of ethnic prose which still asks for (re)consideration and up-to-date (re)readings in a multitude of keys.

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EXPLORING THE DARK SIDE OF ITALY: *THE CENCI*, BY P.B. SHELLEY (1819)

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Abstract: In 1818 Shelley arrived in Italy, where he spent the last years of his life. Shelley's relationship with Italy was passionate albeit complicated: he loved the Italian landscape, the ancient ruins, but he had little sympathy for the Italian institutions and customs. This paper aims at exploring the “dark side of Italy” as portrayed in Shelley's tragedy *The Cenci*.

Key words: Italy, P.B. Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*, *The Cenci*, tyranny

1. Introduction: P.B. Shelley and Italy

Shelley's mixed feelings towards Italy – the country where he settled with his family in March 1818 and where he died, a few years later – could be summarized in the following line from his poem “Julian and Maddalo”, written in the year of his arrival: “Thou Paradise of exiles, Italy!” (l. 57). Shelley was certainly charmed by the Italian art and architecture; he enjoyed the perfect fusion between ancient ruins and luxuriant nature; he was soothed by the mild weather and captivated by the “loveliness of the earth and the serenity of the sky”, as he wrote in April 1818, in a letter from Milan to his friend Thomas Love Peacock (Shelley, 1840: web). However, as an expatriate, despite his wide knowledge of both the Italian language and classic literature, he felt alien to the new context and somehow *suspended* in a vacuum between cultures. Ostracized in England for his unconventional views, he had no sympathy for the modern Italians and their customs: in his opinion, they were “sullen and stupid” (letter to T.L. Peacock, Naples, January 26th 1819, in Shelley, 1840: web); forgetful of their glorious past, they had turned into “a miserable people, without sensibility, or imagination, or understanding” (letter to W. Godwin, Bagni di Lucca, July 25th, 1818, in Shelley, 1840: web). Shelley even postulated the existence of two, clashing “Italies” within the one country: the land of the “green earth and transparent sea, and the mighty ruins of ancient times”, described as “most sublime and lovely”, and the “degraded and odious” birthplace of the Italians (Jones, 1964:67). Shelley's stern antagonism mainly stemmed from his aversion to tyranny and despotic powers. In his 1818 fragment entitled *The Coliseum*, the poet described Roman Catholicism as “the most awful religion of the world [...] surrounded by

emblazonry of mortal greatness” (Medwin, 1833:128); besides, holding Venice as example of the Italian condition, he pointed out that “once a tyrant, [the city was] now the next worse thing: a slave” (letter to T.L. Peacock, Este, October 8th, 1818, in Shelley, 1840: web). The association between “Italy” and “slavery” is strikingly recurrent in several passages of Shelley’s correspondence. When he was in Rome during the celebrations of the Holy Week, he used words of harsh criticism to describe to T.L. Peacock both the ostentation of religious zeal that was displayed before his eyes, and the warm and cheerful greetings of the crowd to the Emperor of Austria, who had just arrived in the Eternal City: “idiots and slaves! Like the frogs in the fable, because they are discontented with the log, they call upon the stork, who devours them” (letter to T.L. Peacock, April 6th, 1819, in Shelley, 1840: web). In the same letter, Shelley indulged in the description of three hundred chained prisoners who – against the background of the magnificent architecture and fountains – were hoeing out the weeds grown in between the stones of St Peter’s Square: “it is the emblem of Italy – moral degradation contrasted with the glory of nature and the arts”.

2. The “dark side” of Italy in *The Cenci*

The “dark side” of Italy that has been rapidly sketched so far is further explored by the poet in a five-act play entitled *The Cenci*, which this paper will focus on. As Mary Shelley’s *Journal* informs, Shelley began his tragedy in Rome, on May 14th 1819, after a visit to Palazzo Colonna (on April 22nd) which had allowed him to admire the portrait of Beatrice Cenci, supposedly painted by Guido Reni while she was confined in prison before her execution, in 1599. Beatrice, a young Roman lady, had been charged with parricide (together with her stepmother and her older brother Giacomo), being held responsible for the death of her wicked, tyrannical, abusive and (so it was believed) even incestuous father. After unsuccessfully appealing to the Pope and the other authorities for justice, Beatrice had in fact resolved to kill her oppressor, thus committing a murderous act of revenge.

To what extent, one may wonder, was she actually guilty, due to the dreadful circumstances?

The story, as the poet remarked in his “Preface”, “was a subject not to be mentioned in Italian society without awakening a deep and breathless interest” (Shelley, 1839:130), and, he continued, it was widely known “among all ranks of people”, thus providing the author with a perfect subject for his all-encompassing portrayal of the gloomy side of Italy, mainly

embodied in Count Cenci and his atrocious crimes, as well as in Beatrice's parricide.

Nonetheless, if the tragedy was contextualized within the framework of Shelley's output and therefore read as part of his broader plan for the reformation of society, this ghastly representation of the "Paradise of exiles" would have a much deeper meaning, well beyond the poet's personal aversion towards the Italians. It should not pass unnoticed that *The Cenci* is a unique case in Shelley's production, as the poet himself pointed out when he wrote to Leigh Hunt (to whom he dedicated the tragedy) that his new work would be "totally different from any thing you might conjecture I should write" (letter to L. Hunt, Leghorn, August 15th, 1819, in Shelley, 1840: web). Mostly composed in Villa Valsovano, near Leghorn (where the Shelleys had moved in June 1819, after the death from malaria of their beloved son William), and finished in August 1819, it is *the only* complete play that Shelley ever wrote and even wished to stage, besides being *his only* work that leaves the realms of the metaphorical, the mythological and the ideal to plunge the reader into history, into "a sad reality" (Shelley, 1839:129), to Shelley's own words. Furthermore, it should be remembered that *The Cenci* was completed while Shelley was composing *Prometheus Unbound* (precisely between the writing of the third and the fourth act), the lyrical drama whose hero defeats the persecutor Jupiter (representing both the religious and the political powers) with mercy and forgiveness, thus refusing to use those very weapons of blood, cunning and revenge that lead Beatrice Cenci to self-destruction. Given the remarkable similarities between the two plots (both focusing on the tyrant-victim relationship), it could be argued that *The Cenci* and *Prometheus Unbound* should be read as parallel and complementary texts. If read together, they are capable of illustrating the different ways (and the alternatives that men have, i.e. the "sad reality", vs. "the ideal") in which the problem of despotism can be dealt with, in order to attain either an illusionary freedom (as in Beatrice's case) or a genuine one, which Prometheus successfully pursues. Shelley's own remarks somehow support this interpretation. Even though he stated in the "Dedication" to *The Cenci* that, in his play, he wished to "lay aside the presumptuous attitude of an instructor" (Shelley, 1839:130), in the "Preface" he pointed out that

the fit return to make to the most enormous injuries is kindness and forbearance, and a resolution to convert the injurer from his dark passions by peace and love. Revenge, retaliation, atonement are pernicious mistakes. (ibid)

Even Shelley's atypical choice of the theatrical form to tell Beatrice's story could be read in the light of his ideal of regeneration. Since Aristotle, the theatre has always been tightly connected with the principle of catharsis, of purification from the sins and weaknesses of the human soul, exhibited on stage. Hence, *The Cenci* may be interpreted as the poet's contribution to a fruitful renewal of the Italian customs and institutions, accomplished by openly displaying, through the characters' lives and actions, the "dark side" of Italy, namely the excesses and the pitfalls of a religion that Shelley abhorred, since, in his opinion, it enslaved its worshippers through the image of a domineering, frightening and unforgiving God. To achieve this result, Shelley sensibly altered his source, an anonymous manuscript that Mary Shelley had copied and translated together with him in May 1818, well before their stay in Rome: *Relationship of the Death of the Family of the Cenci*. In the original document, we are told that "sodomy was the least and atheism was the greatest, of the vices of Francesco [Cenci]" (Shelley, 1839:160). The reader gathers that Count Cenci

never frequented any church; and although he caused a small chapel, dedicated to the Apostle St. Thomas, to be built in the court of his palace, his intention in so doing was to bury there all his children, whom he cruelly hated. (ibid)

In the manuscript, the Pope appeared to be fair and just, willing to sentence Count Cenci to death for his crimes. It was only through the intercession of his sons that the capital punishment was turned into a penalty of 100,000 crowns. In *The Cenci*, on the other hand, these details are distorted, and all concur to form a horrible, hyperbolically negative image of Roman Catholicism, a religion that the readers (and the audience, when staged) would be prone to discard in favour of the "religion of Love" as described in *Prometheus Unbound*. In the "Preface" to the tragedy we read that "the old man had during his life repeatedly bought his pardon from the Pope for capital crimes of the most enormous and unspeakable kind, at the price of a hundred thousand crowns" (Shelley, 1839:129). Further on, Cenci is described as a fervent catholic, who "built a chapel in the court of his Palace, and dedicated it to St. Thomas the Apostle, and established masses for the peace of his soul", because in Italy, religion "is adoration, faith, submission, penitence, blind admiration [... and it] has no necessary connection with any one virtue. The most atrocious villain may be rigidly devout" (Shelley, 1839:130). In Shelley's tragedy, Cenci, the unnatural father, prays on his knees for the death of his two sons, escaped from his grip by fleeing to Salamanca. God, "the great Father of all" (I, iii, 24), and therefore the mirror image of the old Count, fulfils his wishes and punishes

the “disobedient and rebellious” children (I, iii, 42). Also in this case, Shelley exaggerated what he read in his source in order to increase the feeling of horror in the audience, thus encouraging their catharsis. In the old manuscript, both Rocco and Cristoforo were assassinated, the former by a surgeon, the latter when he was attending mass. In *The Cenci*, as we read, “Providence was shown/ Even in the manners of their deaths” (I, iii, 57): Cristoforo is stabbed by mistake by a jealous husband, while Rocco is meaningfully crushed by the rubble of the very church where he had gone to pray God and express his faith. “Heaven has a *special care* of me” (I, iii, 65) is Cenci’s comment, a remark in which Shelley’s hostility towards a religion that he considered merciless, partial and prejudiced is strikingly evident. Among the elements that the poet added to the original storyline, there is the scene of the banquet that the Count gives in order to rejoice for his sons’ death. The correspondence between Cenci and a catholic priest celebrating mass in the name of an angry God is obvious when the old man lifts up a bowl of wine and, mocking the holy communion, utters the following words: “Could I believe thou wert [my sons’] mingled blood,/ Then would I taste thee like a sacrament” (I, iii, 81-82).

Shelley altered his source even in his description of Beatrice. First of all, in the original manuscript the incestuous passion of the Count was just hinted at, through a note that aimed at justifying the blank space the editor inserted in the text, after saying that Beatrice was “exceedingly beautiful”: “the details here are horrible and unfit for publication” (Shelley, 1839:161). Conversely, in Shelley’s work the audience becomes aware of the unutterable crime at the beginning of the third act, when, during a fit of madness, the young woman begins to talk about contamination, “pollution, poisoning” (III, i, 22); the hypothesis of incest is confirmed, and its horrible consequences openly exposed, when the Count wishes Beatrice to bear an unnatural child

a hideous likeness of herself, that as
from a distorting mirror, she may see
her image mixed with what she most abhors. (IV, i, 146-48)

Beatrice’s faith closely resembles her father’s. To escape from her disgraceful situation, first of all she ponders on suicide; nonetheless, in her words, “a religious awe/ restrains [her]” (III, i, 148-49). What could be viewed as a respectful adherence to the teachings of Catholicism, is immediately subverted when, a few lines later, she paradoxically decides that her father has to be murdered:

[...] I have prayed
to God, and I have talked with my own heart,
and I have unravelled my entangled will,
and have at length determined what is right. (III, i, 218-21)

In Beatrice's opinion, the executors of Cenci's death are "a sword in the right hand of justest God" (IV, iv, 126). When, at the end of the play, she's finally imprisoned and about to be executed, her apparently strong faith in the "God of wrath" vacillates:

The God who knew my wrong, and made
our speedy act the angel of his wrath,
seems, and but seems, to have abandoned us. (V, iii, 113-15)

In the source that Shelley used for his play, Beatrice died in peace while "repeating the second verse of the psalm *De Profundis*", after praying to Jesus to cancel her crimes, through a punishment "justly due" (Shelley, 1839:164) to her. On the other hand, Shelley's tragic character never regrets her "pernicious mistake", and the religion she chose cannot soothe the final moments of her life.

3. Conclusion: Beatrice Cenci as the "dark side" of P.B. Shelley

One last observation could be made on *The Cenci*. Critic Belinda Jack (2005:39-44) has pointed out that Shelley almost identified with Beatrice, as his obsession for her portrait seems to testify, together with the striking resemblance between Guido Reni's work and the picture of the poet that Amelia Curran painted during his stay in Rome (45). Shelley often felt persecuted by his father, Sir Thomas Shelley, and throughout his life he fell in love with ladies in distress, harassed by tyrannical parents. Apart from exploring the "dark side" of Italy, therefore, one may infer that, through *The Cenci*, Shelley allowed himself the possibility to observe "the mirror of [his own] darkest thoughts" (V, i, 21), thus emerging purified from what, in the "Preface", he described as "the dark and secret caverns of the human heart" (Shelley, 1839:130).

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IMAGINATION, NO WAY OUT: *THE BRIEF WONDROUS LIFE OF OSCAR WAO*

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Abstract: The characters of Junot Diaz’s *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* are condemned to face reality in spite of all their imaginative efforts to reconstruct, avoid or replace it. It is the *fukú* of all of them to grow convinced that the workings of their minds, despite plausibility or fascination, cannot stand up to the “one and only” reality.

Keywords: imagination, postmodern, reality, subjectivity

1. Introduction

Although the title of the story which won Junot Diaz the Pulitzer Prize, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007), mentions only one character, seemingly the protagonist, the text weaves the plots of two more main characters, Hypatia Belicia Cabral and Lola, her daughter. They bear at least the same burden of significance within the novel’s texture. The destinies of the three protagonists, viewed through the subjective lens of Yuniors, the narrator, share the same guiding line, namely evading reality and the present in order to fulfill the imaginary projections of their minds.

However, what differentiates the three of them is their definition of the dichotomy reality-imagination and the degree of success or failure of their life projects. This article will follow the dynamics of becoming in the case of the above mentioned characters, focusing mainly on the roles that reality and imagination play in fulfilling or provoking failure in their destinies.

2. Preliminaries: the *Fukú-Zafa* pattern of existence

The destinies not only of the three characters, but of all people born or connected to Santo Domingo, the main setting of the novel, seem one way or another to model on what is generally named and acknowledged as *fukú*, a generic curse that is the source of all evils. A short history of the term takes it back to “Fukus Americanus”, the curse of the new world. Though it may seem too obvious or even didactic, one could interpret it as naming the betrayal of what one already has and is in order to follow a foreign route and therefore a new pattern of existence. It is the classical

approach to interpreting the “foreign” as menacing and disruptive, necessarily evil and bringing disaster. Whatever falls outside the boundaries of the familiar must affect negatively those who are open to challenging the conventions of a peaceful yet dull existence.

It is symptomatic of the common thinking not to assume guilt or failure as caused by one’s own flaws but to attribute it to a generalized curse of the nation, of the island or, why not, of the entire world. Therefore, all families of Santo Domingo, Junot Diaz informs us, can tell you a story modelled on *fukú*, the external curse, never acknowledging an internal one.

Within the same predictable scenario, there is the possibility of a positive outcome, called *zafa*: Diaz opens his novel by explaining this *fukú-zafa* pattern that governs the lives of Dominicans, constructing his characters either as confirmations of or exceptions to it.

3. Hypatia Belicia Cabral – “the broken teeth of imagination”

The destiny of Hypatia Belicia Cabral, mother of Oscar and Lola, functions as the perfect illustration of the dynamics *fukú-zafa*: someone whose failure is generally sanctioned yet dismissed as not her guilt, but the contingency of the traditionally Santo Dominican curse. The *zafa* to follow is, similarly, the given of her destiny, not decided or determined by her. Within this generalized scenario, Beli oscillates between what is real and what she imagines, between a cursed present and an equally poisoned future: unable to concretize what she expects from her future, she gets herself embittered both by the present that dissatisfies her and by the elusiveness of her to-come days.

3.1. Reality – Imagination: Settling the terms

Beli spends her youth in the Dominican Republic as a constant Oya-soul, agitated and refusing the quietness of a given state of things. The reality she is permanently discontent with is dominated by the image of her adoptive “madre” (her aunt, La Inca, one of the most respectable women in Bani) - kind and sympathetic all the time, providing her what a common third world girl would have considered a bliss: fancy clothes, a small but consistent salary for helping at the bakery, and a manifested and unconditioned affection. Moreover, the daily nightmare amplifies with the school she attends, which does not improve in any way the portrait of boring and horrifying Bani.

Opposing this is her irreversible tendency to escape the reality that weighs on her. Beli “wants something else”, yet she cannot name or define

“the different” that allures her: it is more of a subconscious drive that has guided all her life. When it comes to circumscribing it, the apparently indefinable future takes the shape of an “ordinary” reality that she could achieve without the restless evading attitude that she ostensibly adopts: an extraordinary life, a handsome wealthy husband, beautiful kids, “a woman’s body”.

The only certainty she appears to have is this tendency to evade. In light of her totally evasionist attitude, Diaz’s calling the Dominican Republic under the reign of Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Molina the country in which all young people long for evasion, bears just a secondary relevance. It is not because of the political or economical situation of the country that Beli feels the need to evade, and her dreams are not related to the political freedom of her people. What she really cares about is strictly her personal escape. However, at the end of her life, Beli will recount how trapped everybody felt, as if on the ocean bed, thus collectivizing what could have differentiated and individualized her.

Moreover, Beli’s unbearable present is, due to La Inca, steeped in the past, in the undisputable reality of the Golden Glorious Past of her Family. For La Inca the future necessarily derives from a signifying past, while for Beli the past is not reality, but only the stories being told to her over and over again: she assumes herself not as a “maldita ciguapa”, with her feet in the past, but with her feet running towards the future.

3.2. Reality vs. imagination. First experience

When she is 13, Beli starts her experience as a student of the most respectable, high-class school in Bani, El Redentor. The reality of her presence there means being disregarded and despised due to her social position, as well as being isolated by all except someone also belonging to a ‘marginal’ category, her Chinese mate.

Once out of the schoolyard, she reconstructs her situation in opposite terms, projecting how she would like to be treated and telling it all to her friend at the bakery. Her previous elusive imagination now takes the shape of a conquering-the-rich-boy project, and thus draws the nice house dream closer to reality. What she envisages as the perfect house is totally different from “su madre”’s expectations, who wanted to bring back to life the legendary Hatúey house, the place where Beli’s family used to live in glory before being *fukú*-ed to death. Once again, the futures of the two relatives differ both qualitatively and symbolically, for Beli’s imagined house is brand new, future oriented.

Beli conceives her future on the structure of patterned romance, namely the love stories that reach her: she compares herself to Marta Montez, a bakery girl as well, kidnapped and taken to a castle in France. Obsessively feeding on her dreams and imagination, Beli finally transforms into “un mujeron total”, “la Tetua Suprema”, thus her fancied future drawing closer and closer. Her power consists now in the attraction she exerts on the men around her. Her body is now her future and there is no looking back – or at least this is what she believes.

The projected “amor”, her imagined future, that of loving and being loved by a man who will provide her an ideal family and home, proves nothing more than a sex roll in the school closet. Before this, Beli has the intuition of the first juxtaposition between reality and imagination, dreams coinciding with facts: she has the feeling that she has started down her path, that she has made the first step towards something great, majestic. Ironically and dramatically, reality proves harsher than imagination, this being the first in a series of disappointments. However, what she accumulates is her first mature decision, a new coordinate of her reality: never to let herself be influenced again.

3.3. Reality vs. imagination. Second experience

Once expelled from El Redentor and decided not to follow any other school, degraded from a “princesa” to a “mesera”, Beli is still awaiting her glorious future to materialize, a future represented by acquiring the whole “world”: this is what Beli wants from the bottom of her heart, but she does not know how she could fulfil her desire.

Working as a waitress, she dreams about dancing, which leads her to meet her next love, the Gangster, no one else but the husband of Trujillo’s sister, the man who will later cause her to leave Santo Domingo and embrace the Diaspora. Falling in love means, in reality, being regarded as the “whore” of the neighbourhood, while in her imagination - living in Miami and finally being truly loved. The trip to Samana, where Beli could control a space of her own, playing the wife and imagining her ideal home, represents a second time when reality and imagination overlap. Reality, however, fights back and Beli finds herself beaten almost to death by the men of the Gangster’s wife. Contrarily to the previous feeling of paradisiacal self-fulfilment, Beli experiences a feeling of solitude that wipes away any memory, similar to the solitude of her nameless childhood.

3.4. Reality – the final experience

For the first time, the loneliness of her reality coincides with her state of mind, with the solitude she intuits about her future: she will remain like that for the rest of her life, “alone, dark-skinned, *fea*”. She is conscious of having been cheated again – by love, by the city, and by her own foolish needs. Reality has no way out, despite the “*madrugada*”’s promise of a future, the *zafa* that would compensate the heavy *fukú* that has almost sentenced her to a violent death.

Beli leaves Santo Domingo for New York, empty in her soul, betrayed and abandoned to death, her dead unborn child making her stop smiling for ever. Her future is no longer “love”, “home”, or being someone as a result of her own wishes and projections; her future is in the “nowhere’s land”, bearing scarce dreams, coldly embracing the Diaspora, the hospital, the cancer.

4. Oscar “Wao” – ‘the fire of reality’

The trajectory of Oscar’s existence is wrought on his mother’s living pattern; one could say that he practically reiterates Beli’s life experience, that he restates the same dichotomy reality-imagination in drawing and defining himself.

Facts and dreams, however different, coincide in terms of how they are valued, namely as opposing categories, the former – debased and appeasing, the latter – idealized and remote. At least this is the perception that guides the reader until the last pages of the novel.

Yunior, the narrator of the whole saga, describes Oscar as the man who had the sci-fi and the fabulous in his blood, yet who did not embody the Dominican macho. Oscar’s obsession with SF literature translates into reality as Oscar being ‘the greatest loser’, somebody incapable of establishing any genuine human relationship.

4.1. Imagination as a literary genre

The reality of his adolescence is marked by a complete lack of joy, the Don Bosco Tech high school representing a source of restlessness, an “imbecile inferno” as he himself is proud to call it. All dissatisfaction becomes visible in his growing fatness and the refusal to exchange the nerd position he more and more represents. Moreover, untypically Dominican, Oscar transforms into “*el parigúayo*” of his neighbourhood, a passive and

powerless watcher to everything that happens around him, getting involved in no sports, no music, and no energetic activity of any kind.

On the other hand, his adolescence reality as he perceives it, therefore his imaginative projections on how the world should translate for him, is entirely and actively made up of SF writers such as Lovecraft, Wells, Alexander, Herbert, Burroughs, Howard, Asimov, and, equally significantly, of movies, monster TV shows and cartoons, special ships, mutants, destructive devices and destinies, magic and malefic bastards. He could also write in the Elfs' language, he could speak Chakobsa and he could differentiate among imaginary creatures in the slightest details.

All these preferences and "skills" weave the portrait which Oscar represents, that of a distorted normality for which the narrator finds three possible explanations: Oscar's being from the Antilles, his living in the Dominican Republic for some time, or the existence of an ancestral motivation. The mentioning of the third cause feeds naturally the whole *fukú-zafa* scenario set as the premise of the novel. One is back to external motivations of personal failures or of unfavourable state of things.

4.2. Reality-imagination. First failure

A social introvert and a passionate "*enamorado*", Oscar is advised into normality by his sister, Lola, and what she recommends him in order to become like the others and be accepted by them is to cut his hair, take off his glasses, practise sports, and give up porn magazines. Oscar's obedience manifests itself and works on his own terms: he goes on vacation to Santo Domingo and starts writing sci-fi books, imagining himself "the Stephen King of the Dominicans". His reality continues to be one of solitude, playing games, reading and writing books. What equals the passion for his books is his love for Anna, a colleague in the SAT class. He thus continues the family tradition of love as madness. Predictably, the reality of his love completely differs from the projections of his heart, Oscar's intention of juxtaposing the real and the imaginary failing to such an extent that he almost commits suicide.

4.3. Reality-imagination. Second failure

The peak of wretchedness is reached during his college years when he receives the nickname of "Wao", after being compared to Oscar Wilde, the man about town and not the writer. The parallelism reality-imagination functions here as well, Oscar falling in love the second time, with the same outcome. Disappointed, he attempts suicide and, when back to his "senses",

he restarts writing in order to become a Tolkien of the Dominicans. His reality is defined once more by the stories about the girls met on the bus, in the street or in class.

4.4. Imagination as reality, the final experience

After graduation, Oscar moves back to his house which he left a virgin and in which he returns unchanged. The only difference he operates is replacing the game posters on his room walls and starting to send his writings to various publishers, who do not show any interest though. Oscar develops the same feeling of emptiness that Beli, his mother, experienced after a whole series of disappointments in fulfilling her dreams. The sensation of falling down is similar to Beli's solitude, Oscar simply looking tired after years of silent despair. What he is most afraid of is his becoming an old and sour man. The no smiling expression of his face is another element that makes him his mother's faithful inheritor.

The only weapon Oscar has against it is his writing, and he plans a sci-fi tetralogy, the best of his efforts: what he bitterly discovers is that the new generation of kids no longer prefers games with characters and plot, and consequently no one would be interested in what he is best at. His projected world gets obsolete before even being translated into reality.

The dream of becoming a famous writer fails, yet the dream of loving and being loved continues: back in Santo Domingo, he declares himself in Heaven. Despite the fact that he does not know how to dance, has no money, does not know how to dress, does not trust himself and is not handsome, and despite his cousins' efforts to finally make a man out of him, Oscar falls in love for the third and last time, this time with Ybon Pimental, a pensioned "puta".

Having failed both to adjust himself to the reality of the commoners and to fulfil any of his dreams, Oscar experiences the first successful juxtaposition between reality and imagination. In the same way in which his mother was beaten to death because of her forbidden love for the Gangster, Oscar is on the verge of being executed by the men of Ybon's lover. Fukú, the national and familial curse makes another appearance, within the same correlation with the opposing term, *zafa*.

If in Beli's case *zafa* means the promise of a concrete, better future, when it comes to Oscar, it no longer associates with the feeling of an external kindness descending on him and blessing his future existence. This is the context that differentiates Oscar from his mother's expected scenario of life. While in a coma, Oscar dreams of an old man who was standing in front of him in the yard of a castle in ruins, holding a book so that he could

read it. That man is wearing a mask and Oscar notices that the book is blank. When Beli, on the verge of death, sees “la madrugada”, her future is revealed, word by word, by the strange creature: *fukú* is absolved through *zafa*, and Beli does nothing but confirm the Dominican pattern of existence, inscribing herself within the scenario of an external determining power of modelling destinies.

Risking his life, Oscar leaves Paterson for Santo Domingo once again and for the last time. Found by the captain’s men, he is shot after being dragged in the fields. His last words explain the meaning of the blank book image: you can be all you can dream. His final insight equates Life with Beauty. At the end of his short wondrous life, Oscar realizes that reality can be what he imagines: he becomes aware of the fact that dreams could be fulfilled and thus there is the possibility of a way out of the common, already prescribed, *fukú*-ed existence. In order to match reality with his imagination, Oscar asserts and acts out his love for Ybon, despite the social disapproval and personal danger these actions bring about. It is within the logic of the novel, though, that such an overlap between reality and imagination cannot be long-lived and the brave perpetrator cannot survive his victory.

5. Conclusion

Junot Diaz’s *The Short Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* is a novel about fighting external reality and about the extent to which new realities, resulting from one’s own belief in what one dreams, can be brought into existence. Oscar, unlike the other two characters caught in the dynamics of the real, finds the way out of an unbearable present: it is not isolation or rejection of what surrounds him but, on the contrary, it involves following through with his dreams and beliefs. Expressing his love for Ybon and taking public responsibility for his choice, which is different from the “how things should be” of a common thinking, Oscar manages to establish a successful relationship between the two terms of the obsessive dichotomy of Diaz’ novel.

Though all three important characters fight the same pattern of existence – out of and back to reality – it is only the weird Oscar “Wao” who finally escapes the burden of a suffocating real and declares the tangibility of his own imagination. This is the main reason why his life is “wondrous” and why the title of the novel includes only his name, in spite of the consistent presence of the other characters as well.

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LANGUAGE IN USE

ARE SOME SEMANTIC CHANGES PREDICTABLE?

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Abstract: *Historical linguistics is traditionally concerned with phonology and syntax. With the exception of grammaticalization – the development of auxiliary verbs, the syntactic rather than localistic use of prepositions, etc. - semantic change has usually not been described as a result of regular developments, but only as specific meaning changes in individual words. This paper will suggest some regularities in semantic change, regularities which, like sound laws, have predictive power and can be tested against recorded languages.*

Keywords: *semantic change, connotation, denotation, meaning*

1. Introduction

Sound changes in language are usually not described only as specific sound changes in individual words, but as a result of general tendencies, the so-called sound laws. I-mutation is not an arbitrary vowel change in e.g. *man – men*, but the result of a general tendency. It has been possible to identify the trigger of i-mutation, and therefore sound laws have explanatory value as well as predictive power. Given a suggested word in Proto Germanic, it is possible to predict if this word will be exposed to i-mutation in the later stages of Germanic languages. The same applies in principle to all sound laws. Predictability and regularity are quintessential characteristics of explanatory power. You might say that these characteristics are what earns sound **laws** their name.

In a number of cases it has been possible to formulate general tendencies behind syntactic change. This is true for some changes in word order, the so-called “syntactic” use of prepositions to express, for instance, instrument or agent, the development of auxiliary verbs like *be* and *have* in English, *avoir* and *être* in French, and Jespersen’s law concerning double negation, as in French *ne pas*. However, few linguists would claim that most syntactic changes are predictable and therefore explicable.

When it comes to semantic change, there are few - if any - regularities to be found in the literature. Let us look at a well-known example: In Old English, *brid* means “a young bird, the young of a bird” and *fugol* simply means “bird”. The development from “young bird” to “bird” is described as one of widening or expansion, whereas the development from “bird” to “domesticated bird”, as exemplified by Old English *fugol* and Modern English *fowl*, is described as narrowing or concentration. However

reasonable this may occur, it is important to notice that such a description is strictly *post hoc* and has no explanatory power. This does not mean that semantic expansion and concentration cannot be found in other words, but it has not been possible to predict which way the development of a specific word will go; the trigger of the change has not been identified. This makes semantic descriptions or classifications like “expansion” and “concentration” totally different from the sound laws mentioned above, which is not to say that such descriptions are meaningless. However, since they have no explanatory power, they cannot be tested against recorded changes.

In what follows, I will propose some semantic laws, i.e. hypotheses which describe general and predictable changes in the meaning of certain words. In principle, the laws are to be understood as being of the same type as e.g. Rask/Grimm’s law of consonantal shift. This means that they can be tested against the evidence of actual, recorded languages. However, before the proposed regularities are presented, it will be necessary to take a brief look at the traditional structuralist distinction between denotation and connotation.

Denotation is best described as the relation between linguistic signs (morphemes, words, phrases) and the non-linguistic world. A sign which refers to an entity in the non-linguistic world is said to denote (*a horse* denotes because there are horses), whereas a sign which does not refer to an existing entity (like *a unicorn*) does not denote. As will appear from these two examples, denotation is not synonymous with meaning. We all know what these two words mean, though one denotes and the other does not. Meaning is therefore defined as denotational conditions: the meaning of a word is the conditions which something must satisfy in order to be nameable by that word, to quote Holger Steen Sørensen (1967).

Connotation may be described as the relation between linguistic signs and speaker attitude. *Farmer* and *clodhopper* may very well refer to the same person, i.e. denote the same person, but while *farmer* is neutral, *clodhopper* has negative or pejorative connotations. Similarly with *old woman* and *old hag*. While there is no difference in the referential potential of these two phrases, since they can be used about the same entity, there is a distinct difference in speaker attitude. I believe that the semantic changes which I discuss below are all changes which began as changes in connotation and gradually affected the meaning of the words, the denotational conditions.

2. Four regularities concerning semantic change

2.1. “East – west – home is best” (Down with foreigners!)

Words which designate foreign origin, or simply origin in a place which is not the speaker's home, become pejorative ("negative") and not laudatory ("positive") if they change their connotation and subsequently their denotation. Examples of such words in English are *alien*, *foreign*, *outlandish*, *strange*.

Some of these words are used in a neutral as well as a pejorative sense, as exemplified by *foreign office*, *foreign language* (neutral) and *foreign manners* (pejorative). None of them are used in a positive sense. Note that the change does not only affect the connotation of the words. With some delay, the meaning, the denotational conditions, are affected as well. *Strange* no longer designates foreign origin, but simply means "odd". The Oxford English Dictionary gives six different meanings of the adjective *alien*. The oldest senses (one and four) are paraphrased as "belonging to another person, place, or family; strange, foreign, not of one's own" (attested in 1340) and "of a nature differing from, far removed from, inconsistent with" (attested 1382). After the latter sense, the OED continues "This passes imperceptibly into 5. "Of a nature repugnant, adverse or opposed to""", a sense attested in 1720. Again, we may note that not only the connotation, but also the denotation of *alien* has been affected. It is no longer necessary to belong to another person, place or family in order to be alien.

Additional examples can be found in Danish - *fremmedsprog* ("foreign language", neutral) vs. *fremmedartet* ("strange", pejorative) – or in Dutch - *vreemde taal* ("foreign language", neutral) vs. *op een vreemd manier* ("in a strange manner")

Related to this principle is the following ethnocentric or perhaps xenophobic law: there are neutral and negative words for foreign nations, but not positive ones. See for example, English *frog*, *hun*, *kraut*, *spics*, *wog*, *Prussian*, etc., Danish *prøjsler/-sisk*, Dutch *mof* ("German"), *Fransman* (neutral)/ *fransoos* (pejorative).

Similarly, there are appellations for peoples and nations in which the word for the home nation means "human being" or the like. Compare Greenlandic *kalaalit nunaat*, American *Cheyenne*, and German *deutsch*. The underlying idea seems to be that people who do not belong to the nation or tribe are not really human. See also *barbarian* from Greek.

And in the same vein, one can notice that there are neutral and negative appellations for other tribes, races, cultures and religions, but not positive ones: e.g., English: *coon*, *jid*, Danish: *abe*, *jødesmøvs*, *perker*.

The common principle behind the first law seems to be that there are no positive appellations for beings from somewhere else or for people who are strangers. This may be regarded as a more or less natural

consequence of our view of the world, which is necessarily egocentric and ethnocentric: the new or the unknown must be understood on the basis of the known.

2.2. “Clodhopper” (Down with peasants!)

Words which designate people of rural (as opposed to urban) origin become pejorative, not laudatory, if they change their connotation and subsequently their denotation:

English: *boor(ish)*, *peasant*, *provincial*, *rustic*, *country* (manners), *uncivilized*, *clown*

Danish: *bonde/bondsk*, *landlig*, *provinsiel*

French and English: *villain*

Dutch: *dorpere* “boor”, from *dorp* “village”, *boers*, *rustiek*.

There may be exceptions to the second law. Crabb (1961) says (under *countryman*):

“All these terms are employed as epithets to persons, and principally to such as live in the *country*: the terms *countryman* and *peasant* are taken in an indifferent sense,

and may comprehend persons of different descriptions; they designate nothing more than habitual residence in the *country*: the other terms are employed for the lower orders of countrymen, but with collateral ideas favorable or unfavorable annexed to them: *swain*, *hind*, both convey the idea of innocence in a humble station sense: the *rustic* and *clown* both convey the idea of that u, and are therefore always employed in poetry in a good ncouth rudeness and ignorance which is in reality found among the lowest orders of *countrymen*”.

2.2. “Pig” (Down with (domestic) animals!)

Many words which designate domestic animals or things associated with them become pejorative, not laudatory, if they change their connotation and subsequently their denotation and are used about humans (unlike designations for wild animals, which can go in both directions: *bear*, *lion*, *stag*, *wolf*):

English: *ass*, *chicken*, *cow*, *goat*, *goose*, *pig*, *sheep*, *sow*, *swine*, *pigsty*;

Danish: *får*, *gris*, *gås*, *ko*, *lam*, *so*, *svin*, *æsel* But *due* (“pigeon”) and *tyr* (“bull”) are not necessarily pejorative;

Dutch: *koe* “stupid person”, *ezel* “stupid person”, *blinde kip* “shortsighted person”, *koude kip* “cold woman”, *gans* “goose”, *varken* “pig”, *zeug* “sow”, “fat, sloppy woman”.

There are exceptions to this third regularity. In Bavarian, *Hund* (“dog”) can express a certain admiration when applied to humans. (Professor Hans-Jürgen Diller, Bochum, personal communication).

Unlike the designations for domestic animals, designations for people who look after them may very well develop positive connotations and subsequently denotations: e.g., English: *marshall* (the change occurred already in French), *stuart/ steward/stewart*, *swain* (OED: “young rustic, bucolic lover, suitor”)

2.4. “Frailty, thy name is woman” (Down with women!)

Words which designate women or female roles and occupations become pejorative, not laudatory, if they change their connotation and subsequently their denotation. For example, English *hussy*, *spinster*, *gossip*, *mistress* (cp *master*), *professional* and Danish *matrone*, *kælling*

This regularity has been noted by many feminists, notably Robin Lakoff (1975).

3. Conclusion

It may be said that regular changes like those discussed above tell us nothing about linguistic structure, Saussure’s *langue*, but only about language use, Saussure’s *parole*. This may be true, but it seems clear to me that prolonged changes in language use will eventually affect language structure. Words which change their connotations may very well end up changing their meaning, their referential potential.

The semantic changes listed above form a very depressing picture. On the other hand, I personally find it difficult to believe that the world, or at least the European part of it represented above, is constantly becoming more and more xenophobic, sexist and bigoted. Surely it ought to be possible to make studies of language use which point in another direction? I regret that in this paper I have only been able to present the negative side.

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VARIATION IN TRADITIONAL COCKNEY AND POPULAR LONDON SPEECH

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Abstract: In this paper I examine recordings of two elderly Londoners, one male and one female, in an attempt to show the range of variation that can be found in the traditional speech of London as regards typical features such as H-dropping, TH-fronting, T-glottalling and L-vocalization. The female speaker lacks some of the traits that are generally considered characteristic of Cockney.

Keywords: English dialectology, English sociolinguistics, Cockney, Popular London speech.

1. Introduction

Strictly speaking, Cockney is the basilectal extreme of the popular speech of London, used in an imprecise area north of the River Thames referred to as the East End. The traditional core neighbourhoods of the [East End](#) are Bethnal Green, Stepney & Poplar (since 1965 forming the borough of Tower Hamlets), Shoreditch, Hackney, Mile End and Bow, and a little further south, nearer the river, Spitalfields, Whitechapel, Wapping, Limehouse and Millwall. Nowadays, certain areas south of the river (Southwark, Bermondsey and Walworth) are also strongly associated with Cockney speech. However, probably most of the time these days, the term “Cockney” is used loosely to include any working-class London accents that deviate noticeably from the standard (RP or SSB, as it is variously called). Among these, the varieties that are closer to RP might be more accurately termed Popular London Speech (PLS).

Cockney in its broadest sense is claimed to have had an influence on the speech of other areas, and not only areas close to London, like Essex and the Home Counties: some phonetic phenomena traditionally associated with the speech of London have also arisen further afield, in other parts of England and Scotland and, rightly or wrongly, been attributed to influence of the metropolis. For example, TH-Fronting, a merger most likely due to the phonological markedness of [θ] and [ð] as compared to [f] and [v] (Kerswill, 2003: 240), has been recorded in Glasgow (among other places), and Glaswegian speech containing this feature is sometimes referred to humoristically as Jockney. Glottalization is now found in the speech of

Liverpool, and is in fact even more widespread nowadays than before among young speakers in London in general. The type of regional speech as a whole which has incorporated features of the London variety is sometimes referred to as Estuary English.

In London itself, Cockney and PLS today are spoken among many other linguistic varieties, so we can expect to find influence from these. For instance, the speech of young Inner-London speakers, through contact with British Caribbean English and L2 Englishes, is now characterized by narrow Creole-like diphthongs, or even monophthongs, in place of the broad FACE and GOAT diphthongs of traditional Cockney, [ʌɪ] and [ʌʊ], respectively (see Cheshire et. al., 2006 for details).

Cockney is a low-prestige variety but, by dint of being used as a vehicle of literature and comedy, it also has covert prestige. Everyone is familiar with the flower girl Liza Doolittle, Shaw's character in *Pygmalion* (the basis for the award-winning musical *My Fair Lady*) whose speech the phonetician Professor Higgins strives to improve, or Sam Weller in Dicken's *Pickwick Papers*, who pronounced his [v]'s like [w]'s (*wery good*).

People often associate Cockney with Rhyming Slang, prototypically a collection of binomial phrases whose second noun rhymes with the name of the object referred to, e.g. *plates of meat* 'feet' and *trouble and strife* 'wife'. Lists of it have appeared in numerous publications on Cockney, and there is a good recent specialized dictionary (Ayto, 2002). However, most Londoners rarely use it, except for the items that have become widespread in General English and which many people no longer actually recognize as originally being Cockney rhyming slang: *butcher's* (= *butcher's hook* 'look'), *loaf* (= *loaf of bread* 'head'), *china* (= *china plate* 'mate'). Note also the recent trend among some people of producing rhymes based on the names of famous people: *Hank Marvin* (lead guitarist of the Shadows) for *starving*, and *Shania Twain* for *pain (in the backside)* 'nuisance' (referred to as Mockney or Popney).

2. The present study

In this brief study, I compare the speech of two elderly London speakers, one male and one female, aged sixty-seven and seventy-two respectively at the time of recording, and both with secondary-school education. I show that the two speakers represent different styles of London speech, the male being closer to what we could call true Cockney, and the female being representative of what we might term Popular London Speech. I thus corroborate Wells' recognition of the existence of popular London

accents that differ from broad Cockney in being more similar to RP (Wells 1982: 302). In order to do this, I pay attention to four variables closely associated with the pronunciation of Londoners:

1. H-dropping
2. TH-fronting
3. T-glottalling
4. L-vocalization

Cockney speakers would be expected to use these traits all the time; speakers of PLS will use them to a greater or lesser extent.

First of all, I shall provide a summary of what is known about these linguistic features from the existing literature on the speech of London. Then I shall examine a recording that I made of my two participants on separate occasions in a reading task in order to see to what extent the above four traits are present in their speech.

2.1. H-dropping

Whereas in RP there are many instances of synchronic variable [h]-loss in grammatical words in unstressed environments, and historically in the suffix *-ham* (*Buckingham* /bʌkɪŋəm/) and the pronoun *it* < *hit*, this type of elision is extended, at least among older Cockney speakers, to lexical words like *hat* [æʔ], *heavy* [ˈɛvɪɪ] and *help* [ɛoʔp^h], so that H-dropping is also common in stressed syllables. As the phenomenon is highly stigmatized, Cockney speakers and Londoners in general will make a conscious effort to pronounce [h] in more careful speech. They are usually aware of where [h] is pronounced in RP and are able to use it correctly, but occasionally cases of hypercorrection like *h-educated* [ˈhɛdjʊɪkɪʔɪd] and *h-ignorant* [ˈhɪɡnərənʔ] arise. However, nowadays these are more often than not facetious pronunciations rather than genuine lapses. At least as far young people in (South-east) London are concerned, H-loss, though still widespread, seems to be stabilizing or has stabilized (Tollfree, 1999: 173).

2.2. TH-fronting

Just as Londoners are conscious of where [h] is expected in pronunciation, they are also cognizant of the [f] - [θ] and [v] - [ð] distinction in RP in minimal pairs such as *fought/fort-thought* and *lithe-live*, and often exploit the opposition themselves; otherwise, we would expect to see many hypercorrections like [θaɪð] for *five* (Wells, 1982: 328-329). However,

there is often a merger of these labio-dental and dental segments in London, so that *thin* sounds like *fin*, and *breathe* sounds like *breve*. Initial [ð] is usually maintained, except in the speech of young children, where forms such as [və] for *the* may be found.

2.3. T-glottalling

Although in the present study I am focussing particularly on T-glottalling, it needs to be mentioned that all three unvoiced plosives, [p, t, k], tend to be subject to pre-glottalization when following a vowel and not in absolute initial position in RP: *cup* [kʰʌʔpʰ], *mat* [mæʔtʰ], *nick* [nɪʔkʰ]. In Cockney it sometimes happens that these segments are realized as a bare glottal stop (*cup* [kʰʌʔ], *mat* [mæʔ], *nick* [nɪʔ]), even when a vowel follows: *cup of tea* [kʰaʔ ə tʰi:], *mat and carpet* [mæʔ ən 'kɑ:ʔɪʔ], *he'll nick it* [io 'nɪʔ ɪʔ]. This is most frequently so in the case of underlying /t/, but with the other unvoiced plosives there tends to be a gesture accompanying the glottalling which identifies them as either bilabial or velar, and which may be heard as a weakly articulated plosive: *paper* [pʌɪʔbə], *Wilkins* [wɪoʔɡɪnz]. As can be seen, glottalization takes place in Cockney most commonly when the following syllable is unstressed. Notwithstanding, the glottal stop is occasionally found before stress, as in *tata* [tʰæʔɑ:] 'goodbye' and *cartoons* [kʰɑ:'ʔʊʔnz].

In educated British English accents (what Collins & Mees [2003: 245] call NRP, non-regional pronunciation), pre-glottalization and glottal replacement of [t] very commonly affect a group of high-frequency words, namely: *it, bit, get, let, at, that, got, lot, not* (and contracted forms: *don't, can't, aren't, isn't*, etc.), *what, put, but, might, right, quite, out, about* (Collins & Mees, 2003: 82). However, in Cockney, glottalization is the norm and tends to be used across the board, except in highly self-conscious speech styles or careful reading.

2.4. L-vocalization

While the loss of final [r] in both Cockney and RP is a complete, irreversible process which always operates unless the next syllable begins with a vowel, in which case a linking [r] is used (Cockney *far* [fɑ:], *how far is it?* [æʊ 'fɑ:r ɪz ɪʔ]), loss of the other liquid, [l], in final position is still resisted in many educated accents and registers of English: *tall* /tɔ:l/ is

preferred to /tɔ:/, for example. It is however not an either/or phenomenon (the difference between a vocoid segment and a very dark [ɫ] may be hard to perceive) and, for this reason, many people who would claim to pronounce their post-vocalic [ɫ]s do not in fact do so, except in highly self-conscious styles. Londoners, on the whole, tend to produce vocoid articulations for their post-vocalic [ɫ]s.

The phenomenon is not unknown in other languages, like Polish, where it can occur in initial position (witness the case of the city of *Łódź* /wudʒ/), Brazilian Portuguese (note the pronunciation *Brazil* /bra'ziu/), and Rumanian, whose northern dialects (e.g. Maramureş) tend to vocalize or drop [ɫ] (ALBU > *aub* 'white', *asculta* > *ascuta* 'listen'; See Rosetti 1978: 534, 602). In English, L-vocalization is a consequence of the velarization or "darkening" of [ɫ]. In Cockney, when pronounced after vowels, [ɫ] is very dark (symbol [ɫ̥]) and, if it becomes vocoid, as it usually does, as in *small* [smo:] and *bowl* [bɔʊ], the resulting back vowel is in the region of [o], [ʊ] or unrounded [ɤ].

L-vocalization means that Londoner's who use it have an additional phoneme among their diphthongs: *bowl* /bɔʊ / v. *bow* /bəʊ /, *soul* [sɔʊ] v. *so/sew/sow* [səʊ].

Although the environment in which [ɫ]-vocalization has been traditionally attested is word/syllable-final pre-consonantal or pre-pausal, Tollfree (1999: 174) has found instances in word-final intervocalic contexts among the younger generation in South East London (1999: 174). This means that from now on we are probably going to find increasing vocalization in phrases like *the Millwall area* [ðə mɪlɔ'wo:ʷ ɛəriə], *Muswell Hill* ['mɔzweɔʷ ɪɔ] and *He took a bowl over his mate's* 'He went to his friend's house' [ɪi 'tʰɔʔk ə bɔʊʷ ʌʊvər ɪz mʌɪʔs] without recovery of the underlying lateral segment.

3. The recordings

For the purpose of this study, the participants were asked to read the passage "The North Wind and the Sun", whose orthographic version and approximate RP transcription are provided below (3.1 and 3.2). The recordings, made on a mini-disc recorder, were converted to wave files using Goldwave and transcriptions were produced. When it was necessary to check features such as aspiration, voice and glottalization, the relevant segments were examined in the programme PRAAT. To keep the

transcriptions reasonably consistent, cases where laryngealization seemed to be present rather than complete glottal closure were all treated as cases of glottalization and the symbol for the glottal stop was used.

Nasalization of vowels is not indicated in the transcriptions. It is normal for vowels to be nasalized to a greater or lesser extent when followed by a nasal consonant, and this is particularly noticeable in Cockney and PLS. However, as it is a feature that is entirely predictable, it was considered unnecessary to record it in the phonetic notation.

3.1. *The North Wind and the Sun.* Orthographic version

The North Wind and the Sun were disputing which was the stronger, when a traveller came along wrapped in a warm cloak. They agreed that the one who first succeeded in making the traveller take his cloak off should be considered stronger than the other. Then the North Wind blew as hard as he could, but the more he blew the more closely did the traveller fold his cloak around him; and at last the North Wind gave up the attempt. Then the Sun shone out warmly, and immediately the traveller took off his cloak. And so the North Wind was obliged to confess that the Sun was the stronger of the two.

3.2. *The North Wind and the Sun.* RP transcription. Phonemic (based on Roach 2004: 244)

ðə 'nɔ:θ 'wɪnd ən ðə 'sʌn | wə dɪ'spju:tɪŋ 'wɪtʃ wəz ðə 'strɒŋgə | wɛn ə
'trævlə keɪm əlθŋ 'ræpt ɪn ə 'wɔ:m 'kləʊk || ðeɪ ə'grɪ:d | ðət ðə 'wʌn hu 'fɜ:st
sək'si:dɪd ɪn 'meɪkɪŋ ðə 'trævlə teɪk ɪz 'kləʊk ɒf | ʃʊd bi kən'sɪdəd 'strɒŋgə
ðən ði 'lɒðə || 'ðen ðə 'nɔ:θ 'wɪnd 'blu: əz 'hɑ:d əz i 'kʊd | bət ðə 'mɔ: hi 'blu: |
ðə 'mɔ: 'kləʊsli dɪd ðə 'trævlə 'fəʊld hɪz 'kləʊk ə'raʊnd hɪm | ənd ət 'lɑ:st | ðə
'nɔ:θ 'wɪnd geɪv ʌp ði ə'tempt || 'ðen ðə 'sʌn | 'ʃʊn aʊt 'wɔ:mli | ənd ɪ'mɪ:diətli
ðə trævlə 'tʊk ɒf ɪz kləʊk || ən 'səʊ ðə 'nɔ:θ 'wɪnd wəz ə'blaɪdʒd tə kən'fes |
ðət ðə 'sʌn wəz ðə 'strɒŋgər əv ðə tu:

3.3. *The North Wind and the Sun.* TC, male aged 67, from Paddington, W2

ðə 'nɒʊf 'wɪnd æŋ ðə 'sæn | wə dɪ'spɪtʃɪn 'wɪtʃ wəz ðə 'ʃtrɒŋgə | wɛn ə
 'tʃævələ kʰɛɪm əlθŋ 'ræp tʰɪn ə 'wɔ:m 'klʌʊkʰ || ðəɪ ə'gɪɪ ðə? ðə 'wʌn fɪu
 'fɜ:s sækstɪðɪd m̩ mʌɪkɪn ðə trævə tʰeɪk ɪz 'klʌʊk ɒf | 'ʃʊb bɪɪ kʰn'sɪdə
 'ʃtrɒŋgə ðəŋ ðɪ 'avə || 'ðeŋŋə 'nɒʊθ 'wɪnd 'blʊt əz 'ɑ:d əz ɪ? 'kʊdʰ | bə? ðə
 'mɔə ɪɪ 'bɪʊt | ðə 'mɔə 'klʌʊslɪ dɪd ðə 'trævələ 'fʊʊd ɪz 'klʌʊkʰ ə'ræʊnd ɪm |
 æn ə? 'lɑ:s | ðə 'nɒʊf 'wɪnd geɪv 'ʌp ðɪ ə'tʰɛmʔtʰ || 'ðeŋ ðə 'sæn 'ʃʊn æə?
 'wɔ:mli æn ɪ'mɪdɪəʔɪɪ ðə 'trævə tʰʊkʰ ɒf ɪz 'klʌʊkʰ || ən 'slʌ ðə 'nɔ:θ wɪnd
 wəz ə'blaɪʔ tʰu kʰn'fɛ:s | dæ? θə 'sæn | wəz ðə 'ʃtrɒŋgə əv ðə tʰə

3.4. The North Wind and the Sun. PT, female aged 72, from Abbey Wood, SE2

ðə 'nɒʊθ 'wɪnd æŋ ðə 'sæn | wɜ: dɪ'spɪtʃɪn 'wɪtʃ wəz zə 'strɒŋgə |
 wɛn ə 'tʃævələ kʰɪm əlθŋ 'ræʔtʰɪn ə 'wɔ:ʊŋ 'klʌʊkʰ || ðəɪ ə'gɪɪd | ðə?
 ðə 'wʌn fɪu 'fɜ:s sək'sɪdɪd ɪn 'mʌɪkɪn ŋə 'trævələ | tʰɪk hɪz 'klʌʊkʰ ɒf |
 ʃʊd 'bɪə kʰn'sɪdəd 'strɒŋgə ðəŋ ðɪ 'aðə || 'ðeŋŋə 'nɒʊθ 'wɪn 'brʊt əz
 'hɑ:d əz hɪ 'kʰʊd | bə? ðə 'mɔə hɪɪ 'blʊt ðə 'mɔə 'klʌʊslɪ dɪd ðə 'trævələ
 | 'fʊʊd hɪz 'klʌʊʔk ə'ræʊnd hɪm | ənd ə? 'lɑ:st ə 'nɒʊθ wɪnd ɪz 'gɪv ʌ? ðɪ
 ə'tʰɛmt || 'ðeŋ ðə sʌn 'ʃʊn æə? 'wɔ:mli | ænd ə'mɪdɪəʔɪɪ | ðə trævələ
 tʰʊkʰ ɒf hɪz klʌʊk || ən 'slʌ ðə 'nɒʊθ 'wɪnd wəz ə'blaɪʔ tʰə kʰn'fɛs | ðə?
 ðə 'sæn wəz ðə 's:trɒŋgə ɒv ðə tʰə

4. Comment on the recordings

The number of instances in the readings of the linguistic features under scrutiny can be seen in the following table:

	H-dropping	TH-fronting excluding initial [ð]	T-glottalling	L-vocalization
Male speaker	6/7	3/5	7/7	1/1
Female speaker	0/8	0/5	5/6	1/1

H-dropping is absent from the female speaker's reading, not even occurring with the grammatical words *he* and *his*, which would often have

an aitch-less form in RP connected speech. In the male speaker's reading, H-dropping is almost 100% (6/7 – note one instance of *it* instead of *he*).

TH-fronting is totally absent from the female speaker's reading. In the male speaker, TH-fronting occurs, except when [ð] is initial, as in the definite article, etc.

In the female reader, T-glottalling is only used pre-consonantly, as in RP. She also glottalizes the [p] of *up*, but, once again, in preconsonantal position. In the male reader, T-glottalling is 100% (also found in the form *it*, which he uses on one occasion instead of *he*).

Both speakers vocalize the [l] of *fold*. Presumably, if there had been more instances of this consonant in preconsonantal or final prepausal position, then they would have vocalized these, too, as is the norm in London.

5. Conclusion

It would appear from the two readings that we are dealing with two slightly different but related varieties of London speech: the speech of the male speaker is closer to what we would label as true Cockney, which lies at the basilectal end of the London accent continuum, while that of the female speaker approximates more to John Wells' concept of "popular London" Speech, which he describes as being "very slightly closer to RP than the broadest Cockney" (Wells, 1982: 302). It would therefore appear feasible to propose, as Wells does, a classification that makes a distinction between forms of London speech that resemble one variety or the other, apart from recognizing a more educated variety closer to RP than either of these, and the more recent appearance of a vernacular more obviously influenced by substantial immigration, with levelling of the diphthongs in the FACE and GOAT sets of words: Multi-Cultural London English.

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THE DISTRIBUTION OF LIGHT VERBS IN ENGLISH: AN EMPIRICAL, CORPUS-BASED STUDY

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Abstract: *This paper provides a corpus-based investigation of the distribution and collocational force of five light verbs: have, take, make, do, give, in complex predicate patterns based on data gained from the British National Corpus. Focus of analysis: (i) surveying the representation of light verb constructions in standard, learners' dictionaries of English, (ii) meaning and usage-based factors of light verb + NP vs. full verb constructional variants, (iii) semantic/pragmatic differences between variants with different light verbs preceding the same NP.*

Keywords: *light verb, constructional variant, non-compositional, deverbal noun, corpus-based, frequency*

1. Introduction

The term 'light verb' was coined by the Danish linguist Otto Jespersen (1942:116-118) referring to the verb of a V-NP transitive construction in which the verb undergoing delexicalization loses its primary lexical meaning, is left neutralized and only fills its verbal predicative role in the construction. Thus the meaning of the constructional expression is primarily expressed by the nominal filling the role of the object (*Patient*, in terms of case grammar (Starosta, 1988:123-126)). At a significant rate, but not exclusively, such nouns are deverbal, as in *take a walk* vs. *make noise*. Therefore, one of the primary aims of the present paper is to investigate possible differences expressed by the constructional lexical representation versus its parallel full verb variant in present day English, based on a selected body of sample material. As variability in the light verbs taken by the same nominal can also be observed, another aim of the paper is to investigate possibly arising differences in meaning and force of such constructional variants. These two important aspects of study even today require adequate scrutiny of investigation, possibly relying on corpus-based analysis of data with simultaneous testing of native speakers' intuitive judgment used as a control over the validity and representative nature of the data gained from corpora. The present paper is a study with such scope. Empirically based, seminal approaches to analyzing the morphological and lexical as well as syntactic variability of light verb constructions such as

Wierzbicka's and the now classic, standard descriptive grammar of Quirk and co-workers have largely concentrated on recognizing and interpreting the regional distribution of constructional variants with the occurrence of various light verbs (Quirk et al., 1985:751-752, Wierzbicka, 1982). Akimoto and Brinton note that the choice of light verb yielding constructional variants with the same N has little if any effect on the meaning of the composite predicate (1999). I do not share the view of these authors and will aim to point to marked differences both in meaning interpretation and force of such variants, based on data gained from the BNC and native speaker testing, described in the section that will account for my empirical investigations.

In addition to Jespersen's term 'light verb', several other terms have been used in the literature during the identification of verbs delexicalized in the type of construction studied in this paper. One of the classics, Halliday (1967), an outstanding and devoted functionalist, uses the term 'neutral verb', quite appropriately, I believe. Cattell (1984), whose approach is primarily focussed on investigating the types of syntactic patterning in terms of argument structure of such verbs uses the terms 'complex predicate' and 'composite predicate', and Allerton (2002), whose approach is quite similar to Cattell's in its bias, uses the term 'stretched verb constructions'. Traugott (1999) also uses the term 'complex predicate'. Algeo (1995) views the construction to function as an 'expanded predicate'. Akimoto and Brinton (1999) use the label 'composite predicate'. Matsumoto (2008), in her historically-based analysis, categorizes the construction as 'periphrastic expressions'. Engelen (1968) as well as Nickel (1968) call such verbs, whose meaning has been neutralized in the construction studied here, 'function verbs'. It is their term that is used by Hungarian theoretical and descriptive linguists even today.

One can see from the wide choice of terms used to identify and describe the morphology, syntax, as well as semantic character of the construction that various linguists have given priority to and have managed to grasp various aspects of the notion and formal, as well as functional, aspects of its behavior. Of the heterogeneity of terminology, however, Jespersen's term seems to be outstanding and seems to have gained the most widespread use, especially in typologically based approaches to investigating the construction at various levels of linguistic representation. In particular, typologists have pointed out the universality of light verbs, based on data gained from a large number of typologically radically different languages, and have successfully pointed to its '(semi)lexical' status (Butt and Geuder, 2001). It has to be noted, however, that the semantic makeup of light verb constructions and lexical expression via

parallel representation by full verb versus constructional variant in various languages may show strict correspondences, but also variable differences, that is, mere contrastive surveys relying on calques may be inconsistent and are likely to yield false results.

Surveying the relevant literature, the light verb status of five lexical items, namely *have*, *take*, *do*, *make*, *give*, has been studied by most authors. In their constructional occurrence, all of these verbs have lost their strict lexical meaning and have undergone delexicalization, or, as some would put it, grammaticalization (Traugott, 1999), resulting in non-compositionality of the items that constitute the constructional lexical expression. Let us note, however, that the constructional occurrence of light verbs by no means constitutes a closed set; several other verbs have been judged to hold a similar status. However, these verbs, including *go*, *get*, and even *put*, have not completely lost their primary lexical meaning in the construction, that is, their delexicalization is judged to be in a transitional stage. In some collocational patterns they may represent particular lexical-grammatical functions, for instance, expressing change of state as a routine, as exemplified by the expressions *go mad* or *turn black*, or causativity, as in *make laugh*. However, I would guess that even though the occurring verb in such constructions collocates with an adjective or a verb and not with a deverbal noun in a transitive-based construction, its lexical role is still approaching the status of light verbs.

Many would claim that historically light verb constructions developed from full verbs as a result of the growth of analyticity and consequent compositionality of lexical expression. However, as pointed out by Matsumoto (1999 and 2008) and Traugott (1999), the construction already existed as early as the final stage of the Old English period, parallel with full verb variants, and underwent standardization in Middle English, and the type ratio of (dominantly deverbal) nominal collocates radically increased in Early Modern English and Modern English. As already noted above, the collocational force of types of light verbs in constructions is far from being rigid or bound and lexical variability is quite frequent. Historically, however, occurrence of loss of certain lexical variants and retention of their lexical partner in the construction can also be traced, as exemplified by the loss of OE *macian bath* and retention of *tacan bath* (without the occurrence of the indefinite article at the time) as opposed to the full verb variant *bathian*. The choice of light verbs occurring with the same NP occasionally underwent radical changes historically (see, for instance the case of *sellan* vs. *macian* and *giefan* as well as that of *niman* and *tacan* or *macian + weg* in OE and ME) as discussed by Akimoto and Brinton (1999:48-50). Finding the reasons for such changes in lexical

expression and interpreting possible meaning relations and differences between retained variants claims further research.

Occurrence of verbs in light verb constructions may result in shifts of their aspectuality as exemplified by the case of *have*. The full verb is significantly [+stative] in nature, whereas its constructional variants *have breakfast* or *have a dance* carry a [+dynamic] force. No such shift in force can be observed in the case of constructional variants with the light verb *take*, however, which both as a full verb and as a light verb expresses the [+dynamic] nature of the action lexically represented.

Structural variability in argument structure and the manifestation of complementation of light verb constructions is also significant both synchronically and historically and studying it requires corpus-based research, as pointed out by Hiltunen (1999). Distribution of nouns occurring in construction with particular light verbs may reveal lexical field related constraints. For instance, as pointed out by Traugott, *do* in its light verb function tends to co-occur with abstract nouns or event-based nominals, whereas *give* readily participates in the lexical expression of locutionary acts and mental experiences (Traugott, 1999:256). Variability in the morphological representation of constructional expression can also be observed at a significant rate. Gradual loss of plural nouns and the appearance of the indefinite article occurred in the Middle English period (see, for instance OE *reste habban* vs. Modern English *have (a) rest*, *take (a) rest*). Matsumoto, based on information gained from Brinton, notes aspectual differences between constructions with and without the indefinite article, exemplified by the durative-like interpretability of *make noise* and the expressed punctuality of *make a noise* in Modern English (Matsumoto 1999:95). Standardization of constructional expression in Middle English also resulted in the fixation of word order of constituents in the construction and the loss of their compositionality in the expression.

As already noted, light verb constructions are non-compositional lexical expressions. This is justified by the fact that variability with a choice of light verbs occurring with the same NP is frequent, but it is far from being systematic. A large number of lexical gaps may occur with NPs collocating only with particular light verbs in the construction. This is exemplified by the acceptability and occurrence in corpora of the expression *take leave* and the rejection by native speaker intuition of the constructions *make leave* and *have leave*, expressing the meaning 'depart'.

2. Representation of light verb status in monolingual learners' dictionaries of English

Looking up the senses of the five most common light verbs *have*, *take*, *do*, *make*, and *give* in the most recent, 2009 editions of two outstanding desk-size learners' dictionaries of English, COBUILD 5 and LDOCE 5, users can see that, although, naturally, there is no mention of the term 'light verb' in the definition of the senses, it is still easy to recognize it from the character of the definition under the description of a particular sense. Emphasis in both dictionaries is on the constructional collocational patterning of the given verb and the noun following it, however, the meaning of the respective verb or its neutralization, delexicalization are not even mentioned. In the examples given, the light verb construction and the transitive patterns with a full verb are not separated, these forms of lexical representation being listed side by side (ex. *have ice cream*, *eat ice cream*, *have a shock*, *suffer a shock*, *take* vs. *assume control*, *do* vs. *brush your teeth* [COBUILD 5]). LDOCE 5 concentrates on itemizing the senses topically, with possible reference to the relevant lexical fields instead of provision of a precise, accurate definition under the given sense identified. It gives quite a large body of examples concentrating on the choice of collocating nouns in the construction (ex. *have a look/walk/sleep/talk/a swim*, *take delight/pleasure/pride etc. in doing sth*). COBUILD 5 more dominantly refers to the occurrence of parallel forms of lexical expression in constructions versus full verbs (*have a look at*, *look at*) than LDOCE 5. Looking at the examples listed under each relevant sense of the five light verbs in the two dictionaries, a striking observation can be made: the user cannot see that there is a possibility of light verb variation in the examples given, due to the heterogeneity of the lexical makeup of the examples themselves. Additionally, although, as can be seen, the constructional variant has been given together with the full verb variant, possible relations such as identity, similarity, or difference in the meaning of the two types of formal expression are not discussed. In sum, although the representation of common light verb constructions in the two learners' dictionaries is quite good, both dictionaries neglect interpretation or explanation of the coexistence of constructional vs. full verb variant and do not even refer to the possibility of constructional variation with different light verbs in their material.

In addition to studying the representation of the light verb function under the heading of the underlying full verb in the two learners' dictionaries, I also studied the representation of constructional patterning under the definition of nominal constituents of a selected sample. To my

surprise, the two standard, corpus-based dictionaries under-represented the construction at a significant rate. Let me illustrate this by giving a few examples in Table 1.

Nominal	COBUILD 5	LDOCE 5
walk	<i>take (long) walks</i> (in examples)	<i>take/have a walk</i> (collocations)
dinner	<i>have dinner</i> (in examples)	<i>have/eat dinner</i> (collocations)
lunch	<i>have lunch</i> (in def. of <i>lunch</i>)	<i>have /eat lunch</i> (collocations)
shout	--	<i>give a shout /shouts</i> (in examples)
scream	--	--
kiss	<i>give someone a kiss</i> (word partnership)	<i>give sb a kiss</i> (collocation)
party	<i>have a party</i> (word partnership)	<i>have a party</i> (sense.: for fun)

Table 1. Constructional variants of light verbs given under headings of nominal constituents in learners' dictionaries

COBUILD 5 completely disregards light verb constructional variants of *walk*, and in LDOCE 5 only two variants are listed. Concerning the light verb constructions occurring in the lexical field of 'meals' and 'party', only *have* is given. The representation of possible constructional variation is poorest in the field of exclamatory expressions. The overall picture, here, too, reveals complete disregard of constructional variability based on a choice of possible light verbs, and consequently, a total neglect of interpreting the meaning and force related differences of the arising possible variants of lexical expression. Let me also note that, in all of the above cases, constructions were listed (without interpretation of their meaning, sense or force) under typical collocations of the nominal with verbs in the two dictionaries, not in the definition of particular senses.

3. Corpus-based data: frequency of occurrence of light verb sample material in BNC

With the aim to gain more reliable insight into the distribution of types of possible constructional variability of light verbs in the chosen sample material, I have studied the frequency of occurrence of constructions based on the same constituent nominals in the 100 million word based British National Corpus. (In interpreting the results it has to be noted that

BNC is primarily based on a corpus of written textual material, hence the figures gained cannot be considered as representative of spoken discourse.) Present as well as past tense forms of the respective light verbs were considered in the survey, which yielded the following results:

<i>WALK</i>		<i>DINNER</i>	
<i>take a walk</i>	47	<i>have dinner</i>	117
<i>takes a walk</i>	0	<i>has dinner</i>	1
<i>took a walk</i>	18	<i>had dinner</i>	88
<i>have a walk</i>	18	<i>do dinner</i>	1
<i>has a walk</i>	0	<i>does dinner</i>	0
<i>had a walk</i>	8	<i>did dinner</i>	0
<i>do a walk</i>	1	<i>take dinner</i>	2
<i>does a walk</i>	0	<i>takes dinner</i>	0
<i>did a walk</i>	2	<i>took dinner</i>	1
<i>take walks</i>	4		
<i>takes walks</i>	0	<i>LUNCH</i>	
<i>took walks</i>	1	<i>have lunch</i>	125
<i>have walks</i>	2	<i>has lunch</i>	0
<i>has walks</i>	0	<i>had lunch</i>	91
<i>had walks</i>	0	<i>do lunch</i>	2
<i>do walks</i>	0	<i>does lunch</i>	0
<i>does walks</i>	0	<i>did lunch</i>	0
<i>did walks</i>	0	<i>take lunch</i>	17
		<i>takes lunch</i>	0
<i>KISS</i>		<i>took lunch</i>	2
<i>give a kiss</i>	2		
<i>gives a kiss</i>	0	<i>SCREAM</i>	
<i>gave a kiss</i>	0	<i>give a scream</i>	0
		<i>gives a scream</i>	0
<i>SHOUT</i>		<i>gave a scream</i>	5
<i>give a shout</i>	3	<i>do a scream</i>	0
<i>gives a shout</i>	1	<i>does a scream</i>	0
<i>gave a shout</i>	9	<i>did a scream</i>	0
<i>give shouts</i>	0	<i>make a scream</i>	0
<i>gives shouts</i>	0	<i>makes a scream</i>	0
<i>gave shouts</i>	0	<i>made a scream</i>	0
<i>PARTY</i>			
<i>have a party</i>	42		
<i>has a party</i>	5		

<i>had a party</i>	27
<i>do a party</i>	0
<i>does a party</i>	0
<i>did a party</i>	2

Even though present in a number of morphologically distinct cases, the frequencies of occurrence show very low rates in the above lists; however, they still attest that variability in the choice of light verbs taking deverbal nominals in their argument structure, and thus forming non-compositionally based constructions, reveals productivity of formation. In the lemma, present tense first and second person as well as past tense forms have a dominantly expressed rate of occurrence, and for some reason, present tense 3rd person forms are considerably underrepresented. It can be observed that, whereas in the case of *walk* and the constructions belonging to the lexical field of ‘meals’, there is a relatively wide choice of light verbs selected, even though the frequency of one of them seems to be outstanding (*take* for *walk*, *have* collocating with *dinner* and *lunch*). For constructions expressing spontaneous events (*shout*, *scream*, and even *kiss*, which, however, can be interpreted as expressing a durative action, a process or a singular act), only one particular light verb is selected for the construction. Perhaps this is the reason why even experienced lexicographers would highlight the phrasal nature of such constructions; however, they tend to forget about interpreting the quantitatively based hierarchy of particular light verbs use for particular types, domains or fields, not to say about conceptually based frames (in Fillmore’s sense (2008:1-3)) of lexical expression. Subtle differences, for instance, differences in the activity potential of agentive or experiencer subject nominals depending on the light verb occurring in the constructional variant are not noted and accounted for at all. What is more, as noted above, even today’s corpus-based dictionaries fail to give account of the existence of constructional variants with a set of light verbs possibly taken by a nominal, nor do they interpret meaning and force related similarities and differences between constructional variants and full verbs. I will concentrate on such relevant issues in the last section of this paper.

I am, of course, fully aware of the fact that the constructional variants given in my sample do not constitute a full set, as other candidates for light verb status might also be considered. For instance, in BNC, *give* co-occurs with the nominal *party* at a significant rate, with 19 occurrences in the lemma. However, in such cases, it is difficult to separate the already delexicalized light verb status of the verb from its transitory cases of this process, especially due to the clear-cut realization of the agentive status of

its performer functioning as subject in the sentence, with the occurrence of a beneficiary object in its argument structure or a PP in the periphery. In my listed samples, *do* claims an agentive subject, whereas potential subjects of *have* are usually interpreted as experiencers, but they can also function as potential agents. Let me note that *give* may show a more advanced stage of delexicalization in other frames, such as that of ‘education’: in constructions such as *give a talk/lecture*, its semantic neutralization is judged by native speakers’ intuition to be higher than in *give a party*.

4. Semantic-pragmatic similarities and differences between full verbs versus constructional expressions based on native speaker testing

In order to gain control over the reliability of the corpus-based data and to interpret the semantic and communicative content as well as force of the constructions listed in Section 3, and also to study possible and potential differences between (or similarities of) constructions and their parallel full verb variants, I have performed an empirical testing of acceptability and interpretability of the sample material, using 40 adult native speakers of American English as experimental subjects. They were asked (i) to state whether the constructions and their parallel full verb expressions were acceptable based on their intuitive judgment, and (ii) to identify and interpret or characterize possible relevant semantic or usage-based differences between them. The results gained are summarized in Table 2, where factors or features mentioned by at least 10 subjects have been given.

TOPICAL NOMINAL	LIGHT VERB OR CONSTRUCTION	FEATURES, CHARACTERIZATION
<i>WALK</i>	<i>walk</i>	physical act of walking in any circumstance, direction event and process highlighted expression of movement highlighted [- directional]
	<i>take a walk</i>	specific, circumscribed activity (specifically one of leisure) actor (agentive sense) highlighted movement/locomotion with directionality highlighted
	<i>have a walk</i>	event-based, rather than agentive action
<i>DINNER</i>	<i>dine</i>	passive tone more formal, official event, not with

	<i>have dinner</i>	family and friends routine-like event with family and friends, informal
<i>LUNCH</i>	<i>do dinner</i>	scheduled but informal event
	<i>lunch</i>	formal, old fashioned, rarely used
	<i>have lunch</i>	process of action highlighted in description
	<i>do lunch</i>	factual, date specific, related to an appointed, informal way of describing eating lunch with someone usually for business or leisure
<i>SHOUT</i>	<i>take lunch</i>	break for lunch
	<i>shout</i>	raise the voice quickly and very loudly short vocalization singular action or process
	<i>give a shout</i>	singular action marked with * as unacceptable by 37 informants
<i>SCREAM</i>	<i>scream</i>	activity, process, purposeful
	<i>give a scream</i>	ejaculation of voice marked with * as unacceptable by 34 informants
	<i>make a scream</i>	marked with * as unacceptable by 36 informants
	<i>do a scream</i>	marked with * as unacceptable by 37 informants
<i>PARTY</i>	<i>party</i>	drinking only, only two people could do it together having fun
	<i>do a party</i>	organizing event, newer usage marked with * as unacceptable by 21 informants
	<i>have a party</i>	requires a certain number of people organizing event, classic usage, sounds more common
<i>KISS</i>	<i>kiss</i>	factual, duration not specifically marked
	<i>give a kiss</i>	shorter in duration – if longer, N takes modifier (ex. <i>give a long kiss</i>)

pre-planned and circumscribed
action

Table 2: Features or characterization of constructions and full verbs

It can be seen from the above results that in every single case different type of differences in the meaning and usage of full verbs and their constructional variants have been noted by the informants, and also that, in every single case of constructional variation, differences rather than similarities have also been observed. Although it may be the case that some differences in usage may be regionally based, as noted in dictionaries and also by authors like Wierzbicka (1982) and Quirk et al. (1985), such differences have not been accounted for by my informants. The types of differences they noted mainly fall into three groups: (i) differences in aspectuality (durational factors, action vs. process) and consequential selectional restrictions (purposeful, circumscribed or spontaneous actions), especially concerning cases of constructional vs. full verb representation (see, for instance *kiss* vs. *give a kiss*), (ii) more marked expression of encyclopedically-based knowledge (especially related to constructional variation – see, for instance *have a party* vs. *do a party*, *have lunch* vs. *do lunch* vs. *take lunch*), and (iii) register-based differences (for instance, *dine* and its constructional variants *do/have dinner*). Differences of argument role, especially for potential subjects have also been noted. Such important differences of a semantic-pragmatic character are not accounted for by learners' dictionaries. Of special interest is the significant rate of rejection of exclamatory acts constructional variants by native speakers, in opposition to the corpus-based data, in which, although the figures of frequency of occurrence are low, acceptable usage of such expressions is still attested.

5. Conclusion

I am fully aware that, although the above argumentation about the nature and distribution of light verbs is based on empirical investigations, with the results of corpus-based data and native speaker testing compared in order to offer a parallel control over their validity and reliability, I have only managed to scratch the tip of a huge iceberg of phenomena. A more extensive study will have to include reliance on data gained not just from a single corpus, but based on several corpora, including those of various regional varieties of English; data representing a large number of different types of registers and usages should be studied (and contrasted) separately. However, I think that even touching the tip of a large iceberg by using

empirical methods, and pointing out relevant factors of analysis can lead to important and valid results. I hope to have been able to persuade the reader that when studying the functional behavior and typology of light verbs in English, to contrast the semantic specificity and pragmatic force of light verbs and their full verb partners and to include the full set of constructional variants in a set have to be taken as a must.

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**DISTRIBUTION OF LINGUISTIC VARIANTS IN SPECIFIC
GRAMMATICAL ENVIRONMENT**
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***Abstract:** In diachronic linguistics, the Naturalness Theory purports to unravel the seemingly random distribution of linguistic variants at the early stage of their assertion, when no other tangible functional, contextual or pragmatic motivation exists. The paper presents the results of three empirical studies, which confirm that the complexity of grammatical environment is instrumental in the choice between elective morphosyntactic constructions. Special attention is paid to the relevance of traditional grammatical parameters in defining grammatical environment as complex.*

***Keywords:** linguistic variant, grammatical environment, form, complexity*

1. Introduction

The subsequent paper reviews the results of a number of empirical studies (Trobevšek, 1990, 1994, 1999) into the distribution of selected pairs of morphosyntactic constructions in Old English and in present-day English texts, and re-examines the parameters of their interaction with the immediate grammatical environment. The basic postulates of the research derive from the *theory of naturalness* in linguistics, which posits that, in addition to functional and pragmatic motivation, the assertion and distribution of linguistic constructions in specific grammatical environment depend on their outer form.

The pioneers of the *naturalness theory* were *natural phonologists* (Stampe, 1979, Donegan, 1985) and *natural morphologists* (Mayerthaler, 1981, Dressler, 1987). In syntax, the theory was applied by Rydén (1979), Dotter (1990) and Dressler (2000). The behaviour of morphosyntactic pairs of constructions in English and German texts was first empirically tested by a group of linguists at the University of Ljubljana (Orešnik, Snedec, Teržan, Trobevšek Drobnak, 1990).

On the *synchronic level*, the theory introduced the terms *stronger* (for more elaborate) and *weaker* (for less elaborate) *variants*, but Mayerthaler (1987) and Orešnik (2000, 2007) currently operate with values of the *naturalness scale*. The naturalness scale rests on the assumption that, of two morphosyntactic variants, one is more natural (<*nat*) from the speaker's point of view, who is considered to be the focal point of communication (Orešnik, 2007:293). A typical <*nat* construction is formally less elaborate, bending to the principle of the least effort (Havers,

1931: 171), but semantically more opaque and less transparent to decode. Mayerthaler (1981) divided the naturalness scale into the values referring to the semantic properties (*sem-values*) and those referring to the symbolic (formal) properties (*sym-value*) of linguistic constructions. A typical *<sem value* construction would be more natural (i.e. more economical, easier to recall) from the speaker's point of view; a typical *<sym value* construction would be more natural (i.e. easier to decode) from the hearer's point of view. While the natural affinity of the speaker for more economical linguistic variants can be explained in terms of fundamental Gricean pragmatics and his *maxim of quantity* (Grice, 1975), the *naturalness theory* aims to determine the role of grammatical *environment* of linguistic variants in the speaker's assessment of the minimum output of expression, which would still be, as Martinet (1962:139) puts it, "compatible with achieving his ends".

On the *diachronic level*, the initial hypothesis was that, *post status nascendi*, stronger (*>nat* or *<sym*) variants are favoured in a relatively complex grammatical environment, and weaker (*<nat* or *<sem*) variants in a relatively simple grammatical environment (Orešnik et al., 1990, Orešnik, 1999). The complexity/simplicity of grammatical environment is defined in terms of the degree of markedness of the values of grammatical categories within the clause or sentence in which the observed linguistic variants occur. The author of this paper empirically tested the hypothesis by investigating the correlation between the complexity of grammatical environment and (a) the assertion of expanded tenses in Old English, (b) the loss of the preverbal *ge-* in Old English, and (c) the distribution of participial non-finite clauses in Old English and in present-day English. On the *synchronic level*, the theory introduced the terms *stronger* (for more elaborate) and *weaker* (for less elaborate) *variants*, but Mayerthaler (1988) and Orešnik (2004) currently operate with *naturalness scale*, *sem-values* and *sym-values*. While the natural affinity of the speaker for more economical linguistic variants can be explained in terms of fundamental Gricean pragmatics and his *maxim of quantity* (Grice, 1975), the *naturalness theory* aims to determine the role of grammatical *environment* of linguistic variants in the speaker's assessment of the minimum output of expression, which would still be, as Martinet (1962:139) puts it, "compatible with achieving his ends".

2. Empirical studies

2.1. The method

For each construction pair, basic and control samples were compiled from Old English and/or present-day English texts. The basic samples depict the grammatical environment of the constructions under observation, and the control samples the environment of their respective linguistic variants.

The grammatical environment of selected constructions was determined as to its scope (e.g. sentence, clause, matrix verbal phrase) and as to the observables. Initially, these were traditional grammatical categories, which were assigned binary values, one defined as constituting a more complex (<com), and the other as constituting a less complex (>com) grammatical environment. In the absence of other reliable criteria, the attribute <com was assigned to the *marked* values of grammatical categories, as proposed by the *Prague School* (Jakobson, 1932) and by *natural morphologists* (Mayerthaler, 1981). Unlike Mayerthaler's *sem-values*, with which they share the common *markedness* grounds, the <com and >com labels are used for the assessment of the complexity of grammatical environment of chosen constructions, and not for the evaluation of the (cognitive or grammatical) complexity of constructions themselves.

For each of the observables, the probability rates were computed for parameters to assume the <com value in the environment of the <form construction (P_a) and of the >form construction (P_b) respectively. The equation applied was (Pavlić, 1985):

$$P(a,b) = \frac{n(a,b)}{n}$$

The probability rate of favourable events in the basic samples was compared with the probability rate of favourable events in the control samples, and the index of the statistical significance (when exceeding 2) of the difference between them was calculated:

$$Id = \frac{P(a) - P(b)}{sd}, \text{ with } sd = \sqrt{\frac{P \times q \times (n(a) - n(b))}{n(a) \times n(b)}}$$

The initial hypothesis that <form constructions are favoured in <com grammatical environment, and >form constructions in >com grammatical environment, was considered validated if the probability rates of <com values (favourable events) of individual parameters were significantly higher in the environment of <form constructions than in the environment of >form constructions.

2.2. Study 1: Expanded tenses in Old English *Orosius*

The first test of the validity of the hypothesis was the analysis of the use of expanded tenses in the Old English translation of *Historiarum Adversus Paganos* by the historian and theologian Orosius (Trobevšek, 1990). The term *expanded tenses*, taken from Nickel (1966), was chosen over *progressive* or *continuous tenses*, since it makes no allusion to the potential function(s) of the periphrasis.

The construction *beon/wesan* + *present participle* –*ende* can be found in the oldest Old English manuscripts. In *Orosius*, dating from about CE 890, expanded tenses are relatively frequent and independent from the Latin constructions: of 237 instances, 131 correspond to simple verbal tenses or have no equivalent in the Latin original (Mossé, 1938: 66; Nickel, 1966: 112), and 154 are rendered as simple tenses in either or both of its Modern English translations (Nickel, 1966: 330-51). Given the electivity of expanded and non-expanded tenses in *Orosius*, they can be treated as syntactic variants, the former as the <*form* and the latter as the >*form* construction.

The basic sample consisted of 237 clauses with the verb in one of the expanded tenses. The control sample consisted of 855 clauses with the verb in a simple tense (present or preterite). The traditional marked values of the parameters *type of clause*, *propositional modality*, *tense*, *mood*, *aspect*, *number* and *transitivity* were presumed to constitute <*com* grammatical environment. Additionally, in the complementation of transitive verbs prepositional phrases were assigned the <*com*, and nominal phrases in the accusative case the >*com* value. The probability rates of the chosen grammatical parameters to assume <*com* values were computed for the basic (P_a) and for the control sample (P_b).

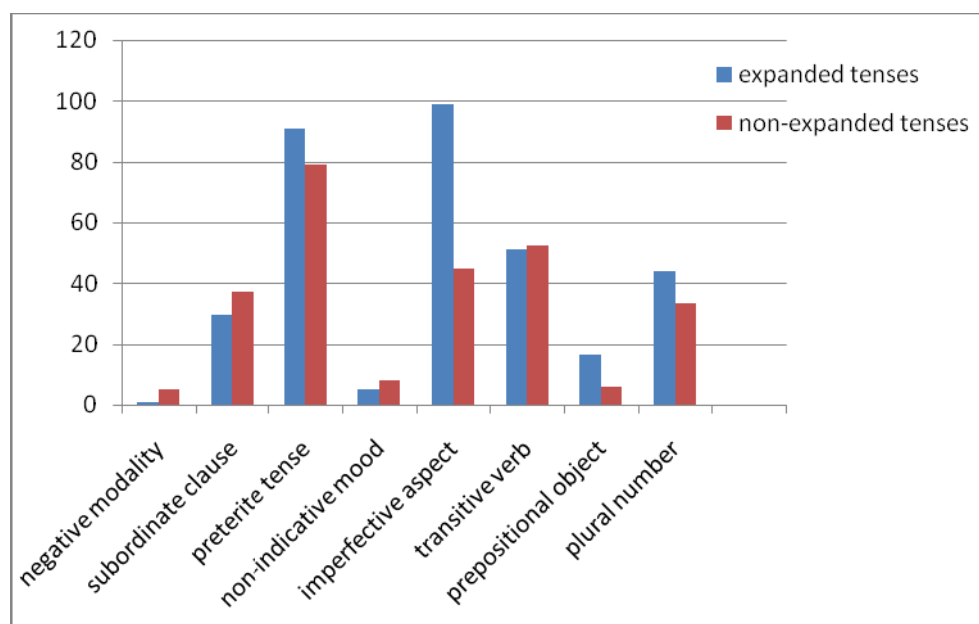


Figure 1: Probability of <com values of grammatical parameters in the environment of expanded and non-expanded tenses in Old English Orosius

The results reveal that four of the eight observed parameters (*the tense, the aspect, the type of object and the number*) assume the <com value more frequently in the environment of the <form construction, while the other four parameters assume the <com value more frequently in the environment of the >form construction. The hypothesis stated in 1.2 and 1.3 is verified in the case of *the tense, the aspect, the type of verbal complementation (object) and the number*. The propensity of <form for <com grammatical environment is clearly indicated, but not consistently so.

2.3. Study 2: The preverbal *ge-* in *Orosius* and in Old English *Gospels*

The second empirical test of the hypothesis involved the study of the grammatical environment of Old English verbs with the prefix *ge-* in comparison with the grammatical environment of Old English simplex verbs.

The Old English preverbal *ge-* has traditionally been related to the Gothic *ga-*, which is in turn explained as corresponding to Latin *cum-/com-* (< Indo-European **kom-*). Most linguists, like Mossé (1938: 1-13) and Samuels (1949: 81-90), agree that the original meaning of the prefix, ‘zusammen’, had faded out in Old English, and that its function was to

imply completion, pluperfect or the future perfect. Lindemann (1970, 1: 19-25) writes that it seems to “do something” to the information conveyed by the verb, but the exact nature of this additional information depends on the context. (At least) in the late Old English period, the preverbal *ge-* was weakened to the point that its use was no longer tangibly contrastive with simplex verbs (Trobevšek, 1994: 126). Consequently, *ge-*verbs can be treated as the <form linguistic variants of corresponding simplex verbs.

The research samples were taken from the Old English *Orosius* and from the Old English translation of the *Gospels*. The first basic sample consisted of all 820 occurrences of *ge-*verbs in Sweet’s edition of *Orosius* (past participles excluded), and the first control sample was made of 1000 simplex verbs in the same edition (every other simplex verb was taken, with the exception of modal verbs and the verbs *beon/wesan*, *habban* and *weorþan* when used with the past participle). The second set of samples was taken from Skeat’s (1871, 1878) edition of the Old English translations of the *Gospel according to St Mark* and of the *Gospel according to St John* (Corpus MS). The basic sample consisted of all the occurrences (377) of *ge-*verbs in the two Gospels, the control sample consisted of all simplex verbs (565) in the same two texts.

The parameters chosen as the indicators of the complexity of grammatical environment were the same as in study of expanded tenses, with the following minor modifications: (a) the parameter *aspect* was excluded since the use of *ge-*verbs could be functionally motivated (to express perfectiveness); (b) the parameter *person* was added; (c) the parameter *number* was restricted to the 3rd person only.

The probability of each grammatical parameter to assume its >com value was computed for both sets of samples. The results are presented in Figure 2 and Figure 3:

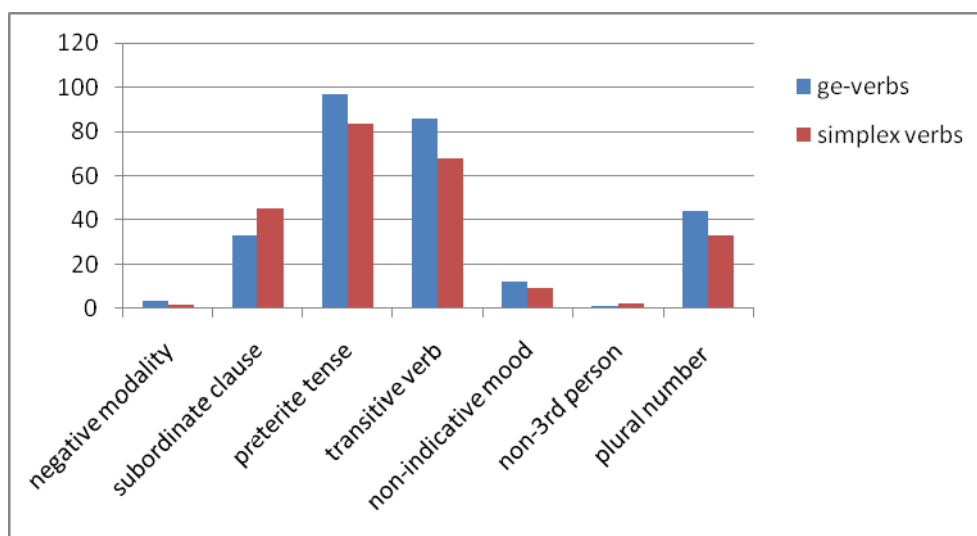


Figure 2: Probability of <com values of grammatical parameters in the environment of ge-verbs and of simplex verbs in *Orosius*

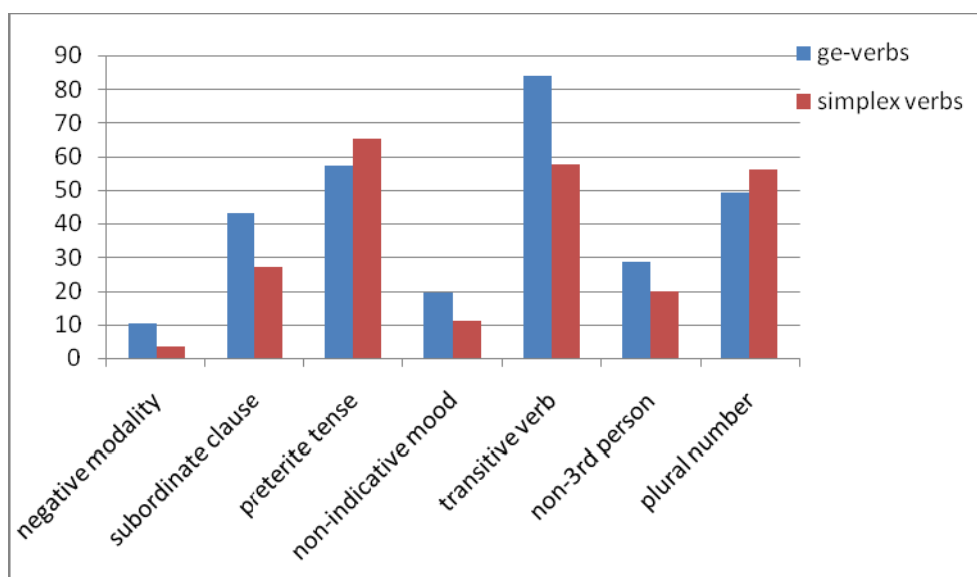


Figure 3: Probability of <com values of grammatical parameters in the environment of ge-verbs and of simplex verbs in Old English *Gospels*

The comparison of the results of the analysis of both sets of samples reveals consistency in the case of *negative modality*, *transitivity* and *non-indicative mood*. In both sets of samples, the prediction that ge-verbs would

persist longer in <com environment was confirmed for these three parameters. The results differ in the case of the *type of clause, tense, person* and *number*. Further research was clearly indicated, with more caution applied to: (a) defining constructions as <form and >form syntactic variants; (b) pairing off different values of grammatical parameters as representing simple (>com) or complex (<com) grammatical environment.

2.4. Study No 3: Participial Non-Finite Clauses in Old English and in present-day English texts

The one contention against defining expanded tenses and *ge*-verbs as the <form variants of non-expanded tenses and simplex verbs respectively could be the possible functional motivation for their use. No such motivation can be found in the choice between the participial non-finite clause and its more elaborate equivalent – the adjectival or the adverbial finite subordinate clause.

The early stage of the assertion of non-finite clauses with present participles in *-ende* was in Old English (Kisbye, 1971: 24-27), possibly under the influence of Latin. They are still interchangeable with adverbial and adjectival subordinate clauses in present-day English, which makes the two constructions syntactic variants. The participial non-finite clauses (PNF) can be assigned the >form value, and the corresponding adjectival and adverbial finite subordinate clauses (FSC) can be assigned the <form value. Their respective partiality for specific grammatical environment can be empirically tested.

The list of parameters as the indicators of the complexity of grammatical environment (see 3.2 and 4.3) was revised for the study No 3. The parameter *type of clause* was eliminated, since one of the variant constructions was to be a finite subordinate clause. The parameter *transitivity* was assigned three values: [-transitive], [+transitive] and, as a sub-set of [+transitive], the value [+ditransitive] for verbs with three complements (the subject, the direct and the indirect object). Three parameters were added: the [+/- animate] status of the subject of the matrix verb, the [+/- stative] status of the matrix verb, and the syntactic function of PNF or FSC in the superordinate linguistic construction. These additional parameters are relevant in the process of *creolization*, which is commonly recognized as manifesting the interdependence of the form and of the content of communication (Todd, 1974, Bickerton, 1975). In the subject, the parameter [+/-animate] affects the encodement of the number in creole languages, which progresses from *human* > *animates countable* > *mass nouns*, and from the *subject* > *direct object* > *indirect object* > *locative* >

genitive. In creole languages, the primary tense system depends on the *stative* or *non-stative* status of the verb. The default tense of the zero form of stative verbs is [-anterior], and the default tense of non-stative verbs is [+anterior] (Bickerton, 1975: 461). For that reason the parameter *tense* was observed in combination with the parameter [+/-stative]. All parameters were observed in the *environment* of the two constructions, so that the computed values pertain to the *matrix verb* (in the case of PNF) or to the verb in the *main clause* (in the case of FSC).

The first set of samples was taken from Skeat's edition of the Old English *Gospel according to St Mark* (1871). The basic sample consisted of all 114 clauses containing a non-finite clause with the present participle, the control sample consisted of 252 clauses to which adjectival or adverbial clauses were subordinated. The second set of samples is from *Murder in the Calais Coach* by Agatha Christie (1934). The basic sample consisted of 250 occurrences of PNF, the control sample of 300 occurrences of main clauses with adjectival or adverbial subordinate clauses.

The hypothesis was formulated as follows: (a) The values of grammatical parameters in the environment of PNF will differ from the values of grammatical parameters in the environment of FSC. (b) PNF, as the *>form* variant, will be favoured in *>com* grammatical environment, and resisted in *<com* grammatical environment, which will still favour the *<form* of FSC- (c) The contrast between the complexity of the grammatical environment of PNF and FSC will be more pronounced in the Old English than in the present-day English samples.

The frequency of *<com* values of grammatical parameters in the environment of PNF and FSC are given Figure 4 and in Figure 5.

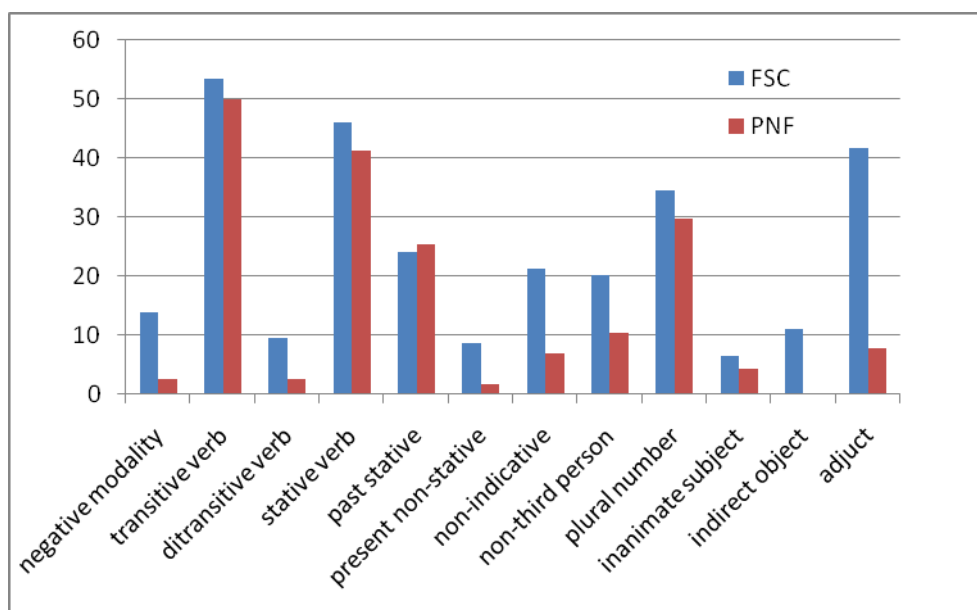


Figure 4: The probability of <com values of grammatical parameters in the environment of PNF and FSC in Old English Gospels

The results reveal that the following grammatical environment resisted the spread of PNF in Old English: *negative modality*, *transitive* and especially *ditransitive* (matrix) verbs *stative* (matrix) verbs, *non-stative* (matrix) verbs in the *present tense*, *non-indicative mood*, *non-third person(s)*, *plural subject* of the (matrix) verb, *inanimate subject*, PNF performing the function of the *indirect object* or the *adjunct* in the superordinate structure.

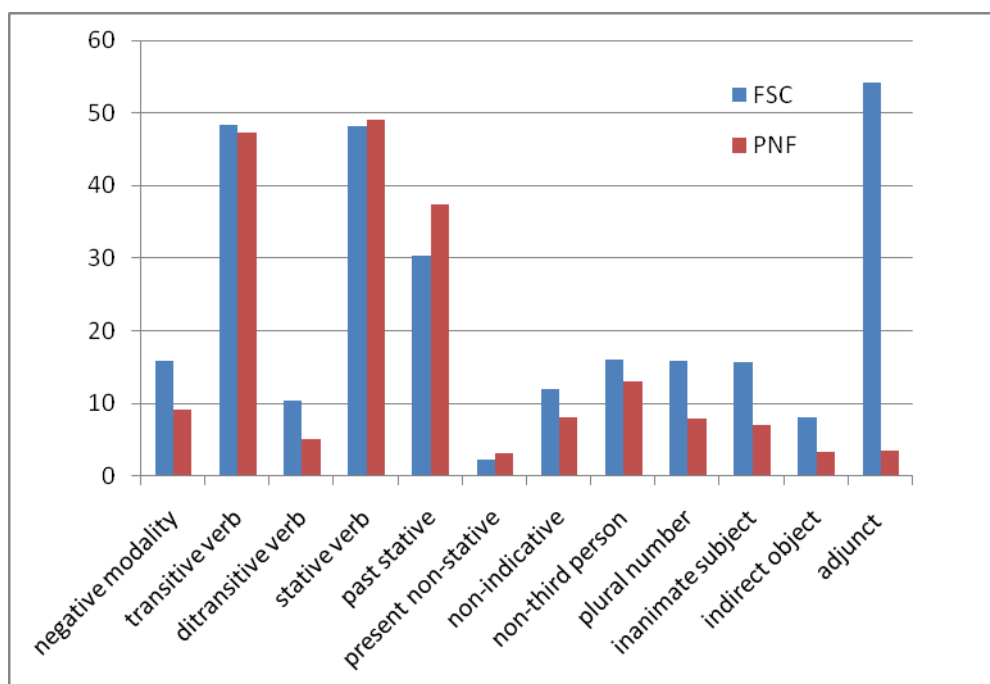


Figure 5: Probability of <com values in the grammatical environment of FSC and PNF in present day English

In contrast to Old English samples, PNF has become the preferred choice in the environment of *stative* verbs and in *the present tense* of *non-stative* verbs in present-day English samples. The differences in the probability rates of parameter values in the environment of both syntactic variants are less pronounced in the present-day English samples than in the Old English samples, with the exception of the parameters *present stative verbs*, *past stative verbs*, *(in)animate subject* and *the function of adjunct*.

3. Conclusion

The application of the method and postulates of the *naturalness theory* to the study of the early expansion of linguistic constructions is pertinent, since it offers tenable explanation of their distribution prior to the regularization of function and use. The most vulnerable aspect of the theory is the stipulation that some values of grammatical parameters render the entire grammatical environment more complex than others. The decision to start out with the marked values of grammatical parameters as proposed by the *Prague School* and by *natural morphologists* seemed logical, but the

inconsistency of the first results anticipated their constant re-examination.

Of all the studies, the one exploring the assertion and distribution of participial non-finite clauses yielded the most consistent results. They prove that, in addition to the correlation between the form and the content of linguistic constructions themselves, the nature of the immediate grammatical environment affects the choice between formally contrastive linguistic variants. This influence is more pronounced in the early stage of the proliferation of a linguistic innovation. The marked values of traditional grammatical categories yield more consistent results as indicators of the complexity of grammatical environment if their position and function in the process of creolization are taken into account.

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FALSE RESULTATIVES ARE NOT RESULTATIVES

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***Abstract:** Resultative constructions are predicate constructions in which the sentence-final predicate denotes a change in state or location as a direct result or consequence of the action of the matrix verb. There are structures, both in English and Romanian, which inherit the surface word order of these constructions but are not true resultatives. In this paper we discuss why false resultatives are not resultatives.*

***Keywords:** resultative construction, false resultative, English, Romanian*

1. Introduction

The resultative construction (henceforth RC) has been central to many recent works on argument structure and the syntax-semantics interface in both Minimalist and Constructional approaches to grammar. The construction is a type of predicate structure in which the sentence-final resultative predicate (henceforth RP) denotes a change in state or location as a direct result or consequence of the action denoted by the matrix verb. This change of state or location is achieved by an NP argument, either in the subject or in the direct object position. The RC covers a wide array of constructions and there is considerable variation in what is generally taken to be an RC. Therefore, a description of this construction pinned with illustrative examples is essential for delimiting this construction from other, similar structures.

In this paper I shall try to delimit true RCs from false RCs and discuss why the latter ones are not resultatives. There are different definitions of false resultatives; what is common to them is that false resultatives borrow the surface word order of RCs (verb - postverbal NP - sentence-final predicate), but do not have a resultative meaning.

The paper is organized as follows: Section 2 illustrates true resultatives in English and Romanian. In section 3, I take a closer look at English and Romanian false resultatives showing that they do not denote any change in state or location, thus they should not be taken into consideration. Finally, in section 4, I present my final conclusions.

2. True resultative constructions

RCs can be grouped according to several criteria related to the syntax and semantics of the four units involved in the pattern: the subject, the matrix verb, the postverbal NP and the sentence-final RP. The general classification is the one based on the type of the matrix verb; as such, there are RCs built on transitive (1), unaccusative (2) and unergative (3) verbs:

- (1) a. He hammered the metal flat.
b. He broke the window into splinter.
c. She painted the barn a weird shade of red.
d. They kicked the dog out.
e. They swept the broom to pieces. (Hoekstra, 1988:116)
f. He ate himself sick. (Goldberg, 1995:192)
- (2) a. The lake froze solid.
b. The toast burned to a crisp.
- (3) The clock ticked the baby awake. (Hoekstra, 1988:115)

Within these main groups we have different subtypes established according to the status of the postverbal NP, which can be subcategorized, as in (1a-d) or non-subcategorized, as in (1e-f); according to the part of speech the RP is expressed by, which can be an AP, as in (1a); a PP, as in (1b); an NP, as in (1c) or a Prt, as in (1d) or according to the type of change the RP expresses: change of state, as in (1a) or change of location, as in (1d).

In Romanian, as generally in all Romance languages, RCs are less well represented and they are built around a limited class of verbs. There are no unergative-based resultatives and the class of RCs based on unaccusative verbs is quite restricted. The RP is more often than not a PP and when it is an NP, it is the result of an elliptical PP (cf. the free variation between structures like *a tăia pâinea/șunca felii* ‘to cut the bread/the ham slices’ and *a tăia pâinea/șunca în felii* ‘to cut the bread/the ham into slices’ and the presence of a modifier following the NP RP which requires the PP variant, as in *a bate albușul spumă* ‘to beat the egg white foam’ and *a bate albușul până se face spumă tare* ‘to beat the egg white into a stiff foam’). Some Romanian RCs are illustrated in the following:

- (4) a. *Ea a* *bătut* *albuș-ul* *spumă*.
 she AUX beat.PST egg white-ART foam

‘She beat the egg white to a frothy consistency / until stiff’

b. *El a spart geam-ul în cioburi.*
he AUX break.PST window-ART in splinters
‘He broke the window into splinters.’

c. *Lac-ul a înghețat bocnă.*
lake-ART AUX freeze.PST hard
‘The lake froze solid.’

As we can see, the general term *RC* covers a large variety of constructions and this raises difficulties to our task of delimiting true resultatives from false resultatives.

Before going into the details of the boundaries between true and false resultatives, I would like to discuss two important issues which raised a contradictory attitude in the literature. First, transitive-based resultatives, like the ones in (5) contradict Simpson’s Law (cf. Simpson, 1983:146) according to which the most important feature of resultatives is that the RP is predicated only of the surface or underlying object, but not of the Subject of a transitive clause. Hence, such Subject-predicated RCs are considered to be false resultatives or not even resultatives (e.g. goal PP constructions):

- (5) a. The wise men followed the star out of Bethlehem.
b. The children played leapfrog across the playground.
(Rappaport Hovav & Levin, 2001:770)

But, as in resultatives the RP may denote a change of state or a change of location, the examples in (5) should not be considered non-resultatives. In these rare examples, the verb retains its direct object, but the RP is predicated of the surface Subject. In (5b) there is a syntactically transparent semantic relation between the Subject and the postverbal NP, *the children* and *leapfrog* in our case. However, we consider that the true Subject of the path RP is the NP *the children*; it is they who end up on the other side of the playground, rather than the type of game. We do consider these rare examples to be true resultatives.

Second, as noted in the literature, examples like (6) are often considered to be false resultatives, because the RPs only repeat or further modify the final state already specified by the matrix verb, instead of describing a second, independent result state. As such, the AP *solid* in (6a) is the modifier of the freezing state rather than its final realization.

- (6) a. The lake froze solid.
b. She wiped the table clean.

The verbs *freeze* and *wipe* imply the resulting states of solidness, respectively cleanness; therefore, the meanings of these verbs are closely related to the meanings of the predicates. Contrary to this argument, I do consider these and similar constructions to be true resultatives. The arguments that I have in favour of their status as true RCs are presented in what follows.

First, in mainly transitive- and unaccusative-based RCs, where the postverbal NP is subcategorized by the verb, there is a lexical-semantic relation holding between the matrix verb and the RP, the latter specifying a property that is an intrinsic part of the meaning of the verb. Compare the resultative in (7a) with the causative in (7b), the consider-type construction in (7c), the subject-depictive in (7d) and the object-depictive in (7e):

- (7) a. She shot him dead/to death/wounded/*paranoid/*black and blue.
b. Sarah made Jeff happy/sad/angry/laugh/leave the room.
c. We considered him intelligent/suitable for the job/our friend/an idiot.
d. John ate the salad naked/drunk/tired/sick.
e. John ate the salad fresh/raw.

RPs lexically depend on the verbs they combine with and this relation between the verb and the predicate is much stronger than in any other predicate constructions. This feature differentiates RCs from all the other predicate structures. With this, I have already delimited true RCs from other predicate constructions, like causatives, consider-type constructions and depictives. The distinction between resultatives and depictives boils down to the fact that resultatives describe a resultant state which is caused by the action denoted by the matrix verb, whereas depictives describe the state of their subject at the time when the action of the verb occurs. The resultative in (7a) can be interpreted as *they shot him and as a result he died/became wounded*. On the contrary, the depictives in (7d-e) can indiscriminately be described under conjunction, as both actions occurring at the same time of reference: *John ate the salad and John was naked/drunk/tired/sick when he was eating the salad*, respectively *John ate the salad when the salad was fresh/raw*.

The next argument is provided by the productivity of English resultatives, as the same matrix verb can combine both with a lexically entailed and a non-lexically entailed RP, but this is not the case with Romanian RCs:

- (8) a. He cut the meat into pieces. (lexically entailed)
 b. He cut the melon open. (non-lexically entailed)

(9) a. *El a tăiat carne-a în bucăți.*
 He AUX cut.PST meat-ART in pieces
 ‘He cut the meat into pieces.’

b. **El a tăiat pepene-le deschis.*
 He AUX cut.PST melon-ART open-ADJ,
 masc, sg

‘He cut the melon open.’

Thus, lexical entailment of the RP should not be viewed as an argument to consider these constructions to be false resultatives. Lexical entailment only sheds some light on the difference in the productivity of English and Romanian resultatives.

The last argument concerns the general claim about Romance languages that they have mainly lexically entailed RPs. This claim is valid for Romanian, as well. To claim that such lexically-entailed constructions are not resultatives would mean to claim that there are no resultatives in Romanian at all; which is different from saying that these constructions are limited in number and systematically differ from the ones in English. Mateu (2000:71) emphasizes that a crucial distinction should be drawn between the two families of languages in the matter of true/non-adverbial resultatives (e.g. *John hammered the metal flat*) versus false/adverbial resultatives (e.g. *John cut the meat thin*); as both English and Romance languages have false resultatives, but only English has true resultatives. I consider that this claim should be rewritten in terms of the distinction between RCs with lexical entailment versus RCs without lexical entailment, as both English and Romance languages have constructions of the former type, but only English has of the latter type. The dichotomy proposed by Mateu does not reflect the specificity of the difference between English and Romance languages in matter of resultatives; it only reflects the existence/non-existence of adverbial resultatives in the two languages.

3. Beyond resultative constructions

3.1. Way and time-away constructions

A legitimate question that we have to ask ourselves is where the exact boundaries between RCs and non-RCs are. There are constructions, both in English and Romanian, which inherit the surface word order of RCs without being members of this class of constructions. In this section of the

paper I shall take a closer look at these examples and explain why they cannot be taken to be RCs.

First, within the Constructional Grammar approach, Goldberg (1995) and Jackendoff (1997) posit additional special subconstructions, like *way* and *time-away* constructions, illustrated in (10):

- (10) a. Frank dug his way out of the prison. (Goldberg, 1995:199)
b. We're twisting the night away. (Jackendoff, 1997:534)

Containing a special lexical element as a postverbal NP (*way*), respectively as an RP (*away*), the interpretation of these constructions is not fully predictable from the semantics of the particular lexical items. They have a fixed semantics, they roughly mean 'spend time doing V'. Moreover, they do not have a resultative meaning and there is no causal meaning between the subevents; therefore I do not consider them to be RCs.

3.2. Idioms based on resultative pattern

As pointed out in Jackendoff (1997) and Goldberg & Jackendoff (2004), idioms based on a resultative pattern, like the ones presented in (11) pose a problem for the definition of resultatives:

- (11) a. She cooked her head off.
b. She sang her heart out. (Goldberg & Jackendoff, 2004:560)

These examples carry an adverbial force, denoting that the activity expressed by the matrix verb is intense and/or passionate. On the one hand, these constructions allow a large variety of intransitive verbs, e.g. *laugh/work/cry/run/yell/dance/shout/eat one's head off*; on the other hand, the postverbal NP can only denote a part of the body, like *one's ears/one's head/one's ass*. They are fixed expressions and do not allow any alternation in the postverbal NP - Prt word order, as particle constructions usually do. By including these idioms based on a resultative pattern into the larger class of resultatives, I would offer an extremely generous account of RCs, enlarging their borders and losing a clear-cut criterion for their possible definition. These examples carry only an adverbial meaning, without denoting any change in state/location; thus, they should not be taken and will not be taken into consideration.

3.3. Idiosyncratic resultatives

On a par with idioms presented in the previous sub-section, we consider that idiosyncratic examples, like the ones in (12), should not be considered true RCs:

- (12) a. The baby monkeys frightened/scared us to death.
b. The bridegroom kisses the bride's mouth dead. (Jespersen, 1940:120)

All these resultative patterns emphasize that the activity expressed by the matrix verb is intense and maybe passionate, especially (12b). The PP RP *to death* in (12a) does not carry any change of state meaning; moreover, the construction on the whole does not carry any resultative meaning. Although they have the surface word order of RCs together with examples, like *complain oneself blue in the face*, *talk one's husband into the ground*, they will not be considered true RCs. These idiosyncratic examples contradict my own definition of resultatives, which states that the sentence-final predicate denotes a change in state or location of the NP argument, either in the Subject or in the Direct Object position. As these examples do not denote any change in state or location, I do not take them into consideration.

As an intermediate conclusion, I would say that idiosyncratic constructions with the surface word order of RCs should not be taken into consideration, because they do not denote any change in state or location as a direct result of the action denoted by the matrix verb. I do not wish to enlarge the class of resultatives by the inclusion of these false constructions.

3.4. Idiomatic verb-particle constructions

Together with Aarts (1989), I would like to emphasize the necessity of a distinction between idiomatic verb-particle constructions (henceforth IVPCs) presented in (13a) and resultative verb-particle constructions (henceforth RVPCs) illustrated in (13b):

- (13) a. The police chased the demonstrators off.
b. You robbed the bank! I can't believe you brought that off.

In the present paper, I take only RVPCs into consideration, namely those in which the Prt denotes a change in state/location as a direct result of the action of the matrix verb. Consider the following minimal pair:

- (14) a. The lady poured the wine out into a bottle.

- b. She poured her heart out to me because I am the only person she feels able to talk to.

While (14a) is resultative, as it denotes a change in location, the example in (14b) has a pure idiomatic meaning. One and the same V-Prt unit can be both resultative and idiomatic. In this paper, I take only the resultative particle constructions into consideration.

3.5. Romanian false resultatives

In Romanian, too, one can find similar constructions, which borrow the surface word order of RCs, but have only an idiomatic meaning. These constructions allow a large variety of secondary predicates, as illustrated in (15):

- (15) a. *L -au bătut măr.*
 him-ACC AUX beat.PST apple.
 ‘They beat him flat/black and blue/hollow.’
- b. A *curățat/frecat podea-ua lună /oglindă.*
 AUX clean/wipe.PST floor-ART moon /mirror
 ‘She wiped/scrubbed the floor (very) clean.’

Here the sentence final NPs intensify the action of the matrix verb and the basic idea is that John has been badly beaten and that the floor has been wiped very clean. The paraphrase for (15a) would be a comparative phrase, like *they beat John until he became as red as an apple* and for (15b) something like *she wiped the floor until it became as shiny as a mirror*. I consider that it is questionable whether they are true resultative, not only because they are based on comparison, but also because they have a metaphorical meaning; the paraphrases just presented above emphasize the intensity of the action lexicalised by the matrix verb. Many false Romanian RCs, which have metaphorical meanings, are based on comparison and function as fixed expressions, rather than grammatical constructions with free choice of the compounding elements.

Delimiting true resultatives from false resultatives is also important in the syntactic analysis of these constructions. Ionescu (1998), for instance, builds her analysis on such idiomatic and quasi-idiomatic V - NP predicate units and takes their existence to be an argument in favor of a lexical-semantic selection between the verb and the sentence-final NP and thus she argues that resultatives are complex predicates. However, this lexical-

semantic selection is explained exactly by the idiomatic/fixed nature of the construction. But, as they are not true RCs, their syntactic behavior does not represent an argument in support of the complex predicate analysis.

In my analysis of English and Romanian RCs, I do not include these and similar idiosyncratic verbs and constructions into the larger class of resultatives.

3.6. Adverbial resultatives

Finally, I would like to discuss adverbial RCs, like the ones in (16):

- (16) a. She braided her hair tight.
b. They cut the meat thin.

There are two ways of analysing these and similar structures. First, we might argue that *tight* and *thin* behave like adverbs, in that they carry the notion ‘manner’ and that *tight*, but not *thin*, is essentially equivalent in this context to its adverbial correspondent *tightly*. The second option is to take them as adjectival, but then we would face the problem that neither of them modifies the postverbal NPs *her hair*, respectively *the meat*. Rather, what is modified here is the NP which results from the action denoted by the matrix verb: the braid, respectively the slices of meat. So, there is no overt NP in the syntax that the AP could modify. No matter which direction we take, the important point is that these adverbial constructions are different from true resultatives, as there is no predication relation holding between the postverbal NP and the predicate: (16a) does not mean that ‘the hair is tight as a result of braiding it’.

The following English and Romanian examples, which are more relevant for the present study, further support my claim that the modifier is in fact a manner adverb and therefore these structures are not true resultatives:

- (17) a. They peeled the potatoes thin.
b. She ground the coffee course/medium/fine.

- (18) a. *Au feliat pâini-le subțire* /**subțiri*.
AUX slice.PST bread-pl-ART thin-ADV */thin-ADJ, fem,
pl

‘They sliced the loaves of bread thinly.’

b. *Pâini-le feliate subțire* / **subțiri* *erau pentru sandvișuri*.

Bread-pl-ART sliced thin-ADV/*thin-ADJ be. PST for sandwiches

‘The thinly sliced loaves of bread were for sandwiches.’

In (18a), the use of the AP *subțiri* agreeing with the NP *pâinile* in gender, number and case would have only a depictive/adjectival interpretation, like *they sliced the loaves which were thin*. No matter which adjunct interpretation we take, the important issue is that they do not denote any change in state/location and thus they are false resultatives.

3. Conclusion

4.

The aim of the present paper was to delimit true resultatives from false resultatives and to discuss the differences between them. After giving a clear definition of this construction and illustrating it in a somewhat contrastive manner in English and Romanian, I illustrated false resultatives in the two languages and concluded that these should not be taken into consideration because they only inherit the surface word order of true resultatives, but do not denote any change in state or location as a direct result of the action of the verb.

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THE CASE OF MANNER ADVERBS – A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: *The present paper investigates data related to manner adverbs from a historical perspective. The focus is on the position of manner adverbs in Old English. These adverbs are usually taken to adjoin the verb phrase (VP), but there is some confusing evidence from Old and Middle English which may indicate that they could actually occur in some higher projection. Following Kemenade (2000), there is evidence for at least two adverb positions in Old English, one adjoined to the VP and the other to the tense phrase (TP). This study seeks to analyze the evidence for OE and interpret the data in the light of recent syntactic theory on clausal structure and adverbs.*

Keywords: *manner adverbs, clause structure, VP adjunction, language change, equivalence.*

1. Introduction

English adverbs evolved from a dual-form system: zero-adverbs which in ME succeeded the OE adverbs ending in **-e** and adverbs derived by means of the suffix **-lich(e)**. According to Hopper (1991), this is *layering* in grammaticalization.

The more recent layer, i.e. the *-lich(e)* suffixation, is periphrastic. The adverbial suffix goes back to the OE *lic* ‘body’, and *lice* ‘likeness’. Its reduced form has retained its morphological distinctiveness. The older layer now consists of morphologically opaque zero adverbs.

In recent years, generative linguists have done much research into the syntax, and especially the word order patterns of Old English, involving Verb Second and object-verb (OV) and verb-object (VO) word orders. Following Kemenade (2000), there is evidence for at least two adverb positions in Old English, one adjoined to VP and the other to TP.

2. The problems

Before any conclusions can be drawn about adverb positions in Middle English and how they changed from Old English, however, there is one gap to be filled: the placement of OE manner adverbs which remains less than clear. Manner adverbs have generally been taken to adjoin to the

VP, but there is evidence from ME that manner adverbs could appear to the left of the finite verb, which usually moved in ME. Does this mean that manner adverbs could, in fact, appear in the high adverb position as well (i.e., in a position where the adverb is interpreted at the left periphery of the sentence)? Furthermore, a preliminary look at OE data revealed that there was one suspect manner adverb position in this stage of English as well: to the right of the auxiliary and preceding all other VP material.

This means that it is necessary to investigate the syntactic properties of OE manner adverbs. This is a task that requires an answer to several questions when one analyzes sentences from Old English prose texts: did OE manner adverbs occur anywhere else than in the low adverbs position (i.e. in a position where a manner adverb is normally generated in the sentence that is adjoined to the VP inside the inflection phrase (IP) domain)? Or was there evidence that they might appear in the high position as well?

2.1. Theoretical background: principles and parameters and language change

In this section, I shall briefly discuss the theoretical framework under which I intend to lead my investigation. My paper follows the approach of generative syntax, which is part of a theoretical framework in which a Universal Grammar (UG) is understood to rule human linguistic competence and language acquisition. UG exists of principles and parameters. Principles are characteristics shared by all human language; parameters are points of variation with settings which differ for different languages.

What appears to be clear within the generative framework is that changes in linguistic structure are in fact changes in parameter settings. Changes occur during the process of language acquisition. When speakers in a community change their speaking habits, if they use some constructions less or more often, for instance, this has repercussions on the way the children in the community acquire their language. Parameters are set one way or the other in agreement with certain cues in the spoken language the child hears. These cues have to be robust; if they hardly appear at all, they are seen as glitches and ignored. This will result in a different parameter setting than was required for producing the constructions in the preceding generation and may mean that the child will not see a construction which was formerly perfectly grammatical, although not very frequent, as grammatical anymore.

A tool to help discover exactly how linguistic changes spread and how they rest on the resetting of parameters, is the constant rate hypothesis

(Kroch, 1989). This hypothesis rests on the tenet that several surface characteristics depend on a single parameter; when this parameter is reset, the dependent characteristics will change as well, and all at the same rate, though not necessarily at the same moment. As Kroch (1989: 200) states: “*when one grammatical option replaces another with which it is in competition across a set of linguistic contexts, the rate of replacement... is the same in all of them*”. It follows from this, that grammatical change indeed depends on the resetting of parameters.

Kroch takes the competition between grammatical options to take place via competing grammars: if speakers have two different settings for a parameter, they have two separate, complete grammars around these settings. In the end, the following generations will choose the one that is used often enough and delete the one that is not used often enough anymore.

2.2. Old English and Middle English syntax

It is a well-known fact that Old English was a language with a rich morphology and relatively free word order, in contrast with Modern English, which has barely any morphological suffixes and a rather fixed word order. Most of the changes which brought about this formidable difference occurred or started in Middle English (cf. Fischer et al., 2000). I shall focus here on Old English and how it changed into Middle English, with special reference to word order and the placement of adverbs.

2.2.1. Verb Second and a high Negative/Adverb position

Like many other Germanic languages, Old English had Verb Second (V2). This is a process of movement that takes the finite verb in root clauses to a position at the start of the sentence, just after the first element of that sentence, be it the subject or something else. The verb can be moved either to the complementizer position (C) or to the inflection position (I), which leaves the first element in Spec(ifier), CP (complementizer phrase) or in Spec, IP (inflection phrase) (Fischer et al., 2000: 110-111).

In Old English questions, negative-initial sentences and sentences introduced by *þa* ‘then’, V2 occurs and the verb precedes the subject, whether it is a pronoun or a determiner phrase (DP). This means that V must be moving very high, ostensibly to C as it only happens in sentences without a complementizer in C.

In topic-initial sentences, however, the position of the subject relative to the moved verb depends on the shape of the subject. If it is a personal pronoun, it will precede the verb, whereas it will follow the verb if

it is a nominal (Fischer et al., 2000: 117-118). This means that these two kinds of subjects occupy different positions, to the left and to the right of the finite verb's position, which must be lower than C.

Other facts also point to two different positions for subjects: Holmberg (1993) already argued that weak pronoun subjects and NP subjects in Mainland Scandinavian are in Specifiers of different functional projections: pronouns are in a higher structural position than NP subjects. Holmberg took NP subjects to be in Spec,TP. In Mainland Scandinavian, there is an Adverb position separating the two subject positions (Holmberg, 1993: 32-38)

The same goes for Old English: Van Kemenade (2000) and cf. Fischer et al. (2000: 123-126) uses evidence from the position of negative adverbs to determine the exact placing of OE subjects. She takes the negative adverb *na*, which is preceded by the pronoun subjects and followed by the DP ones, to be in the Specifier of a Negative Phrase (NegP). She calls the projection that hosts the pronouns (object pronouns can also appear in its Spec, cf. Fischer et al., 2000: 119), functional projection (FP). The sequence of projections on the left-hand side of the clause, then, is as follows: [CP FP NegP TP ... VP] (Van Kemenade, 2000: 65). The NegP is also needed to account for the negative clitic *ne*, which belongs to a negative head and cliticizes onto the finite verb (V_f) (Van Kemenade, 2000: 57). This gives us the structure in (1) below (apud. Fischer et al., 2000: 126).

An important point for this investigation is that Van Kemenade takes the NegP to be a specialized kind of adverb phrase (AdvP) (Van Kemenade, 2000: 66), with its own negative head. Van Kemenade shows that the same intermediate position of NegP is also occupied by OE short adverbs like *þa* 'then', *nu* 'now', *eac* 'also' and *la* 'lo' (Van Kemenade 2000: 8-9). This means that the phrase between FP and TP is a NegP or AdvP, depending on which kind of adverb actually appears in a particular sentence. This is the clause structure I will be taking as the starting point for my analysis.

The fact that there is a contrast between the different subject positions relative to the position of the finite Verb in Topic initial positions, means that this verb most likely moves to F and not to C in topic-initial contexts, and the same probably goes for subject-initial contexts (Fischer et al., 2000: 128). This V-to-F movement was lost later on, in late Middle English and early Modern English (apud Fischer et al. 2000: 137).

- (1) [CP [SpecCP [C'[C⁰ V_f]] [FP [Spec Pronoun [V_f]]
[NegP/AdvP [Spec *na* [Neg *ne*- V_f]]] [TP [Spec Subject [T... V_f]]
VP[Spec [...V...]]]]]]

2.2.2. The Middle Field and VP: OV and VO

In the preceding section, we have described a rather precise picture of the higher portion of the clause structure in Old English. The middle field, the portion between TP and VP, however, is less clear. Many elements can appear left of the unmoved verb, but most of them can also appear to its right (cf. Fischer et al., 2000: 140-144).

We can infer from this that Old English had OV as well as VO orders. It need not surprise us that personal pronoun objects appeared mainly to the left, as they could occur in Spec, FP, much higher up in the clause. Clausal objects have appeared to the right throughout the history of English, presumably because they are heavy elements that would take up too heavy a memory load to be placed in the middle of a clause (cf. Fischer et al., 2000: 144). DP objects, on the other hand, are more mysterious: if they can occur on either side of the verb equally well, what is their base position and what is happening in the clause around them?

There is a quantitative difference in the occurrence of OV and VO word orders between main and subordinate clauses, but this depends solely on the movement of finite verbs that occurs more in main clauses. The position of the unmoved verb does not vary, and objects can appear on either side, whatever the clause type (Fischer et al., 2000: 51-52).

In the course of the Middle English period, the OV word order became obsolete and only VO order remained. It is not exactly clear how this happened; so far, there has been no comprehensive and detailed investigation of this matter taking into account the movement of the finite verb (Fischer et al., 2000: 160).

There is no real consensus over what is the base order of verb and object, OV or VO. The classic view for Continental West Germanic languages like Dutch and German was that OV was the basic order, and the same might go for Old English by extension. In recent years, however, the minimalist approach has gained support.

The OV analysis has the advantage of having to explain fewer dislocations, but it might need rightward movement to account for the VO orders, which is very rare if not nonexistent in the languages of the world.

2.3. Theories on adverb placement

The basic adverb positions, for which there is unequivocal evidence and which have formed the basis for this investigation, are discussed below.

We have already seen the evidence for a high Negative or Adverb position between FP and TP, which could be occupied in Old English by negative adverbs and several short adverbs. Another type of adverb on which there is general consensus is represented by VP-adverbs, such as manner adverbs. These modify the Verb and are generally assumed to occupy a low position, adjoined to VP (Holmberg, 1993: 35 and cf. also Costa 1998 for an agreeing view).

Holmberg (1993: 32-33) notes that in Swedish and Norwegian, some sentence adverbs, typically epistemic adverbs such as *mojligen* 'possibly', vary between the higher and the lower position, and that the same goes for time and frequency adverbs across dialects of Mainland Scandinavian (1993: 35).

This general division into a high and a low position will serve as the basic framework in which to interpret my findings, but more elaborate theories suppose several or sometimes many different NegPs or AdvPs. It remains to be seen whether there is unambiguous evidence in Old and Middle English that supports these theories.

In Italian, these elements occur between the position of the active past participle and the VP, in a fixed order (cf. Cinque, 1999). The adverbs are *gia* 'already', *piu* 'no more', *sempre* 'always', *completamente* 'completely', *tutto* 'all', and *bene* 'well'. The last of these positions is reserved for unstressed manner adverbs (Cinque, 1999: 7); it is the one closest to the VP, so this account does not run counter to what was mentioned above about manner adverbs adjoining to VP.

Going beyond this sequence of Romance adverbs, Cinque (1999) claims that there is an AdvP to the left of every functional projection, appearing as an adjunct to its specifier. Cinque supports this with cross-linguistic evidence, building a very elaborate clause structure with a wealth of rigidly ordered functional projections and semantically and structurally related Adverb phrases.

There are also some pronounced views to be found in literature on the relation between negation and adverbs. Cinque makes a clear cut distinction between negation and adverbs. He supposes that NegPs are only generated if there is an actual negation in the sentence, and supposes that negation placement depends on scope and a NegP might appear over every functional projection from the first tense phrase (TP) down (Cinque, 1999: 121-125). This would mean that the higher adverb/negation position mentioned above is not really one position. This may be so, but if Cinque's argument about AdvPs holds, I do not see why NegPs should not receive the same treatment as AdvPs and always be generated in the clause structure as well. After all, the fact that there is not always overt material present in the

sentence that corresponds to negation, does not have to mean that there is no underlying structure present for it; the same goes, in Cinque's theory, for adverbs.

Another salient point in the analyses of both Cinque (1999) and Costa (1998), following Jackendoff (1972), is that there is a class of ambiguous adverbs, which can either have a manner or a subject-oriented interpretation. In Modern English sentences with one auxiliary and a nonfinite verb, these adverbs can have either interpretation if they appear following the auxiliary and preceding the main verb. This ambiguity does not occur when there are several auxiliaries in the clause. The manner interpretation only occurs following the second auxiliary, and the subject-oriented one occurs between the two auxiliary positions (Cinque, 1999: 19). Both Costa and Cinque conclude that the ambiguity is in essence a structural one: the adverbs are manner adverbs if adjoined to VP (Costa, 1998: 82; Cinque 1999: 19), and subject-oriented adverbs if left-adjoined to a certain higher projection. Costa (1998: 78-82) takes this higher projection to be TP, the projection that he takes to contain the (lower) auxiliary position, and to be structurally linked to the subject. Cinque (1999: 89-90) links subject-oriented adverbs to modal verbs, and takes them to adjoin to the several modality phrases that host these modal verbs. In Cinque's elaborate clause structure, these come in the same portion of the clause as Tense phrases, generally following mood phrases and preceding aspect phrases (cf. 1999:106). This position may turn out to be the same one I have called the high adverb position in Old English.

3. Positions of manner adverbs in Old and Middle English

While Van Kemenade was looking into the positions of adverbs in Middle English, she expected to find manner adverbs only adjoined to VP, but not higher, as opposed to time adverbs, which might reasonably be supposed to appear in a higher position as well. I came across manner adverbs that appeared left of the finite verb:

- (2) but for he *stedfastly* aȝeynstode hym
unless he steadfastly withstood him
'unless he withstood him steadfastly'

So, does this mean that manner adverbs appear in a higher position as well? Or does the finite verb just not move in these sentences? Without further evidence, this could not be made out.

For Old English, the appearance of certain sentence adverbs in the higher position had already been investigated, but not much was known about the placement of manner adverbs. In order to know exactly what had changed in adverb placement between Old English and Middle English, I needed an exact overview of the positions OE manner adverbs could occupy.

I expected to find manner adverbs only in the low position, adjoined to VP. But a first glance at some of the prose texts in the Old English corpus revealed, besides many of these, one possibly exceptional position for manner adverbs: a position as in (3), immediately following the auxiliary and preceding all other VP material, in this case prepositional phrases (PPs) and the object.

(3) we cristene men *sodlice* licgað under godes mysan and etað þa
 we Christian men truly lie under God's table and eat the
 cruman his gastlican lare for ðan ðe we sind *eadmodlice*
 mid
 crumbs of-his ghostly lore for that that we are humbly
 with

lichaman and mid sawle godcundlicum spræcum underðeodde
 body and with soul godly-dat speech-dat subjected
 to gefyllenne his beboda thæt he us his behat gelæste
 to fulfill his command that he us his promise grant-subj

‘We Christian men truly lie under God's table and eat the crumbs of his spiritual teaching, because we are humbly with body and with soul subjected to the divine judgment that we should do his command, so that he may grant us his promise’

It seemed possible that this position might actually be higher than the classical manner adverb position adjoined to the right of VP. I decided to focus especially on this pattern, as well as on the canonical low position and on any evidence there might be of manner adverbs appearing in a high position.

The questions I wanted to answer with my investigation, therefore, were, did OE manner adverbs really only appear in the low adverb position, or higher up as well? And if they did appear higher up in the syntactic tree, should this be taken as evidence for a third adverb position, or was it the same as the high pre-TP position?

In Old English, objects could appear on either side of the unmoved verb, yielding either OV or VO, but of course, whenever a stand-alone finite verb moved out of a VP, a VO order would also emerge. In the subsequent shift which eliminated OV orders, both the positions of objects relative to the unmoved V and changes in the frequency of finite verb movement may have been implicated. I expected manner adverbs to remain in their original position whenever a finite verb moved out. In this case, the adverbs would appear following the verb. Manner adverbs appear in these texts distinctly, not only according to which position they occupied, but also according to the clause type they appeared in.

Within each clause type, I distinguished between different positions: ‘high’, that is the position between FP and TP, left of the DP subject, and ‘possibly high’, the position immediately following the auxiliary and preceding all other VP-material. I also distinguished ‘low’, a position generally within the VP-area (as in (4)); ‘left low’, a position within the VP-area clearly to the left of the unmoved verb (5); and ‘right low’, a position to the right of the unmoved verb (6).

(4) *saga me for hwam scyne seo sunne swa reade on serne morgien*

say me for what shine-subj the sun so redly on early morning

‘Tell me, why does the sun shine so red early in the morning?’

(5) *and agustus eac ealles folces frofor mid feowertynum
and August also all-gen, people-gen, joy with fourteen
rihtingum kynlice rixað*

regulares kingly reigns

‘And August, joy of all people, also reigns like a king with fourteen *regulares*’

(6) *þæt is swiðe sweotol tacn þæm wisan þæt he ne sceal lufian
that is very clear sign to-the wise-sg. that he not shall love
to ungemetlice ðas woruldgesælða forðæm hie oft cumað
too immoderately the world-fortunes because they often come
to ðæm wyrrestum monnum
to the worst men*

‘That it often comes to the worst men, that is a very clear sign to the wise man that he must not love worldly fortune too much’

Adverbs in semi-independent, modifying phrases (for instance with participles) have a separate ‘modifier’ label (7), because they were not useful for the positional analysis.

(7) mid þam ða com þæt wif and hi astrehte æt his fotum

with that then came the woman and she stretched-out at his feet

þus cweðende drihten leof help min
thus speaking lord dear help me

‘Then came the woman and she lay down at his feet and spoke thus: ‘dear lord, help me’

Within the texts of Ælfric, Alfred and Wulfstan, there seem to be many manner adverbs; a few of them, however, were not actually manner adverbs. Among the rest, we found mostly low adverbs and inconclusive ones, but also seven possibly high ones, and to my surprise, a few instances that seemed to be high, as they clearly preceded the auxiliary and the DP subject. These adverbs are not really in the high adverb position, but rather pre-posed to CP through either topicalization (8) or wh-movement (9).

(8) swæ clæne hio wæs oðfeallenu on angelcynne ðæt
so cleanly she [learning] was declined in Anglekind that
swiðe feawa wæron behionan humbre ðe hiora
very few were on-this-side-of Humber that their
ðeninga cuðen understondan on englisc oððe furðum
church-services could understand in English or even
an ærendgewrit of lædene on englisc reccean
one letter from Latin in English translate

‘So totally had it [learning] declined in England that there were very few on this side of the Humber that could understand their church services [as if they were] in English or could translate just one letter from Latin into English’

(9) mid ðæm worde he cyðde ðæt hit is se hiehsta cræft
with that word he proclaimed that it is the highest craft

forðæm he cwæð ðæt hine ealle ne gefengen and eac sæde
because he said that it all not capture and also said

ðæt he unieðe wære to gehealdenne and eac cyðde
hu
that it not-easily was to keep and also proclaimed
how

wærlice hi hine healdan scolden ðonne hie hine
carefully they it hold should when they him

underfangen hæfdon
caught had

‘In saying that he proclaimed that it [learning] is the highest art, because not everybody attains it and it was not easy to keep up and he also told how carefully they should keep it when they had attained it’

Another type of adverbs worth discussing is that preceding a finite verb. These are themselves preceded by VP material (10). Since VP material is diagnostic for the position of the verb and also for the position of the adverb, these cases were therefore left-low, and similar cases where the adverb followed the finite verb, right low.

(10) Fram adame menn wunedon on flæsclicum lustum and sume
from adam men dwelled in fleshly lusts and some
on hæþenscype *unsnoterlice* gelyfdon
in heathenship unwisely believed
‘From Adam on, people gave themselves over to carnal desires
and some unwisely had pagan beliefs’

Based on the Modern English evidence concerning ambiguous adverbs, we might expect that adverbs that denote manner when adjoined to VP take on a different reading when generated in a different position. In Modern English, this happens with adverbs generated to the left of Aux. This is not the position of the possibly high adverbs, though, and there is no visible evidence in the OE corpus that the possibly high adverbs should have any other reading than the normal manner reading. This leads to the following conclusion: while we cannot say with any certainty what the exact structural position of the possibly high adverbs is, there is no clear evidence that it should be any different from the position(s) of the low adverbs. Until further evidence is found, the most logical conclusion remains that there is no intermediate structural position for manner adverbs.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, I have discussed the treatment of adverb placing in generative diachronic syntax and especially in the study of Old and Middle English. I assumed that at least two adverb positions were available in OE: a high one between FP and TP for short sentence adverbs and probably for some other kinds of adverbs as well, and a low position for manner adverbs and possibly some time or place adverbs.

I have investigated the exact placing of manner adverbs in Old English prose texts and have found that there are indeed no OE manner adverbs appearing in the high position, and that many are unequivocally in the low position and a small but significant minority appears in the 'possibly high' position.

One of the things I expected to find in this process was that there would be more manner adverbs following the verb, as the VO orders became more prominent in ME; further research will have to show whether this is correct and what the exact time course of the changes was. A further point of interest will be how negation developed in Middle English, and in how far it functioned in the same way as adverbs.

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ON THE AMBIGUITY OF SYNTACTIC POSITIONS OF ADVERBS

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***Abstract:** The present paper takes a look at the positions adverbs can assume in the sentence, especially when auxiliaries are involved. The possible readings take into account syntactic attachment, while the analyses reveal how ambiguity of syntactic position leads to ambiguity of semantic interpretation.*

***Keywords:** adverb, ambiguity, syntactic position, projection rule*

1. Introduction

Syntax is felt to play an important role when dealing with adverb placement. Configurations where an adverb makes more than one interpretation possible have as source the various adverb positions; contexts in which an adverb receives the same interpretation in more than one syntactic position will be ruled out.

In an attempt to tackle this problem, Jackendoff (1972: 49) tries to reduce the notion ‘ambiguity of syntactic position’ and discusses it under the notion of ‘ambiguity of syntactic attachment’. Adverbs can occur in three basic surface positions in a sentence: initial, medial, and final, without intervening pause. When analyzing *-ly* adverbs, he discriminates between various classes of adverbs, considering their occurrence in these three basic positions. It would be helpful, however, to present succinctly some differences between the classes of adverbs and the way they reflect on their syntactic position.

2. Ways of discriminating among various classes of adverbs

Semantically, the traditional classification of adverbs distinguishes between predicate operators and sentence operators, which roughly correspond to the more familiar distinction of VP-adverbs and S-adverbs. Not all categories of S-adverbs, however, can be interpreted to belong to this category, as there are many other sorts of S-adverbs such as pragmatic adverbs (*frankly, honestly*), evaluative adverbs (*fortunately, happily*), domain adverbs (*politically, mathematically*), which behave differently.

Jackendoff (1972:69) mentions a different class of S-adverbs, ‘speaker-oriented adverbs’, which in several situations are interpreted as embedding the reading of the rest of the sentence as one argument and the reading of the derived subject as the other argument to the adverb. It thus involves a two-place adjective, whose first argument is the sentence resulting from removing the adverb and whose second argument is an NP referring to the speaker. The appropriate paraphrase of a sentence like

(1) Happily, Frank is avoiding trouble.

involves a two-place adjective, as in

(2) I am happy that Frank is avoiding trouble.

The semantic structure for (2) can be represented by (3):

(3) ADJ (SPEAKER, f(NP¹,NPⁿ)),

where ADJ stands for the adjectival counterpart of the adverb having its semantic content, f(NP¹,NPⁿ) represents its functional structure and expresses the relation between the verb and its strictly subcategorized arguments NP¹,NPⁿ.

Compare the semantic structure with the one involving only a one-place adjective, as exemplified in (5):

(4) ADJ (f(NP¹,NPⁿ))

which embeds the reading of the rest of the sentence as an argument to the reading of the adverb. The sentence:

(5) George probably was lifting the weights

having the following paraphrase:

(6) It is probable (*to me) that George was lifting the weights

takes the following reading, in which *probably* has as argument the reading of the rest of the sentence from which the adverb has been removed:

PROBABLE (LIFT (GEORGE, THE WEIGHTS))

Jackendoff (1972) also introduces class II adverbs, called ‘subject-oriented adverbs’, which differs from class I (‘speaker-oriented adverbs’), as it no longer involves SPEAKER, but rather another NP, usually the surface subject. The sentence resulting from removing the adverb is embedded as a sentential complement of a main clause containing the counterpart adjective.

(7) Carefully, George was lifting the weights.

Possible paraphrases are:

(8 a) It was careful of George to lift the weights.

(8 b) George was careful in lifting the weights.

The semantic structure corresponding to this reading is

(9) ADJ (NPⁱ, f(NP¹,NPⁿ)),

where $1 \leq i \leq n$, and thus specifying that one of the NPs of S is bound to appear in the main clause, generally as the surface subject. It involves again a two-place adjective which takes as its first argument the sentence obtained

after removing the adverb and as its second argument one of the elements selected by the verbal predicate. The arguments of *carefully* in (7) are the reading of the subject (GEORGE) and the reading of the rest of the sentence after removing the adverb as in:

CAREFUL (GEORGE, LIFT (GEORGE, THE WEIGHTS)).

Class III typically contains manner, degree, and time adverbs. A sentence containing a manner adverb, like

(10) Dave speaks eloquently

can be paraphrased as

(11) The manner in which Dave speaks is eloquent.

The paraphrase differs from the previous ones, as it adds a prepositional phrase to the sentence resulting after removing the adverb, which then functions as a relative clause on the subject of the main clause containing the counterpart adjective. Projection rules associate to manner adverbs the following semantic structure, which can be roughly represented as

(12) [f+ADV] (NP¹,NPⁿ)

The adverb can accordingly be interpreted as adding a lexically determined set of ‘semantic markers’ interacting with the set of semantic markers corresponding to the lexical meaning of the verb, but at the same time without changing its ‘functional structure’, that is, its selection properties. (Delfito 2006: 91)

As for class IV, it is assumed to include adverbs such as *merely*, *utterly*, *virtually*, *truly*, etc. Jackendoff (1972) is unable to provide a suitable semantic structure for this class of adverbs. They indeed have parallel adjectives such as *mere*, *utter*, but the adverbial uses seem to be far from being derived from the adjectival uses within the syntactic component. It rather appears that these adjectives are derived from their corresponding adverbs and not vice versa.

3. Ambiguity of Adverb Placement

Generally, the cases of ambiguity taken into consideration concern the relative ordering of adverbs and auxiliaries, as in the following examples:

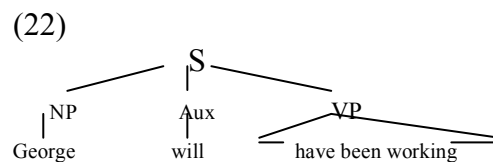
- (13) a. Cleverly, George has eaten the cake
- b. George cleverly has eaten the cake.
- c. George has cleverly eaten the cake.
- d. George has eaten the cake cleverly.

According to previous interpretations, (13a) and (13b) allow only of subject-oriented reading of the adverb, while (13d) of the manner reading of the

Another argument (Radford, 1992: 406) supporting the claim that finite forms of *have* and *be* end up in Aux position (even though they originate within VP) can be formulated when analyzing adverb distribution, especially when S-adverbs are concerned. Such adverbs as *certainly*, *probably*, *definitely*, etc are restricted to occurring as immediate constituents of S. The following examples illustrate the validity of the assumption that they function as S-Adverbs:

- (21) a. George will probably have been working.
 b. *George will have probably been working.
 c. *George will have been probably working.

Assuming that the sentence *George will have been working* has the structure below:



it becomes clear that an S-adverb like *probably* is restricted as far as its internal positions in the structure are concerned to only two possibilities: between NP and Aux, or between Aux and VP, but not to any position within the VP. There is no *Have – Be* raising to account for movement and thus for the possible insertion of the adverb, since the underlying structure contains a modal and the structural description (20) will not be met. V movement is only possible when Aux position is empty. In (22) *have – be* raising is blocked because Aux is already filled by the modal *will*. After the application of the transformation, the Aux can contain only one of the four possible configurations: Tense, Tense – Modal, Tense – *have*, or Tense – *be*.

Since obligatory raising of *have/be* to Tense is assumed to take place, this system makes evident that an adverb following only one auxiliary, as is the case in (13c), can be attached either to S or to VP, thus reducing interpretive ambiguity to structural/ATTACHMENT ambiguity.

Jackendoff (1972: 75ff) posits that only S adverbs are possible before aspect auxiliaries:

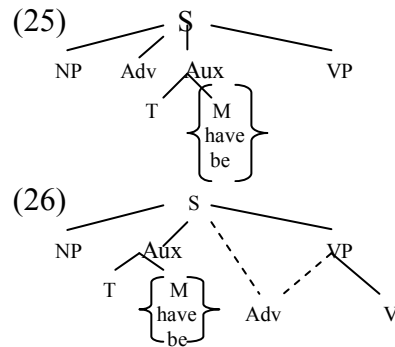
- (23) George { probably } has read the book
 { *completely }

When such is the case, the adverb is dominated by S, entering sisterhood relation with the other constituents of the sentence, namely NP, Aux and VP, as in (25). The only possible interpretation will be of an S-adverb, either a speaker-oriented or a subject-oriented one.

A totally different situation emerges when the adverb does not precede but rather follows a single auxiliary or is used immediately after the main verb *be* (when there is no auxiliary verb).

(24) George has {probably } read the book
 {completely }

As in (26), the adverb can be attached to either VP or S and therefore, different possibilities of attachment lead to different semantic interpretations.

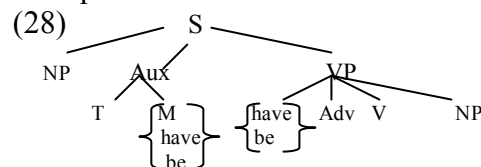


(26) correctly predicts the ambiguity of (24).

There is a different situation, however, when the adverb takes place after two auxiliaries. In this case it is VP –internal, forcing VP attachment of the adverb.

(27) George will have { *probably } read the book.
 { completely }

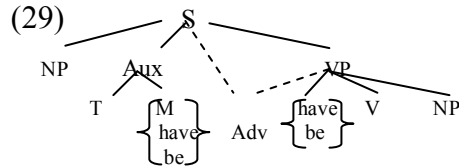
Ambiguity is ruled out due to the *have-be* raising rule which stipulates that only one auxiliary can be raised in Aux position, while the second remains under the government of VP. Therefore, an adverb following the second auxiliary must in its turn be dominated by VP and thus assume a VP semantic interpretation.



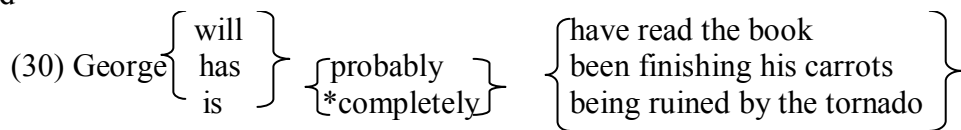
This projection assigns the adverb under the VP a single sense, as was predicted in (27).

In analyzing contexts qualified by the presence of two auxiliaries, we must also consider the possibility of the adverb occurring in-between the two. As obvious in (29), there seems to be attachment ambiguity as to whether the adverb is under the government of S or VP and thus triggering

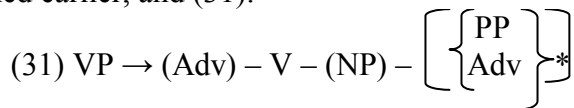
semantic ambiguity in interpretation: whether to analyse it as an S-adverb or VP-adverb.



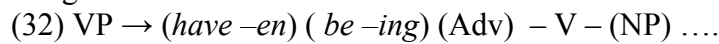
The adverb between two auxiliaries involves the marginality of the manner reading of the adverb and apparently the S-adverb is highly preferred



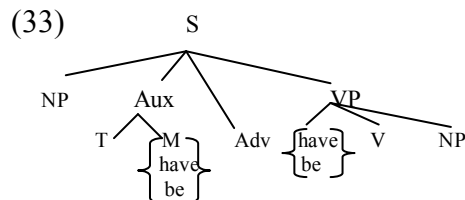
The question is how to exclude VP attachment of the adverb. The structural ambiguity above can be avoided by means of reanalyzing base rules (17), mentioned earlier, and (31):



and extending them as:



By means of this extended base rule, adverbs are generated only after the aspectual verbs, thus ruling out the interpretation of the adverb as a VP-adverb:



As long as attachment ambiguity is not present, there is no semantic ambiguity in terms of interpreting the adverb as an S-adverb.

It is noteworthy to see that speaker-oriented and subject-oriented adverbs are treated as adverbs dominated by S, while manner-like adverbs by VP. The *merely*-like class of adverbs, however, cannot be defined in terms of dominance, as it is not characterized by free movement. In fact, it is restricted to positions immediately after *be* verbs, in auxiliary position or between any pair of auxiliary verbs. This also implies that, considering the position assumed, it can be governed by either S or VP. Both of them are acceptable, as long as they maintain their place between the subject and the main verb.

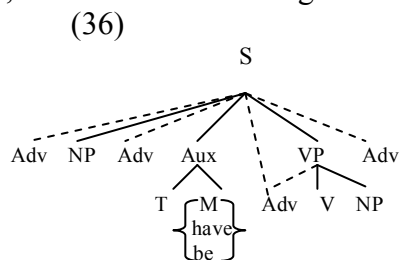
- (34) a. George (merely) will (merely) have (?merely) been (merely) beaten by Bill.
 b. George (merely) has (merely) been (?merely) being (merely) beaten by Bill.

Although its position between the second and the third auxiliary is questionable, *merely* can take all the other positions and, thus, attachment to either the S node or VP node.

The situation is relatively different when S-attachment is under scrutiny, as the position of the adverbs is somewhat less rigid. In the following examples, the system has to account for the possible positions of the adverb: preceding the subject, assuming an intermediate position between the subject and the auxiliary, following the auxiliary, and occurring in dislocated sentence-final position:

- (35) a. Evidently George has eaten the cake.
 b. George evidently has eaten the cake.
 c. George has evidently eaten the cake.
 d. George has eaten the cake, evidently.

As the interpretation appears to be essentially the same, the logical conclusion to draw is that the same structural position is involved in all four examples. Obviously, all adverb positions entail attachment to S rather than VP attachment. As long as their sisterhood relation to the other constituents is preserved, i.e. daughter of S and sister to NP, Aux, and VP, the relative ordering of adverbs with respect to these constituents is less than rigid. In fact, it sometimes varies significantly.



It would be inopportune to suggest special transformations for each of the above examples to support the different positions the adverbs assume. There is a proposal, however, which is technically implemented by Keyser (1968). He noticed that the positions assumed by adverbs correspond to major syntactic breaks in the derived structure. By resorting to the ‘transportability convention’, he hoped to handle cases of apparently free word-order occurrences. Constituents marked as [+transportable] can freely move, taking any position in the derived tree, giving rise to a large variety of linear orders. It does not occur without some conditions constraining their apparent free movement. They must preserve the fundamental structural

relations they entertain with the other constituents, which means maintaining their sister relationships with all other nodes.

The ‘transportability convention’ justifies the occurrence of adverbs dominated by S in all possible sister positions to the other constituents – NP, Aux, and VP, namely initially, before the auxiliary, after the first auxiliary, and finally. Generally, S adverbs assuming final position are used with a pause, as in (35d). Transportability does not apply randomly with all adverbs. At this point it may be necessary to specify that it is restricted to adverbs dominated by S. Strictly subcategorized adverbs specific to VP are not under the ‘transportability convention’, as their free movement would create ungrammatical examples such as:

(36) *George ate immediately the cake.

where the adverb is positioned in-between the verb and the following NP. According to the base rule (31), adverbs in the VP occur either initially or finally, as NP directly follow V. The position of the adverb depends on the application of the adjacency requirement between verb and nominal objects.

In broad terms, as we have seen so far, two different positions of the adverb in the sentence cannot be said to have the same interpretation when under different dominations and their scope is unambiguous. Their interpretation refers to different truth-conditions, such as in the pair (37) (Delfito, 2006: 99):

(37) a. He slowly tested some bulbs.
b. He tested some bulbs slowly.

The interpretation of (b) is evident in expressing that he tested each and every bulb in a slow way. ‘Sentence (37a) would be true if he took a long coffee break between each testing, even though he tested each single bulb quickly.’

Not only manner, but also frequency adverbs trigger different interpretations when the adverb occurs in two distinct positions in the sentence. Even though at first glance the interpretation appears to be the same, the following pair shows that each sentence can be read differently:

(38) a. John knocked on the door often.
b. John often knocked on the door.

The interpretation focuses on two classes of events, especially for the latter example. According to it, (38b) “corresponds to a ‘relational’ statement comparing two classes of events”, namely the event of knocking (on something) and the event of knocking on the door. A rough paraphrase would be ‘many of the events in which John knocked on something are events in which John knocked on the door.’ The interpretation of (38a) would be of an ‘absolute’ statement rather than a relational one, which can be paraphrased as ‘the knocking events (by John) were many.’

4. Conclusion

Adverbs can indeed assume different syntactic positions in the sentence, which, in turn give rise to distinct interpretations. The way of interpreting them is not always without problems and a number of delicate questions revolve around the relation between these interpretations. A better understanding will be possible when satisfactory answers have solved the question of whether and how adverb positions are related by movement.

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THE POSITION OF PARTICLES IN ENGLISH PHRASAL VERBS

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***Abstract:** Besides the complex semantic properties of English phrasal verbs, the placement of the particle before or after an object in transitive verb-particle constructions also represents a bewildering problem for EFL learners. The primary aim of my paper is to explore what factors the choice of the split vs. joined word order is influenced by.*

***Key words:** verb + adverb constructions, placement of particles, syntactic, phonological, semantic and discourse-functional properties*

1. Introduction

Phrasal verbs or multi-word verbs, which consist of a verb and a particle, are a common feature of English and do not enjoy a good reputation in teaching and learning English. Besides their complex semantic properties, the placement of the particle before or after an object in transitive verb + adverb constructions also represents a bewildering problem for EFL learners.

In the literature on phrasal verbs/multi-word verbs (cf. Bolinger, 1971, Lipka, 1972, Fraser, 1976, Quirk et al., 1985, Chen, 1986, Gries, 1999, 2002, Jackendoff, 1997, 2002, Huddleston and Pullum, 2002), it has generally been pointed out that if the verb + particle combination is transitive, the particle can either precede or follow the noun phrase object, whereas in the verb + preposition combination the preposition always precedes the noun phrase object. However, if the object is a pronoun, it must go between the verb and the adverb in separable phrasal verbs, such as in (1a). In the case of prepositional verbs the preposition always precedes the pronoun object as well, such as in (1b):

- (1) a. She *saw off* her friend.
 She *saw* her friend *off*.
 She saw him off.
- b. She *saw through* her friend.
 *She *saw* her friend *through*.
 She saw *through* him.

As far as the position of the object relative to the particle in transitive verb + adverb constructions is concerned, however, there do not seem to be hard and fast rules. On the one hand, with a few transitive phrasal verbs, the object must go between the verb and the particle, whether it is a noun phrase or a pronoun, e.g.:

- (2) a. She *cried* her eyes *out*. * She *cried out* her eyes.
 b. She *laughed* her head *off*. * She *laughed off* her head.

On the other hand, with some other transitive phrasal verbs, just like with prepositional verbs, the object must go after the particle, whether it is a noun phrase or a pronoun, e.g.:

- (3) a. The car *picked up* speed. *The car *picked* speed *up*.
 b. She *gave up* hope. * She *gave* hope *up*.
 c. They *laid down* their arms. *They *laid* their arms *down*.

In some cases, one ordering is more frequent than the other, as indicated in the *Oxford Phrasal Verbs Dictionary for Learner of English* (Cowie and Mackin, 2006). Let us illustrate it by the following examples:

- (4) a. I *looked* my friend *up*. I *looked up* my friend.
 b. He *took* the situation *in*. He *took in* the situation.

Interestingly enough, in 4 (a) the joint order while in 4 (b) the split order is less frequent.

The primary aim of my paper is to explore what factors influence the choice of the split (SVOA) vs. joined (SVAO) word order. General contemporary descriptions of English grammar books and course books focus exclusively on syntactic factors, which certainly affect ordering in verb + particle constructions. Nevertheless, they are not the only ones. I assume that besides the syntax of phrasal verbs, their semantic, phonological and pragmatic properties should also be considered.

2. Syntactic factors

2.1. Pronoun as a realization of the object

As mentioned above, when the object is realized as an unstressed pronoun, it is always inserted between the lexical verb and the particle. In some phrasal verbs the object is realized by the pronoun *it* as in (5), or a reflexive pronoun as in (6). Not surprisingly, they occur almost exclusively in the split construction. Consider the following examples:

- (5) '*Knock it off*, Pyle,' said the boy.
 He and Janet were *whooping it up* in France.

We spent a week *living it up* in the luxury of the Intercontinental Hotel.

(6) Gladys *got/pulled* herself *together* enough to see a lawyer.

We didn't like to *push* ourselves *forward*.

2.2. The definiteness of the noun phrase

Chen (1986:97) also remarks that the definiteness of the NP also influences particle movement, i.e. particle movement for definite nouns is higher than that for indefinite nouns:

(7) a. The government will *give* the unemployment figures *out* tomorrow.

Somewhere a transmitter was *giving out* a weak signal.

b. He *gave* a penalty *away* as a result of a violent tackle.

He *gave away* two goals in the first half.

2.3. Coordination of particles

The co-ordination of particles also requires avoiding the SVAO order (Quirk et al., 1985: 1155):

(8) I *switched* the light *on* and *off*. ~ ? I *switched on* and *off* the light.

2.4. Coordination of pronouns

When the pronouns are coordinated, the particle precedes them (Bolinger, 1971:39):

(9) a. *Bring along* him and her.

b. His scheme was to *show up* you and me as a liar.

2.5. Length/complexity of the direct object

If the direct object NP is too long or syntactically complex, i.e. it contains relative clauses, *that* clauses, non-finite clauses, or a prepositional phrase as postmodification/complementation, the particle is not usually separated from the lexical verb (Gries, 1999:110, Jackendoff, 2002:70, and Potter, 2005:LS 3 *Macmillan Phrasal Verbs Plus*). Consider the following examples, in which the object contains a prepositional phrase, and/or a relative clause as postmodifier/complementation:

(10) He *brought back* the books that he had left at home for so long.

*He *brought* the books that he had left at home for so long *back*.

The doctors could *knock out* all of the pain that he's experiencing pretty easily.

*The doctors could *knock* all of the pain that he's experiencing pretty easily *out*.

The realisation of the object by a non-finite clause also seems to be an obstacle for moving the particle after the object:

(11) We've *given up* trying to persuade them to change.

*We've *given* trying to persuade them to change *up*.

Use this column to *mark down* how much each item costs.

*Use this column to *mark* how much each item costs *down*.

2.6. Presence of a directional adverbial after the verb-particle construction

As noted by Gries (1999:110), directional adverbials realized by prepositional phrases follow the adverb and not the noun:

(12) He *put* the junk *down* onto the floor.

? He *put down* the junk onto the floor.

2.7. Presence of any prepositional phrase complement

The particle must precede any PP complement (Jackendoff, 2002:72):

(13) He *grew up* into a strong man. ~ *He *grew* into a strong man *up*.

Sam *ran away* to the city. ~* Sam *ran* into the city *away*.

2.8. Semantic equivalence of the particle to a reduced prepositional phrase

In transitive verb-adverb combinations the adverbial particle may be semantically equivalent to a reduced prepositional phrase, from which the complement has been omitted, thus it will be preceded by the object (Quirk et al., 1985:1155):

(14) They *pulled* the cart *along*.

Move the furniture *out*.

[along the road]

[out of the house]

2.9. Degree adverbs modifying the particle

Some particles can bear a specifier (*right, completely*), however, this is possible only in right hand position (Jackendoff, 2002:70-71):

- (15) I'll *look* the answer *right up*. I'll *look* (**right*) *up* the answer.
 Shut the gas *completely off*. *Shut* (**completely*) *off* the gas.

3. Phonological factors

As pointed out by several scholars (Chen, 1986:80 and Gries, 1999:109), besides syntax, phonological factors, such as stress of the direct object can also influence the constituent ordering, e.g.:

- (16) He *brought back* the book and not the map.

The factor of stress seems to be strong enough to override even the otherwise obligatory rule of pronoun insertion between the lexical verb and the particle, as well:

- (17) He *brought back* him (not her).
 * He *brought* him and not her *back*.

In addition to the above mentioned syntactic and phonological factors, semantic factors also effect constituent ordering in verb-particle constructions. Numerous studies on particle placement have pointed out the semantic relation between the verb and particle as a crucial factor of joined vs. spilt orders (Fraser, 1976, Gries, 1999 and Jackendoff, 2002, etc.).

4. Semantic factors

Analysing the meanings of verb + particle combinations, scholars usually refer to the distinction between idiomatic/opaque, i.e. non-compositional (*bring up* 'rear', *turn down* 'refuse', *take in* 'deceive') and literal/transparent i.e. compositional meanings (*bring sth in, take sth out*). As pointed out by Quirk et al. (1985:1162), in some 'semi-idiomatic' combinations, such as *find out* 'discover', *cut up* 'cut into pieces', *slacken off* 'reduce place/energy', the verb keeps its meaning, whereas the meaning of the particle is less easy to isolate. In contrast, it is the particle which establishes a family resemblance in the following groups: *drink up, finish up, break up, use up, or draw out, eke out, last out, hold out*, i.e. completion.

Recognising the above mentioned meaning of some particles, for example, that of *up* in *use up* or that of *out* in *draw out*, some scholars

propose to form a third group for particles, i.e. the ones that add aspectual meanings to the verb (Dehé, 2002), and it is assumed that these might have an influence on particle placement as well. Gries (2002) also applies a three-way distinction, i.e. literal, aspectual and idiomatic. Besides, he adds metaphorical meanings as an intermediate category between literal and idiomatic meanings.

Let us see how the semantics of verb-particle constructions can have an effect on particle placement. Compositionality of meaning seems to play a significant role in constituent ordering. It has been generally observed (Fraser, 1976, Chen, 1986, Gries, 1999, 2002, Jackendoff, 1997, 2002, Huddleston and Pullum, 2002) that idiomatic verb + combinations exhibit stronger adjacency between verb and particle than literal ones. First, let us examine particle placement in literal combinations.

4.1 Literal combinations

As pointed out by Quirk et al. (1985:1152), in literal combinations (called *free combinations* by them), the verb acts as a normal intransitive verb denoting motion and the adverb has its own directional meaning. Consider the following examples:

- (18) He *put out* the cat. He *put* the cat *out*.
 She *took in* the box. She *took* the box *in*.

Bearing in mind the adverbial status of the particle, we would expect the latter order (SVOA), but SVAO order is also possible.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that in these free combinations, the particle can replace a directional prepositional phrase:

- (19) He *put* the cat *out of the house*.
 He *took* the box *into the room*.

As pointed out by Jackendoff (2002:75), any verb that selects a directional PP can take any directional particle instead, and the meaning is fully compositional. The particle occurs to the right or left of the object NP.

Another test for their independence is whether it is possible to insert an adverb before the particle (Quirk et al., 1985:1154):

- (20) The pilot *jerked* the lever *right back*.

 The dancer *threw* her hands *wildly about* above her head.

In contrast, idiomatic verb + adverb combinations do not allow the insertion of an adverb:

(21) *They *put* the meeting *hurriedly off* [postpone].

Jackendoff (2002:75), however, notes that when there is a modifying adverb, the particle cannot precede the object NP in literal combinations, either:

(22) Beth *tossed/took/put/carried* the food (right) *up the stairs/into the house*.

Beth *tossed/took/put/carried* the food (right) *up/in/away/back*.

Beth *tossed/took/put/carried* (*right) *up/in/away/back* the food.

Another feature of these literal combinations is that directional particles can appear in the locative inversion construction as well, e.g.:

(23) *Up* *marched* the sergeant.

Back *hopped* the frog.

Down *went* the soldiers.

Out *goes* the garbage.

By contrast, idiomatic particles lack the appropriate directional meaning, so they cannot appear in locative inversion, e.g.:

(24) **Up* *blew* the building [explode].

**Out* he *passed* [faint].

4.2 Aspectual combinations

Several studies of phrasal verbs (Bolinger, 1971, Lipka, 1972, Fraser, 1976 and Jackendoff, 1997, 2002) have analysed the aspectual cast of particles in phrasal verbs. Nevertheless, none of these studies refers explicitly to what effect the aspectual meaning of the particle can have on particle placement.

One of the most common aspectual markers among English particles is *up*, which definitely marks the terminal phase of the situation, thus it has a clear terminative, completive sense, such as in *drink up*, *eat up*, *finish up*, *clean up*, *use up*, *pack up* and *wash up*, etc. As a huge number of verbs can co-occur with it, it does not form an idiomatic combination with the verb. In fact, the meaning is fully predictable and it allows split and joined word order as well. Consider the following example:

(25) a. She *drank up* the milk. ~ She *drank* the milk *up*.

However, if there is a manner adverb, it does not occur in right hand position, e.g.:

b. She *drank* (*completely) *up* the milk.

Completion is often signalled by *out* as well, such as in *clean out*, *tire out* and *thrash out*, which also allow both orderings (V+O+A, V+A+O):

- (26) They spent the day *cleaning out* the garage.
We need *to clean* these cupboards *out*.
All that exercise really *tired* the children *out*.
It's enough to *tire out* the fittest swimmer.
Both sides hope to *thrash out* an agreement by next week.
We are going *to thrash* things *out* over the next few days.

In her study on particle verbs in English, Dehé (2002) examined whether the aspectual meaning added by the particle has a significant effect on particle placement. Her results, however, reveal no significant differences between idiomatic and aspectual particle verbs with regard to adjacency.

4.3 Idiomatic combinations

Idiomaticity seems to have a great influence on order alternation. As pointed out by Huddleston and Pullum (2002:285), there are some cases where the particle can only precede the object (unless the latter can have the form of an unstressed personal pronoun). They regard this as a clear case of fossilization: the lexical unity bars the usual syntactic separability, such as in:

- (27) *buy in* [food] *fork out* [money] *hold* *out*
[prospects]
 let out [cry] *pass out* [samples] *put* *up*
[resistance]
 ride out [recession] *start up* [conversation] *pour out*
[feelings]

Furthermore, Huddleston and Pullum (2002:286) also note that there are also examples of idioms which virtually require the order verb – object –particle:

- (28) *answer sb back* *order sb about* *take sb aback*
 have sb on (tease) *work sb over* (beat up)

Idiomaticity, however, is a matter of degree. As pointed out by Quirk et al. (1985:1154), between the two extremes, i.e. the literal and fully idiomatic combinations, there are some 'semi-idiomatic' verb + particle constructions, such as *turn on the light*. In this combination of a verb and

adverb, however, some substitution, but a limited number only, can be made:

(29) *Turn/switch/put the light on/off/down/up.*

As far as the order of verb – noun – adverb is concerned, both orderings are possible:

(30) They *turned on* the light. They *turned* the light *on*.

In some cases, the meaning of a verb + adverb construction is fully idiomatic (*turn over a new leaf, lay down the law* and *put on a good face*, etc.), but very often an idiomatic construction can be related to a literal construction i.e. it involves an obvious metaphorical extension of the literal construction (Bolinger, 1971, Lindner, 1981 and Rudzka-Ostyn, 2003, etc.):

(31) *Lay out* your clothes so that they won't be wrinkled.
Lay out your ideas clearly.

She *smoothed out* the newspaper on the table.

Baker *was smoothing out* the differences with European allies.

If you lay something out, you put it in a particular place, spread out and it is neatly arranged. (V+ADV+N, V+N+ADV, V+PRON+ADV). If you lay out an idea or information, you express it or present it clearly (V+ADV+N, V+PRON+A).

Similarly, if you smooth out a surface, you press it down with something in order to make it flat (V+ADV+ N, V+PRON+AVD). If you smooth out a difficulty or problem in a process or situation, you make it more even or regular (V+ADV+N, V+PRON+ADV). The link between the literal and idiomatic meaning is apparent here, which happens in the case of a lot of multi-word verbs. The question is, however, to what extent such a relationship is actually transparent to the language user. There are also a lot of verb-particle combinations where the idiomatic meaning is completely opaque.

As far as the word order of idiomatic verb-particle constructions is concerned, it seems to be the case that the more idiomatic the meaning is, the higher the probability of the joined word order, especially when there is a specific NP attached to the construction as an object, e.g.:

(32) She *eked out* a poor *existence*/tried to *eke out* a living by selling toffee.

They attempted to *drum up* support for students.

Alice and I *struck up* a *friendship* immediately.

They *chalked up* several *victories*/four *wins*.

He *took up the cudgels* on behalf of farmers.

A special group of idiomatic combinations is represented by the following examples, referred to as 'his heart out family of constructions' by Jackendoff (2002:88):

- (33) He *sobbed* his heart *out*.
He *cried* his eyes *out*.
He *laughed* his head *off*.

As they are idiomatic combinations, they are strictly fixed in form and the NP has become part of the idiomatic meaning of the entire phrase, so the order *NP + particle* cannot be reversed. The meaning of the particle can be approximately paraphrased by 'to excess', though each of them has additional overtones. As might be evident from the above examples, idiomaticity plays an important role in particle placement.

5. Discourse-functional factor: news value of the direct object

Gries (1999: 121) considers news value to be a significant determinant of word of constituent ordering for transitive phrasal verbs as well. When the direct object is introduced earlier, it is not newsworthy in the second sentence. In such an instance, V+N+A word order is preferred. Newsworthy direct objects, however, correlate with V+A+N, e.g.:

- (34) We'll *make up* a parcel for them (new).

On the morning of Christmas Eve we *made* the parcel *up* (familiar).

In *the Language Study of Macmillan Phrasal Verbs Plus* (2005:LS 3), Elisabeth Potter also points out that, if the object presents new information, it is more likely to come after the particle. She argues that this is because we normally give more emphasis to new information than to information that is already known, and putting the object after the particle gives it a little more emphasis. For example, consider these two sentences:

- (35) Ann *slipped* the jacket *on* to see what it looked like.

She *slipped on* some flat sandals and made her way downstairs.

In the first example, the jacket has already been previously mentioned, so the object comes between the verb and the particle. In the second example the object refers to something that has not been mentioned before (some flat sandals), so it comes after the particle.

6. Conclusion

As might be clear from the above discussion, the ordering preferences for verb + adverb constructions can be determined by various factors. Most grammarians, however, seem to have focused mainly on one factor, i.e. the syntax of phrasal verbs. In fact, the stress of the direct object, idiomaticity, and even the news value of the direct object might influence particle placement in transitive verb + adverb constructions. It might even be the case that some of these factors can jointly affect constituent ordering, which, however, requires further investigation. All the same, I hope that my analysis above has managed to penetrate the myth about the perennially worrisome problem of whether to place the particle after or before the verb.

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**CANESTEN CREAM IS TRUSTED BY WOMEN –
LEXICAL MANIPULATION IN ADVERTISEMENTS IN BRITISH
WOMEN'S MAGAZINES**

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***Abstract:** The paper analyses the advertising lexicon in British women's magazines, and deals with lexical manipulation in advertisements through the choice of words and the way they collocate with other words in the body copy. The analysis shows that the most frequent words in advertising discourse are not manipulative per se, but the context in which they appear is the key factor of manipulation.*

***Key words:** advertising, women's magazines, lexical choice, manipulation.*

1. Introduction

As a global phenomenon and one of the most widely used forms of mass communication, advertising is ubiquitous nowadays. Although advertisements in print media lack the reality of movement, the sound of the radio and the availability of the Internet, this form of advertising is still very popular, mostly due to the fact that it can be slanted towards a specific target audience and that magazines have a fairly longer life span compared to other media of mass communication.

Women's magazines are nowadays a dominant type of print media. They cover female readership of various age groups, education and interests. Despite their mutual differences, mostly in regard to the specific female target audience, which require somewhat different topics of interest to women, women's magazines share several common characteristics, being "a multi-million dollar business which presents pleasurable, value-laden semiotic systems to immense numbers of women" (McCracken, 1993: 1). Advertising makes an inseparable part of women's magazines, shaping their overall cultural content (McCracken, 1993: 3).

Persuasion and information are the two most important functions of advertising, which indicates that this typical representative of a persuasive genre is created with a specific communicative purpose in mind, varying across types of advertising, but mostly aiming at persuading the listener, viewer or reader to adopt a certain kind of thinking and to act accordingly, in the desired direction. These two main functions of advertisements serve

as the guidelines for the choice of verbal and visual means employed by the copywriter. The language of advertising is evaluatively loaded. Therefore, it is not surprising that it has been submitted to various kinds of analyses (see e. g. Williamson, 1983; Vestergaard, Schroder, 1985; Cook, 1992; Myers, 1994; Toolan, 1988; Tanaka, 1994; etc.). Most people interested in advertising would agree that the language of advertisements differs in style and grammar compared to the conventional discourse use. However, it is important to stress that, although the language of advertising, like most “minimalist” texts (Toolan, 1988: 62), possesses its individual style, it should not be regarded as a form which deviates from other language varieties. It is true that the language of advertising as a genre possesses certain unique traits. However, they are unique if treated as part of the way the overall communicative purpose of advertising is achieved. Beneath the mask of simplicity, advertisements are subtly and carefully structured – copywriters frequently use unexpected innovative strategies, creatively exploiting the language within the usual linguistic patterns and techniques. In this way, the rhetorical purpose of the author – to attract and keep the attention of the reader, make him/her memorise the advertisement’s text and urge his/her action – is achieved by the systematic use of well-known patterns in innovative and creative ways.

2. Theoretical framework and corpus

Although the most important aims of advertising are to inform and to persuade, I shall argue in this article, within the theoretical framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (van Dijk, 2006; Fairclough, 1989; Fairclough, Wodak, 1997) that women who read advertisements in women’s magazines become victims of a subtle and hardly discernible manipulation. Having in mind that “the overall strategy of manipulative discourse is to focus on those cognitive and social characteristics of the recipient that make them more vulnerable and less resistant to manipulation” (Van Dijk 2006: 376), I maintain that the advertising lexicon in women’s magazines is manipulative in such a way that women are most frequently emotionally blackmailed by nicely wrapped, elusive claims that are difficult to refute. Being one of the key notions in Critical Discourse Analysis, manipulation is understood as “a communicative and interactional practice, in which a manipulator exercises control over other people, usually against their will or against their best interests” (Van Dijk, 2006: 360), in which “manipulators make others believe or do things that are in the interest of the manipulator, and against the best interests of the manipulated” (van Dijk, 2006: 360). Advertisements are a typical medium of manipulation in a wider, semiotic

sense, where manipulation is present not only in the text but in the pictures and photographs as well, when “[t]he verbal and photographic texts [...] function together as a semiotic system through visual montage” (McCracken, 1993: 24).

As already mentioned, advertising may be regarded as a typical example of a persuasive genre, which raises an important question: where is the boundary between the legitimate practice of persuasion, on the one hand, and manipulation, on the other? Unlike persuasion, manipulation is a process in which message receivers are victims of manipulation, most frequently due to their passive role in discourse, their inability “to understand the real intentions or to see the full consequences of the beliefs or actions advocated by the manipulator” (Van Dijk, 2006: 361), as well as to a lack of knowledge necessary in order to resist manipulation (Wodak 1987). Manipulation is a social, discursive, semiotic, and, above all, cognitive phenomenon, since it always implies changing the *mind* of others in one’s own interest (van Dijk, 1993: 254). If such a definition of manipulation is applied to advertisements in women’s magazines, it is possible, within the theoretical framework of Critical Discourse Analysis, to show that such a type of advertising possesses many attributes which categorises it into not only persuasive but also manipulative discourse.

In this paper, I deal with the lexical analysis of advertisements in women’s magazines, trying to reveal possible discursive manipulation manifested through the choice of specific words (nouns, verbs and adjectives) and their manipulative collocation with other words. My focus on only one type of magazines has enabled the consistency of the research corpus in terms of advertising message receivers – it is aimed at a female population. On the other hand, there are groups of women within the female population who differ in terms of age, social status, interests, education level, etc. Therefore, I have tried to include in the corpus the magazines which address various groups of women. I shall try to show how women are treated by copywriters, how advertisers deal with their needs, wants and problems, as well as to establish how the choice of lexis affects the degree of manipulation in advertising.

The corpus for this research consists of 430 advertisements taken from five British women's magazines published between 2003 and 2005: *Cosmopolitan* (289 advertisements), *Women’s Own* (67), *Bella* (54), *Vogue* (11) and *Now* (9). All these magazines are generally perceived as aimed at women, covering a range of topics popularly thought to be of interest to women (beauty, housekeeping, motherhood, romantic relationships, etc.)

A frequency analysis of the lexical fund containing a total of 34,023 words was conducted with the help of a computer programme, Intex,

produced by Max Silberztein. This programme also provides concordances, which show all occurrences of a chosen word in its immediate context, thereby allowing both quantitative, qualitative as well as a contextualised analysis of lexical units. This frequency analysis has shown that the most frequent words in advertising discourse of women's magazines are not manipulative *per se*, although they shape the overall ideology of women's magazines, but that the context in which they appear, in line with a communicative purpose of the message sender, is a key factor of manipulation.

3. Lexical frequency analysis

Extensive research of advertisements in women's magazines has already shown that the portrayal of women in this medium of mass communication is based on subtle discrimination. Namely, women and girls are depicted as having different characteristics compared to men: they are less authoritative, less active, less rational and decisive, they care about their body and the way they look much more than men, etc. In addition, women are usually depicted in the roles of housewives or are ascribed lower-status professions, they seem less intelligent, less serious and much more frivolous than men, etc. (McCracken, 1993; Goffman, 1976). In this paper, an attempt will be made to establish whether this picture of women is supported by the choice of lexis in advertisements in British women's magazines.

As McCracken claims (1993: 96), "like any language, the systems of meaning configured in advertisements are value-laden; beneath the pleasurable and ostensibly innocent appearance of purchased ads are subtexts and codes that articulate ideology". It has already been noted in several studies within the Critical Discourse Analysis tradition that "all levels of linguistic analysis may be ideologically relevant" (Del-Teso-Craviotto, 2006: 2007). My aim in this article, therefore, is to establish to what extent it is possible, by mere *lexical choice* in advertisements, to be not only persuasive, but also manipulative in a subtle, almost indiscernible way. A frequency analysis of advertising lexicon has revealed very indicative results which will be discussed in greater detail later in the text. Due to space constraint, I shall deal only with certain aspects of lexical units in advertisements: *verbs* (in Present Simple, Past Simple, Future Simple and Imperative), *adjectives*, and *nouns*, and only with their most salient features.

3.1. Verbs

A lexical frequency analysis has shown that the ten most frequently used verbs in advertisements in British women's magazines are: *can* (5.77% of the total number of verbs), *have* (3.00%), *make* (2.64%), *help* (2.61%), *give* (1.99%), *need* (1.96%), *call* (1.80%), *take* (1.80%), *get* (1.72%), and *look* (1.72%). The list looks somewhat different when the verbs occur in the Present Simple Tense. The ten most frequently used verbs in the Present Simple Tense are the following: *have* (4.53% of the total number of verbs), *need* (3.91%), *want* (3.50%), *help* (2.26%), *make* (1.92%), *contain* (1.92%), *give* (1.78%), *work* (1.78%), *know* (1.65%), and *look* (1.37%).

I shall illustrate the use of some of the most frequently used verbs in the corpus. What do women *want*, how does the advertised product *help* them and what *can* they do after they consume it? As depicted in advertisements, women predominantly want *the perfect figure*, they want *to lose a few pounds*, they don't want *their hands to give away their age*, while the advertised product helps them *keep new lines away*, helps *their hands to feel soft*, helps *their nails grow much longer than before*, etc. After taking advantage of all the benefits the advertised product offers, women can *act their age without looking it*, they can *lose up to one dress size*, while the contact lenses they wear can *be a real boost to their animal magnetism*. These examples unambiguously indicate the overall themes dealt with in women's magazines and the dominant topics which shape a specific way of thinking (beauty, looks, body and face care, losing weight, romantic relationships, etc.). By narrowing women's interests, problems and wants to beautification, advertisers portray a woman as someone who is "a passive object awaiting the man's initiative", i.e. "in order to become happy and successful a woman has to be beautiful". (Vestergaard, Schoeder, 1985: 82). Because beauty of the idealised type presented by flawless models in advertisements is impossible to achieve, a woman "has to live suspended in expectations of a marvellous future, ceaselessly and carefully applying the cosmetics prescribed by advertising" (Vestergaard, Schoeder, 1985: 84), waiting for that happy day to come.

The use of Past Simple Tense in advertisements, albeit very rare (a mere 2% of the total number of verbs in the corpus), is almost exclusively a tool of presenting the positive outcome of using the advertised product. It contrasts the after-situation with the before-situation, emphasising all the benefits of the subject of advertising. We shall illustrate this by several examples from the corpus:

My head cleared and I felt better almost straightaway; my headache went away; I wasn't born a natural blonde. But it only took me 20 minutes to become one; etc.

In very few examples, Past Simple Tense is used to refer to the before-situation, defining the problem that needs to be overcome with the advertised product,

e.g. Our clubs offer you the chance to shape up, slim down and transform your body as you never thought possible; Sandra never dreamt she could feel this good – you now have the opportunity to feel this good too!; etc.

By using the Future Simple Tense, copywriters forecast a splendid, completely changed future to their female readers, once they buy and consume the advertised product. These forecasts are meant for the stereotypical roles of women as housewives, mothers and seducers, or refer to the desirable looks and behaviour defined as the only correct ones, according to the accepted model in a society. For example:

You'll see more than just beautiful hands. You'll see very beautiful hands ; ... it will leave your hair looking, feeling and smelling great!; The result is that you will notice an improvement within 4 weeks, and a further reduction in the signs of ageing after 12 weeks; Then it will help keep your lips looking luscious all day long; You'll almost forget you're on a diet until you look in the mirror; etc.

A slim figure, soft and shiny hair, luscious lips, no signs of ageing, and all other prescriptive “recommendations” of advertisers serve as evidence in support of the deeply embedded notion about the woman who is not given a chance to decide “whether she wants to emulate the ideal, only how to become a perfect version of [her]self” (Vestergaard, Schoeder, 1985: 87).

As far as the Imperative is concerned, entirely in line with the expectations and on the basis of some previous linguistic studies of advertising register (see Myers, 1994; Toolan, 1988), verb *buy* is very rarely used (merely 0.38% of the total number of verbs in the corpus and 2.33% of the total verbs in the imperative form), being replaced by euphemisms such as *get*, *try* or *look out for*. Copywriters use for *buy* other, unobtrusive verbs, traditional euphemisms in advertising language, in order not to appear to be imposing themselves on the audience and because *buy* has some unpleasant connotations (such as its association with money and the idea of parting with it), for example:

So get on the phone and take advantage of a new fast and hassle free way to drive your next car; get the story book absolutely free; Get your teeth whiter; Look out for future volumes in the series; So look out for Kellogg's Nutri-Grain bars; Try it with Satin Care Moisture rich Shave Gel.; Look out for them in the

frozen dessert section; etc.

Despite the need for being as aggressive as possible in attracting new customers, advertisers rarely openly urge the buyers to *buy* the advertised product and try to be inventive in finding more subtle ways of doing it. This clearly indicates that the vigorous hard-selling advertising techniques, which put a high amount of pressure on the customer, have been replaced by much less direct, subtly persuasive and much more suggestive soft-selling advertising, which “appeals to the emotions and tries to establish a link between a product and beauty or wealth, romance or self-confidence, success or prestige.” (O’Donnell, Todd, 1991:106). Almost as a rule, an exhortation to action (buying the advertised product) is masked as information or advice (Vestergaard, Schoeder, 1985: 69).

Particularly interesting are the collocations of the verb *be* used in the imperative form, which suggest the picture of the woman that advertisers wish to create, what a woman should be like in their opinion. I shall illustrate this by several most striking examples from the corpus:

Be extraordinary not ordinary. Be loud. Be seen. Be heard; Be stunning Be spectacular. Be sensational; be a natural phenomenon; etc.

These examples illustrate the global message that copywriters wish to convey, which cannot be hidden behind often contradictory statements – by using the advertised product you acquire the socially desirable attributes, thereby eliminating the possibility of being stigmatised. Even messages such as “be extraordinary” and “be different” are based on the unfounded claim that distinctiveness is possible to achieve only with the help of the advertised product!

3.2. Adjectives

The ten most frequently used adjectives in advertisements in British women’s magazines are: *new* (6.71% of the total number of adjectives), *good* (2.54%), *available* (2.21%), *free* (1.58%), *first* (1.33%), *natural* (1.29%), *perfect* (1.03%), *unique* (0.96%), *smooth* (0.92%), and *fresh* (0.88%). Not surprisingly, by far the most frequent adjective in advertisements turns out to be *new*, most often associated with another adjective, *improved*, together premodifying the product name:

e.g. we have developed a new type of skincare; a new improved care; Organics announce a breakthrough with their new hairspray range, etc.

As McCracken claims (1993: 61), “closely linked to its opposite, the old-fashioned and obsolete, the ideology of the new often helps to create feelings of inadequacy in readers which the new products are promised to remedy.” However, the following examples indicate that this adjective cleverly serves another purpose as well:

It’s an easy step towards unveiling the whole new you; the first step towards a new you; get a whole new body; ... gives a whole new meaning to your life, etc.

Not only does the female reader need to buy the *new/improved* product, serving as a remedy for supposed shortcomings, but she will also become *a whole new woman*, turning from a girl nextdoor into a real beauty, similar to the idealised one who advertised the product in the first place. This transformation, it goes without saying, concerns predominantly the visible parts, the body, the face and the hair, when “the focus is on achieving an external beauty which is defined by market forces” (McCracken, 1993: 57).

Another controversial adjective is *natural*:

a natural aid for slimming; a natural balance for your skin; perfect, natural beauty; beautifully natural colour; a completely natural feel that looks great too; The most natural feeling; so easy, so natural, so reliable; A natural way to help you lose weight more easily; Résistance from Kérastase offers extra strength to all hair, allowing it to recapture its perfect, natural beauty, etc.

Manipulation by means of language is at its peak here, achieved with the help of absurd claims: if a natural look is achieved only with the help of the advertised product, then this look is presented as an *improvement* of nature, i.e. “as somehow superior to [its] natural source” (Vestergaard, Schoeder, 1985: 159), implying that such a look is not natural any longer. However, the meaning of the adjective *natural* is most frequently equated with the meaning of the adjectives *desirable* and *prestigious* (cf. Vestergaard, Schoeder, 1985: 160), so that, in this regard, its use in advertisements is understandable. The fascination of advertisers with the adjective *natural* sends a clear message to female readers – their natural look is not in line with the cultural expectations of society and it is necessary, by consuming the advertised product, to reach a different, “natural” look, which will conform to the prescribed model. The feelings of guilt and inferiority are only some of the consequences of this approach.

The use of “comparative adjectives [...] establishes a thematic and syntactical opposition” (McCracken, 1993: 51) to the situation before using the advertised product. We shall illustrate it by several concordances of the comparative adjective *younger*:

Wake up to visibly younger-looking skin; Your skin appears radiant, better toned, visibly younger looking; It's a dream come true; we can prove it's what you need most to look younger; Discover more radiant, younger looking skin; You're only 2 weeks from younger looking skin; etc.

The opposition between “the negative ‘before’ and the positive ‘after’” (McCracken, 1993: 51) reinforces feelings of insecurity and inadequacy, deliberately stirred in female readers for commercial purposes.

3.3. Nouns

Nouns are the most variable class of words in the advertising lexicon and their frequency is affected by several factors, the subject of advertising and the period of publication being among them. Some of the most frequent nouns found in the corpus are part of adverbials (e.g. *day, time, year*) or have a generic nature (e.g. *product, information, way, etc.*). Other nouns indicate the most often advertised products in women's magazines or the body parts for which they are meant (e.g. *skin, hair, hand, care, vitamin, cream, etc.*). However, due to space constraint, I shall focus on the noun *woman* and the manipulative way in which it is used in order to select a target audience or for endorser identification. Let us quote several examples from the corpus:

Canesten Cream is trusted by women to relieve the irritating symptoms of thrush; women are happy to say they have found Body Lift, not just effective, but highly effective; for a woman who knows better; etc.

In an attempt to employ the endorsement technique (the first two examples), advertisers use the following formula: “*X is trusted by women to (inf.) + product benefit*”, or *women say/claim that X + product benefit*, leaving the reader rather confused, to say the least. Does *women* refer to *all women*, women who have already used the advertised product, only *some women*, or, perhaps, women who have shared their opinion about the product with the copywriter? The advertiser has opted for general and elusive statements, superficially diminishing their strength. However, the advertiser's intention is obvious – female readers are expected to comprehend the endorser as “women in general”, “all women”, “women as opposed to men”, which inevitably results in the identification with a group so broadly defined. Other strategies of selecting a target audience are, I think, direct address:

e.g. If you are single and would rather be married... if you want to find a man who loves the real you... or if you want to capture the heart of anyone you choose; So, if you don't want your hands to give away your age...; etc.

as well as the use of inclusive *we*, which creates a bond between the advertiser and the female reader:

e.g. Sometimes we want to lose a few pounds; We all know kids can be a bit of a handful; etc.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, an attempt has been made to reveal some of the ways in which the choice of lexis in advertisements in women's magazines may become the key means of persuasion and manipulation. Based on a frequency analysis of the lexis (verbs, nouns and adjectives) used in 430 advertisements taken from five British women's magazines, I have hopefully demonstrated the enormous power of language in shaping the desired way of thinking.

By lexical manipulation advertisers are able to subtly and almost indiscernibly affect and shape the way women think, entirely in line with the claim of the proponents of Critical Discourse Analysis that manipulation is first and foremost a cognitive phenomenon. If we accept the above mentioned definition of manipulation as an activity "in which a manipulator exercises control over other people, usually against their will or against their best interests" (Van Dijk, 2006: 360), then I may be almost certain to be right when claiming that advertisements, with their overall ideology, are a prime example, at least in some of their aspects, of not only a persuasive, but also a manipulative genre, in which the messages conveyed to women are not in their interest.

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