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***READINGS ON THE EDGE***

## THE CENSORSHIP OF BRITISH FICTION IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY EUROPE: PARADOXES AND INCONSISTENCIES

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**Abstract:** *Censorship is as old as civilisation itself. Since the beginning of time, censors from different countries and cultures have tried to suppress books that they considered immoral, blasphemous, seditious or dangerous to the national security. Censorship of printed publications was particularly vigorous across Europe in the twentieth century and writers had to confront several censorship systems before having their books published. The diversity of political regimes under which censorship flourished generated a multiplicity of attitudes and responses towards the same author or text. This article looks at the inconsistencies and paradoxes that emerged from various European censorship systems during the twentieth century when censors had to decide whether to publish or ban the work of some very-well known British novelists, such as H. G. Wells, D. H. Lawrence, George Orwell or Doris Lessing.*

**Keywords:** *censorship, Lawrence, Lessing, Orwell, reception, Wells.*

### 1. Introduction

Censorship has existed and exists in all societies, authoritarian, democratic or otherwise. Since the beginning of time, censors from different countries and cultures have tried to suppress books that they considered immoral, blasphemous, seditious or dangerous to the national security. Traditionally, they acted as gate-keepers safeguarding three basic social institutions: family, church and state. The general motives may be similar, however, the actual implementation and practice of censorship has been diverse, depending on time and country. In twentieth-century Europe censorship of printed publications was particularly vigorous and writers had to confront several censorship systems before having their books published. The diversity of political regimes under which censorship flourished generated a multiplicity of censoring attitudes and responses towards the same author or text. History of literary reception is strewn with examples of radical changes of opinion concerning the decorum or unsuitability of certain texts. The same book could be banned today and celebrated as a classic five years later; its author could be ranked among the celebrities of one regime and be prosecuted in a different country. This article looks at the inconsistencies and paradoxes that emerged from various European censorship systems during the twentieth century when censors had to decide whether to publish or ban the work of

some very-well known British novelists, such as H. G. Wells, D. H. Lawrence, George Orwell or Doris Lessing.

In order to better understand these inconsistencies and paradoxes, it is worth briefly reviewing some of the censorship systems established in twentieth-century Europe. Firstly, Britain enforced different types of institutional censorships. On the one hand, the Ministry of Information, created during the First World War and then again in 1939, was responsible for filtering information that might be considered harmful to the national interests during the war years (Maclaine 1979). George Orwell worked for this Ministry of Information during the Second World War and used it as his inspiration for the Ministry of Truth in *Nineteen-Eighty-Four*. On the other hand, there were some laws on obscenity and sexual content, like the Obscene Publications Act of 1857, which was changed in 1959 and 1964. Thanks to this 1959 change, which introduced the possibility of defence against the charge of obscenity on the grounds of literary merit, Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was allowed to be published.

In Ireland, after the country gained its independence from the United Kingdom, the Censorship of Publications Act was passed in 1929. This law established the creation of a Censorship Board of five people that could ban publications they considered to be indecent or obscene. In this country, where the Catholic Church had traditionally had a strong influence, customs officials and organised groups of Catholic Actionists sent books to the censorship board with offensive passages marked, and on this basis the board banned the books. The register of prohibited publications included a great number of important names, among them Marcel Proust, William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, Saul Bellow, Vladimir Nabokov, Samuel Beckett, Arthur Koestler, George Bernard Shaw, Dylan Thomas, Jean Paul Sartre, Sean O'Casey, H. G. Wells, Nadine Gordimer, Kate O'Brien, Patrick Kavanagh, and many, many more. In 1967 the law was reformed and from that moment the strictness of Irish censorship began to fade (Adams 1968; Carlson 1990).

Another country in which the Catholic Church has traditionally played a significant role in religious, cultural and political spheres was Spain. Here, a strict censorship policy was established during General Franco's regime (1939-1975). It was a system of previous censorship, that is to say, no book could be printed or sold without permission from the censorship office. Censors examined all applications and wrote reports in which they justified their decision on whether the text was allowed to be printed, was banned or could be published with some "alterations". In a totalitarian regime that evolved from right-wing extremism and supported the traditional values of the Catholic Church, these Spanish censors suppressed or changed any publication that was thought to be subversive or included "improper" comments about morality, the Church, or the principles of the regime. Official censorship did not really disappear until the Constitution of 1978, which introduced full freedom of expression. Censorship files of Franco's regime are found in the Archivo General de la Administración (Alcalá de Henares, Madrid).

On the other side of the political spectrum and on the other side of the map of Europe, state censorship remained severe in the first home of communism, the Soviet Union (now Russia). In the period between the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 and the end of the 1980's all kinds of ideological publications were forbidden. In 1922, the central censorship office was established, known for short as *Glavlit*. They had absolute authority over the performing arts and all publications. Censors were present in every large Soviet publishing house and they reacted against books that were hostile to Marxism, communism or the Soviet power, as well as literature that contained elements of capitalist ideology, bourgeois moral and religious values. All Western literature was usually suspected of being ideologically dangerous for Socialist readers, particularly from the 1930s onward (Ermolaev 1997; Blium 2003a). At the end of the Second World War this type of censorship was exported to other Eastern European countries that had a Soviet-style government, such as Poland, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, etc.

Finally, we should not forget the Nazi regime in Germany during the 1930s. With Hitler's rise to power in 1933 a lot of "blacklists" for Jewish and dissident writers were established, and many books were banned from libraries and book stores. An event often remembered is the burning of the books in Berlin and other German cities on the night of May 10, 1933. Students from universities gathered to burn those texts which did not correspond with Nazi ideology. Books by Sigmund Freud, Albert Einstein, Thomas Mann, Jack London, H. G. Wells and many others went up in flames. Following the Second World War, Germany was split into two separate nations: the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) and the German Democratic Republic (East Germany), the first one enjoyed the freedoms of the new democratic way of life and the second one stayed under the Soviet umbrella and its cultural politics.

## **2. H. G. Wells**

In this diverse and restrictive Europe, the British novelists tried to succeed and overcome the restrictions placed by all these censorship systems. Among them was H. G. Wells, a writer that has often been portrayed as provocative, an iconoclast or, as he wrote in his *Experiment in Autobiography*, "an uninvited adventurer who has felt himself free to criticize established things without restraint" (1967:704). H. G. Wells was considered a powerful intellectual influence that popularized progressive thought. His work was often used as a vehicle for the diffusion of his advanced ideas and sometimes as a way of showing the follies of society. Some of Wells's scientific romances read like extended treatises on socialism and Darwinism; other books encouraged revolt against Christian tenets and accepted codes of behaviour. He defended equality between the sexes, birth control, divorce, freedom of speech and human rights in general. It comes as no surprise then that he often found himself at the centre of controversies and even scandals. When *Ann Veronica* was published in 1909, it was harshly treated in his own country, Great Britain, because of the supposedly immoral behaviour of its sex-conscious protagonist. *Ann Veronica* is a young woman from a respectable



home who defies her parents, first in going to London to study biology and live on her own, then in demonstrating with the suffragettes and going to jail for the cause, and finally in setting up housekeeping with the man she loves even though he already has a wife. The book was not only attacked by some critics of the time, who thought it would corrupt young minds, but also “cand preached against by earnest clergymen” (Wells 1967:395).

Similarly, in 1939 Wells suffered the pressure of Irish censorship when *The Fate of Homo Sapiens* was serialised in the Irish weekly periodical *Picture Post*. Wells’s essay discusses the “existing forces” that hold human beings on the road to destruction and prevent us from taking the road to utopia. One of those forces was, in his opinion, the Catholic Church. That judgment was not to the liking of some conservative Catholic intellectuals, like Alfred O’Rahilly, then the President of University College Cork. O’Rahilly strongly condemned this book and *Picture Post* was banned by the Irish Censorship Board for a period of three months, allegedly because of Wells’s articles (Asworth 2005:267-68). Ireland also banned four other titles by Wells between 1930 and 1946 on the grounds of indecency, which could mean, among many other things, that they advocated the unnatural prevention of conception (Adams 1968:242-43). One of them was *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind* (1932), which reflects Wells’s social, political, and philosophical thought. It is interesting to see Alfred O’Rahilly’s reply to H. G. Wells about this book in the *Standard* in 1940 (qtd. in Gaughan 1993:224).

It is surprising that when *The Fate of Homo Sapiens* came to Spain, six years after it was banned in Ireland for its critical view of the Catholic Church, Franco’s Catholic censors did not find fault with Well’s anticlerical statements. However, they found a different obstacle to the book being read in Spain: it was Chapter 6 on the liberties of democratic nations. *The Fate of Homo Sapiens* was then banned in Spain, not on religious grounds but on political grounds (File 4539-45). Another inconsistency between Irish and Spanish censors was that when the Spanish censorship office assessed an import request of an Argentinean edition of *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind* in 1950, they gave the green light. A first report describes the book as an ambitious and materialist essay, indicating a couple of pages that should be seen by an ecclesiastical censor because they support birth-control (Ch. 13, Part 1) and criticize religions (Ch. 15, Part 3). But the ecclesiastical censor said that, although those references do indeed go against Catholic morality, the book could be approved, taking into account the type of readership that would be interested in it (File 379-50). More volumes of the Argentine edition of this book were imported in 1966 and 1971. It seems that Spanish censors were more lenient than the Irish; and that, despite Wells’s antecedents. During the Spanish Civil War, Wells’s controversial spirit was displayed in Spanish newspapers, raising his voice against Franco’s *coup* and supporting the legitimately elected Republican government. For instance, in the Barcelona journal *La Vanguardia* (The Vanguard), his personal opinions about this war were quoted, with references to Franco as a “military adventurer” who committed an act of treason and was responsible for atrocious killings (“Un valeroso” 1938:1). He was also known in Spain for his sympathies for the Soviet

Union, a country that he had visited on three occasions. With these qualifications, one would expect the name of this left-wing writer, freethinking atheist, and passionate anti-fascist who criticized Franco from the very start, to appear in a black list of the Spanish regime. However, paradoxically, his anti-Catholic statements went through the filter of a very Catholic censorship.

Similarly, Wells's scientific romances did find their way to Spanish readers during the post-Civil War decade, despite the utopian socialism they embody and transmit. *The First Men in the Moon* was authorised in 1941, *The Island of Doctor Moreau* in 1943, and *The Croquet Player* was published in 1945. In 1953 and 1954, two volumes with the so-called *Obras completas* (Complete works) by Wells visited the Spanish censorship office. They included the most famous romances, among them *The Time Machine*, *The Invisible Man*, *The War of the Worlds*, *When the Sleeper Wakes*, *The Food of the Gods*, *The Wonderful Visit* and *In the Days of the Comet*. In the case of this last novel, it is interesting to note that the censors found no fault with William Leadford's enthusiasm for socialism or with the *ménage à quatre* depicted in the story, which could be interpreted as advocating free love. On the contrary, the censor's report described the book as an "imaginative novel, narrated with grace and interest, as well as in a good literary style" (File 7517-53). Only the fantasy *Men Like Gods* met with some opposition from the Spanish censors, who did not like some irreverent remarks about a priest, Father Amerton, so they asked the publisher to make deletions on three pages (File 4882-53). The publisher did cut those passages and the novel was published. What about the socialist ideas? Were they not censored by the fascist Spanish censors? They were not. It would appear that Wells's fantasy stories were allowed to express the progressive political and social views that could not be tolerated in other literary forms. Utopian worlds and science-fiction scenarios are usually more successful in concealing controversial issues than realistic stories and expository prose, where the author's points are made more simply and directly. However, it is interesting to note that the second volume of *Obras completas*, which included some realistic novels like *Ann Veronica*, was considered innocuous by the Spanish regime, despite the scandalous reputation of this novel in Britain. The censor found no moral harm in the behaviour of its heroine, who, it is true, was "bordering on licentiousness", but ended up "redeeming her errors" (File 2579-54). Up to eight realistic novels by Wells were banned in Spain during the 1940s and 1950s – *Bealby*, *The Undying Fire*, *The Secret Places of the Heart*, *Christina Alberta's Father*, *You Can't Be Too Careful*, *The Bulpington of Blup*, *Tono-Bungay* and *The History of Mr Polly* (in *Obras completas*) –, but not the much criticised *Ann Veronica*, which had been banned in British libraries.

If the fascist Spanish censors treated some of Wells's novels with a certain courtesy, the Nazi German regime was not so benevolent. Although in the first decades of the twentieth century Wells had been a popular writer in Germany and Austria, it comes as no surprise that since the year 1933 his books ceased to be published there. Given Wells's outspoken criticism of the current political situation in Germany, the Nazis regarded him as "corrupt" and included his name in the "List One of harmful and undesirable literature", which explicitly banned the

distribution of all his works (Nate 2005:108). Wells even reported in his autobiography that the Nazis had burned his books (1967:704); therefore, we may assume that his writings were among those that went up in flames on that night of May 10, 1933.

### 3. D. H. Lawrence

Another very controversial writer was D. H. Lawrence. In his novels Lawrence wanted to explore beneath the surface of human behaviour and this led him into a frank discussion of psychology and sex. With him the novel began to include explicit descriptions of the sexual act. Today it is scarcely possible to pick up a novel which does not contain a portrayal of such intimate experience, but many of Lawrence's novels were very controversial when they first appeared because of their frank treatment of sex. For some critics, like Henry Seidel Caby, editor of the *Saturday Review of Literature*, this was an obsession. He wrote that Lawrence "is obsessed by sex... With rare exceptions Lawrence's characterizations turn upon the possession, or the lack, or the perversion of the sex instinct." (qtd. in Bowerman 1931:34). That is the reason why the conservative sectors of British society launched a moral crusade against some of Lawrence's novels: *The Rainbow* (1915), *Women in Love* (1920) and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) were banned in Britain because of their "candid portrayal of sexuality" (Sova 1998:230). There is no doubt that *Lady Chatterley's Lover* turned out to be the most controversial case. The passionate love affair between Constance Chatterley (whose husband has returned from the war in a wheelchair) and her gamekeeper, Oliver Mellors, with its lush descriptions of their erotic meetings, was found objectionable in the extreme. To escape British censorship Lawrence had to print it privately in Italy in 1928. A "popular edition" of the novel in English was also published in Paris in 1929 by an American Expatriate, Edward W. Titus, who owned a bookshop in Paris and edited a periodical. However, only heavily expurgated versions would be published in Britain from 1932 onwards (Gertzman 1989). It was not until 1960 that the full text would be made available in Britain. The previous year the old Obscene Publications Act had been changed, introducing the possibility of defence against the charge of obscenity on the grounds of literary or social merit. After a dramatic and much-publicised trial, the book was found to have merit, and Penguin Books was allowed to publish the novel in its entirety. C. H. Rolph in his book *The Trial of Lady Chatterley* (1961) gives a lot of details about this literary episode. An interesting paradox, or rather an irony of fate, was that, although the Director of Public Prosecutions took the publishers to trial so that the book never reach British readers, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was not only published, but it became a best-seller. According to the article in the BBC website "*Lady Chatterley's Lover Sold Out*", English bookshops sold a total of 200,000 copies on the first day of publication.

But this was not only a British phenomenon. In West Germany it was the *Lady's Chatterley's Lover* trial and its publicity that really reawakened fresh interest in Lawrence as an author, so that a new German translation of the novel

was brought out in October 1960 and reprinted five times in the same year. Something similar had happened in France nearly thirty years before. The French translation of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* appeared in 1932 and, after some controversy among reviewers, a complaint was submitted to the court of Paris. When the town council urged the mayor to ban the novel, it was decided that Lawrence's story should be banned in the newspaper kiosks of Paris. However, the scandal and the publicity had a very positive impact on the sales of the book and encouraged other publishers to release French translations of many other works by Lawrence (Katz-Roy 2007:114-15).

Lawrence's indecency was also a relatively important issue in the Soviet Union. A Russian translation of *The Rainbow* appeared in 1925 with certain episodes, like chapter 5, much shorter than the original version (Reinhold 2007). *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was translated into Russian as early as 1932, although published in Berlin not in Moscow. However, Lawrence's works were received by Soviet critics as "ideologically acceptable" in the 1920s (Reinhold 2007:189). Russian versions of *Sons and Lovers*, *Aaron's Rod*, and *The Boy in the Bush*, also appeared. Nevertheless, soon after this early welcome, the tide turned and a more hostile response began to emerge. In 1935, an influential Marxist-oriented critic, Dmitri Sviatopolk-Mirski, wrote a devastating statement on Lawrence's writings:

Even taking an international standpoint he remains the principal exponent of that strain of bourgeois decadence which is "attracted to the primitive" – to savages (a number of Lawrence's works deal with Mexican aboriginals), to animals (his poems about animals and plants are one of the high points of modern English poetry), and to naked biologic man. (qtd. in Reinhold 2007:191).

For years, Mirski's criticism was used to justify the official exclusion of Lawrence in the Soviet Union. A similar silence was imposed in other Soviet countries. Though Lawrence's Czech reception was enthusiastic in the 1930s, with the translation of several novels, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* included, the communist *coup d'état* in 1948 brought a few years of disapproving attitudes towards Lawrence (Grmelová 2007). The same could be said about Bulgaria. While the Bulgarian version of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* came out in 1932, the translation of Lawrence's work was abruptly stopped with the establishment of the communist regime in the post-war era (Roussenova 2007). One might have expected that Lawrence, the son of a miner, that is to say, a member of the proletariat, who had portrayed some autobiographical details of social struggle in his *Sons and Lovers*, would have been better received by the social-realist critics and the Soviet censors.

The wheel of fortune also turned for Lawrence in Germany. In the Nazi regime Lawrence enjoyed more public favour than many other foreign writers; perhaps because his wife Frieda was German and also because some critics considered his thought "to be in sympathy with some of the regime's ideological prejudices" (Mehl & Jansohn 2007a:25). In the Germany of 1941, Lawrence was even seen as a "rebel against English prudishness, intellectualism, bourgeoisie, the machine, democracy and Christianity" (Mehl & Jansohn 2007a:51). However, as

the hostilities with Great Britain worsened during the Second World War, Lawrence's reception in Germany began to change. His name was included in a list of English and American writers issued in 1942 by the Propaganda Ministry, allegedly for its pornographic tendencies (Mehl & Jansohn 2007a:25). It seems that the alleged pornography of his novels had not been detected in their previous readings. When the war ended, Lawrence's position in the German literary scene changed once more. The publishing industry was revitalised in West Germany and many classical books were reprinted. One of them was George Goyert's translation of *Son and Lovers*, which appeared in 1947. But it was once more the publicity of the trial of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* that renewed the interest of German readers in Lawrence's writings. New translations were published and thousands of copies of this novel were sold in the 1960s and 1970s (Mehl & Jansohn 2007b:54).

The reception of Lawrence in Italy was very different. One should remember that it was in Italy that the complete version of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was published for the first time in 1928. The earliest translation of Lawrence in Italian appeared the following year. It was a volume with the stories "The Lady Bird" and "The Fox". Then, there followed the translation of many other novels in the 1930s, among them, *The Trespasser*, *The White Peacock*, *St. Mawr*, *The Lost Girl* and *Sons and Lovers* in 1933, *Women in Love* and *The Plumed Serpent* in 1935, and *The Rainbow* in 1937 (Ceramella 2007:93). While puritan Britain found the sexual innuendoes of some stories too obscene, Catholic Italy turned a blind eye to the erotic passages. It is true that when the publisher Mondadori brought out an Italian version of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in 1946, it caused a major scandal and the police seized the book. The publisher then presented a formal protest, stating that Lawrence was by then considered a "classical writer", that *Lady Chatterley's Lover* had been freely published countless times in Italy and that his "de luxe edition" was so expensive that young people could not afford it. Eventually, the magistrate acquitted Mondadori (Ceramella 2007:101-102). Why this permissive attitude in Catholic Italy? Stefania Michelucci offers an interesting answer in her essay "The Fortunes of D. H. Lawrence in Italy". According to this critic, the reason why Lawrence could publish his books in Italy without creating scandals "was undoubtedly due to the fact that Italian culture, like that of other Mediterranean countries, has a more "relaxed" attitude towards instinctual life" (2007:80).

Spain is also a Mediterranean country, but we do not find the same relaxed attitude towards instinctual life in Franco's censors. They would not accept the marital infidelity, the pagan celebration of the body and the sensual language of Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. In 1963, three years after the London trial, the Barcelona publishing house Plaza y Janés submitted an application to publish a Spanish version of Constance Chatterley's story, but one of the censors pointed at 101 immoral pages which made the novel "an essentially obscene and shameless tale", though he added that "unfortunately, it is interesting from a literary point of view" (File 3530-63). A second censor confirmed this opinion and rejected the application to protect Spanish society from the author's corroding obsession for sex and the "filth" of his story (File 3530-63). Like Mondadori in Italy, the Spanish

publisher defended his case arguing that Lawrence was already a classic, that a British court had authorised the publication of the novel and that, rather than the apparent sensuality of Constance, the reader would see her desire to fulfil her unsatisfied maternal instinct. The answer from the censorship office was negative, as it was in the other applications submitted in the 1960s and early 1970s. The first Spanish version of the novel would not arrive until 1976, one year after Franco's death. Similarly, other novels by Lawrence, such as *Sons and Lovers*, *Women in Love*, *The Trespasser*, and *Aaron's Rod*, were banned in Spain, mainly on moral grounds.

#### 4. George Orwell

The story of the reception of George Orwell includes more inconsistencies and curiosities. It was political reasons that made it difficult for him to find an English publisher for his famous *Animal Farm*. Orwell finished this allegorical fable, based on the story of the Russian Revolution and its betrayal by Joseph Stalin, in 1943. At that time the Soviet Union was an ally, fighting a common enemy – Hitler. Therefore, anti-Soviet literature was not welcomed in Britain or America. *Animal Farm* was then rejected by several British and American publishing houses, including his regular publisher Gollancz. Even the director of the prestigious Faber and Faber, T. S. Eliot, declined to publish the novel because the point of view it showed was not convincing: “Your pigs are far more intelligent than other animals, and therefore the best qualified to run the farm [...] what was needed (someone might argue) was not more communism but more public-spirited pigs” (qtd. by Shelden 1991: 403). Another publisher from New York, Dial Press, returned the manuscript saying that it was “impossible to sell animal stories in the U.S.A.” (Orwell 1970:138) Similarly, the publisher Jonathan Cape turned *Animal Farm* down, because an official from the Ministry of Information had warned him off (Shelden 1991:402). After these examples of editorial self-censorship, the then modest London firm Secker & Warburg agreed to issue a limited printing of Orwell's fable, which appeared in 1945. Shortly after the war ended, the political situation changed and the Soviet Union became a political rival; *Animal Farm* soon became a best-seller. George Orwell's last novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), also became an instant best-seller. Moreover, its appalling warning against the dangers of totalitarian regimes and abuse of political power helped this dystopia to be regarded as a modern classic.

As it might be expected, Orwell's satiric views of totalitarian states and betrayed revolutions were not welcomed in the Soviet Union. Although he had always been a left-wing intellectual, in the land of Marxism he was considered an enemy of the country and suffered censorship in various forms. Firstly, his books were not translated into Russian and they were never published there; those rare copies in English brought from abroad were confiscated. Then, Orwell's name was usually cut out of histories of English literature used in Soviet universities; that is to say, his name disappeared from academic circles. If Orwell ever appeared in literary histories, he was presented as “an ideologist of imperialist reaction”, whose

books were used by the Western bourgeois press to discredit socialism. In an interesting article by Arlen Blium entitled “Orwell’s Travels to the Country of Bolsheviks” (2003b) we learn a fascinating detail about the censorship of Orwell in the Soviet Union. In 1959 the Ideological Department of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party ordered the novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* to be translated into Russian. The reason was very simple: they wanted a few highly-placed members of the party bureaucracy to be familiar with the book, so that they could set up some counter-propaganda. No details of the number of copies or the translator’s name are given.

If Orwell’s books were banned in the Soviet Union we should expect they had a very warm welcome in a Western country with an extreme right-wing regime like Franco’s Spain. However, Orwell had a handicap: during the Spanish Civil War Orwell had been fighting on the pro-communist Republican side against Franco’s troops. Did Spanish censors take that into account when examining his books? Was he on a black list? Surprisingly, he was not. *Animal Farm* was authorised in 1951 when censors faced an import request of a Spanish translation from Argentina (File 5013-51). Similarly, when this fable was first published in Spain in 1963, the censorship office also gave the green light. It seems that Orwell’s anti-fascist past was already forgiven and forgotten. Moreover, when reading the censor’s report we can see an interesting inconsistency: they read the story as a critical look at totalitarian regimes, but they simply believed that the target was Stalinist Russia and did not consider the possibility that Franco’s dictatorship might also be included as part of the satire, so they allowed its publication (File 5178-63). The case of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was different, but also interesting. Just one year after coming out in Britain, a publisher from Barcelona tried to issue a Spanish translation of the novel. They expected no problems, since the book was being presented as an anti-Soviet story. However, even though no political objections were raised by the censors, they banned the book on moral grounds. They found Orwell to be somewhat obscene in some explicit sexual scenes staged by the protagonist Winston and his lover Julia (File 3632-50). The novel was eventually authorised in 1952, once twenty-one passages describing the relationship between Winston and Julia had been cut out. The publisher agreed to expurgate the novel because he thought that those passages did not really affect the overall value of the novel. However, most critics agree that one of the main themes in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is the subordination of all personal feelings to the party’s official ideology. Orwell’s account of the affair of Winston and Julia connects sexual passion with political rebellion and sexual repression with totalitarianism. All this was lost in the Spanish version of the novel, whose censored text was reprinted again and again until 1984.

## **5. Doris Lessing**

The last of our authors that shows the paradoxes and radical changes of censoring attitudes is Doris Lessing. She established her international reputation as a novelist and short story writer during the 1950s and 1960s with the publication of

works such as *Martha Quest*, *The Golden Notebook* and *African Stories*. Her long and prolific literary career culminated in receiving the 2007 Nobel Prize in Literature, when she was about to turn 88. Lessing's writings are well-known for their controversial issues concerning colonial Africa, communism and the role of women in relation to men. Her outspoken views on racial problems attracted the attention of the white government of South Africa, which declared her a "prohibited alien" in 1956 (Lessing 1956). A member of the Communist Party for several years, Lessing also wrote radically on social issues in the 1950s and returned to them in the novel *The Good Terrorist* (1985). Similarly, characters such as Martha Quest in "The Children of Violence" series and Anna Wulf in *The Golden Notebook* shocked many readers with their desires and frustrations, representing for some critics the early voices of the feminist movement. Lessing's serious engagement with political and social concerns, as well as her constant experimentation with genre and style, has made her a highly reputed figure in the English literary scene. However in other countries, her reputation changed with time and socio-political contexts.

That change is clearly seen in the Soviet Union and other communist countries. In the early 1950s, when Lessing's writing career had just begun, she had a positive reception there. She even visited the Soviet Union in 1952. Her African stories were translated and reviewed in Russian; also, a translation of her novel *Martha Quest* was published in 1957. They welcomed the anti-racist stories of a progressive peace activist who was a member of the Communist party. Her novella "Hunger", an experiment with social realism, became one of the most translated, anthologised and positively reviewed of her works in the Soviet Union (Peterson 1990:144). The story of Jabavu, a poor African boy who leaves his small village to discover the social inequities of a large modern city, was clearly in accordance with the Marxist doctrine. However, Lessing resigned from the Communist party when the Soviets invaded Hungary in 1956. That changed her situation completely in the USSR. For the Soviet Union she became "a betrayer" (Peterson 1990:142) and her name was erased there for twenty years, since 1957 to 1977.

Surprisingly enough, in Spain, a country with a right-wing government that prohibited the promotion of communism, the early left-wing Lessing was published without problems. In 1953 an import request of *The Grass is Singing*, a novel that shows the cruelty and exploitation of colonialism in Africa, was authorised (File 2190-53), and eleven years later the novel was published in Spanish. It is interesting to see that Lessing's condemnation of European colonialism was understood and accepted by Spanish censors. They did not mind the critique of the brutal colonisation of Africa by the white man or the attack against the injustices of racial inequality and prejudice. We must remember that twentieth-century Spain also had colonies in Africa, like Equatorial Guinea, a central African nation under Spanish rule for 190 years, which did not gain its independence until 1968. Obviously, the censors who read *The Grass is Singing* believed that the target of Lessing's criticism was only the British Empire and did not consider the possibility



that Spain's colonial policy might also be touched by Lessing's satire on colonialism.

However, after this positive experience, Lessing also had problems in Spain, as she had in the Soviet Union, but for the opposite reasons. If she was banned in the Soviet Union for having left the Communist party, in Spain her novel *The Golden Notebook* was banned in 1962 on political grounds, because, as the censor reports, its communist characters are portrayed as "idealist types and a hundred per cent human" (File 3486-62). Nevertheless, this was not the only reason for the ban of this novel, which presents in detail the life of the sexually liberated Anna Wulf. The Spanish censor noted down over sixty pages which, in his opinion, went against the morals, and then wrote about the "sexual degeneration" that can be found in the story, which includes adulteries, homosexuality, masturbation, Freudianism, etc. Following this first request, some ventures to import *The Golden Notebook* came along. In 1964, two booksellers received a positive answer and they were allowed to sell the book, although some censors still thought that it was problematic. In fact, there were some discrepancies between the censors on the degree of the problems in question. Whereas one insisted that the novel had to be banned because it was "Crude, immoral, descriptive", and that the protagonist had "clear communist connections," another one wrote a much more favourable report:

[...] the author is showing her thought on the woman and her problems: feminism, love, marriage, religion, politics, etc. In many points they are very debatable opinions. I believe that there is nothing to cut out. In any case, it is an import in English. IT CAN BE AUTHORISED. (File 670-64)

The description of this report is worth reading in detail. What was previously called "sexual degeneration," "libertinism," "adultery," and "communism," here it is just referred to as "love," "marriage" and "politics." Eventually, this request was granted.

## 6. Conclusion

This brief account of the workings of European censorship on five British novelists is necessarily limited in scope. Without a doubt, many other authors could have been discussed here. However, there is enough evidence to suggest that twentieth-century European censorship in practice was full of inconsistencies and paradoxes that indeed conditioned the reception of Wells, Lawrence, Orwell, Lessing and many other writers. It appears to some extent logical that the same author may be ranked among the celebrities of one regime and prosecuted in a different country. What seems less understandable is the multiplicity of censoring attitudes and responses towards the same author or text from countries that promote similar moral, religious and political values. For instance, two conservative Catholic censorship systems, like the Irish and the Spanish, treated Wells's anti-Catholic views in a different manner: the first was much stricter than the second. Similarly, two totalitarian fascist regimes, the German and the Spanish, treated

Wells's utopian socialism differently; again Franco's regime seemed more permissive. Likewise, when confronted with Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* two Catholic countries, Italy and Spain, reacted very differently: the former had a much more "relaxed" attitude than the latter. It also seems a paradox the fact that the same author could be banned for opposite reasons in countries with opposite political regimes. We have seen how Lessing was banned in the Soviet Union for not being a communist and, at the same time, banned in Spain for communist tendencies. On the other hand, the same text provokes different responses from censors in the same country, as was the case with Lessing's *Golden Notebook* in Spain; a book that had very different reports from two colleague censors.

There is also an inconsistency in the way in which the same book could be banned today, but valued and appreciated the following year. That was the experience of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and *Animal Farm* in Great Britain. While Lawrence's novel went from being banned to gain best-seller status in just a few days, Orwell's fable recovered from being rejected by several publishers and suddenly became a great popular success. Other radical changes of opinion also took place in the Soviet Union, when Lawrence had a positive reception in the 1920s, but was banned in the 1930s. Again in the Soviet Union, Lessing was admired in the early 1950s and banned a few years later when she left the Communist party. Similarly, in Nazi Germany, Lawrence enjoyed public favour in the 1930s, but was banned in 1940s.

We have also seen instances of what could be called "false expectations". Since Wells and Orwell had appeared publicly as enemies of Franco's regime, one would expect their works to be outlawed in Spain; however, some of their works were surprisingly authorised there several times. What is more, Wells's utopian socialism was often ignored by Spanish fascist censors, just as Lessing's anticolonialism was given the green light by the censorship office of this colonial country. Whilst Orwell's left-wing messages were forbidden in the Soviet Union, they were allowed in Spain, although his anti-Soviet book *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was banned in fascist Spain on moral grounds. In addition, it is also ironic that Lawrence, whose social background was close to the proletariat, was censored in the Soviet Union, the country in which the supremacy of the proletariat was upheld in practice.

Finally, it is easy to understand how sometimes censorship backfires. We all know that the attempt of some particular censors to block access to a specific book, film or image may result in the controversial text being copied and spread all over the country, all over the continent or (now with internet) all over the world. We have seen how the British prosecutor's efforts to suppress *Lady Chatterley's Lover* wound up making a best-seller of it. Something similar happened in France with the same book. Likewise, the censorship of *Ulysses* in Britain and America triggered sales on the German market.

One can wonder if there are logical explanations for these paradoxes and inconsistencies. Naturally, a variety of factors influence the decision to ban or authorise a literary text. One of these factors is the particular political and moral context in which censors are working and interpreting the text. Although it may

seem that the general political or moral values – conservative, Catholic, communist, fascist or whatever –, are similar, there are indeed always many subtleties and nuances in action in each country. Then, there is also the time factor. Political ideas, regimes and situations sometimes change profoundly in a short period of time; taboos and moral restraints too. Undoubtedly, the rapid changes that occurred during the twentieth century in all fields of life – social, political, scientific and cultural – had a direct impact on the practice of censorship, which has never been a static force. A third explanation could be that there is often lack of specific censorship criteria. It is difficult to establish limits and criteria to such abstract concepts as “immorality”, “indecenty” or “obscenity”. Agreeing on a definition of those terms has obviously often been a problem for the censors. Furthermore, some inconsistencies discussed here simply reveal that we are dealing with literature, a complex phenomenon whose components are often open to a diversity of interpretations. Censors are human beings and, therefore, like other readers, may have differing understandings of the same text. It would be wrong to think of censors as one homogeneous group. Thus, different censors might come to different reports and decisions. Censorship, then, is not a simple matter; paradoxes and inconsistencies will continue to exist and to shed interesting light on the nature of particular censorship practices.

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**‘A VAMPIRE WITH A SOUL? HOW LAME IS THAT?’**  
**AUTO-REFERENTIALITY IN *BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER***

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*Abstract:* Joss Whedon’s cult TV-show *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003) is a perfect example of postmodern media culture, where feminism, subversiveness and genre experimentation blend together with camp, drama and hero narrative. The paper will focus on the series’ auto-referentiality, attempting to determine the textual, subtextual and extratextual reasons behind it.

*Keywords:* auto-referentiality, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, cult TV, involution, Postmodernism

**1. Introduction: “Slayer comma the. Look it up.”**

Rarely has a television show inspired such interest, both among fans and academics, as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (further referred to as *BtVS*), the brainchild of Joss Whedon, the mastermind behind not just *BtVS*, but also *Angel*, *Firefly*, *Serenity*, *Dollhouse* and the Emmy Award-winning web musical *Dr Horrible’s Sing-Along Blog*. *BtVS* began its life in 1992, as a lacklustre, campy flick which, while entertaining, did not do justice to Whedon’s vision. The film was soon forgotten, but the idea was not; it was revamped (no pun intended) in 1997, this time as a TV series which premiered with the episode “Welcome to the Hellmouth” and lived for seven seasons (144 episodes in total), concluding with the show’s finale, “Chosen”, which aired on 20 May 2003. The show grew to be a success and, as one television critic aptly put it, “set a template for some of these other major shows to come.” (*BtVS: The Complete DVD Collection*)

Whedon’s subversion of the horror movie cliché of a helpless little blonde who inevitably gets killed by the Big Bad Monster™ via turning said little blonde into “the Slayer”, the “one girl in all the world” who “alone will stand against the vampires, the demons and the forces of darkness,” as early-season voiceover intros inform us, soon garnered the attention of critics and audiences alike. The show’s clever writing, innovative and humorous dialogue, rich characters and thematically challenging story arcs gave rise not only to a fanatical following but also to an enviable number of academic papers (in areas as diverse as linguistics, literary theory, cultural and media studies, and perhaps most importantly, feminism and gender studies), conferences, an international academic journal (*Slayage*) and even a special issue of the *European Journal of Cultural Studies* (Amy-Chinn and Williamson 2005), focusing on one of the show’s most popular characters, the vampire Spike. Buffy Summers (named thus after the eccentric early-20<sup>th</sup> century occultist Montague Summers), a Valley girl-turned-defender of the Hellmouth (the convergence of mystical forces situated under the ironically named small town of Sunnydale, California) managed to achieve exactly what her creator envisioned for

her, namely, to be “an icon, not just a TV-show.” (*BtVS*: The Complete DVD Collection)

## 2. “*Moonraker* is inexcusable!”: The nature of cult

It seems logical to define *BtVS* in terms of its connections to cult TV. But what exactly *is* cult? Roberta Pearson (in Abbott 2010:7-8) says that

[i]n the media, in common usage, and sometimes even in academia, ‘cult’ is often loosely applied to any television programme that is considered offbeat or edgy, that draws a niche audience, that has a nostalgic appeal, that is considered emblematic of a particular subculture, or that is considered hip [and that] caters to intense, interpretative audience practices. ... Cult TV is defined not by any feature shared by the shows themselves, but rather by the ways in which they are appropriated by specific groups.

*BtVS*’s overall popularity, however, surpasses that of a run-of-the-mill cult show; a fact which Stacey Abbott (2010:70) explains by saying that the series is actually what she calls ‘mainstream cult’, as it was

an international TV hit [which] combine[d] the horror-sf-fantasy themes and subject matter of much cult TV... with high-gloss production, strong female characters, and a cast of ‘beautiful people’.

Whether cult or mainstream cult, the series arrived on air at exactly the right time: into a climate that allowed for all the generic promiscuity, narrative experimentation and meta-awareness any self-respecting postmodern work looks to place under its belt. As Catherine Spooner (2006:114-115) put it,

*BtVS* has received an unprecedented level of critical and academic attention compared to previous television shows, partly for the sophistication of its witty, complex, densely intertextual narratives, and partly because its story of an ordinary Californian teenager chosen to save the world from the Forces of Darkness apparently captured the imagination of her generation. ... *Buffy* is the text that perhaps more than any other embodies the possibilities of contemporary Gothic: not only does it constantly interrogate the stories and generic conventions from which it springs (the double, in “Doppelgangland”; the Frankenstein myth in Season Four; the greatest vampire of them all in “Buffy vs. Dracula”), but it also plays with other genres (the musical, in “Once More, With Feeling”; the docudrama, in “Storyteller”; fan fiction, in “Superstar”), and consistently raises major ethical and ontological questions.

The postmodern nature of the show is, thus, one of the most appealing things about it; *BtVS* provides a much better insight into postmodern media culture than some of the shows which aired at approximately the same time, but soon lost their edgy feel and succumbed to the regular soap format, both stylistically and thematically (case in point: *Sex and the City*). The TV critic who said that *BtVS*

was “constantly reinventing itself, and really looking at what its possibilities were, and that’s... why scholars like it too” (*BtVS*: The Complete DVD Collection) was not wrong. The fun part of studying postmodern works (apart from the fact that they make studying fun at all) is that they allow for so many concurrent approaches and ideas; and *BtVS* does not disappoint in that regard. One of the most interesting aspects of the show is certainly its remarkable auto-referentiality, which will be the focus of the remainder of my paper.

### **3. “It was like there was a wall missing, like there were only three walls, and not a fourth wall”: Auto-referentiality and involution**

Though it might be tempting (in a way that it’s not, as Buffy would say) to try and find just the right definition of auto-referentiality by digging through various dictionaries of literary terms, this is, strangely, more satisfactorily done by using Alfred Appel Jr.’s definition of a process he calls “involution,” which he develops in his *Annotated Lolita*. (Apparently, I am not the only one who got the idea to combine involution, Appel and *BtVS*; see Pateman 2006 for an involution-inspired analysis of the excellent Lynchian dreamscape episode 4x22, “Restless”). Appel (2000:xxiii-xxiv) explains that

[a]n involuted work turns in upon itself, is self-referential, conscious of its status as fiction, and ‘*allégorique de lui-même*’ – allegorical of itself, to use Mallarmé’s description of one of his own poems. ... Characters in involuted works often recognize that their authenticity is more than suspect.

In *BtVS*, this meta-awareness is the position usually reserved for the characters somewhat removed from the show’s centre; it seems that, to recognise the fictionality of it all, or certainly, the allegory that lies at the heart of the show, one should look at it as a member of the audience. For instance, the central metaphor of the series is that of “The Slayer”; primarily a feminist show, *BtVS* focuses on female empowerment and the overthrow of patriarchal norms. Throughout the show, Buffy rejects layer after layer of patriarchy, and concludes her onscreen journey by sharing her power with other women (see episode 7x22, “Chosen”). The audience is well aware of the metaphor, but the characters are not; the intradiegetic reading of “Slayerhood” is literal: Buffy is a warrior chosen to protect the world and endowed with literal, not metaphoric, superstrength. This interpretation, however, belongs to the primary players, while the ex-centric characters opt for an allegorical angle. Thus, when discussing the inherent potential for being “chosen” as a Slayer, one of the tertiary characters, Andrew, says,

It’s like – well, it’s almost like this metaphor for womanhood, isn’t it? The sort of flowering that happens when a girl realizes that she’s part of a fertile heritage stretching back to Eve. (Episode 7x12, “Potential”; all episode transcripts taken from [www.buffyworld.com](http://www.buffyworld.com))

The other characters meet this declaration with disdain; the fact, however, is that Andrew's metaphor is spot-on. The catch is that he can only "get it" because he is removed from the Slayer's inner circle; thus, even though, on the surface, the show rejects the idea of the characters' awareness of their own fictionality, it inserts a genre-savvy minor character as an audience proxy and uses him as a mouthpiece to inform the viewers that they, too, have infiltrated the diegesis of "the Buffyverse". Another character who often breaks the fourth wall is Anya, who, as a thousand-year-old ex-demon, has no brain-to-mouth filter and thus gets to say whatever crosses her mind, both on intradiegetic and extradiegetic levels. For instance, although almost all the characters show considerable distress over being forced into the musical conceit in the episode "Once More, With Feeling" (6x7), Anya is the only one (see Albright 2005) who gets obsessed with the styles of the songs sung, deconstructs her performance by saying that it was "a retro pastiche that is never going to be a breakaway pop-hit," and complains that

it was like we were being watched. Like there was a wall missing in our apartment. Like there were only three walls and not a fourth wall.

Another example of the show drawing attention to its constructedness would be the documentary-style episode "The Body" (5x16), which details the first few hours after the death of Buffy's mother and everyone's reactions to it. One scene takes place at an art class attended by Buffy's sister Dawn, where the teacher tells her students,

Remember, we're not drawing the object. We're drawing the negative space around the object.

This meta-commentary encapsulates the theme of the episode: the focus is not on Buffy's mother, Joyce, or even on her body (though it features prominently in the episode and even gives it its title), but instead on the negative space around her. By having a little more than walk-on-part character state these words, Whedon manages to get enough distance to allow the audience to recognise the patterning and infer the show's fictional nature.

Having an outsider on the inside resembles one of the basic ways in which involution functions, that of "work-within-a-work" (the device most notably present in Elizabethan theatre). There are, of course, many other ways of achieving involution, but the most prominent ones, when it comes to *BtVS*, are allusion and parody.

### **3.1. "I handled it fine": Allusion and auto-allusion**

The use of allusion in Postmodernism is pretty much the norm; it is one of the easiest ways to show metafictionality of art – by making an obvious, conscious connection between the work in question and the works that came before it; between "individual talent" and "tradition," as Eliot put it. Due to its horror nature,



*BtVS* mostly (though by no means exclusively; see earlier quote from Spooner 2006) works within the confines of that genre; therefore, the majority of its allusions are to other horror stories and gothic conventions. What adds another layer of involution to this device is the show's remarkable consistency in depicting its universe; thus, auto-referentiality takes a literal turn, as the show alludes not only to its predecessors, but to itself. For example, one of the staples of the Gothic genre is the story of The Double; and Buffyverse is full of them – not just doppelgängers (like Vamp!Willow is to Willow) and evil twins or their thematic stand-ins (Angelus to Angel), but also parodic doubles (Buffybot to Buffy), structural doubles (Warren to Willow) and Jungian shadow selves (Faith to Buffy). Thus, in the episode 3x16, "Doppelgängerland," Buffy's best friend Willow gets a vampire doppelgänger; the situation arises as a continuation of a plotline introduced in episode 3x09, "The Wish," where an alternate reality is created in which Willow and Xander are vampires; the Willow from the "Wishverse" somehow gets pulled into the regular Buffyverse. Once this situation is resolved, though, the show does not forget the plotline; instead it refers back to it almost two years later: in the episode 5x03, "The Replacement," where Xander gets a double (by being split into two, his best and his worst self). The following exchange illustrates the show's grasp of the little details that make its history:

XANDER: Hey, wait till you have an evil twin. See how you handle it.

WILLOW: (pouts) I handled it fine.

This particular bit of auto-reference continues through yet another episode, where another double is introduced, this time a life-size robotic version of Buffy. At first, the gang believe that "Buffybot" is actually Buffy, until they see the two together, at which point Xander, alluding to his own experience in "The Replacement," proudly announces,

Hey, I know this! They're *both* Buffy! (Episode 5x18, "Intervention")

This is just one of the many examples of how a single detail from the show doesn't get discarded once its primary purpose is finished; it instead gets used and reused, making for an intricately interwoven net of auto-allusions.

### 3.2. "I help the helpless!": Parody and self-parody

I have already mentioned that *BtVS* is most honest about its fictional nature when an observer character acts as the focalizing point. This is most easily identifiable when a primary character becomes the observer, via various stylistic conceits. This then allows for the subtext to be brought to the level of text, which results in the re-examination of the text, as is the case in the episode 3x13, "The Zeppo."

"The Zeppo" is structurally rather interesting; it switches perspectives from Buffy's to Xander's, which results in the sidekick becoming the protagonist, and

the B plot becoming the A plot. Watching through Xander's eyes, the audience sees an over-the-top, parodied version of hitherto undisputed ideas. Thus, the relationship between Buffy and Angel, a vampire with a soul, which was always presented as a larger-than-life star-crossed romance when Buffy was the focalizing point, becomes a clichéd, over-the-top melodrama when seen through Xander's eyes, complete with sweeping violins and soft glowing light. The show certainly plays heavily with the subtext of the premise, juxtaposing Buffy's teenage visions of the Tall, Dark and Mysterious Man with a Past who Changes for the Love of a Good Woman with the reality of Angel whose stalker-like courting of an underage girl is questionable at best. This is achieved mostly through parallels (for instance, the second season makes many connections between Buffy and Drusilla, a woman whom Angel stalked, tortured, drove insane and turned into a vampire; also, the next time the show tackles a relationship between a century-plus old vampire and a teenage girl, it is the platonic, big brother-little sister relationship between Spike and Dawn). The audience, however, do not usually have enough distance from the plot to realise that the show's creators, the show itself and other characters do not share Buffy's view of things. Thus, it normally takes a bit more for subtext to become obvious, which is why we get episodes like "The Zeppo" – as a subtle way for the writers to remind us that the text is hardly objective. And sometimes, this is not subtle at all, and takes a downright self-mocking turn, as when Buffy's mentor Giles talks about the Buffy-Angel romance:

A vampire in love with a Slayer? It's rather poetic! In a maudlin sort of way. (Episode 1x11, "Out of Mind, Out of Sight")

or when his answer to Buffy's confessions (on Willow's abuse of magic, Xander's leaving Anya at the altar and her own sleeping with Spike) is to simply burst out laughing (see episode 6x22, "Grave").

Another example of self-parody through observers' eyes can be found in episode 6x8, "Tabula Rasa." The premise of the episode is that everyone in the core group loses their memory, thanks to a spell Willow casts; this lets them see themselves afresh. The most interesting scene is probably the one where Spike, another vampire in love with the Slayer, decides who he is; in order to fully understand the parody, however, we must briefly return to the character of Angel. After the third season of *BtVS*, Angel leaves Buffy and, searching for redemption, goes to LA where he starts up a detective agency whose tagline is "We help the helpless." His adventures are explored in *BtVS*'s offshoot series, *Angel* (1999-2004). Having that in mind, we can return to the following exchange in "Tabula Rasa," when amnesia-stricken Buffy and Spike realise that Spike is a vampire:

BUFFY: I kill your kind.

SPIKE: And I bite yours. So how come I don't wanna bite you? (Buffy frowns in confusion) And why am I fighting other vampires?

Spike gets a look of revelation on his face, lifts himself up onto his elbows.

SPIKE: I must be a noble vampire. (Buffy looks dubious) A good guy. On a mission of redemption. I help the helpless. I'm a vampire with a soul!

BUFFY: (frowning) A vampire with a soul? (beat) Oh my God, how lame is that?

This is, of course, an in-universe joke, where *BtVS* gently pokes fun at its sister series, *Angel* (complete with its “helping the helpless” motto). It also parodies the concept of souls and demonstrates how ridiculous the whole idea of souled vs. soulless vampires might sound to someone who doesn't know the rules of the Buffyverse. But this scene also works on another level, allowing us to see various parallels between Angel and Spike, probably the most conspicuous pair of doubles in the entire Buffyverse. Their similarities are numerous (both end up as souled vampires, both are Buffy's lovers, they even share the same human name, William and its Irish variant, Liam), while their differences work more along the line of opposites, making them each other's flipside (e.g. Angel is tall and dark, Spike is small and blond; Angel owes much to Byronic vampires a la Lord Ruthven, while Spike is a postmodern creation inspired by *Blade* and *Lost Boys*; Angel is coded OTT masculine, despite his feminine name, while Spike can be coded queer, despite his phallic name – see Amy-Chinn 2005 and Spicer 2002; Angel stems from a lower class but pretends sophistication, Spike is originally upper-crust, but adopts a plebeian persona, etc.) Moreover, Spike's subconscious appropriation of Angel's identity allows for some subtextual Freudian analysis (given that Angel is essentially Spike's father: he is his grandsire and his teacher when it comes to vampiric behaviour) and at the same time highlights the extratextual: structurally, Spike replaces Angel as the main vampire on the show, so it is understandable for him to believe they are the same. Further, this also foreshadows the future of the show, as Spike will have become involved with Buffy by the end of the episode, will go on a quest to really become a vampire with a soul, and will finally find redemption – basically, he *will* become Angel, and the audience are invited to see it in this very scene.

### 3.3. “Come with me, gentle viewers”: The fan in the show

The most auto-referential episode of *BtVS* is probably “Storyteller” (7x16). The episode's focalizer is the already mentioned character of Andrew, whose primary function is that of an audience proxy: he is removed from the central group, is extremely nerdy and lives vicariously through shows and films about which he is fanatical (*Star Wars*, *James Bond*, *Dragon Ball Z*) instead of participating in the “real world” that is Buffyverse. The episode opens as a parody of *Masterpiece Theatre*, with Andrew as host, and the narrative develops along fractured lines, which is achieved via Andrew's camera recordings, both real and imaginary. When talking about this and similar episodes (4x17 “Superstar” and 5x02 “Real Me”), Stacey Abbott (2010:102) says that they

highlight the constructedness of the cult TV experience in which any fan can write themselves into the centre of their favourite TV show.

This is exactly what Andrew is: a fan-insert who idolizes Buffy and is a fanboy of Spike, who focuses mostly on the relationships between characters and whose perspective resembles nothing more than an extreme rendition of our own experience of the show. For example, the fan-coloured-lens of his camera acts like an extreme airbrush, lending a soft, warm hue to the scenery, taking Spike's shirt off and placing Buffy in a shampoo commercial pose; when the filming stops, though, everything returns to its normal look. There are simply too many auto-referential moments in "Storyteller" and too little space here; I will therefore focus on a single, representative detail: Spike's shirtlessness. On the surface level, the character loses his shirt because Andrew, who has a huge crush on him, mentally undresses him. But it also serves as a meta-commentary on the show itself, especially its sixth season, during which Spike is almost always nude or semi-nude (for a more detailed exploration of Spike's nudity, see Amy-Chinn 2005). Extratextual explanation would be that the show's writers made most of the fact that the actor did not have a no-nudity clause in his contract; on the subtextual level, though, *BtVS* subverts the notion of male gaze by reserving its fetish-shots for a man and thus creating female gaze. This serves as a parody of usual film practices whereby women are objectified, but also plays into audience expectations by disrobing one of its most popular and attractive characters. This is, again, referred to in this episode, when Spike seemingly threatens Andrew for filming him, but stops and starts again, having slightly moved, after Andrew tells him that the light was not good – it is all just an act for the audience, who even gets a say in the construction of the show; "Storyteller" thus highlights the fact that, no matter how real something we see through a camera lens may seem, it is still just cleverly constructed media.

#### **4. Conclusion: "I wanna see how it ends"**

The list of auto-referential moments in *BtVS* could go on and on, but all good things must come to an end. The chosen examples have, hopefully, demonstrated the playfulness and campy self-mockery lying at the heart of the show's deliberate deconstruction of its own construction. The attitude needed for such exposition of the mechanisms at work is probably one of the main reasons why the postmodernist academia is still so enamoured with *BtVS*, even though the show has technically been off air since 2003. Or maybe there is just a lot of truth in Joss Whedon's insistence that he knew exactly what he was doing when he envisioned the story of his slayer:

I always intended it to have the kind of impact on popular culture that it had. I wanted Buffy to be a pop-icon. I wanted her to be remembered, I wanted her to be in people's interior lives, I wanted her to be a hero. (*BtVS: The Complete DVD Collection*)

Whatever the reasons, *BtVS* will certainly live on, not just through reruns and DVDs, but also through scholarly work and, most importantly, in the best intertextual manner possible, through the shows it inspired. And that kind of contribution to the vast sea of Eliot's "tradition" is the hallmark of any true work of art.

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**A CONDITION OF PERMANENT MOURNING:  
RESONANCES OF JOYCE IN ALICE MCDERMOTT'S  
*AT WEDDINGS AND WAKES* AND *CHARMING BILLY***

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*Abstract:* Alice McDermott's novels of the Irish American immigrant experience in New York, *Of Wakes and Weddings* and *Charming Billy*, demonstrate Joyce's influence in terms of point of view, other fictional strategies, and treatments of time and loss. Focusing on characters marked by Joycean "paralysis," McDermott explores lives thwarted by a complex of religious constraints and cultural assumptions similar to those at work in Joyce's *Dublin*.

*Keywords:* Catholicism; Irish; Immigrants; Irish-American; Alice McDermott

## **1. Introduction**

While Ireland continues to produce superb writers, their cousins across the Atlantic have only recently established a crop of excellent writers beyond Eugene O'Neill and F. Scott Fitzgerald, neither of whom was known as primarily Irish-American. National Book Award winning novelist Alice McDermott shares the field of writers who address Irish-American life and identity, like Mary Gordon, Maureen Howard, and Thomas Kennedy. McDermott explicitly pays tribute to F. Scott Fitzgerald and Faulkner in some aspects of her work, and this essay will touch on some of those influences and parallels. The most significant resonances in McDermott's novels, however, especially in *At Weddings and Wakes* and *Charming Billy*, which focus on immigrant families in the Mid-Twentieth Century, are not with McDermott's American literary forebears, but with James Joyce.

## **2. Literary influences**

McDermott's work resonates with stories in *Dubliners* in terms of point of view, often that of a child or participant observer, as in Joyce's much-anthologized story, "Araby." Further echoes are heard in the themes of death, alcoholism, thwarted desires, and an atmosphere of unexpressed emotion. Critics have identified Joycean echoes in characters' concerns with death, as well as their frequent inability to act for their own fulfillment (Hagan 2002:48-9; Reilly 2005:558). They especially note the thematic and tonal qualities in McDermott's novels, as reflecting the concerns of Joyce's long short story "The Dead." This essay asserts that other Joyce stories, too, especially "Eveline," "Clay," and "A Little Cloud," resonate with McDermott's Irish American fiction. Finally, in her narrative structures and artful use of time, which are arguably more Modernist than Post-Modernist, her work resembles Joyce's novels *Portrait of the Artist as a*

*Young Man and Ulysses*, as well as those of other High Modernists like Faulkner and Woolf. Both McDermott novels under discussion are epistemological enterprises which circle around, and gradually unveil, the tragic events at their center. McDermott has said that writers can hardly avoid the influences of Joyce and Faulkner, yet her own treatment of time is quite distinctive. She describes her experiments with time in her novels as “echoing” as well as “circular” (Reilly 2005:577).

Apart from Joyce’s stylistic and technical influence, McDermott’s novels reflect the cultural assumptions at work on both sides of the Atlantic during Joyce’s life and into the 1950s. Some qualities in Irish and immigrant life, and Roman Catholicism as practiced in both Ireland and the United States, fostered a culture out of which Irish American writers created their works. Eugene O’Neill, for example, writes of addiction and family losses and secrets, yet, as the author himself is reported to have told his son Eugene, “The critics have missed the most important thing about me and my work—the fact that I am Irish” (Bowen 1959: vi). Fitzgerald’s characters, too, reflect a kind of American striving, not toward the Western frontier, but toward the East and the glamour associated with New York and Long Island. McDermott acknowledges that Fitzgerald is an influence; she named a character in another novel *Daisy* as a sort of whimsical tribute to him (Reilly 2005:568). Alcoholism permeates the work—and lives—of Joyce, Faulkner, Fitzgerald and O’Neill, and McDermott explores alcoholism head-on in her characterization of Billy Lynch, an exemplum of tragic Irish drunkenness. Yet in *Billy*, she transcends cultural stereotype and particularizes Billy’s complex psyche.

The sense in McDermott’s novels of characters living with severe constraints reflects the twin pressures of Catholic teachings promoting acceptance of God’s will, and the genuine lack of broad opportunities for immigrants. Emotional martyrdom can create bitterness, but resignation and piety are more common responses among McDermott’s New Yorkers. Social and economic conditions in Ireland under an essentially colonial rule by England have clearly affected characters, whether consciously or not. Momma, for example, the widowed matriarch in *At Weddings and Wakes*, was not sufficiently lettered when she arrived from Ireland in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to read the newspaper. Veronica, a tippler and recluse, was disfigured by a mistake in a treatment by the Red Cross for her complexion, a situation in which Momma sat helpless. These conditions of stasis and limitation and the attitudes they promote bring to mind the well-identified theme of paralysis in Joyce’s work.

### **3. Joycean echoes**

The term “paralysis” appears on the first page of the opening story of *Dubliners*, “The Sisters.” Critics have taken the term to incarnate the entire intention of Joyce’s project in the stories. Unmarried, widowed, or dissatisfied characters are common denizens of Joyce’s Dublin. The fates of Little Chandler in “A Little Cloud,” Maria in “Clay,” the boy in “Araby” and the girl in “Eveline,”

especially, and their failure to resist their circumstances are echoed in McDermott's Brooklyn matriarchy, with its three unmarried daughters, and in the long-suffering Maeve who becomes Billy's wife. Perhaps Billy himself, who martyrs himself in tribute to his dead love Eva and becomes a severe alcoholic, is the quintessential extension of some of Joyce's pub- or church-goers in Dublin. If McDermott's work seems technically clearly rooted in the work of Modernists like Joyce and Faulkner and Fitzgerald, so too is it thematically rooted in the issues of the individual locked into or resisting cultural, economic, or familial constraints. In the Irish Catholic transmutation of this theme, the colonizing authority that demands obedience is not England, but the Church.

McDermott's highly original use of the collective or alternating point of view of three young children yields flexibly to a more omniscient third-person narrator in *At Weddings and Wakes*. The point of view of Margaret, Bobby, and Maryanne Daily, grandchildren who try to decipher the atmosphere of permanent mourning which haunts their grandmother's household in Brooklyn, echoes Joyce's "Araby" and the very young Stephen Dedalus. In *Charming Billy*, a young woman cousin reconstructs Billy's story after returning from Seattle for Billy's funeral. Her father, Dennis Lynch, reveals to her that his cousin Billy's life of devotion to a putatively ideal—and putatively dead--Irish girl, Eva, was based on Dennis' own lie told years earlier to protect Billy from despair at Eva's perfidy.

McDermott's novels show many characters who are frozen in place, but also some who are drawn both physically and emotionally to leave humble, cramped apartments in Brooklyn or Queens for the modest central Long Island suburbs of the post-World War II era, and most evocatively, to Easthampton, a beautiful village on the ocean, where people of modest means may be able to rent a cottage in proximity to the Atlantic. Echoes of Joyce's notion of the West of Ireland, as evoked in "The Dead," appear in the never-fulfilled longing of May in *At Weddings* and Billy in *Charming Billy* to revisit the open spaces of Eastern Long Island. Easthampton carries little of the political weight of the West of Ireland for Joyce, but it does suggest ease and freedom which are in short supply in Joyce's Dublin.

And if Gretta's birth in the West of Ireland evokes for Joyce readers a sense of an essential Irish identity, Easthampton for McDermott suggests natural beauty unpolluted by the oppression and poverty that permeated lives in Ireland. The children's Aunt May, a shy former nun, conflates the convent on Long Island where she was sent for a "rest cure," with its "endless garden and the smell of the sea and a trellised wall thick with red roses" (McDermott 1992:133) with her hopes for a home and garden with the mailman Fred. Billy dreamt unrealistically of a honeymoon with Eva near the huge seaside house where she worked briefly as a nursemaid. In contrast, the more realistic Bob Daily, Lucy's husband and the children's father in *At Weddings*, brings his family to a rented cottage each summer to give them the sense of freedom he experienced as a Fresh Air Fund child. Here, Brooklyn and Queens represent enmeshment and confinement, while Easthampton suggests freedom and beauty.



McDermott's novels resonate with the point of view and the concerns and tensions of *Dubliners*. Yet Joyce's short stories are straightforwardly chronological, apart from clearly signaled flashbacks, while these novels circle around events of the past, building layers of revelation into the ongoing story. One must look to Joyce's complex treatments of time in *A Portrait of the Artist* and *Ulysses*—and to other Modernists like Woolf and Faulkner—to find sources for McDermott's experimentation with time as non-chronological, circling and “echoing.” *At Weddings and Wakes* is, in fact, structured a bit like Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*, with a woman's death as the somewhat absent central event. Most notably, May's death is revealed early in the novel when one of the children, Maryanne, tells her teacher that her aunt had died just after her wedding the past summer, when “something burst inside her” (McDermott 1992:58). Yet the novel proceeds in the past time of the year of May's shy courtship by Fred. The novel nears its end with an extensive description of the children's experience of the wedding, followed by a short and lyrical chapter at the cottage Bob rents for his family, where they wake to be informed by their landlady that May has died on her honeymoon. So while the participant observer technique owes something to “Araby” and the first part of *Portrait of the Artist*, the circling narrative structure owes much to later Joyce and to Faulkner.

For the three children in *At Weddings and Wakes*, the Brooklyn apartment their mother Lucy brings them to visit acts as a stage for the enacting of past and present family dramas. The apartment has seen their real grandmother Annie's early death after giving birth to her fourth daughter forty years earlier. Annie's newly-arrived sister Mary had eventually married Annie's widower husband Jack, an event followed by Jack's sudden death and the posthumous birth of their son Johnny. Lucy, the one married daughter and the mother of the children, who feels the appropriate reaction to the family history is “outrage,” is enmeshed with Mary/Momma, who raised the four orphaned daughters and who kicked her son, a severe alcoholic at twenty, out of the household. In the stultifying atmosphere of the apartment, Momma dominates; in a sly reference to the family's unquestioning Catholicism, McDermott has two of the daughters follow Momma into the kitchen “like acolytes following a cardinal” (McDermott 1992:24). The boredom of childhood for the grandchildren is intensified by undercurrents of tense murmuring in the kitchen. The children overhear, over and over, their mother's complaint that their father Bob, whom she married before he served in World War II, is “not the man I married” (McDermott 1992:23). For the children, however, their father's arrival to pick them up on summer evenings offers rescue and relief. Bob's renting of a cottage for two weeks each summer far east on Long Island provides the children with a sense of expansiveness and freedom that serves as a counterweight to the constriction and enmeshment of the Brooklyn apartment.

The long-ago deaths of Annie and John echo in the walls of the apartment, where Annie's journal is hidden, as if to underscore the interpenetration of the tragic past with the paralyzed present. The family inheritance of mourning extends into the past and Ireland. When Annie left Ireland, Mary was left to care for their alcoholic stepfather, as Joyce's Eveline is (Crabtree 2007:2). After the death of the

“drunk in the parlor” Mary/Momma arrived to live only two weeks as a member of a reconstituted family before Annie’s death.

Momma’s story would be a familiar one for immigrants, especially Irish youngest daughters, if not for the crushed hopes that await her in the New World. As in “Clay,” where Maria frets about the cake she buys, only to lose it before arriving at the family dinner, the New York-bound Mary foolishly spends her money on chocolate sold at an onboard shop rather than saving it for her arrival. If Maria’s death is hinted at in the cruelty of her young relatives’ giving her clay in a game of choice rather than a prayer book or ring, so are Mary’s hopes of freedom and reunion with her sister crushed. She witnesses the birth of Veronica and watches helplessly as Annie slowly dies. Years later, she continues to rehearse the terrible moment when she heard a cry that suggests the *bean sidhe*, or banshee, the Irish folk figure who foretells a death, just before Annie’s death:

[S]he had stood above her sleeping sister...had seen the light grow flat and felt the air become hollow and had heard the distant but unmistakable cry of what no one in the family...would call a banshee, knowing how foolish it would sound. (McDermott 1992:85)

Staying on in a rented room downstairs for the sake of propriety, Mary cares for the children and finally marries Jack, her widowed brother-in-law, only to be widowed a year later. This history for the children is “part of everything they knew” (McDermott 1992:85), “the current of loss after loss that was adulthood” (McDermott 1992:147). In a sense, the cry of the banshee never really ends for Mary/Momma. As May’s wedding approaches, in an explosion of distrust of Fred and anger at May’s naïve happiness, she unconsciously foretells May’s death, telling the children that May’s dream of a garden and flowers near the sea “sounds like a cemetery to me” (McDermott 1992:145). Momma becomes a sort of banshee in this outburst to the terrified children (Crabtree 2007:5).

Family secrets in both McDermott and Joyce are often expressed in “murmurs,” repeated stories, and songs or extraordinary sounds. The banshee’s cry, female and seemingly human rather than animal, (Bourke 1993:116), seems to echo and extend Joyce’s artful use of sounds as in the clinking of metal in “Araby” and in the ending of “Eveline.” Before Eveline leaves to meet Frank at the boat, she hears an organ grinder in the street and recalls her mother’s enigmatic last syllables, sounding like Irish Gaelic but actually gibberish: “The pitiful vision of her mother’s life laid its spell on the very quick of her being—that life of commonplace sacrifices closing in final craziness” (Joyce 1960:40). At the dock as the boat blows “a long mournful whistle into the mist,” Eveline stands conflicted, as “a bell clanged in her heart” (Joyce 1960:41). The boat pulls away, but she stays on the dock gripping the railing and sending “a cry of anguish” across the water. As Frank calls desperately from the barrier, “Eveline! Evvy!” Joyce writes that “She set her white face to him, passive, like a helpless animal. Her eyes gave him no sign of love or farewell or recognition” (Joyce 1960: 41). All the sounds in the story have led to Eveline’s paralyzed silence.

Perhaps the best known of Joyce's uses of sound in *Dubliners* occurs in "The Dead," when Gabriel Conroy sees his wife Gretta stop on the stairs as they leave Aunt Julia's house after the Christmas party. As Gretta listens to Bartell D'Arcy singing "The Lass of Aughrim," Gabriel recognizes a sort of trance on the part of Greta, which she speaks of at their hotel room. Her story of Michael Furey, the young boy who risked or incurred death to see her on the night before she left Galway, and the power of this memory for Gretta, unbalances Gabriel's world. Gabriel recognizes his own lesser significance in Gretta's eyes as well as in Ireland itself, where the snow is falling on Michael Furey's grave in the West "and faintly falling upon all the living and the dead" (Joyce 1960: 224). Gretta's grief, although enduring, is not willful, as Billy's is for Eva in *Charming Billy*. And, in fact, Eva will be revealed not to be dead at all. McDermott's banshee, Momma's enraged claim that May's dream of a garden resembles a cemetery, and the knock on the cottage door in Easthampton at the end of the novel that will tell Lucy, Bob, and the children that May has died, all resonate with these moments in "The Dead."

May abandons her paralyzed innocence when she reaches beyond the family heritage of mourning to a marriage with Fred. Her desire is cruelly thwarted, as if in punishment for seeking happiness, and perhaps for having intercourse, which presumably precipitates the cerebral hemorrhage that takes her life. May's dreams suddenly end, but for McDermott's Billy Lynch, the dream of idyllic love lives on destructively, enthroned in intransigent grief.

McDermott's depiction of the complex interplay of family, history, and place are evident in *Charming Billy*, winner of the National Book Award in 1998. Narrated by the daughter of Billy's cousin Dennis, the novel opens with the funeral luncheon for Billy after he has been found dead of alcoholism. Billy's widow Maeve, looking rather beautiful in her plain way, presides at one end of a large table at a Bronx restaurant reminiscent of a pub in Ireland. Billy's sisters and cousins take part in a much-admired scene of communal dialogue, eight pages long, arguing in part about whether the death in Ireland of Billy's fiancée, Eva, years before, was the sole cause of his alcoholism. The dialogue as the narrator observes it builds a story of the past for the reader. Returned from World War II, Billy Lynch and his cousin Dennis had taken a working vacation repairing Dennis' stepfather's cottage in Easthampton. There they had met Eva, who had joined her sister Mary to work as a nursemaid. When Eva returned to Ireland with a promise to return to marry Billy the next summer, Billy borrowed and started working off the money for Eva's ticket. A year later, Dennis had taken Billy out to the cottage to break the news that Eva had died back home in Clonmel.

This dialogue among the mourners resonates, at least technically, with Joyce stories like "Ivy Day in the Committee Room." Here the death that is mourned is not of a great Irish political leader like Charles Stuart Parnell, but of a deeply flawed, if lovable, man. Yet the death at the heart of Billy's story, and thus of his funeral lunch, is that of an idealized Irish beauty, significantly named "Eva," met on a beach on the Atlantic decades before. Eva's long-ago death had thwarted and shrunken Billy's life. He has been found drunk on the floor innumerable times,

with Maeve calling his cousin Dennis for help getting him home or into bed or, finally, identifying his body at the veteran's hospital.

At the end of this first chapter, as Dennis and his daughter return from the luncheon, Dennis tells her quietly, "It was lie. Eva lived." Dennis himself had lied to Billy to protect him from the reality of Eva's betrayal; she had kept the passage money, married, and bought a gas station near Clonmel. Dennis judged that heart-break would be easier to bear than humiliation and betrayal. With this knowledge, the narrator leads the reader back and forth between the fictive present and reconstructions of the past, layering and expanding details.

When Dennis and Billy Lynch first arrive in the late 40s at the neglected cottage and later explore the wealthy oceanside section of Easthampton with its high hedges and huge summer houses, they are astounded by a sort of parallel world to the density and ugliness of the city. "I never knew.... it existed," Dennis tells his daughter. The cousins share a wondering sense that "This house (the cottage) had been here, just as it was...all the while" (McDermott 1998:114). They are most affected by the immense and gracious summer houses, oddly called "cottages," with lawns that run down to the sea. Eva and Mary are living in quarters at one of these houses, and Billy later imagines Eva's return and their honeymoon, conflating Eva's beauty with that of the place itself. The sense of wonder Dennis and Billy feel echoes Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and the mystique of Daisy and the green light at the end of the dock, at least for Billy, for whom Eva is in a sense an abstraction. Fitzgerald's East Egg is much closer to the city, on the north shore fronting the Long Island Sound, a tamer body of water despite its archetypal significance for Gatsby and his reader. The cousins' sense of wonder at the Atlantic may more properly echo Fitzgerald's evocation of the Hudson River at the end of Gatsby.

In the context of the low expectations of Billy's generation and the poverty that marked the lives of his forebears in Ireland, the awe inspired by the "big house" suggests an inherited sense of the subaltern. No one comments upon the gap between rich and poor in the Easthampton at mid-century, and Billy doesn't desire wealth so much as nearness to the beauty of the houses and sea. A sense of revelation, of wonder, is at the heart of Billy's innocence, and in this he resembles Gatsby. For Billy, Easthampton is "Eden," and, dead, Eva is sanctified. His piety intertwines with his longing; he makes visits to churches to feel her presence, and never visits the cottage again. This attitude, of settling for bare survival, of putting one's faith in the Church and the old pieties, is the residue, perhaps, of the colonized position of the Catholic in Ireland, carried over to New York.

Charming, an inveterate note-writer, a lover of children, Billy has lived a childless marriage with Maeve—possibly a celibate one, with their blue bedroom decorated like a shrine to the Virgin Mary. A helpless caretaker to her alcoholic father while he lived, Maeve has suffered long nights of worry, finally sensing Billy's death and ironing a shirt for his corpse while waiting for Dennis to call.

As Edward Hagan points out, the cousin--narrator "has meticulously investigated the painful, multi-generational events that the web of Billy's drunkenness encloses; she records the story's intricate paralysis, masterminded by

her father, Dennis” (Hagan 2003:53). Dennis tells his daughter that there was never a time when he could have told Billy the truth, so in a sense Dennis is both complicit in Billy’s illusion and paralyzed in the face of its intensity. Hagan, too, sees Joyce connections, writing that Billy, “somewhat like Gabriel Conroy, is traumatized by the need to lie to create belief while consciously aware of the speciousness of what he believes” (Hagan 2003:65). Hagan may be right about Billy’s gradual knowledge of the lie he has built his life around, for when he goes to Ireland in middle age to “take the Pledge” to abjure drinking, and makes a trip to Clonmel to visit Eva’s grave, he is not devastated when he meets a plump woman with dyed hair at a gas station on the Convent Road, who offers him a cup of tea and a reimbursement.

The foreclosed hopes of her characters aside, McDermott is an American novelist as well as Irish American one. Not unmindful of Joyce and his evocation of the West of Ireland, she follows Fitzgerald in her explorations of the mystique of the East Coast. The spatial concerns here, the sense of confinement and entrapment in the city over against the freedom and sense of possibilities represented by the shore and sea, are far more ambiguous than those of the traditional critical notion of “the American Adam,” new born in the New World. McDermott’s Irish Americans are not pioneers, although the narrator has married a man named West and lives with him and their children in Seattle, as if to escape the family’s sense of loss and mourning, including her mother’s early death. Further, the innocence of characters like Aunt May or Billy is not ahistorical. Rather, notions of duty, loyalty, and piety are embedded in both the Irish colonial heritage and the religious-familial ways of knowing the world that have shaped them.

The past that haunts the present and serves to thwart the lives of McDermott’s characters is not a consciously political past, not the idea of Ireland’s colonial history that has molded many an Irish and Irish-American psyche over the generations. Rather, real griefs and losses resonate with earlier tragedies. Rather than resorting to political analysis, most characters tend to react by resignedly contracting, rather than expanding, their dreams and their views.

The only character who voices an awareness of the political situation as Ireland struggles beyond colonial status is May’s father, Jack Towne, who had met his first wife Annie on the boat to the States in the early 20th century. Annie’s journal records her telling Jack that men like her drunken stepfather are reason enough for leaving Ireland. Jack’s response is, “wasn’t that just like a woman, the whole country going to rack and ruin and all she sees is the drunk in the parlor” (McDermott 1992:165). McDermott underplays this political perspective, yet readers see how English rule and the poverty it enforced or reinforced in the past contributed to the tragedies families faced in Ireland. The characters are responding, albeit unconsciously in most cases, to personal situations that are deeply rooted in Irish politics and Irish history. Post-colonial theory has been applied to Joyce’s work, and an argument can be made for application to McDermott’s as well. For Ireland and her troubles are as present in their absence as Jack and Annie are present in Momma’s apartment in Brooklyn, or as Eva is present in Billy’s lifelong sorrow.

#### 4. Conclusion

Significantly, both novels end in Easthampton in sight of “the farthest, greenest reaches of the Island [and] the wide expanse of the sea (McDermott 1992:40). Although the Dailys are drawn back to the city and mourning by May’s death, *Charming Billy* ends with a wryly hopeful scene, that of the narrator’s father, Dennis Lynch, now married to his cousin’s widow Maeve, the two happily ensconced at the cottage which is now their own. What the West of Ireland means for Joyce may be more complex than the meaning of Eastern Long Island, on the opposite shore, for McDermott. But for Gabriel Conroy and Gretta in “The Dead,” as for Dennis Lynch and Maeve, grief endured may yield a kind of clear-eyed affection forgiveness and—just possibly—some kind of redemption.

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**“TELLING HER OWN TRUTH”:  
RECORDING UNTRANSLATABLE HISTORIES  
IN CRISTINA GARCIA’S FICTION**

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***Abstract:** Cuban-American author Cristina Garcia’s works revolve around multi-generational families torn between the Caribbean island and their adoptive – U.S. - communities. While strong female voices strive to capture the challenges of transgression, communication is often hindered by the discontinuities of memory and discourse. The present paper analyzes the role physical, mental and linguistic boundaries play in the evolution of Garcia’s protagonists.*

***Keywords:** Cuba, memory, narrative, political regime, truth, United States*

## **1. Introduction**

History and memory are central to Cristina Garcia’s *Dreaming in Cuban*, an intricate narrative about three generations of Cuban women’s personal struggle in between Cuban and American, real and imaginary homelands. Ibis Gomez-Vega’s article on *The Journey Home* summarizes the book’s determining circumstances, presenting it as

a personal telling of impersonal history, a microcosm of the larger political events that have taken place in Cuba and altered the lives of many Cubans [...] It is the story of how a family is separated by each individual’s personal strife, his/ her personal reaction to Castro’s socialist revolution; but it is also a story about the cataclysmic effect of political/ historical events happening in Cuba and in the United States, as Cubans embody and reenact their country’s slide into historical chaos on a smaller, personal scale. Regardless of their political affiliations, Garcia’s characters are torn by the progress of Cuba’s history. Being for or against “the revolution” defines who they are, who they become, the choices that they make until they can redefine and recreate themselves as the merging of two identities, two histories (1997:75).

## **2. Radicalization vs. Rationalization: Spatial and Mental Divides**

In the context described above, the first and the second generation of del Pino women’s ideological choices are as radical and militant as can be. Garcia places everything in a larger framework, which allows the reader to assess situations and develop a superior understanding to that of the involved protagonists. From the point of view of their intimate responses to life’s challenges and to particular stages in the development of their country, both Celia (the grandmother)’s and Lourdes (the daughter)’s attitudes can find some level of

justification. It is the novel's main strategic goal to humanize inhumanity, explain the inexplicable and lend faces and voices to the people history tends to otherwise treat as an amorphous mass.

Celia and Lourdes' constant confrontations arise from their inner devotion to ideals they hold dear. In what Celia is concerned, she utterly believes in the promises of Castro's revolutionary government. She is dominated by delusions of national grandeur; she cannot but support a system that, to her mind, will undoubtedly bring about the changes she has long been praying for:

Celia imagines the cane she cuts being ground in the centrals, and its thick sap collected in vats. The furnaces will transform it to moist, amber crystals. She pictures three-hundred-pound sacks of refined white sugar deep in the hulls of ships. People in Mexico, Russia and Poland will spoon out her sugar for coffee, or to bake in their birthday cakes. And Cuba will grow prosperous. Not the false prosperity of previous years, but a prosperity that those with her on these hot, still mornings can share (1993: 45).

In fact, the constant opposition between mother and daughter is a manifold type of conflict: while it is a generational issue many families encounter, its roots also lie in the two women's voluntary positions as representatives of and spokespersons for different systems. Cuba vs. the U.S., capitalism vs. communism: these essential binary oppositions span the entire novel. Celia never gets to leave her home country. Charmed by the apparent benefits of Castro's reign, she has neither any real term of comparison, nor a genuine urge to challenge authority. Emotionally unstable, challenged by the inner and outer events of her personal life, she needs a guiding light. She believes she has found exactly that in a regime that capitalizes on frustration, misery and deprivation by promising everything. The true accomplishment of the revolutionary pledges does not concern her as much as the hope she gladly embraces and defends from detractors – be they strangers or members of her own family.

She does not question her convictions, even when so forced by her close ones; instead, she would rather break relationships and imagine conspiracies: as Pilar, her granddaughter, emphasizes, "*I know what my grandmother dreams. Of massacres in distant countries, pregnant women dismembered in the squares. Abuela Celia walks among them mute and invisible*" (1993:219). In many respects, Celia del Pino is the ultimate embodiment of immobility. Physically and mentally, she is trapped into her own mono-dimensional existence, imprisoned by the public discourse that shapes her universe. Like an eternally faithful Penelope, she is a figure of stasis, which makes her virtually unable to open up to new experiences and accept historical transformation. Her need for equilibrium equals her refusal to act decisively. Her epiphany and her decision to finally escape her socially and mentally imposed limitations equal death by suicide:

It occurs to Celia that she has never been farther than a hundred yards off the coast of Cuba. She considers her dream of sailing to Spain, to Granada, of striding through the night with nothing but a tambourine and too many carnations.



*Sing with me, the duende cries, sing for the black sea that awaits your voice.*  
Celia steps into the ocean and imagines she's a soldier on a mission – for the moon, or the palms, or El Lider. The water rises quickly around her. It submerges her throat and her nose, her open eyes that do not perceive salt. Her hair floats loosely from her skull and waves above her in the tide. She breathes through her skin, she breathes through her wounds... *Sing, Celia, sing...* (1993: 243)

Lourdes' case is more interesting to follow, as she does escape geographical boundaries. She is the essential exile who chooses an adopted country for want of a better life. However, she does not hold memories of her home country dear; unlike many immigrants, she does neither cherish the thought of the Cuba she has left behind, nor harbor any melancholy connected to her pre-U.S. existence. The past equals acute pain, therefore she chooses to eradicate any connection to it and focus on the present and the future. The segments of Lourdes' life are scrupulously kept apart. Born anew once she has reached America, she wants nothing to do with her previous experience. Her desire is as utopian as her mother's, though, since her roots, her ancestry, her Cuban husband and Cuban-born daughter cannot but link her inextricably to the destiny of the country she struggles to forget.

Fleeing to the U.S. gives Lourdes the opportunity of personal and professional reconstruction. It is here that she can recover by supplanting and redesigning lost hopes and projects, it is here that she can participate in a capitalist ethos that invests property with nobility, ownership with inherent greatness. It is here that she finds a purpose, that her life gains weight and meaning:

Lourdes felt a spiritual link to American moguls, to the immortality of men like Irenée du Pont, whose Varadero Beach mansion on the north coast of Cuba she has once visited. She envisioned a chain of Yankee Doodle bakeries stretching across America to St. Louis, Dallas, Los Angeles, her apple pies and cupcakes on main streets and in suburban shopping malls everywhere. Each store would bear her name, her legacy: LOURDES PUENTE, PROPRIETOR (1993: 170).

Such passages illustrate Lourdes' headlong plunge into the American mentality, her willful appropriation of a set of social norms and criteria meant to offer her material satisfaction, as well as complete separation from her country of origin's communist idea(s). Deprived of the existence she had built for herself in Cuba, witness to her husband's dispossession of his family's properties, the woman is bent on securing a stability that would never allow for such injustice and humiliation to happen again. Analyzing *the Global Baggage of Nostalgia in Cristina Garcia's Dreaming in Cuban*, Elena Machado Saez points out that not only is Lourdes "convinced she can fight Communism from behind her bakery counter," but mass production also allows her to identify with an alternate community, one that is not Cuban. Lourdes becomes part of a nation building project, the United States' bicentennial celebration, engaging in the marketing of American patriotism through products such as "tricolor cupcakes and Uncle Sam marzipan" (2005: 136).

Lourdes' resistance to what she sees as a destructive and unfair ideology takes various shapes and intensities. Initially, her disapproval of Castro's regime finds most accurate expression in her imaginary conversations with her dead father. It is there that she can freely formulate her deepest concerns and castigate what she believes to be American innocence with regard to the demagogical perversion of human minds.

Above all, Lourdes and her father continue to denounce the Communist threat to America. Every day they grow more convinced that the dearth of bad news about Cuba is a conspiracy by the leftist media to keep international support for El Líder strong. Why can't Americans see Communists in their own back yards, in their universities, bending the malleable minds of the young? The Democrats are to blame, the Democrats and those lying, two-timing Kennedys. What America needs, Lourdes and her father agree, is another Joe McCarthy to set those things right again. *He* would never have abandoned them at the Bay of Pigs (1993:71).

Coming from a different background than most of the Americans surrounding her, Lourdes is baffled by what seems to her a generalized (and ominous) naivety, springing from a serious lack of knowledge as to the monsters that certain ideas have bred in various, literal, circumstances. Fearing the effects of leftist indoctrination upon the territory she deems ideal precisely because it is 'communism-free' and, therefore, untainted, Lourdes becomes increasingly militant. Her efforts to make her generous adoptive country understand the true nature of the threat her home Island's government poses to democracy and normalcy grow stronger and more determined. She acts as a facilitator of radical acts and, to the amazement of her Americanized daughter, fuels the diaspora's negativity and vindictiveness:

Mom is fomenting her own brand of anarchy closer to home. Her Yankee Doodle Bakeries have become gathering places for these shady Cuban extremists who come all the way from New Jersey and Bronx to talk their dinosaur politics and drink her killer espressos. They set up a toll-free hot line so that Cuban exiles could call in and choose from three scathing messages to send directly to the national palace, demanding El Líder's resignation [...] Just last week, the lot of them were celebrating – with cigars and sparkling cider – the murder of a journalist in Miami who advocated reestablishing ties with Cuba (1993: 177)

### **3. "Telling Her Own Truth." Communication: Impossible?**

It is only the third party, Pilar, Lourdes' daughter, who can grasp the absurdity of such reactions and assess the paradoxical nature of violence bred by violence, cruelty triggered by cruelty and cynicism born out of cynicism. She will be the one to eventually internalize the lessons of history, while the ones directly involved wallow in bitterness and blindness to their own degrading morality and humanity. Her mother does not go as far as the people she shelters; she does,

however, do anything in her power to oppose Castro. Once she does return to Cuba on a short visit, her furious remarks and anxious interpellations of the locals seem out of place.

Yet, Garcia's investigation of her character's consciousness exposes the real dimensions of her struggle: she wants nothing to do with her native Cuba because she abhors the regime and resents seeing what it has done to the people: the abasement, the annihilation of agency and reason. Nevertheless, her reactions affirm an almost unspeakable truth: she loves Cuba to tears, she would like nothing more than to see it proud and free from the humiliation and misery she tries to expose:

Every way Lourdes turns there is more destruction, more decay. *Socialismo o muerte*. The words pain her as if they were knitted into her skin with thick needles and yarn. She wants to change the "o" to "es" on every billboard with a bucket of red paint. *Socialismo es muerte*, she'd write over and over again until the people believed it, until they rose up and reclaimed their country from that tyrant [...] At the next table, a group of sunburnt French Canadians were enjoying baked lobsters and getting drunk on Cuba libres. Lourdes overheard one woman remarking on a Cuban boy who had flirted with her on the beach. So these were El Líder's supporters overseas? Odious armchair socialists! They didn't need coupons to eat! They didn't have to wait three hours for a pitiful can of crabmeat! It had taken all of Lourdes's resolve to remain calmly in her seat (1993: 222).

The difference between Lourdes, now a tourist in her own country, and the "gauche caviar" she observes and openly despises is made by an element essential to Garcia's literary construction: memory. It is memory that discerns or obscures, vilifies or glorifies. It is her consciousness of loss and gain, her painful flashbacks, her experience of both worlds that entitle her to compare and contrast, to fight for awareness amongst her own people. Aggressive and arrogant as her interventions might seem, they represent her desperate attempt to motivate the island's population to rebel against harsh treatment, inferior living conditions and never-ending speeches, void of any real content or credibility to the experienced listener. Taking Lourdes' reactions to the extreme of her climactically calling Castro '*Asesino!*' to his face, Garcia emphasizes the devastating effects history can have upon the individual, the toll trauma takes on people's minds and hearts:

Mom is talking louder and louder. My mouth goes dry, like the times I've gone with her to department stores with merchandise to return. Four or five people gather at a safe distance. It's all the audience she needs.

"Look at those old American cars. They're held together with rubber bands and paper clips and still work better than the new Russian ones. Oye!" she calls out to the bystanders. "You could have Cadillacs with leather interiors! Air conditioning! Automatic windows! You wouldn't have to move your arms in the heat!" Then she turns to me, her face indignant. "Look how they laugh, Pilar! Like idiots!

They can't understand a word I'm saying! Their heads are filled with too much *compañero* this and *compañera* that! They're brainwashed, that's what they are!"

I pull my mother from the growing crowd. The language she speaks is lost to them. It's another idiom entirely (1993: 221).

While Lourdes' rhetoric is certainly not the most fortunate under the circumstances, as she resorts to the symbolism of a world the people have been taught to reject, her genuine preoccupation with the issue of a better life for Cuba is evident. Her assessment of the situation and her desperate attempts to right what she considers wrong and inappropriate by comparison may be genuine. However, her approach is not at all convincing, rather bordering on offensive to her audience. Pilar's comment upon this particular scene is, in fact, descriptive of a more generic problem: she is the one to at least obliquely point out that there is no common language that the two countries, the two systems and the individuals they comprise can communicate in. This accounts for the everyday theater of the absurd that Pilar seems to be witnessing within her own family.

Her [*Celia's*] daughters cannot understand her commitment to El Líder. Lourdes sends her snapshots of pastries from her bakery in Brooklyn. Each glistening éclair is a grenade aimed at Celia's political beliefs, each strawberry shortcake proof – in butter, cream, and eggs – of Lourdes's success in America, and a reminder of ongoing shortages in Cuba.

Felicia is no less exasperating. "We're *dying* of security!" she moans when Celia tries to point out the revolution's merits. No one is starving or denied medical care, no one sleeps in the streets, everyone works who wants to work. But her daughter prefers the luxury of uncertainty, of time unplanned, of waste... (1993: 117).

While there is hardly any dialogue between generations, regimes, systems, countries or continents altogether, Pilar's perspective does reflect the true nature of this drama. As a hyphenated Cuban-American, she has access to both stories but belongs entirely to neither. She is allowed the detachment and focus necessary for both an overarching narrative, which encompasses and surpasses the conflicting versions, and a personalized response to the challenges and dilemmas of her own condition. She is the bearer of a complex burden: understanding and reconciliation, unavailable to her predecessors, are – narratively and experientially – entrusted to her.

Not only is she unaware of this mission from the very beginning; she also seems completely unprepared for the task. She is introduced to the reader as the estranged inheritor of a world to which her strongest ties might have been irreversibly severed. Celia's concern is evident: "*Pilar, her first grandchild, writes to her from Brooklyn in a Spanish that is no longer hers. She speaks the hard-edged lexicon of bygone tourists itchy to throw dice on green felt or asphalt*" (1993:7).

#### 4. Language/-s, Identity/-ies

In a novel to which the preoccupation with (overstepping) boundaries and (blurring) separation lines is central, language plays a crucial part, prefigured by the very title. *Dreaming in Cuban* is a symbolic rendition of what actually happens to the third generation protagonist upon her reunion with the native country she has been fantasizing about and reconstructing in her mind: "I've started dreaming in Spanish, which has never happened before. I wake up feeling different, like something inside me is changing, something chemical and irreversible. There's a magic here working its way through my veins" (1993:135). Subtly and determinedly, Garcia uses language as a defining element of individual and national identity. Although not ranking among the characters' main concerns, language is ubiquitous; it describes, shapes, captures the experiences it witnesses or determines. Be it English, Spanish or both, it plays an important part in the (trans)-cultural development of its users.

It is, therefore, not surprising that references to it occur quite frequently as the novel progresses. Pilar goes full circle between the "foreign" Spanish of her early American years and the one that eventually pervades both her conscious and her unconscious states. While English is the language of accomplishment and reason, Spanish appears to be connected to the depths of emotion and human involvement. It is not accidentally that, when Pilar meets Ruben - her Peruvian boyfriend, also a New York resident -, Spanish seems to best fit the intensity of their emotions: "We speak in Spanish when we make love. English seems an impossible language for intimacy" (1993:180). Even so, English is the required idiom for success and recognition in the U.S., as Pilar learns quite early in her Manhattan existence: "My mother used to take me for walks in Central Park. Once, an agent from the Art Linkletter show stopped us at the Children's Zoo and asked my mother if I could be on the show. But I didn't speak English yet so he passed" (1993:31).

Pilar's determination to overcome the uncertainties of in-between-ness and create her own definitions of freedom and acceptability is tightly connected to her personal imperative: finding her (translated and translatable) self. Garcia endows her with a natural calling that helps clarify and transmit an indispensable message. Being an artist is the elegant solution to Pilar's linguistic dilemma, the symbol of maturity and reason. It transcends the limitations of language and takes communication to another level, which makes physical and ethnic borders irrelevant. Even before her visit to Cuba and the personal illumination it brings about, the teenager voices her frustration with the inadequacy of languages to render her hyphenated existence. She finds solace in painting due to its inherent expressivity:

What could I say? That my mother is driving me crazy? That I miss my grandmother and wish I'd never left Cuba? That I want to be a famous artist someday? That a paintbrush is better than a gun so why doesn't everybody just leave me alone? Painting is its own language, I wanted to tell him. Translations

just confuse it, dilute it, like words going from Spanish to English. I envy my mother her Spanish curses sometimes. They make my English collapse in a heap (1993: 59).

Pilar's subsequent evolution as an element of equilibrium and promoter of conciliation is foreshadowed by her open opposition to the violence and aggressiveness that dominate her background. Not only is a paintbrush better than a gun; creativity and intellect shall prove superior to irrationality and uncontrollable, visceral impulse at any given moment. Pilar's own option becomes increasingly clear as she advances in her journey towards self-discovery: "Who needs words when colors and lines conjure up their own language? That's what I want to do with my paintings, find a unique language, obliterate the clichés" (1993:139).

This particular scene occurs at a key-moment, when Pilar's mother commissions her daughter to paint a pro-American mural on "the 200<sup>th</sup> birthday of America" (1993:143). Regardless of the painting's reception within the community, it opens the lines of communication between generations, it bridges the affection gap, and it prefigures the fulfillment of the girl's wish: that of winning her own battles with her own type of weapon – art.

I ask Abuela if I can paint whatever I want in Cuba and she says yes, as long as I don't attack the state. Cuba is still developing, she tells me, and can't afford the luxury of dissent. Then she quotes me something El Líder said in the early years, before they started arresting poets: "Within the revolution, everything; against the revolution, nothing". I wonder what El Líder would think of my paintings. Art, I'd tell him, is the ultimate revolution (1993: 235).

Within the framework of characters and communities positioning themselves either for or against Castro's revolution, Pilar's message is representative of a fresh perspective, of a creative alternative to the vocabulary of intolerance. Taken aback by the thinly disguised censorship which reveals to her a Cuba she no longer romanticizes, Celia's granddaughter makes an essential point: demagoguery relies upon the imprisonment of the mind. Telling people what to think and feel may be reassuring for a confused and misguided nation, but it is, nevertheless, an unacceptable kind of dictatorship. After endless proclamations of "ultimate truths" coming from both Pilar's mother and her grandmother, this particular passage relativizes everything, makes "history" and "truth" matters of perception and attitude.

As Elena Machado-Saez (2005:131) points out, "within *Dreaming in Cuban*, nostalgia emerges as the desire to reconnect with the original objects of memory's gaze, to possess an alternative history, one that is personal and familial, over the national and public History". This particular wish stems from Pilar's early realization that truth is not a monolithic entity, that history is a matter of dominant narratives. It is her perceptiveness and her particular condition as the receiver of various types of narratives that fuel her interest in contributing to the grand epic.

My father knew I understood more than I could say. He told me stories about Cuba after Columbus came. He said that the Spaniards wiped out more Indians with smallpox than with muskets.

“Why don’t we read about this in history books?” I ask Minnie. “It’s always one damn battle after another. We only know about Charlemagne and Napoleon because they fought their way into posterity” [...] If it were up to me, I’d record other things. Like the time there was a freak hailstorm in the Congo and the women took it as a sign that they should rule. Or the life stories of prostitutes in Bombay. Why don’t we know anything about them? Who chooses what we should know or what’s important? I know I have to decide these things for myself (1993:28).

Thus, Pilar voices her distrust of the official versions of history, as well as her critical detachment from a system that disregards whatever is considered too small, too muted, too insignificant to foreground. The idea of recording the ‘little’ lives of the ‘common’ people is much more appealing to the girl, who feels that institutional monopoly does not necessarily validate discourse or render its content irrefutable. It is what makes her go in search of her own truth. The stories in Garcia’s novel paint a picture that is as vivid as it is personalized. As Andrea O’Reilly Herrera points out, “historically and culturally significant, *Dreaming in Cuban* is, however, equally concerned with the recording and transmission of culture, H/history, and herstory” (1997:79).

## 5. Conclusion

By asking a series of essential questions, Garcia draws the reader’s attention upon the importance of comparing and contrasting stories, particularly when they are part of a larger narrative, which lacks authorized documentation. Lourdes’ case is emblematic, both in terms of her flawed use of English and of her skill in blending fact and fiction to a most dramatic effect. Although she is not capable of providing a coherent and linguistically accurate narrative, she is a gifted story-teller, as manipulative as she is convincing – both to the others and to herself.

Mum’s embellishments and half-truths usually equip her to tell a good story, though. And her English, her immigrant English, has a touch of otherness that makes it unintentionally precise. Maybe in the end facts are not as important as the underlying truth she wants to convey. Telling her own truth is the truth to her, even if it’s at the expense of chipping away our past (1993:176).

Under such circumstances, the issue of “broken English”, so important to the immigrants’ regular adjustment to the U.S. social expectations becomes secondary to the ability of making oneself, one’s past, one’s community, one’s experience understood. Garcia’s web of stories, whether intersecting or parallel, whether harmonious or dissonant, builds upon dialogism to provide a broader perspective upon Cuban-Americanness and its issues. Acknowledging the

complexities of the present and the unpredictability of the future, the book employs literature to a cultural and social purpose.

Even as the doomed characters speak past rather than with each other, the text constitutes the space where they “meet” and where the reader engages in communication. The reader has full access to the gamut of discourses and strategies employed to decentralize the narrative and offer alternative points of view. This narrative scheme by itself does not produce a happy ending, as confirmed by the adverse fate of the novel’s characters. At another level, however, it offers the distinct possibility of dreaming, in Cuban as in any dialect, of the fragile coexistence of ideologies, languages, and discourses in a single space. This potential represents an innovative and inspiring approach within the emergent field of Cuban-American fiction (Lopez 2000:159).

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**THE ITALIAN RISORGIMENTO IN MARY SHELLEY'S  
RAMBLES IN GERMANY AND ITALY IN 1840, 1842 AND 1843 (1844)**

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*Abstract:* References to the Italian Risorgimento (the political movement leading to the unification of Italy, in 1861) are scattered throughout Mary Shelley's output. This paper will focus on her epistolary travelogue, *Rambles in Germany and Italy*, where her political engagement, her involvement in the Italian cause are more evident and noteworthy.

*Keywords:* Carboneria, Education, Italian Risorgimento, Italy, Mary Shelley, Travelogue

### **1. Introduction: the British and the Italian *Risorgimento***

The so-called *Risorgimento* (the Italian liberation struggle which led to the political unification of the country in 1861) was hailed with mixed feelings by the British. On the one hand, writers such as P.B. Shelley and Lord Byron were ardent advocates of the cause. Through their writings (for example Shelley's "Ode to Naples" and Byron's Canto IV of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*), they voiced their strong support to the Italian patriots, as well as a heartfelt appeal to European states to contribute to the liberation of a land where civilization and the arts had once bloomed. On the other hand, many regarded the Italian revolutionary movements with suspicion, fearing repercussions on the precarious political balance established after the end of the Napoleonic Wars. Moreover, as Jeanne Moskal (2003:248) points out, it was widely acknowledged that the lazy and sluggish Italians, wrought by the superstition and bigotry of Catholicism, were actually "unfit for self-rule" and, therefore, doomed by nature to be subjugated under a foreign yoke. Finally, some British considered Napoleon and his Kingdom of Italy (1805-1814) as the real source of *Risorgimento*, thus distrusting the "decidedly French flavor" (Moskal 2003:248) of the movement for the unification of Italy.

#### **2.1. Women Travel Writers and Italy**

Being restricted to the domestic environment, women were commonly excluded from the political arena, and women writers were bound to abide by the same rule. Nonetheless, travel writing soon proved to be a *genre* that allowed British women to cross physical and mental boundaries. As Kathryn Walchester (2007: 7-37) elucidates, Italy turned into one of the most favorite destinations for women travel writers, and travelogues written by them multiplied in number in the first half of the nineteenth century. The extraordinary and unsettling potential of this genre must be clarified. Beside innocent descriptions of archaeological sites

and picturesque views, in addition to personal remarks and recollections, women travel writers had the possibility to insert “topics which were deemed ‘unfeminine’” (Walchester 2007:29) in their volumes, such as details and observations concerning the Italian turmoil for freedom and independence. Hence, they could forcefully undermine the notion of *separate spheres*, thus metaphorically *invading* a space they were normally prevented from attaining. Women travel writers paradoxically acted as both Penelope and Ulysses.

## 2.2. Mary Shelley, the Travel Writer

After her youthful stay in Italy together with her husband (from 1818 to 1823), Mary Shelley visited the country in the late years of her life, in 1840 and, then again, in 1842 and 1843. On both occasions, she accompanied her only surviving son (Percy Florence) and his friends on their *Grand Tour* through Germany and Italy, which prompted her to write *Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842 and 1843*, an epistolary travelogue in two volumes published in 1844. Despite whole chapters devoted to the admired descriptions of museums, churches and works of art, notwithstanding the recurrent, sorrowful evocation of the dear ones she had lost in Italy, in spite of the *familiar tone* typical of the epistolary style, Mary Shelley, the travel writer, aimed at conveying a strong political message to her readership.

Through a close analysis of her text, this paper sets out to explore the writer’s profound engagement in the *Risorgimento* and the strategies she employed to offer her valuable contribution to the cause.

The reason behind the publication of *Rambles* is in itself meaningful. At the end of her second travel, going back to England via Paris, in August 1843, Mary met Ferdinando Gatteschi, a charming but penniless exile. He had fought in the insurrections of Ancona (1831), besides being a fervent follower of *La Giovine Italia* (Young Italy), a political movement founded by Giuseppe Mazzini, a patriot who had escaped persecution and had repaired to London in 1837. The romantic feelings Mary developed for the unhappy expatriate (who would later on reveal his true colors, trying to even blackmail the writer) encouraged her to raise money to support him. She, therefore, wrote to the publisher Edward Moxon, promising to create a book which would be “as light – as personal to myself – & as amusing” (Jones 1944:196) as possible: *Rambles in Germany and Italy*, whose proceeds were to be donated to Gatteschi. He even contributed to the project, with his accounts of the *Carbonari* (a secret revolutionary society, described in Vol. II, Letter XIV) and the Ancona revolt (Vol. II, Letter XXI).

Despite the alluring prospect of an entertaining and, therefore, lucrative travelogue, Mary Shelley did not live up to the publisher’s expectations. Her *Rambles in Germany and Italy* was harshly criticized by *The Observer* (August 11<sup>th</sup>, 1844) because of its historical and political contents, unsuited for a woman’s use:

With her, as with all women, politics is a matter of the heart, and not as with the more robust nature of man, of the head; and consequently her arguments take the tone of passion, and her convictions the tone of feeling. (Moskal 2003:250)

Far from displaying the irrational and erratic attitude detected by the anonymous reviewer, Mary Shelley's political discourse appears to be logically organized, solidly argued and, as a result, strikingly effective. She, first of all, tries to dispel misconceptions and stereotypes about the Italians, while tightening the connection between them and the British. Then, she describes the state of subjection of the population, indulging in the description of the unfortunate condition of intellectual inactivity in which the oppressors wanted their subjects to remain, in order to control their actions. At the same time, throughout her travelogue, she persistently offers her ingenious solution, which does not rely on riotous violence (Mary was certainly reminiscent of the French Revolution and its failure, leading to the Terror) but on the sensible formula *regeneration through education*.

### **3. *Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842 and 1843: Mary Shelley's Contribution to the Italian Cause***

Let us delve into each of these aspects. In the "Preface" to the text Mary Shelley uncovers her socially responsible purpose in writing what, in her words, is not just "a mere gossiping companion to a traveler" (Shelley 1844: viii): she wishes to produce "something that may incite others to regard [the Italians] favorably, something explanatory of their real character" (Shelley 1844: viii-ix). *Rambles* is full of observations on the amiable nature of the people, on their "innate courtesy which forms, together with their simplicity of manner, the charm of the Italians" (Shelley 1844: I, 68-69). She then tries to excite the sympathy of her readers towards the cause, by cleverly severing the tie that, as already noticed, bonded the hateful French with the *Risorgimento* in the mind of her compatriots. "The aspiration for free institutions all over the world", Mary highlights in her "Preface," "has its source in England" (Shelley 1844:xi) – certainly not in France. Consequently, Italian gentlemen cannot but view with admiration and longing eyes the pride the British can take in their country, where people "enjoy the privilege of doing and saying whatever [they] please so that [they] infringe no law" (Shelley 1844:xii). The writer's awareness of the blame her detractors would certainly cast on a woman dealing with history and politics triggers a sort of *captatio benevolentiae*, placed nearly at the end of the "Preface." As she humbly claims: "my book does not pretend to be a political history or dissertation. I give fragments – not a whole" (Shelley 1844:xvi). This statement, however, does not thwart her from making a compelling appeal to her countrymen (an appeal which closes her introductory remarks) "to regard with greater attention and to sympathize in the struggles of a country, the most illustrious and the most unfortunate in the world" (Shelley 1844:xvi).

Among the tyrants that, like vultures, have dismembered the body of Italy and have ruled over it, Mary particularly criticizes the Austrian Emperors, the Grand Duke Leopold II of Tuscany, and Pope Gregory XVI. The “*paternal care*” (Shelley 1844:II, 88) of Francis I, Emperor of Austria, towards his “*rebel chil[d]*” Silvio Pellico (the revolutionary who had first been imprisoned in Venice and then deported to the dungeons of Spielberg), is bitterly recalled, as well as the despot’s “*sedulous study*” on how to “*torment and attenuate – to blight with disease and subdue to despair*” (Shelley 1844:II, 88) each dissenter. The Austrian secret police seems to constitute a major threat even to travelers and tourists, as it can be inferred in the episode of the Englishman the writer met at Cadenabbia. Holding his gun up in the air, he cannot refrain from shouting “*Tradimento! Tradimento!*” (treason), believing, as Mary explains, “*that the Austrian police want to poison him*” (Shelley 1844:I, 72). Mary casually relates this incident, as if it were a mere, humorous anecdote concerning a miserable madman; nonetheless, she must have understood its real significance and implications. As Nora Crook reveals, there is good evidence in *Rambles* that the writer herself and her party were spied upon as potential threats, and that their letters were intercepted (Crook 2001:84-86). Secret police, undercover agents and traitors are Leopold of Tuscany’s instruments of power. Yet, his kingdom seems to be a safe haven, where nothing ever happens; the Grand Duke’s subjects look unbelievably quiet and dullishly content. In spite of the appearances, however, as an Italian points out in dejection, despotism is “*a serpent hid among flowers [...] odio il tiranno che col sonno uccide*” (Shelley 1844:II, 188) – I hate the tyrant who kills with sleep: people are starved of “*intellectual food*” (Shelley 1844:II, 189), their minds are left to languish, and thirst for knowledge is punished as a crime. The same stagnant atmosphere characterizes the Pontifical States. “*The papal government*”, in Mary Shelley’s words, “*is considered the worst in Italy*” (Shelley 1844:II, 244). The inhabitants of Rome are idle and vicious and the Pope fosters their passive submission to such an extent that he even opposes to the construction of the railroad, for fear of communication with rebellious areas. Catholicism is a source of superstition, which further weakens the population. When a cholera epidemics spread across the Capital of the world in 1837, the Pope encouraged processions and public prayers which, far from dispelling the disease, increased the opportunity for contagion. Since Mary Shelley wished to advocate the Italian cause, however, she could not insist on the portrayal of religion as an insurmountable hindrance to the people’s emancipation, otherwise she would have strengthened the already mentioned, deeply ingrained stereotype. Consequently, even if she expresses her disdain towards the Pope, she somehow balances this feeling with her utmost appreciation for the Jesuits and other pious brotherhoods, who offer charitable assistance to the sick and poor, and comfort to rural families in distress.

Together with the *pars destruens* that has been analyzed so far, the writer proposes her personal solution to the Italian question, her *pars construens*. Following Lia Guerra’s reading of Shelley’s travel writings (2001:134-135), the author relied heavily on her in-depth knowledge of historical accounts (Edward Gibbon’s and Simonde de Sismondi’s, to name a few), and on Godwin’s belief in

the educational power of History, perceived as a continuous flow. Since a revolution implies a thorough and brutal rejection of the past, it is, therefore, doomed to failure, like an uprooted plant which cannot derive its nourishment from the ground. As Mary Shelley wrote in her *Journal* on October 21, 1838, reflecting on the accusation that had been moved against her for being a mild supporter to the Chartist cause, “I am not for violent extremes which only bring on an injurious reaction” (Feldman and Scott-Kilvert eds. 1995 [1987]:554). Hence, notwithstanding her empathy with the Carbonarists – who “first taught the Italians to consider themselves as forming a nation” (Shelley 1844:II, 180), despite her admiration for their leader Capo Bianco, who died as “a martyr” (Shelley 1844:II, 167) on the scaffold, she cannot approve of their “fearful secrecy” (Shelley 1844:II, 168) sworn on the cross, on their mingling religion with politics, thus crafting a “*political religion*” (Shelley 1844: II, 168) that appealed to “a people pious to superstition” (Shelley 1844: II, 168). After summing up the evolution of the Carbonarist movement, characterized by fierceness and murder, she remarks that “the pure patriotism of its originators [had] bec[o]me tainted by the personal ambition of their followers” (Shelley 1844: II, 178). Conversely, the reason why the writer holds *La Giovine Italia* in high esteem and regards it as a valid – albeit still less influential – alternative, is because “they have committed no crimes; and work by spreading knowledge and civilisation, instead of striking terror” (Shelley 1844: II, 179).

*Education* is the core of the problem and the key to its solution.

At the beginning of the first volume of *Rambles* she had already highlighted that “the root of the evil still rests in the absence of education and civilisation” (Shelley 1844:I, 100). She had already expressed her deep conviction that the Italians “are highly gifted with intellectual powers, and possess all the elements of greatness. They are made to be free, active, inquiring people. But,” as she continued, “they must cast away their *dolce far niente*” (Shelley 1844: I, 86), the savage torpor they had been deceived into by tyrants and potentates. In Mary Shelley’s opinion, there is no real breach of continuity between the bygone splendor of the country and its current state of slavery: the past can be successfully reflected upon in order to reform the present. Institutional changes, however, can be carried out effectively only if people mature into awareness and responsibility, which is the precise goal and the aspiration of literature. *Rambles in Germany and Italy* opens with a quotation from *Arnaldo da Brescia* (1840) by Giovanni Battista Niccolini, a text that in a note to the second volume, Mary describes as “a splendid protest against the temporal dominion of the Pope and the abuse of the power of the Church” (Shelley 1844:II, 204n). Quotations from Dante, one of the first Italian patriots, are scattered throughout the book. A whole section of the second volume (Letter XIV) is devoted to contemporary Italian literature expressing the authentic, noble and nonviolent values of *Risorgimento*, as Alessandro Manzoni did in his *I Promessi Sposi* (the betrothed), employing the past as a mirror held up to the present. Meaningfully enough, Mary’s literary review immediately follows the letters that illustrate the rise and fall of the Carbonarists (Letter XIV) and the

despotic rule of Leopold II (Letter XV), thus creating a striking contrast with the means of the former, and the cultural deprivation imposed by the latter.

#### 4. Conclusion

Many more examples could be quoted, but one sentence best summarizes what has been argued so far, namely Mary Shelley's engagement in the Italian cause, her search for a usable past, and her faith in the invigorating force of literature:

The time must come when again [the Italians] will take a high place among nations. Their habits, fostered by their governments, alone are degraded and degrading; alter these, and the country of Dante and Michael Angelo and Raphael still exists (Shelley 1844: I, 87).

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**“HOW THINGS ARE SUPPOSED TO BE”:  
RHETORIC, EDUCATION, AND MOTIVE  
IN KAZUO ISHIGURO’S *NEVER LET ME GO***

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*Abstract:* In *Never Let Me Go*, those in power patrol identity by exploiting the ambiguity between humans as agents and agency. This ambiguity enables an ideology that defines some humans as tools for others’ use, and a rhetoric that overwhelms possibilities for action by those victimized.

*Keywords:* Bakhtin, M. M.; Burke, Kenneth; Ishiguro, Kazuo; language; identity; ideology

## **1. Introduction**

*Never Let Me Go*, by Kazuo Ishiguro (2005), is a creepy and disturbing book. It tells the story of a group of “students” who live in “England” in the “late 1990s.” Its narrator is a young woman named Kathy H. who writes (or speaks) to an unnamed “you.” The opening is set in what first appears to be an idyllic fantasy of English boarding school called Hailsham, where students are taught primarily art and literature by a group of people called their “guardians.” But the opening also suggests another level of experience, more puzzling and potentially frightening. Kathy H., speaking retrospectively in the novel’s first pages, tells us that she is now “thirty-one years old” and has been a “carer now for over eleven years” (3). She also talks with pride about her work: “my donors have always tended to do much better than expected. Their recovery times have been impressive, and hardly any of them have been classified as ‘agitated’ even before fourth donation” (3). As the novel proceeds, we hear more references to “donations,” and we eventually learn that the “students” are, in fact “clones” (a word used very infrequently in the book), whose lives “have been set out for them.” As one of the guardians reminds the “students” (and tell us the readers): “You’ll become adults, then before you’re old, before you’re even middle-aged, you’ll start to donate your vital organs. That’s what each of you was created to do. . . . You were brought into this world for a purpose, and your futures, all of them, have been decided (81). In the second section of the novel, we see the students eventually become teen-agers who leave Hailsham and live together in a place called The Cottages, until they begin their training to become carers. And in the last section, we see them at recovery centers where, as donors, they recuperate from surgeries until they eventually “complete,” or, in another word that is almost never uttered in the novel, “die.”

What is so creepy and disturbing about the book is not that the students are clones; Kathy, the narrator, and her friends Ruth and Tommy, do in fact seem to be students (the term they use to describe themselves and which I will use throughout

this paper). We see them engage in the typical activities of adolescents: making, losing, and keeping friendships; falling in and out of love; having sex. Rather, the fundamental uneasiness that many people feel on reading this novel comes from Hailsham, including its eerie perfection, its discordant terminology, and the sense of inevitability it successfully creates in all the characters. Thus, for many readers, the first question the novel raises is why the students willingly acquiesce to donations that will, in fact, kill them? Why do they not rebel or flee? The answer, I believe, is that Hailsham and the rest of the system which it includes has transmitted an ideology to its participants (students and guardians) that is so successful, so normalized, that everyone simply concludes, in a term that is repeated throughout the book, this is the way things are “supposed” to be. Resistance is never attempted because it is never imagined. The second question the novel raises for many readers is who do the students really represent? No reader whom I have ever met has believed that Ishiguro is really writing about abuse of clones; the possibility of functioning human adult clones in England in the 1990s is clearly fantastical. Thus readers often seek historical parallels between the students and other oppressed peoples, such as African American slaves or Jews in the Holocaust. I believe Ishiguro’s use of clones as the obviously fictional subjects of the novel deliberately invokes such parallels but does not limit analysis to any specific group. Instead, it offers readers an opportunity to consider—historically and contemporaneously—the destructive effects of an ideology that rates some people as less “human” than others. More specifically, it challenges us to understand the kinds of cultural narratives that enable these ideologies to flourish.

My goals in this essay are to identify these insidious narratives in *Never Let Me Go* and to show the ways they gain rhetorical and ideological force. To accomplish this, I draw on the American rhetorical and literary theorist Kenneth Burke, particularly *A Grammar of Motives* and on the Russian theorist M.M. Bakhtin’s “Discourse in the Novel.” In *A Grammar of Motives*, Burke offers a method of analysis that “treats language and thought primarily as modes of action” (Burke 1945:xxii). Burke begins by posing the questions “What is involved, when we say what people are doing and why they are doing it?” (xv). His answers are found in his analyses of “the attributing of motives.” The term “motive,” for Burke includes not just conscious or unconscious intention; more importantly, “motive” suggests the purposive and meaning-making actions by which humans make sense of themselves and their world. In the first part of this essay, I will discuss the power of rhetoric in the attribution of motives in *Never Let Me Go*, particularly how language and thought can become forms of action that make some people seem less human than others. In the next part, I will draw on Bakhtin’s concept of the dialogic to consider how that ideology can be so successfully taught, even to those who are its victims. Finally, I will discuss what I see as the Burkean motive of *Never Let Me Go* itself, particularly its examination of what it means to be an “authentic” human being.



## 2. 1. The Rhetoric of Donation

One of the most disconcerting aspects of *Never Let Me Go* is the discordant vocabulary that announces one reality while hinting at another. The key terms in this vocabulary all appear in the first few pages, including *carer*, *donor*, *donation*, *guardian*, *recovery*, and *completing*. These words suggest ethical qualities associated with altruism (*donors* and *donations*), protection (*guardians* and *carers*) and some kind of natural sequence (*recovering* then *completing*). But as we gradually learn, these words have a more pernicious meaning. Donors are those persons whose organs are taken from them; donations are the acts of those takings. Guardians are teachers or authority figures who indoctrinate people into this system. Carers are fellow victims who must facilitate the process. And completion is death.

The rhetoric of oppression in *Never Let Me Go* thus enables two narratives: one, the official narrative, is a story of altruism and care; the other, covert, narrative, is a story of violence and death. To examine how these narratives are related, I turn to Burke's analytical methods, "the pentad," that is, his "generating principle" for understanding how motives are attributed. The pentad separates any statement about motives into five component parts:

In a rounded statement about motives, you must have some word that names the *act* (names what takes place, in thought or deed), and another that names the *scene* (the background of the act, the situation in which it occurred); also, you must indicate what person or kind of person (*agent*) performed the act, what means or instruments he used (*agency*), and the *purpose* (Burke 1945: xv).

As Burke (1945: xv) explains, despite the fact that "men may violently disagree" about how these components are defined, "any complete statement about motives will offer *some kind* of answers to these five questions: what was done (act), when or where it was done (scene), who did it (agent), how he did it (agency, and why (purpose)." Using these terms, the official rhetoric of donation can be defined as something like this:

Act: donating  
Scene: hospitals and recovery centers  
Agent: donors  
Agency: doctors, nurses, other officials  
Purpose: What we are "supposed" to do

In the official version, donors are *agents* because donation literally means to give willingly, voluntarily, as a gift. But donors are not really agents, because they do not really participate in the system voluntarily. Thus hidden behind the official narrative, is another more horrific story:

Act: murdering other humans

Scene: hospitals

Agents: doctors and nurses, guardians, and other members of the system.

Agency: humans whose organs are taken

Purpose: to cure other, “more human” people’s illnesses.

In the covert version, donors, or their bodies, are *agency*—the means or mechanism by which those in power are able to survive illnesses and live longer lives.

Both narratives are contained in the novel. The first, of donor-agents willingly giving up their own lives is constantly articulated and, in an important sense, is true: the students have been trained to believe that they are agents who are really are donating. At the end of the novel, for example, Tommy (facing fourth donation) asks Kathy (his carer) “don’t you get tired of being a carer? All the rest of us, we became donors years ago. But you’ve been doing it for years. Don’t you sometimes wish, Kath, they’d hurry up and send you your notice” (282). And Kathy, in fact, looks forward to the “quieter life” she will have “in whichever centre they send [her] too” (286). Moreover, she feels excluded from and resentful of the circle of donors who claim to understand things she cannot. But the narrative of students as agency is also true, something the students recognize, though seldom articulate. It comes out, however, as in the conversation Kathy, Tommy, and Ruth have after Ruth’s first (and difficult) donation about a friend from the Cottages who “completed” at “second donation.” Despite the fact that Kathy describes Chrissie’s youthful boyfriend as “okay” with what happened and as believing that “Chrissie wouldn’t have minded too much,” Ruth responds

How could he possibly know what Chrissie would have felt? What she would have wanted? It wasn’t him on that table, trying to cling onto life (226).

Later in the novel, facing his “fourth donation,” Tommy expresses a fear that is often felt but rarely discussed:

maybe, after the fourth donation, even if you’re technically completed, you’re still conscious in some sort of way; how then you find there are more donations, plenty of them, on the other side of that line; how there are no more recovery centres, no carers, no friends; how there’s nothing to do except watch your remaining donations until they switch you off. (279)

As readers, we are pushed to understand how these narratives of agent and agency interact, particularly how the presence of one shapes and changes the other.

The reader’s understanding that the narratives of donation and of murder are complexly related is produced by what Burke calls the trope of irony. At the end of *A Grammar of Motives*, Burke (1945:503) identifies “four master tropes” (the others are metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche), each of which, he claims, not only has “figurative usage,” but also plays “a role in the discovery and description of ‘the truth.’” Further, (in one of his many anticipations of

poststructuralist theory) Burke argues that all language is to a degree figurative and that no “truth” is knowable except in relation to the inevitable paradoxes and ambiguities of the language in which it is constructed. The four master tropes are thus characteristic of all the ways in which humans try to answer questions about what are they doing and why are they doing it. But of the four master tropes, irony is perhaps the most powerful, because it most directly reveals the interrelationships of various perspectives, none of which is ontologically or metaphysically privileged:

Irony arises when one tries, by the interaction of terms upon one another to produce a *development* which uses all the terms. Hence from the standpoint of this total form (this “perspective of perspectives”), none of the participating “sub-perspectives” can be treated as either precisely right or precisely wrong. They are all voices, or personalities, or positions, integrally affecting one another. When the dialectic is properly formed, they are the number of characters needed to produce the total development. (Burke 1945:512)

Burke’s trope of “irony” resembles what M.M. Bakhtin (1981) calls the “dialogic”: the ways speakers can bring the heteroglossia of multiple voices (and the ideological perspectives they articulate) into critical relationship. What Bakhtin’s dialogic adds to Burke’s trope of irony is an emphasis on how language contributes to critical thinking and learning.

## **2. 2. Learning to be a Donor**

For Bakhtin (1981:342), the ability to understand language as dialogic—as always fraught with multiple voices, multiple ideologies—contributes to “the history of an individual ideological consciousness.” Learning is not just the passive acceptance of “authoritative discourse” (“reciting by heart”) but also the active assimilation of “internally persuasive discourse” (“retelling in one’s own words”) (341). A dialogic school would thus be a “contact zone,” a place where learners are able to recognize that no language—nor “the ideological systems and approaches to the world . . . indissolubly connected with [that] language”—is absolute or complete (269). The dialogic learner thus becomes like the novelist, finding ways to refract one language through another, to parody, to critique.

At Hailsham, we see glimpses of the dialogic, as, for example, when the students joke about zipping and unzipping parts of their bodies to get at their organs. Or later in the drawings Tommy makes of tiny creatures that are part machine and part animal: “The first impression was weaving tendons, miniature screws and wheels were all drawn with obsessive precision, and only when you held the page away could you see it was some kind of armadillo, say, or a bird” (187). But for the most part, opportunities for critique or resistance are minimized. Indeed, Hailsham is very effective in promoting an authoritative discourse that establishes, with almost no ambiguity, what one is “supposed” to do. It therefore offers a frightening but nonetheless familiar model for how to enculturate an

oppressive ideology and how to convince people that they are the agency for other people's prosperity, rather than the legitimate agents of their own lives.

The primary way of inculcating the inevitability of donations and shutting down resistance occurs through what one of the guardians calls being "told and not told" (82). That is, the guardians offer information before it can be fully understood, so that by the time it is comprehended, it has come to be what the students "already knew" (82):

Tommy thought it possible that the guardians had, throughout all our years at Hailsham, timed very carefully and deliberately everything they told us, so that we were always just too young to understand properly the latest piece of information. But of course we'd take it in at some level, so that before long all this stuff was there in our heads without us ever having examined it properly. (82)

The result is a kind of brainwashing in which the ideology and vocabulary of donation become naturalized: simply the way things are. Denied any opportunity for critical examination, the students grow up—Kathy recalls knowing about donations "in some vague way, even as early as six or seven" (83)—believing donating is as natural as having sex.

Hailsham also indoctrinates by invoking the belief that safety exists only within its boundaries—a deeply ironic concept given what it is training its inhabitants to do. Outside is the unknown, the unexplored. Thus the students imagine the horrors of the surrounding woods, strange tales of students who were exiled to the woods and who begged to be let back in. The woods and the world it opens into are, in fact, so frightening there is no need for real barriers to keep the students in place. Watching students "mimicking touching electric fences," one of the guardians says softly "It's just as well the fences at Hailsham aren't electrified. You get terrible accidents sometimes" (78).

At Hailsham, students learn to police their own and their friends' identities. They constantly control what one or another is "supposed to do." For example, when the young Tommy becomes enraged, students feel "embarrassed" (14), even though Kathy later realizes that Tommy's outbursts were because "at some level [he] always *knew*" (275). That this all begins at a school, is also deeply ironic. Because what happens here is not what is promised by the allure of the English boarding school (itself a kind of debased version of Hogwarts Academy). Instead, it is a Foucauldian panopticon, but one in which surveillance is carried out by the same people who are being surveilled.

### **2.3. Who Gets to be Human?**

The rhetoric of the oppressive system of *Never Let Me Go* depends on the ability of people in power to maintain a crucial distinction between those who are human and those who are not. This distinction is essential if one is to bring other people into the world in order to murder or exploit them. Such distinctions have a long history: in pre-Emancipation America, a slave was counted as 3/5 of a person;

in Nazi Germany, Jews were murdered because they were represented as an inferior race. In *Never Let Me Go*, the students from Hailsham are seen as “less than human” so that they can provide resources to the non-cloned world, bodily organs that would ensure that the world’s “own children, their spouses, their parents, their friends, did not die from cancer, motor neurone disease, heart disease” (263). In the rational explanation of one of the guardians: “Here was the world requiring students to donate. While that remained the case, there would always be a barrier against seeing you as properly human” (263). Defining those who are “other” as not the same as one’s self—in this case, defining the “other” as someone “not properly human”—is accomplished by what Burke (1945:25) calls a “contextual definition,” in which something is defined “in terms of what it is not.” Thus guardians see students as not like themselves and thus not really human, a feeling the students sometimes share, understanding themselves to be “modeled from *trash*. Junkies, prostitutes, winos, tramps”(166). Haunting the novel, however, is another way to define the students, what Burke (1945:26) calls a “familial definition,” in which the “substance of the offspring. . . is derived from the substance of the parents or family.” The students do, of course, share a significant and substantive familial connection to the humans who made them: their identity with one another is written in their DNA. But in *Never Let Me Go*, the substance of DNA is never offered as proof of authentic humanness—just as, in a similar way, DNA cannot be used to define, culturally, who is African American or Jewish. (In Nazi Germany, one grandparent was enough to make someone “Jewish”; in the American south, “one drop of Negro blood” was enough to make someone other than “white.”) In *Never Let Me Go*, the putative substance that would prove someone human is called the “soul,” and there is some debate in the novel about whether students do or do not possess one.

What would constitute evidence of a “soul?” One of the guardians tries to prove students have souls by collecting their artwork; a rumor circulates that if two students are really “in love,” they can win a deferral from the otherwise inexorable process of “donations.” But art and love, the erstwhile evidence of a human soul, in fact, become commodities: students exchange art work for tokens which they can use to buy extra items, and love seems a way to barter for extra life. None of these ploys is successful: Tommy, facing “fourth” (and apparently last) “donation,” is told that, despite his art and despite his love, his “life must now run the course that’s been set for it” (266). Nevertheless, the very possibility of using art or love as currency in order to purchase the merchandise of being considered human reinforces the motive of forced “donation,” in which the value of something is measured in how useful it is to someone else.

While students may not have “souls” in the world of Hailsham, in the rhetorical world of *Never Let Me Go*, they clearly do. The evidence of this is Kathy’s narrative, particularly its ethical qualities. Kathy is above all a carer, someone who not only takes care of her donors but also takes care of her friends Ruth and Tommy throughout their lives together. The ethical imperative Kathy feels to make things better, or at least to keep things from going more badly, is in direct contrast to the uncaring actions of the adults who surround her, including the

guardians, the doctors and nurses, and the non-cloned population who benefit from the students' bodies. Thus the violence with which she and the other students are treated becomes even more horrifying—and the acquiescence to it even more frightening.

### 3. Conclusion

*Never Let Me Go* is addressed to an unnamed “you,” to someone who is familiar with Hailsham or other boarding schools, with donors and carers, and with completing. At first, readers cannot identify with this “you,” because they “don’t know how it was where you were” (96). But eventually we do begin to understand, and we start to slip, uneasily, into the rhetoric of Hailsham. We become, in a sense, complicit. The novel is set in the late 1990s but published in 2005. It is read, that is, in a post 9/11 world where the question of who is and who isn’t completely human is shaped anew. The terrorism of 9/11 was itself an expression of the relative worth of some human life. But much of the response has drawn on divisions that also privilege the rights of one group over those of another—and the basis for these divisions are often articulated, as has been true throughout the history of America, in terms of ethnicity. In the United States, for example, we have seen the passage of a bill in Arizona that allows police to stop anyone they suspect, on looks alone, of being an illegal alien, something that hitherto was illegal. We have seen English Only or English as the Official Language laws passed in over 25 states, because English is understood to be the authentic language of America. We have gone to war in Iraq because of suggested but never demonstrated connections between Saddam Hussein and Muslim terrorists. We have witnessed overt Islamophobia, as seen for example in recent media frenzy about building a mosque on the “sacred” site of ground zero—despite the fact that the site is not really ground zero and the building is not really a mosque. And we have seen the rise of the “birther movement” in American politics, including questions about Barack Obama’s legitimacy as president and claims that he is not “really” an American and is certainly “not one of us.” Much of this happened, of course, after *Never Let Me Go* was published. But it is hard not to feel uneasy in Hailsham’s rhetoric. It is hard not to feel that it is just a little bit too familiar.

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**THE TEMPTATIONS OF THE TRIGGER:  
DEMYTHOLOGIZING VIOLENCE IN COOPER'S *THE PIONEERS***

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*Abstract:* Many scholars mark Cooper as the master myth-maker of American imperialism, arguing that he portrays frontier violence as progress. This paper questions the critical consensus. By retracing the violence depicted in *The Pioneers*, this paper unravels an ecological argument coupled with a psychoanalytical motif that Cooper employs to warn against unharnessed American aggression, not to celebrate it.

*Keywords:* violence, native Americans, American imperialism, ecology, psychology

### **1. Introduction**

A pale finger flushes with adrenaline as it strokes the steel trigger of a rifle. The buck bounds; the pigeon flushes; the Native chief charges; the adrenaline explodes. And with this explosion, James Fenimore Cooper ensconces himself in the American literary canon. Since his canonical induction, foundational literary critics, as early as D.H. Lawrence and on through Richard Slotkin, interpret Cooper's literary explosions as blatant attempts to mythologize the American frontier as a catalyst to divinely-destined American imperialism. When criticizing *The Pioneers*, such critics concentrate on Chingachgook's death and the creation of Natty Bumppo—Leatherstocking—as the quintessential American hero as two sure manifestations of Cooper's pro-imperialist myth. Other less consensual critics, however, suggest that rather than advancing the already pervasive imperial myth, Cooper problematizes nineteenth-century America and its imperialist ideologies (Fanuzzi 1993:38). Despite such interpretive anomalies, the majority of critics continue to argue that *The Pioneers* glosses over, masks, and even celebrates the violence of American empire-building (Permaul 2006:9-17). Yet, by aligning with the critical anomaly, an analysis of the violence portrayed in *The Pioneers* exposes a more critical portrait of American imperialism than most critics conclude. Rather than celebrating violence, Cooper employs ecological metaphors and explores the psychological effects of committing violence in order to combat the literal violence waged against nature and the Native Americans. By doing so, Cooper does not advance the already prominent myth of divine deracination; he violently demythologizes it.

Critics cringe at the fact that Cooper inundates hundreds of pages with violence, exterminates the last of the Mohican tribe, only to conclude his novel as a Shakespearean comedy. Adopting Slotkin's (2000:564) assessment of nineteenth-century American literary violence, Nadesan Permaul (2006:12) insists that the motto of *The Pioneers* reiterates Tacitus' tirade on ancient Rome after conquering Britain: "They make desolation and call it peace." Permaul and Slotkin both argue

that *The Pioneers* depicts the desolation of nature and the Native Americans only to call the desolation peace. Deriving the motto, however, solely from a novel's dénouement, trivializes the novel's exposition, rising and falling action, and climax. Instead of interpreting *The Pioneers* through such an Aesopian lens,—searching for a single, conclusive moral—dissecting the novel's introduction and body as equally determinant, reopens an intriguing critical discourse on Cooper. Though Cooper concludes *The Pioneers* by entrusting the future of the American frontier to certain white settlers, he does not conceal nor mythologize the desolating violence of American imperialism; he exposes and problematizes it.

Slotkin (2000:4) initially describes what he interprets as Cooper's Roman tactic as a "failure to recognize and deal with the real mythological heritage of [his] time and people." Permaul (2006:15) again extends Slotkin's assessment and contends that beyond simply failing to recognize the reality of the frontier conflict, Cooper strategically conceals it, concluding, "Those who must be excluded from the romance to make its charming mythology work for the audience are effectively removed from the shape and rise of the new American people and national identity." As Permaul asserts, Cooper's novel progresses through a series of effective removals. Early on in the novel, Squire Jones describes the forthcoming removals as he presents the frontier project to the inquiring Elizabeth Temple. "We must run our streets by the compass," Jones exclaims, "and disregard trees, hills, ponds, stumps, or, in fact, anything but posterity" (Cooper 1853:199). Jones' definition of Templeton's frontier project sounds familiarly Roman, but nowhere throughout the novel does Jones embody Cooper's views on the frontier and the proper process of American expansion. Instead, Cooper repeatedly condemns Jones' blind use of his imperial compass.

## **2. Removals**

### **2.1. First Removal: The Trees**

The novel's series of removals commences with the trees as Billy Kirby, the town's leading lumberjack, enters the neighboring forest. Cooper (1853:208) writes, "[S]electing one of the most noble for the first trial of his power . . . , the heavy and brisk blows that he struck were soon succeeded by the thundering report of the tree." Here Cooper employs two key terms that invite a metaphoric interpretation of the trees' removal: "noble" and "power." The term "noble" intimates a victim more human than arboreal, while the term "power" reveals Kirby's reason for removal. After ennobling Kirby's first victim and connecting Kirby to an imperial power struggle, Cooper (1853:208) then further personifies the falling tree: "[I]t came, first cracking and threatening, with the separation of its own last ligaments, then threshing and tearing with its branches the tops of its surrounding brethren, and finally [met] the ground." Through his personification, Cooper transforms the otherwise routine felling of trees into the battleground between two races, one noble, and the other powerful. Kirby then, like the Romans of old, "march[es] away under the blaze of the prostrate forest, like the conqueror



of some city, who, having first prevailed over his adversary, applies the torch as the finishing blow to his conquest” (Cooper 1853:208). Cooper’s depiction of Kirby, this Romanesque conqueror, mirrors critics’ claims of making desolation and calling it peace. Like Jones, however, Kirby never embodies Cooper’s concept of American expansion.

Cooper describes the fallen trees as “noble,” a term ubiquitous in nineteenth-century rhetoric to describe the Native Americans. Along with the more obvious epithet, trees themselves were also a common literary symbol for the Native Americans. Similarly personifying the symbolic arboreal victims of American imperialism, nineteenth-century poet, Lydia Howard Sigourney (1854:83-84), writes:

Man’s warfare on the trees is terrible. / He lifts his rude hut in the wilderness, /  
And, lo! The loftiest trunks, that age on age / were nurtured to nobility . . . / fall  
with a thunder sound to rise no more. . . . / He lifts his puny arm, / and every echo  
of the axe doth hew / the iron heart of centuries away. . . . / And upturn [*sic*] roots  
and prostrate columns mark / the invader’s footsteps.

Like Cooper, Sigourney depicts the felling of the frontier forest as the violent removal of a noble race. Whether this particular, ecological poem lends interpretation as a metaphor for the removal of the Native Americans is uncertain, although Sigourney grants voice to Native Americans elsewhere in her works (Zagarell 2005). It is no coincidence, however, that Cooper employs the trees as the literal and symbolic victims of his novel’s first removal, for the trees share the ennobling epithets of their “ancient inhabitants” (Cooper 1853:144)

## 2.2. Second Removal: The Pigeons

The second removal comes about much less as a proof of power than out of the thrill of the kill, introducing a psychological aspect to Cooper’s already ecological argument. Waking early to organize their attack, the Templeton settlers gather their ammunition and hurry to the hills. Anxiously, they waylay, anticipating their enemies’ advance. The pigeons—the settlers’ enemies—soon crest the hill and the settlers immediately fusillade:

Arrows, and missiles of every kind, were in the midst of the flocks; and so numerous were the birds, and so low did they take their flight, that even long poles, in the hands of those, on the sides of the mountain, were used to strike them to the earth. (Cooper 1853:268)

Here, Cooper transforms the frontier sport of shooting into a brutal bloodbath, revealing the American settlers’ unrestrained killer instinct. As the arrows, missiles, and poles prove insatiate to the settlers’ excited aggression, Jones,

the holder of the imperialist compass, arrives at the frontlines wielding a cannon. The arrival of the new artillery “collect[s] all the idle spectators to the spot, who being mostly boys, [fill] the air with cries of exultation and delight” (Cooper 1853: 269). While the settlers shout with excitement, Natty approaches and surveys the battlefield, from which “none pretended to collect the game, which lay scattered over the fields in such profusion as to cover the very ground with the fluttering victims” (Cooper 1853: 269). Disgusted with the settlers’ unharnessed excitement, and absolute prodigality, Natty declaims, “This comes of settling a country! . . . The Lord won’t see the waste of his creatures for nothing, and right will be done to the pigeons, as well as others, by and by” (Cooper 1853: 270). Through Natty’s castigation, Cooper transforms the frontier sport into a sermon against the prodigal, passion-filled violence of the American settlers while alluding also to the reality of other frontier victims.

A cannon-worthy flock, now understood as a metaphor for all other victims of frontier violence, soon appears over the hill and the temptations of the trigger become so overwhelming that even Judge Temple, the novel’s animal activist by mouth, “forg[ets] the morality of Leatherstocking . . . , and, in common with the rest, [brings] his musket to a poise” (Cooper 1853:273). The flock comes in range; the cannon and muskets fire; the victims fall; and the settlers celebrate, “Victory! . . . , Victory! We have driven the enemy from the field” (Cooper 1853: 274). As the settlers celebrate, however, Cooper (1853: 274) delves into the psychological process of Judge Temple’s remorseful rebuttal:

Not so . . . , the field is covered with them; and, like the Leatherstocking, I see nothing but eyes, in every direction, as the innocent sufferers turn their heads in terror. Full one half of those that have fallen are yet alive; and I think it is time to end the sport, if sport it be.

By juxtaposing Temple’s immediate compunction with his and his fellow settlers’ prior excitement, Cooper concatenates a psychological element to his already ecological argument.

As Temple turns to leave the battlefield, Cooper (1853: 274) then bolsters his argument with a motto that is less imperialist than most critics assert:

Judge Temple retired towards his dwelling with that kind of feeling that many a man has experienced before him, who discovers, after the excitement of the moment has passed, that he has purchased pleasure at the price of misery to others.

The key term here is excitement. In each of the novel’s removals, Cooper dissects the excitement of committing violence and analyzes its effects on the aggressor while simultaneously unmasking the desolation of imperialist violence. Cooper’s analysis of Judge Temple’s immediate regret emphasizes the novel’s motto and the prophetic forewarnings against adrenaline-based expansion.

Cooper's motto does not mask the cruel realities of the American frontier—unless metaphor and psychoanalysis have become literary devices to conceal rather than reveal—nor does it advance the violent myth of American imperialism.

Similar to the tree metaphor, placing the pigeon battle into its literary context provides an enlightening interpretation of the pigeons as another metaphor for the Native Americans. In 1827, four years after the publication of *The Pioneers*, frontier novelist, Catharine Maria Sedgwick (1842:69), employs a similar metaphor in her novel, *Hope Leslie*, to express a Native American's recollection of the Pequot War. Sedgwick writes, "Some of our people . . . mounted the palisade, but they were shot and dropped like a flock of birds smitten by the hunter's arrows." Then describing the battle's aftermath, she continues, "The bodies of our people were strewn about the smouldering [*sic*] ruin, and all around the palisade lay the strong and valiant warriors, cold, silent, powerless as the unformed clay" (Sedgwick 1842:69). Sedgwick's depiction and diction parallels Cooper's pigeon battle. Both apply a flock of birds. Sedgwick's victims are valiant; Cooper's are noble. Sedgwick's are strewn about; Cooper's are scattered. Sedgwick's victims are powerless; Cooper's flutter about. Sedgwick seems to have understood Cooper's pigeon metaphor and embraces it as a simile in her own writings. By interpreting Cooper's pigeons, as Sedgwick seems to, they become a powerful metaphor of *The Pioneers'* underlying, yet ever-present, Native American victims.

### **2.3. Third Removal: The Fish**

Having conquered the fields and the skies, the American settlers set off to take control of the water as Cooper repeats his ecological-psychological argument against American imperialism. Reaching the lakefront at dusk, the settlers set off furtively across the water's surface in preparation for another surprise attack on their next victims. When their positioning is precise, Squire Jones sounds the attack. The settlers drop their nets and paddle furiously shoreward. As the nets near the shore, "an occasional flutter on the water announce[s] the uneasiness of the prisoners it contain[s]" (Cooper 1853:283). Excited at the sight of their impending victory, Jones commands, "Haul in, my lads . . . , I can see the dogs kicking to get free" (Cooper 1853: 283). Obeying Jones' command, Kirby, the conqueror of the trees, becomes "inflamed beyond the bounds of discretion at the sight, and forgetful of the season, the wood-chopper rushe[s] to his middle into the water, and beg[ins] to drive the reluctant animals before him from their native element" (Cooper 1853: 284).

Following Kirby's lead, and again caught up in the excitement of the moment, Judge Temple—Marmaduke—again succumbs to the temptations of the trigger. "'Pull heartily, boys,' crie[s] Marmaduke, yielding to the excitement of the moment, and laying his hands to the net, with no trifling addition to the force" (Cooper 1853: 284). But as the exciting moment of victory passes, Cooper (1853: 284) repeats anew the novel's motto:

But when the feelings of the moment were passing away, Marmaduke took in his hands a bass, that might have weighed two pounds, and after viewing it a moment, in melancholy musing, he turned to his daughter, and observed, "This is a fearful expenditure of the choicest gifts of Providence."

Through Judge Temple's repeated regret, Cooper reiterates his motto against adrenaline-driven imperialism. He depicts the American settlers as selfish, impulse killers, driven by passion, pride, and possession. Contrarily, he depicts the fish as helpless prisoners and godly gifts. While depicting the fish, Cooper (1853:181) also inserts the key term, "dog," alluding to Jones' earlier description of the Native Americans, and the more obvious phrase, "native element." This terminological juxtaposition of the attacked and the attackers parallels that of the trees and the pigeons. And as such, the fish's removal acts as a final metaphor to foreshadow the novel's final removal of the Native Americans.

#### **2.4. Final Removal: The Native Americans**

Instead of attributing any significance to Cooper's ecological metaphors or his analysis of Judge Temple's post-violence psychology, critics continue to claim that through *The Pioneers*' final removal, Cooper glorifies the need to remove the Native Americans for the cause of spreading American civilization. Labeling Cooper as the master myth-maker of American imperialism, Slotkin (2000:473) concludes, "For the American writer, the conflict of cultures meant the replacement or extermination of the Indian." In other words, Cooper solves the frontier conflict of cultures through what Frederick Jackson Turner (1986:6) terms a "disintegration of savagery." As Slotkin and many critics since argue, Cooper clearly removes savagery from the American frontier. As he removes the Native Americans, however, he reveals an even more detrimental force of civilized savagery rampant among the American settlers, one of unrestrained, adrenaline-driven violence. From the trees, to the pigeons, to the fish, and now on to the Native Americans, Cooper reveals the inhumanity of the American imperialist project against nature and its Natives. Perhaps his revelations of reality are masked, as critics argue, but only behind metaphors laced with key terms ubiquitous throughout nineteenth-century Native American rhetoric.

Cooper's final removal of the Native Americans comes in the form of Chingachgook, the last survivor of the great Mohican tribe. Critics continue to build the bulk of their argument against this final removal. It is important, however, to reconsider the series of metaphoric removals, and how Cooper removes Chingachgook, in order to move beyond the obvious fact that Chingachgook is removed. In the moment of Chingachgook's death, instead of concealing his suffering, Cooper confides Chingachgook's tragic past to the soon-to-be heiress of Templeton, Elizabeth Temple. Entrusting Elizabeth with his final testimony against American imperialism, Chingachgook inquires:

Where are the blankets and merchandise that bought the right of the Fire-eater? . . . [A]re they with him in his wigwam? Did they say to him, Brother, sell us your land, and take this gold, this silver, these blankets, these rifles, or even this rum? No; they tore it from him, as a scalp is torn from an enemy; and they that did it looked not behind them, to see whether he lived or died. (Cooper 1853:442)

In this final revelation, Cooper does not silence Chingachgook's suffering, removing him clandestinely from the novel. Instead, Chingachgook empties his suffering soul, and, not adhering to Reverend Grant's Christian admonitions, begins "chanting a kind of low dirge, in the Delaware tongue, using the deep and remarkably guttural tones of his people" (Cooper 1853: 452). Chingachgook sings his own requiem, providing the novel's most sanctimonious scene. As the flames engulf him, the last of the Mohican tribe is removed from the American frontier, but Cooper does not mask nor glorify the reality of Chingachgook's lifelong suffering under the arm of American imperialism. Cooper reveals the reality of anti-Native American violence at the novel's climax, atop the mountain appropriately entitled *The Vision*.

In Slotkin's assessment of Chingachgook's death and the novel's festive finale, he concentrates on the incineration of Chingachgook, but draws little connection to the simultaneous burning of Templeton's frontier *Vision*. Instead, Slotkin (2000: 491) presents *The Vision* as a sacrificial pyre, arguing that Cooper appropriates the Mohican myth of national regeneration through kingly sacrifice to promote a republican regeneration through sacrificing the Native King. As Slotkin asserts, the novel's imagery indeed attributes a certain sacrificial reverence to Chingachgook's passing. Slotkin, however, fails to recognize that Chingachgook is not the American arsons' only victim. For the same flames that envelop Chingachgook simultaneously incinerate Templeton's imperial *Vision*. Thus, Cooper presents the removal of the Native Americans as a simultaneous removal of the imperialist ideals Templeton represents. Such a reinterpretation of Chingachgook's death does not suggest that Cooper opposes American expansion or the possibility and even necessity of adopting other forms of spreading civilization. But in *The Pioneers*, Cooper delivers an ecological and psychological argument against the prodigal violence of excitement-driven expansion.

Returning to the novel's first removal of the trees—now understood as a metaphor for the Native Americans—Cooper (1853:243) explains, "Little is known concerning the properties of the tree itself . . . how much it may be improved by cultivation." This early statement signifies Cooper's support of America's republican ideals and their spreading across the continent. *The Vision*'s burning, however, at the moment of Chingachgook's greatest revelation and sacrificial suicide, signifies Cooper's campaign against thoughtless, adrenal Americanism. Understanding Chingachgook's death as coinciding with the death of Templetonian imperialism, invites one to also reinterpret the novel's metaphoric battles and removals that lead up to Chingachgook's climactic killing. Cooper does not call killing peace; he reveals the violence that had been occurring under the cultural and political misnomers of peace and progress.

### 3. The Quintessential American: Natty Bumppo

After the novel's series of removals, one controversial character remains: Natty Bumppo. Critics argue that Natty's survival and sunset stroll into America's next frontier bolsters Cooper's myth of expansion through destruction. D.H. Lawrence (1998) introduces this imperialist interpretation of Natty when he concludes, "[Y]ou have there the myth of the essential white America. All the other stuff, the love, the democracy, the floundering into lust, is a sort of by-play. The essential American soul is hard, isolate, stoic, and a killer." Including Natty in his similar summation of America's mythic heroes, Slotkin (2000: 565) suggests:

Set the statuesque figures and their piled trophies in motion through space and time, and a more familiar landscape emerges—the whale, buffalo, and bear hunted to the verge of extinction for pleasure in killing and 'scalped' for fame and the profit in hides . . . ; the Indian debased, impoverished, and killed in return for his gifts; the land and its people, its "dark" people especially, economically exploited and wasted; the warfare between man and nature, between race and race, exalted as a kind of heroic ideal.

Natty, of *The Pioneers*, however, does not fit Slotkin's categorization. Slotkin's conclusion proves tenable in that Natty kills, scalps, and as Slotkin (2000:499) observes, even receives his Native name, Leatherstocking, from his unmatched skill in battle. Natty, however, never exploits nor desolates. Natty fights against, and finally abandons the exploitation and prodigality of the American settlers; he never encourages them. And through juxtaposing Natty to Judge Temple and the other Templeton settlers, Cooper furthers his argument against the "pleasure in killing."

Cooper's Natty is, as Lawrence asserts, hard, isolate, stoic, and a killer. These traits, however, are in no way those which set Natty apart from the typical white settler, nor are they those which Cooper elevates. To include Natty in Slotkin's summary, therefore, simplifies the complexity of Natty's character in *The Pioneers*. Critics assail Cooper's depiction of Natty because of his stoicism, his almost flawless ability with the rifle, his mammoth strength, and his unwillingness to conform; but Cooper emphasizes Natty's controlled application of these qualities in contrast to the settlers' constant unrestraint. Transgressing the critical consensus, Nicole de Fee (2008: 5) concludes:

Natty's distinct brand of American-ness is someone who does not identify with or promote colonialism or imperialism, and whose roots are connected to the indigenous people of the land, and who, in the end, is white. He is the one, theoretically, with whom Cooper's audience should identify; he is the American.

Nicole de Fee avoids associating Natty with the killer image other critics have simplified him to. She recognizes his whiteness, but disassociates him with the

white settlers and their imperialist frontier project. Despite his whiteness, de Fee's Natty connects with, learns from, and protects nature and the Native Americans. De Fee's Natty is the Natty seen earlier condemning the pigeon massacre. Aligning with de Fee, it is precisely Natty's ability to connect with nature and the Natives, which makes him a mythic American hero; not his hardness, isolation, stoicism, nor "pleasure in killing."

Cooper's mythic, all-American trailblazer coincides with *The Pioneers'* happy ending to suggest a sense of optimism in the new American ideals that Natty will then carry across the continent. But, it does not support impassioned imperialism. Contrary to Sercan Bercowitch's (1981:14) assertion, through Cooper's ecological metaphors, psychoanalysis of Judge Temple's post-violence regret, and creation of Natty as the quintessential American, Cooper transforms the frontier into a barrier against the already violent threshold of American imperialism. Neither Natty nor the novel's conclusion call desolation peace; they reveal the desolation beneath what their contemporaries labeled peace. They then instill the frontier with still white, but new, staid leadership.

#### **4. Conclusion**

For in the end, Oliver Edwards, a man not above the learning of an Indian (Cooper 1853: 95), claims his title as the heir of Templeton, not with an ignorant excitement to continue the current frontier project, but as one having already been injured by Judge Temple's imperialist rifle. He assumes his position as one whose closest friends—Natty and Chingachgook—have been killed or ostracized because of his now subordinates' unwillingness to assimilate with and cultivate nature and its Natives. And by his side stands Elizabeth Temple, the only character to whom Chingachgook entrusts the tragic reality of his people's past. It is also she, who early on in the novel provides the scathing sarcasm against Squire Jones' imperialist project with her retort: "Where are the beauties and improvements which you were to show me?" (Cooper 1853:199) As critics note, Oliver and Elizabeth are still white, but they maintain a vision of beauty and improvement much different than Squire Jones' imperialist compass. Their American vision is one of admiration, friendship, and cultivation. They stand against unchecked, excitement-driven violence, against unrestrained aggression. Together, Oliver and Elizabeth form Cooper's idea of the American frontier. They do not attain their position through power or violence. And they accept their position melancholically not victoriously, because of the loss of Oliver's friends and Elizabeth's saviors. Although *The Pioneers* concludes with a wedding scene of celebration, the celebration is precluded by a series of continual condemnation.

Returning to the beginning of the novel, as to better understand the end, Cooper announces *The Pioneers'* nonviolent motto, which he then repeats each time Judge Temple relapses to his rifle, each time he succumbs to the exciting temptations of the American imperialist trigger. As the novel's first buck bounds, first finger flexes, and first rifle explodes, an argument ensues concerning who

buckled the buck. After a lengthy discussion, Oliver Edwards—the rightful heir of Templeton—unravels the case, explicating the precariousness of Judge Temple’s imperialist rifle:

“You know, sir, you fired in this direction—here are four of the bullets in the tree.” The Judge examined the fresh marks in the bark of the pine, and shaking his head, said, with a laugh—“You are making out the case against yourself, my young advocate—where is the fifth?” “Here,” said the youth, throwing aside the rough overcoat that he wore, and exhibiting a hole in his under garment, through which large drops of blood were oozing. (Cooper 1853: 23-24)

Then announcing the novel’s motto, Judge Temple exclaims, “Good God! . . . Have I been trifling here about an empty distinction, and a fellow-creature suffering from my hands without a murmur?” (Cooper 1853:24). Judge Temple’s declaration of regret becomes a motif, which reappears each time he accedes to the temptations of the trigger. By retracing Judge Temple and his accompanying motif throughout the novel’s violent removals, Cooper reiterates a motto that counterpoints the current critical consensus. Cooper reveals that American imperialism is much more than “one neighbor wanting to enter the house of another” (Cooper 1853:401). It is an unwelcomed guest, forcing his way into the house of another, taking what is not his, and then burning his host’s house to the ground; who by doing so, simultaneously burns his own house. Through a series of metaphoric, ecological removals and a repeated analysis of Judge Temple’s post-excitement regret, Cooper problematizes the prodigal violence of American imperialism; he does not mythologize it.

Reinterpreting *The Pioneers* as a series of ecological metaphors coupled with a repeated psychoanalytical motif as a deliberate foreshadowing of the final, literal removal of the Native Americans; and juxtaposing Natty Bumppo’s control to the enviroing white settlers’ unrestraint, challenges the critical consensus that *The Pioneers* mythologizes divinely-destined American imperialism. Through his metaphors and psychoanalysis, Cooper already adheres to Slotkin’s (2000: 565) enlightening suggestion and places the American myth’s victims in motion to reveal the cruel reality of American imperialism. Cooper neither waxes over, masks, nor places racial exclusion in the background of *The Pioneers* (Permaul 2006:9-17). Nor does he validate the separation of non-whites from the American settlers, the disintegration of the colored, nor preach the providence of racial conflicts (Permaul 2006:13). *The Pioneers* does not form an American “fortress of denial” (Permaul 2006:13); it offers an open house of at least attempted honesty. Yet, despite Cooper’s ecological and psychological arguments against American imperialism, Slotkin (2000: 564) goes on to blame Cooper, as the nineteenth-century’s most prominent myth-maker, for creating an incessant imperial myth, writing:

But the cycle of the myth never really ends. The animal skins on the wall, the tree stumps in the yard, the scalp bounty money in the bank, and the pervasive smell of burning are proofs of what we have been; and they suggest that we still will play,



in concept or action, the same role in dialectical opposition to a new Indian, a new social or political antithesis . . . . Men 'make a wasteland and call it peace.

Slotkin's summary of the underlying American myth rings true today, but it is not uniquely American, nor did Cooper create it. It is an imperial myth, repeated by every empire since the beginning of time. Through the violence waged against nature in *The Pioneers*, now understood both literally and metaphorically as the imperialist violence waged against the Native Americans, Cooper condemns America's repetition of this timeless myth. He psychoanalytically demythologizes the excitement of expansionary violence, and through ecological metaphors, unmask the desolation being passed off to the public as peace. In *The Pioneers*, Cooper calls for a new myth led by a new mythic hero, still white, but one of restrained power, promoting cultivation, not extermination.

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**THE 9/11 CONUNDRUM: BEYOND MOURNING**  
**IN COLUM McCANN'S *LET THE GREAT WORLD SPIN***

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***Abstract:** The literary response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks has attracted a lot of divergent critical attention. Addressing the question of how one can write about such horrors, this paper argues that a more indirect but reconstructive approach might be more effective than attempts to explore the aetiology and consequences of the attacks in more direct ways.*

***Keywords:** 9/11 attacks, literary responses, parallelism, passion for the real, terrorism*

### **1. Introduction**

The 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the attacks on the World Trade Centre has occasioned, among many other commemorative undertakings, a close examination of how literature has dealt with the events. Understandably, there has been a multitude of literary responses of great variety, and it is anything but easy to define categories or draw conclusions. This paper focuses on a perhaps less likely candidate for a critical examination in this context, namely *Let the Great World Spin*, Calum McCann's 2009 novel. The novel itself has very little – if indeed anything at all – to do with the actual events of 9/11. Nevertheless, in the title of his review of the novel in *Esquire*, Tom Junod (2009, online) calls *Let the Great World Spin* “the first great 9/11 novel.” It could, as already suggested, come as a surprise to those familiar with the novel. Junod himself does not go to great lengths exploring this in his review. He does, however, have a very important insight. It is the purpose of this paper to investigate this claim further and to examine the way in which, although set 27 years before the terrorist attacks on America, Colum McCann's novel is indeed a 9/11 novel. The analysis will try to show how by his use of parallelism, his specific “bridging” technique, as well as by what seems to be a reversal of the “passion of the Real” (as defined by Badiou 2007 and discussed by Žižek 2002), McCann manages to write an important 9/11 novel about loss but mainly about reconstruction, endurance, and the regenerative power of beauty and daring.

### **2. The 9/11 novel**

Evidently, the first question to be addressed is: is there such a thing as 9/11 literature and what might it be? What is this species, “the 9/11 novel”, of which *Let the Great World Spin* is a great illustration?

In his review, Junod revisits this literary conundrum – how to write about 9/11? The events make both inviting and forbidding subject matter. There is an expectation that writers have to address the “Day Everything Changed”.

And yet the dream of a novel that unifies the culture around an event that wound up cleaving it is just another of those things that hasn't quite worked out for this country in the Un-American Century. For the most part, American readers have rejected the notion that any one writer can tell *them* about an event they had to live through. The narrative of the Un-American Century is that there is no central narrative, and, thanks to the self-expanding and story-diminishing technology available on the Internet, that's how we like it. (Junod 2009, online)

Or here is Joyce Carol Oates saying:

Though a glut of material has appeared on the subject of September 11, much of it the recorded testimony of survivors and eyewitnesses, very few writers of fiction have taken up the challenge and still fewer have dared to venture close to the actual event; September 11 has become a kind of Holocaust subject, hallowed ground to be approached with awe, trepidation, and utmost caution. The reader's natural instinct is to recoil from a purely fictitious treatment of so profound and communal a subject, for the task of fiction is to create a self-defined, self-absorbed and highly charged text out of language, and the appropriation of a communal trauma for such purposes would seem to be exploitative. (Joyce Carol Oates qtd. in Frost 2008:184)

Other voices are, perhaps, a bit more positive. According to Michael Rothberg (2008:124), “...literature has provided one of the most effective sites for reflection on the meanings of American life after 9/11” and

Literature and other forms of art are especially important after 9/11 because they allow us to imagine alternative responses to the violence of terrorism and the spectacles of mass-mediated culture. Literature and art can become sites for exploring the intersections between the public and the private and for understanding the feelings that terrorism draws on and produces. (2008:131)

In their “Introduction” to *Literature after 9/11*, editors Ann Keniston and Jeanne Follansbee Quinn correctly identify the forces at work in any such enterprise: the need for symbolic representations when dealing with such events and the desire to be true (to the events, victims, families, etc.) (2008:1). The mere articulation of these forces, though, shows how problematic they are. The symbolic in this case is necessarily a departure – or even transgression – and to the extent to which we can talk about “truth”, it can only be of an individual nature, unavoidably betrayed by any totalising enterprise. Consequently, the same editors point out, “... 9/11 literature works as a prosthesis, as awkward substitute for and attempt to compensate for the unrepresentable absence effected by 9/11 itself”. (2008:2) While the word “compensate” might run the risk of ringing the wrong kind of psychoanalytical bells, substitution, or a particular kind of substitution, is precisely

what constitutes the relationship between these texts and their subject matter. However, it is a substitution that, as Michael Rothberg suggests, should act like a bridging, or, as he puts it, like “a bridging realm that connects subjective experience with larger collectivities.” (2008:124)

What most 9/11 fiction seems to have done so far is explain, justify, mourn, poke the *why*'s and, to a certain extent, the *who*'s of the events. Texts as diverse as *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (Mohsin Hamid), *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (Jonathan Safran Foer), *Falling Man* (Don deLillo), *The Terrorist* (John Updike), or even Ian McEwan's *Saturday* try to activate an explanatory mechanism that is presumably meant to make some kind of provisional sense of the horrors and to trigger the mourning process. The analytic drive does, however, give a feeling of remoteness, or disconnectedness, and echoes in a way the compulsive but sterile, meaningless gaze of the viewers who watched over and over again the plane hit the tower or the towers' collapse. When caught in that repetitious behaviour, the actual collapse of the towers comes as an unpleasant surprise in that it interrupts the spectacle (Žižek 2002). Some of these texts seem to work their way backwards, from the disappointment to the enthralling spectacle, not always managing to establish a persuasive relationship with it or to engage in a meaningful mourning process. If they have not been hailed as “the great 9/11 novel,” it is probably because of this disconnectedness or lack of “bridging,” which leaves them suspended between an approach and a topic that do not always seem to link up very well.

In his article “Seeing Terror, Feeling Art,” Michael Rothberg (2008:124), drawing on Kant, argues that literary texts (and art in general) can “bridge seeing, feeling, and understanding, on the one hand, and the subjective and the collective, on the other.” Focusing on Bush's “war on terror,” he says: “By focusing on feeling (‘terror’) instead of a particular political tactic (‘terrorism’), the phrase draws our attention to the affective level of politics and points us toward literature's potential counter-force – a reconstruction of relations between thinking and feeling that both acts of terrorism and the imperial war on terror attempt to sever.” Benjamin Bird (2007) also proposes that fiction could enable New York (and the US in general) to re-establish a connection with its collective memory, with a past that has been too conveniently swept under the rug of the capitalist and technological drive towards the future.

Without focusing on the 9/11 events as such, *Let the Great World Spin* offers a convincing illustration of how feeling and thinking, the individual and the collective can be reunited. With its rather extraordinary feat of “connecting” (since everything connects, from the two towers connected by a metal rope to a prostitute's girls and a successful IT manager in Dublin), the novel reconstructs a sense of hope and even exhilaration that the usually grim analyses – whether fictional or non-fictional – of the terrorist attacks completely miss. Its stubborn avoidance of the events as such seems to suggest that focusing on them only, on their incomprehensible and traumatic nature, prevents us from understanding both the larger historical backdrop against which they occurred and the more effective, regenerative ways of dealing with them.

### 3. “A birth certificate chiselled on a tombstone”

Rather than explain or justify, *Let the Great World Spin* is interested in parallelism and connections, or “bridging,” to use Rothberg’s term. The novel deals for the most part with events prior to 9/11, so in that sense it is rather a pre-9/11, rather than a post-9/11 novel. It is, and here Junod (2009) puts it very well again, “a birth certificate chiselled on a tombstone.” Three of the four books that make up the novel are set in New York in August 1974. They follow the lives of a variety of people (the attempt was clearly to offer a cross-section of the city’s life) and the way in which they weave in and out of each other, sometimes in surprising if not downright unlikely manners. All these lives have a history of loss and an inability to mourn and make sense of this loss. The element that holds this diversity together and the main symbol of the book is Philippe Petit’s stunning high wire act on the morning of August 7, 1974.

The choice of Philippe Petit reveals from the beginning the novel’s obsession with both connection and daring, which constitutes a parallel and a counterpart to the terrorists’ preference for daring (but coupled with disconnection in their case). On that early morning of 7<sup>th</sup> August 1974, Petit pulled off the impossible by walking several times the distance between the newly built and much disliked at the time twin towers of the World Trade Centre. For some it is still the most spectacular, death-defying feat of the 20<sup>th</sup> century while others even see it as the act that saved the Twin Towers which, deeply resented by the New Yorkers, were failing to attract interest and business. While *Let the Great World Spin* is not **about** Petit and his daredevil act, it uses perfectly its symbolic potential. In the “shadow of no towers,” to echo Art Spiegelman (2004), McCann writes about the man who tied a rope between them and walked it, about the men and women down below, and about the effect this has on them.

Petit’s act accomplishes a connection that is both spatial and temporal. The spatial linking is at the same time horizontal and vertical. On a horizontal level, Petit connects the two ugly, cold towers, thus conferring them an unexpected kind of beauty and humanising them. Still on the horizontal axis, the tightrope walk connects the watching people below, all strangers to each other, revealing to them the intricate, indestructible web of (human) relations they are part of. The towers themselves provide the vertical link between the public and the artist-performer, but also between the idea of people being trapped in the small boxes of their daily lives and daily griefs and the liberating power of imagination and generosity. The skyward gaze forces these people, however temporarily, out of their constraints and into something that seems to defy not only gravity, but the idea of what is possible and what not as well. The text performs a constant vertical zigzag that breaks the neurotic pattern of repressed grief and enables everybody involved to entertain the idea of, and actually submit to, a transformation.

On the temporal axis, we move both backward, toward the past, and forward, toward the future. There is loss, death, and destruction in both directions

but the high wire act that the text itself performs is to turn the present moment and this instance of beauty into a lasting bridge above all that. Connecting is – or can be – a risky act, just like the tightrope walk, but the Twin Towers can be saved (from rejection back then and from the rubble and an afterlife of politicised abuse now). McCann himself speaks in an interview (2009, online) about how choosing Petit and the 1974 event to talk about 9/11 was not at all accidental. He sees that time as the mirror image of the time when he is reflecting on 9/11 and writing the book. “The soldiers were coming back from Vietnam,” he says, “now the soldiers are coming back from or going to Iraq (...), the first emails were sent in 1974, hackers, computer hackers were there, questions of faith, questions of belonging, questions of art, like almost if you took that time, you could fold it over onto the time etc.”

#### **4. The passion for the real**

The lives intersecting that August morning are all individual dramas defined by and unfolding against the backdrop of larger, collective ones, touching many of the fundamental dimensions of our daily reality: religion, the social, politics, arts, etc. The unconventional monk John Corrigan flees the institutional constraints of his order to work with the prostitutes in the Bronx, his brother Ciaran joins him after a lucky escape in an IRA terrorist attack, the hookers on the stroll are an unambiguous illustration of the social and racial inequalities of the greatest democracy in the world, the unlikely gathering of mothers is brought together by the horrors of the Vietnam War, former drug addicts and artists Lara and Blaine talk about Nixon to avoid talking about their own murderous act, judge Soderberg feels like a not-as-yet fully digested prey in the stomach of the judicial boa constrictor, and so on. They all seem to be torn asunder, they all seem to lose in their confrontation with the system/s they are part of. They are all engaged in some form of mourning and, perhaps with the exception of Corrigan, they have all embarked on a process of withdrawal from meaningful social relationships. They are victims of a reality they feel artificial, contrived, unreal somehow, and they long for something that would help them break through these layers of artificiality. This is what Petit does for them or enables them to do.

Petit is to a certain extent an embodiment of Badiou’s “revolutionary man” with a “passion for the Real,” for what lies beyond reality, or what we find when we peel off the artificial layers of reality. In *The Century*, Badiou says that this real is a “source of both horror and enthusiasm, simultaneously lethal and creative” (2007:32). The terrorists behind the 9/11 attacks obviously stand for the lethal and horrific side of this passion. McCann offers a counterpart in Petit, whose act, despite its lethal potential, is a celebration of enthusiasm and absolute freedom. This vision of celebration and freedom is precisely what the tightrope walker triggers in the people who witness, either directly or indirectly, his unbelievable deed. They witness it and are derailed – some of them temporarily, some of them permanently – from their course. The tightrope walk and its ripple effects help

them connect back with themselves and with others, even though sometimes the connections may seem rather unlikely, such as between Claire Soderberg, Judge Soderberg's upper crust wife and Gloria, the African-American mother living in the Bronx, who has lost all her three sons in the Vietnam war, or between Lara, the artist, and Tillie, the 38 year old prostitute and grandmother who loses her daughter.

Undoubtedly, there is parallelism in the fact that Petit's walk was, in fact, a crime. This crime, the art crime of the century, as he himself called it, is set against the other crime perpetrated on 9/11. The parallelism actually works not only at the level of the *crime* but at the level of the *art* as well. In his book *Welcome to the Desert of the Real* (2002), Slavoj Žižek talks about the 9/11 events as a spectacle, as a show on TV, slowly emptied out of the real. He claims there is an element of truth in Karl-Heinz Stockhausen's provocative statement that the planes hitting the WTC towers was the ultimate work of art, the repeated shots of the plane hitting the second tower or of people running towards the camera ahead of the cloud of dust from the collapsing tower turning the "real" events into a spectacle not so different from the catastrophe films Hollywood has been so good at producing. Also, the "derealisation," as he calls it, this emptying out of the real, went on after the collapse of the towers.

[W]hile the number of victims – 3,000 – is repeated all the time, it is surprising how little of the actual carnage we see (...) in clear contrast to reporting on the Third World catastrophes, where the whole point is to produce a scoop of some gruesome details: Somalis dying of hunger, raped Bosnian women, men with their throats cut. (2002:13)

The crime that McCann represents, though, and the art inherent in it represent the other side of the passion for the real that Badiou talks about. It is this reversed image, this alternative potential that the novelist offers as a means of dealing with the horror of 9/11. McCann builds his text as a tightrope stretched between the confusing now of the aftermath and the confusing then of the early 1970's. What is needed is a moment – or moments – of daring beauty that would force America away from the destructive course of ideology and militarism onto a course of transformation, which would enable the country to both mourn what was lost on 9/11 and regenerate itself around a more sound (because more aware of the larger world community) core. In her book of essays on the terrorist attacks, Judith Butler says (2004:21):

Perhaps mourning has to do with agreeing to undergo a transformation (perhaps one should say *submitting* to a transformation) the full result of which one cannot know in advance. There is losing, as we know, but there is also the transformative effect of loss, and this latter cannot be charted or planned.

An act like Petit's provides a brilliant example of beautiful risk-taking and of how a sense of communal ethics and responsibility can be recovered through an artistic (rather than criminal) gesture.

There seems to be parallelism at the level of the characters as well. McCann works obsessively in two's – the two Corrigan brothers (one religious, one not, one surviving, one not), the mother-daughter prostitute duo, the two little girls of the younger one, Lara and Blaine, the couple who cause the crash that kills Corrigan and Jazzlyn, etc. Given McCann's self-confessed fascination with the fact that the 70's were the starting point of computers as we now know them, as well as the fact that "writing code" (interestingly enough, writing code to save the Vietnam dead from slipping through the net of history) and hacking feature rather prominently in the novel, it would perhaps not be a total exaggeration to claim that McCann is writing his characters in binary code too. Just like the young Soderberg, the son killed in Vietnam (but in a bar, not on the battlefield, which thus deconstructs any temptation to invoke heroism), McCann, too, is trying to create the code that would save not only his characters, but the twin towers too and their victims, from oblivion.

## 5. Conclusion

In the same *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*, Žižek says "the true choice apropos of historical traumas is not the one between remembering or forgetting them: traumas we are not ready or able to remember haunt us all the more forcefully. We should therefore accept the paradox that, in order really to forget an event, we must first summon up the strength to remember it properly." (2002: 22) Remembering properly involves going back to the beginning, and 1974 marks a kind of beginning for the twin towers and their symbolic life among New Yorkers. Thus, *Let the Great World Spin* is a novel about beginnings rather than endings, the kind of beginnings that redeem endings. As Tony Junod again suggests (2009, online): "McCann's great accomplishment here is not only to identify August 7, 1974, as the beginning of an era of American freedom that ended on September 11, 2001, not only to suggest how the end of that era was prefigured in the beginning, and the fall in the rise. No, it's to forgive the fall, almost preemptively, and on that score, *Let the Great World Spin* stands as a kind of corrective" to other, more punishing, more dissecting, more disrespectful of the Other attempts to write about 9/11. "It is a book so humane in its understanding of original sin that it winds up bestowing what might be called original absolution, and it is a pre-9/11 novel that delivers the sense that so many of the 9/11 novels have missed: We are all dancing on the wire of history, and even on solid ground we breathe the thinnest of air." (Junod 2009, online)

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***NEW WINE IN NEW BOTTLES***

**NOVELIST OR SHORT-STORY WRITER?  
NEW APPROACHES TO GORDIMER'S SHORT FICTION**

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***Abstract:** Nadine Gordimer is best known as a novelist committed to fighting social injustice. Mainstream criticism has paid little attention to her short fiction, as it has been considered to be less significant politically. This article attempts to rectify such a perception, and to endorse the view that Gordimer's novels and short fiction are equally appropriate as fictional vehicles for depicting the vagaries of history.*

***Key-words:** fictional genres; short story vs novel; Gordimer*

### **1. Introduction**

In this article, I argue for a reconsideration of certain orthodox critical approaches towards Gordimer's short fiction, which has tended to be neglected by mainstream critics; by so doing, they unwittingly relegated Gordimer's short fiction to a secondary position. In focusing on Gordimer's two latest short-story collections, my contention is that the short stories do not operate in a realm different from that of the novels; rather, what I am suggesting is that binaries need to be treated with caution. Just as Gordimer's novels include private lives within their public spheres, so the short stories generally present social contexts as influencing individual lives. It is useful in this context to analyse the general critical response to Gordimer's short fiction. This criticism mostly pre-dates the 1970s.

One of the first favourable responses appeared in the 1950s, after the publication of her short-story collection, *The Soft Voice of the Serpent* (1953); Gordimer was then praised for her deep interest in "the uncatalogued humanity of human beings" (Delius 1990/ 1953:23). By 1960, Gordimer had established a reputation for herself as a writer of "masterly prose [which] bespeaks her art as a vocation in the religious sense" (Abrahams 1990/1960:26-27). In the early 1970s, by which time Gordimer had established herself as both novelist and short-story writer, there were still critics who considered the short stories to be among her best work. Haugh (1974), for example, lists Gordimer's short fiction among the masterpieces of the tradition of 'implication' and 'revelation' as it manifested itself in the work of Chekhov, Maupassant, James and Conrad; as well as Mansfield, Welty, Joyce, Crane, and Salinger. Haugh reveals Gordimer's subscription to categories of artistry, of which, her "most enchanting gift is the *trait de lumière*, the illuminating moment, the quick perceptive glance of the author, which sparkles like a gem" (1974: 14).

Despite these favourable early comments on her short fiction, Gordimer's stories have been relatively neglected by critics in the last two decades, or so. Some have ignored the short fiction in its entirety – e.g. Cooke (1985), Newman (1988) and Clingman (1986) – and have considered it to be of less importance than the novels in terms of their historical interest. Ettin (1993) and Wagner (1994), for their part, have unapologetically placed the short fiction in a position of subordination to the novels.

Head (1994) is the first critic seriously to engage with Gordimer's short stories. In reply to Clingman, he argues that novels, as well as short stories, can adequately represent the intricacies of both historical and psychological realities, and that "the privileging of the novels over the stories seems a matter of *degree rather than one of kind*" (1994:163). Like Head, I do not see the stories as operating in a different realm from the novels.

## **2. Select Early (1953) and Later Collections (1991)**

Before scrutinising Gordimer's two more recent collections, I shall point out the main features of her previous collections, as encapsulated in an early and a later one, so as better to identify general directions and tendencies.

In *The Soft Voice of the Serpent* (1953), for example, Gordimer attempted to express her disenchantment with the constrictions of colonial bigotry and racial entrapment. With an emphasis on existentialist philosophy, Gordimer shows that the individual, when faced with the challenge of social indeterminacy, can only rely on self in choosing between either adapting to, or changing, external circumstances. The early stories are also permeated by a state of 'waiting': an instance of the passive acceptance of external circumstances and, more generally, the absurdity of the human condition. My point is, however, that individual action seen from the introspective viewpoint has, for Gordimer, never been the luxury of escape from her surrounding milieu, but a form of oppositional discourse: a psychological reaction to the oppressive mental frameworks of South Africa. Once we recover, via existentialism, or otherwise, a comprehensive understanding of responsibility, commitment and choice, we renounce the often artificial barrier between the private and the public domains of being or becoming.

It is in her early short fiction that Gordimer explores the intricacies of the time-honoured themes of initiation, transformation, dislocation, catharsis, frontier experience, ritualisation and exoticism. Gordimer's early stories were Chekhovian in their amassing of the apparently trivial details that usually stifle unremarkable lives, as in the stories of the concession store. In "A Present for a Good Girl," "The Umbilical Cord" or "The Defeated", for example, the external data of setting and mood tend to overwhelm her characters' ability to surprise us with the volition of their own actions; irrelevant details in a near plotless succession create an expectation of catharsis through epiphany, only to end inevitably and relentlessly in anti-climax.

In her collections of the 1980s and early 1990s, and specifically in *Jump* (1991), Gordimer's general artistic approach changed dramatically: the reader is

now held captive by the ‘incarcerated imagination’ of the years of political Emergency. The motif of the collection is that of the underground as both social and psychological correlative – as foregrounded in the stories “Jump,” “Safe Houses,” “Amnesty” and “Some are Born to Sweet Delight.” The stories are set in the late 1980s, by which time many institutional forms of Apartheid had been abolished. At the crossroads between the totalitarian order and its fractured present, Gordimer combines the themes of ‘guerilla’ struggle in public and private venues with symptoms of morbidity, broken promises and unstable allegiances.

These later stories focus on the actions of people in sometimes brutal, at other times urgent, encounters. Here we find issues of initiation, dislocation and transformation, but also of struggles towards deeper forms of awareness. The general temper of the collection was appropriate to the 1980s, and very different from the stories of the 1950s. However, *Jump* is not merely a document of the years of political struggle. Its motivations are crucially concerned with human behaviour in extreme times. Its place in Gordimer’s *oeuvre* may be identified in the tensions between the responsibility to witness the social issue and the responsibility to perceive the underlying mental process.

### **3. Gordimer’s More Recent Collections (2003, 2007)**

Published twelve, and sixteen years – respectively – after *Jump* (1991), Gordimer’s two latest short-story collections, *Loot* (2003) and *Beethoven Is One Sixteenth Black* (2007), contain further shifts in her short-story writing. The sombre mood of *Jump* – life in the limbo of the political underground – has been replaced by a more centred, and less spectacular social scene. The writer now feels less burdened by social responsibility, and freer to engage in reconstitutions of the civil imaginary. Accordingly, Gordimer’s most recent short fiction signals a radical shift of emphasis in her writerly focus. She seems now to have renounced the morbid fascination with the extremes of human emotions in unusual circumstances. What is new are her excursions beyond the national question, the aspiration to step out of cultural isolation and enter the larger, post-ideological, world scene. Gordimer is still true to the important statement made more than two decades ago: “a writer is ‘selected’ by his subject – his subject being the *consciousness* of his era” (1983). As the political times have changed, and dictatorial regimes have given way to democratic practices worldwide, so has the writer’s subject changed. Gordimer permits herself to be inspired and ‘selected’ by the spirit of the new political world order, both locally and internationally. She does not transcend social reality to take refuge in pure aesthetic experimentation, which again checks any attempt to treat her short stories as of less social significance than her novels.

*Loot* (2003) and *Beethoven is One Sixteenth Black* (2007) present an explicit engagement with this new tendency in Gordimer’s artistic vision. The thrust of the two collections is identity and belonging in conditions of post-apartheid and post-Cold War liminality. Both collections are a reminder of well-worn Gordimer preoccupations with betrayal and disenchantment in human

interaction. These themes were also strongly represented – as already pointed out – in her previous short-story collection, *Jump* (1991), where Gordimer was fully absorbed by the social climate of the late 1980s, the last stage of apartheid before its complete disintegration. In that collection, all stories were set in South Africa, and she combined the motif of underground struggle with symptoms of betrayal. The current collection is not free of these motifs either, but as the writer's social context has become less extreme, she now feels freer to apply her favourite motifs to a broader social spectrum.

Gordimer has concomitantly become more contemplative in her latest story-telling endeavours, which invites comparisons with her early collections, where she stressed existentialist ideas: individual responsibility and free will, the indeterminacy and uncertainty of life and death. Both *Loot* (2003) and *Beethoven* (2007) somehow combine essential traits of the earlier and the later collections – as I shall illustrate below – while bringing a new touch to both: her opening to global perspectives.

### **3.1. Political Pasts Haunting the Present**

One cluster of the more recent short stories focuses on the unpredictable impact of a repressive political past on the present moment (i.e., post-1990) .

“Mission Statement” (2003) – for example – takes place in the 1990s, in an unnamed southern African state, and offers a complex engagement with issues of trauma and identity. The story portrays the love/sex relationship between a white woman and a black man against place/land as contested site of identity. The interracial liaison may be interpreted as an illustration of the ‘postcolonial body’ as concept: a crucial site for inscription and identity representation. Furthermore, the ‘body-as-text’ is a reflection, in this short story, of ‘place-as-text’ of inscription.

Roberta, who has grown up abroad, returns ‘home’ on a professional mission, being subconsciously drawn by a desire to explore her family ‘roots’, only to find that the meaning of life does not reside in the past, but in the present, which happens to unfold elsewhere. The need to explore and purge her family's suppressed colonial past is prompted by her sanitised existence as a member of the international aid-worker brigade whose work takes her to various places around the globe. She, therefore, feels the call of an invisible entity: that of a mythical land of origin. This echoes Lee's concept of home as longing for a recognisable spatial ‘cadence’ or pattern: a “‘presence’, both outside myself and inside my body opening out and trying to get into words” (1974:397).

Roberta's private longing for home mirrors the process of collective cultural experiences that are accretions of many layers of colonial practices and “spatial histories” as “palimpsests”(Carter 1987). Complete erasure of past histories proves to be impossible for her; she cannot liberate herself from the ghosts of collective white guilt. But neither is her polygamous, black lover capable of erasing vestiges of his own personal-cum-cultural history when he “dredg[es] up into his life some remnant [i.e., a wife] from the past” (2003:65). The couple proves unable to stand the test of traditions clashing. In short – and to her credit –

the author is neither prepared to offer idealised versions of the ‘other’, nor to suggest some superficially ‘correct’ happy ending. Roberta leaves southern Africa to become “again a member of an aid agency’s changing personnel, walking away barefoot” (2003:66) and empty-handed.

Gordimer returns to similar issues, albeit from a different angle, in “Look Alikes” (2003). The action of this short story is situated on a South African university campus, a campus that – post-apartheid – has been invaded by vagrants, or, to use another discourse, ‘the historically disadvantaged’: a parabolic/apocalyptic embodiment of the past (almost literally) haunting the present. Gordimer satirises the sham morality of students and academics alike, and even attacks political correctness and semantic evasion regarding the handling of the ‘vagrants’. One wonders, of course, why she should choose to target academia with so much venom. She seems to suggest that intellectuals have no solutions to the massive social problems facing contemporary South Africa: mass unemployment, destitution and dislocation, problems that cannot be resolved by empty rhetoric. Gordimer is explicit about these issues when she says, in an essay, that charity is not a solution: “charity, that palliative to satisfy the conscience and keep the same old system of haves and have-nots quietly satisfied” (1999: 181). The short story culminates in pure fantasy, when both students and staff fraternise with the vagrants and literally start ‘looking alike’. Hence, the title, which mocks the ‘mimicry’ between vagrants and the academic community: “If student solidarity with the underdog was expressed in the wearing of ragged clothes, then the invaders’ claim to be within society was made through adoption of acceptable fashionable unconventions” (2003:113). If Bhabha’s concept of ‘mimicry’ (1994) refers to the have-nots’ tendency of imitating the cultural values of the haves, Gordimer complicates the dynamics by offering the reverse tendency, hence the biting sarcasm.

In the short story “Beethoven is One Sixteenth Black” (2007) – the titular story of her latest collection – Gordimer is, once again, highly provocative, and even verging on the cynical, when she takes issue with the post-apartheid, ‘politically correct’ attempts of redressing past social imbalances. The short story is prompted by the unusual – though historically accurate – biographical detail that Beethoven had some Black ancestry: in other words, that he was ‘one sixteenth Black’. While this fact may be otherwise utterly irrelevant (in societies not scarred by racial divisions in the past), in a country like South Africa, such information is emotionally charged. Gordimer makes use of it as a symbol of skewed, disharmonious racial tensions from the past – “the detritus of other people’s past” (2007:6) – relentlessly haunting the present. Again taking issue with academia, she expresses her sense of its impotently guilt-stricken social conscience and its complicity in bowing to the power-holders of the day. Frederick Morris, a biology professor with anti-apartheid struggle credentials, finds himself little appreciated under the black dispensation, which promotes affirmative action for the previously disadvantaged; thus, Morris’s past right-action is largely ignored, for “the past is valid only in relation to whether the present recognises it” (2007:8). Morris realises that he would benefit from proving that (like Beethoven) he has some Black

ancestry, and – based on information about one of his ancestors' liaison with a Black woman – he is prepared to have a DNA test. He does so not because he believes this would make any difference to him existentially speaking, but rather for pragmatic reasons: “The standard of privilege changes with each regime. Isn't it a try at privilege. Yes? One up toward the ruling class, whatever it may happen to be. One-sixteenth. ... Once there were Blacks, poor devils, wanting to claim white. Now there's a white, poor devil, wanting to claim black. It's the same secret” (2007:17).

### 3.2. Private Pasts Haunting the Present

While the above-mentioned short stories represent instances of the political/ racialised past haunting the present, in many other recent stories, Gordimer focuses on how privately-held secrets can destabilise the protagonists' present identity.

In “Lucie” (2003), Gordimer pursues her investigations into the sense of self as linked to her past family history. The story unfolds against the background of a small Italian village, where a South African father and daughter are on their search for roots and origins, “a search for identity” (98). They focus on the past and its continuing significances, but end up symbolically realising that the meaning of life lies in the present. This change in perception is echoed through a strong metaphor: the stench of a body in decomposition, in the cemetery where the grandmother, Lucie, is buried. The physical reality of the body's degradation – with “the stench of rotting flesh [and the] unbearable fermentation of the sweetness of life” (105) – is skilfully employed to encapsulate psychological levels of awareness and shifts in perception. In short, the stench stands for all the pains of repressed family life, when confronted with “the dynamics of exile and expatriation” (Gurr 1981).

Similarly, in the story “A Beneficiary” (2007), a daughter is in search of her roots; this time, in search of her real father. This search is precipitated on her mother's death, when she goes through the deceased's papers. As it happens, she soon regrets having done so, for “caches of old papers are graves, you shouldn't open them” (2007:127). It is in this way that Charlotte learns that she is the daughter not of her 'official' father, but of a man her mother had had an affair with. As the secret-revealing letter “landed in the apartment looted by the present, it filled it with blasting amazement, the presence of the past” (2007:136). Although she is now haunted by the past's leaked secret, Charlotte eventually decides to let it go; in the process, she learns how more fully to appreciate the man/ 'father' who raised her (although he had known about the affair all along): “He can only be asked: *why* he's been a father, loving” (2007:137; my emphasis).

In “Allesverloren” (2007), Gordimer once again deals with the devastating effects of old secrets erupting into the present. A widow, in trying to piece together memories of her deceased husband, pays a visit to his ex-gay lover. This time, though, there seems to be no redemptive re-appropriation of the present: instead of



fresh insights into the “alternative history of private lives” (2007:103), there is but “a vivid dialogue of the unexpressed” (2007:112): a dead-end of understanding (‘allesverloren’).

### **3.3. The ‘Karma’ of unfinished business, or ‘Alternative Endings’?**

Gordimer’s preoccupation with the above-mentioned ‘alternative history of private lives’ is also present in her two longer short-stories – “Karma” (2003) and “Alternative Endings” (2007). In the latter, Gordimer muses over “choice and the unpredictability of humans” (2007:154) in intimate relationships. These are short, inter-linked pieces forming a whole that deals with love and betrayal: with what could have been ‘alternative endings’ to (what appeared to be) stable relationships.

The motif of “selective interruptibility” (2007:153) of the flow of life was already present in Gordimer’s novella “Karma” (part of *Loot*, 2003). While traditionally ‘karma’ refers to cause-and-effect in human (inter-) action, implying that there is a structured meta-narrative within which individual actions are circumscribed, it is difficult to believe that Gordimer is actually using ‘karma’ in its sacred/ teleological understanding. Rather, she makes use of its implications of fragmentation/ incompleteness perceived as betrayal of hope. Each (untitled) story ends with a sense of ‘unfinished business’, which carries on into the next story, and into the next. The overall impression is one of profound spiritual exhaustion, and if there is a unifying factor, then that might be the general sense of existential betrayal. All these elements are reminders of Gordimer’s early ‘stories of being’, in which she used to focus on the ‘nausea’ of being abandoned in a structure-less universe. The narrator – a nameless, disembodied presence – keeps returning to earthly existence to take on five different lives. The novella’s first subsection focuses on a white anti-apartheid woman activist, who operated underground in the past, but who now has, through corrupt means, obtained a position that enables her to become ‘upwardly mobile’; however, she cannot resist the temptation of bribery and corruption. Norma is caught, stands trial and has to sell the luxurious house she has bought through crooked means. “They sold the house with the Cape Dutch gable, these things not accomplished, the home not achieved” (168). The house in the suburbs is bought by a wealthy black family, and the story of their occupancy is focalised, in the next untitled subsection, via the black daughter’s perspective. She tells of the challenges of adjusting to suburban life; the suburb is made to look fresh with possibilities, until the girl dies in a car accident. Again, the disembodied narrator complains of “acts uncompleted ... something not realised; awry, abandoned halfway” (173). The third subsection leaps back in time to the height of apartheid in order to describe the destiny of a white girl, Denise, abandoned as an infant, then found and raised by a mixed-race couple in a township, after which she is re-classified as ‘non-white’. Life under apartheid is transmuted into a metaphysical correlative: re-classifications from one racial category to another are perceived as forms of ‘rebirths’.

The narrator becomes increasingly esoteric, with the next subsection telling

of an unborn spirit – because physically still-born – who, had he been born, would have been ‘Denis’. As it happened, the other twin, who found him/herself born before Denis, is to blame for the brother’s premature death. Could the surviving twin have been Denise of the previous story? In the last two subsections of the novella, the narrator muses about spirits either never conceived or aborted, with the female body-as-site refusing the inscription of maternity. The disembodied narrator concludes by saying: “So I was never born, refused this time. I suspect the only time. But then, what I have is not what is experienced as memory” (2003:210).

“Karma” concludes on a bitter note of ‘unfinished business’. There is no sense of an ending, but only the promise of more incompleteness, with the disembodied narrator – the writer’s voice? – meditating on its role and function. Gordimer’s metaphorical interpretation of the writer’s voice (as entity that is inhabited by numerous beings who never ultimately find a sense of completion) echoes Barthes’s famous comment on “the death of the author” (1967): the author created in and by language, a ‘site of inscription’ only, and not a ‘god of creation’. And as there is no unity of self, there is no closure, but only unfinished business.

Is this novella a palimpsest, a sign of the continuation of the past in the living present, a “series of erasures and overwritings”, as Rabasa would have it (1993)? Or is this Gordimer, now as postmodernist writer, deconstructing her own ‘authority’ by boldly experimenting with form and images, and the playfulness of endless deferral (‘karmic Returns’)?

#### **4. Conclusion**

Gordimer’s more recent short-story collections thus culminate in a new and unexpected authorial accent, which – although it combines elements of both her earlier and her later collections – pushes her own artistic boundaries to new, puzzling, perhaps mystic possibilities. Is Gordimer still a realist writer? Is she also postmodernist and/or postcolonial in subject and style? An intriguing and provocative choice, especially when applied to this writer, who – as I have sought to illustrate based on her most recent short fiction – seems to have challenged the very label for which she has made her reputation, that of a politically committed writer. Not that there is a lack of such commitment in the recent short fiction, but the term ‘political commitment’ – as used by mainstream Gordimer critics of the 1980s – cannot do justice to the complexity of her post-ideological illuminations.

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**TOWARDS A POETICS OF SMALL THINGS.  
OBJECTS AND OBJECTIFICATION OF LOSS IN  
JHUMPA LAHIRI'S *INTERPRETER OF MALADIES***

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*Abstract:* This paper focuses upon the way in which Jhumpa Lahiri uses the material world that builds the domestic environment in her 1999 collection of short stories *Interpreter of Maladies*, as a means of commenting upon her characters' search for identity and upon conflicting human relationships.

*Keywords:* thingness, reification, retroprojection, objecthood

### **1. Introduction**

Jhumpa Lahiri, winner of the 2000 Pulitzer Prize, offered in her 1999 collection of short stories *Interpreter of Maladies* a remarkable gallery of subtly portrayed characters and an entire network of apparently disconnected individual dramas. The common malady afflicting all the characters in the nine stories that make up her debut volume is alienation which transforms them into uprooted persons, exiled into their own lives, families or faulty relationships, homes and countries.

The elusiveness of these diseased souls and the fragility of the relationships they establish are permanently counterbalanced by the apparent stability and concreteness of the material world they inhabit. In Lahiri's stories, objects seem to acquire a life of their own, operating on different levels and under different guises: as *silent mediators* in dysfunctional relationships or in those cases in which people are caught between cultures and spaces and are accordingly forced to retranslate their identities; as *substitutes* for a lost home and implicitly, a lost identity, due to their spectral dimension alluding to a palimpsestically layered reality that bears traces of several cultures and finally, as *metaphorical containers* of all the conflicting emotions of Lahiri's characters, most frequently translated through food metaphors.

### **2. Things, objects and belongings**

The relatively recent field of the poetics of materiality has initiated an entire debate regarding the theoretical approaches of the discursive construction of matter. There is a general attempt to theorise the strange functionality of the material world around us which at times goes beyond mere instrumentality, acquiring new significances that place it somewhere between subjectivity and objectivity. Among other things, Material Culture Studies try to define the elusive quality that transforms ordinary objects into abstract "things" that might be the

recipients or the material supports of a multitude of projected ideas. The theoretical distinction between things and objects, along with the analysis of the types of transfers operated between them and their particular features, has been generally placed at the core of this field. The “physicality of things,” envisaged beyond the concreteness, instrumentality and functionality of objects, refers to the role they play in the discourse of objectivity where they function as “codes”. Only when our familiarity with a certain object/thing is broken, can we reach that particular quality of the “thingness of objects” that exposes a simultaneous abstract generality and a paradoxical particularity. “The story of objects asserting themselves as things, then, is the story of a changed relation to the human subject-object relation.” (Brown 2001:4)

Bill Brown, one of the theorists of material culture, spoke about a certain quality of *retroprojection* that operates on a mental basis between objects/ things and subjects, so that his definition of “thingness” is related to a particular degree of “excess in objects”; a *thing* is thus engendered when this excess is embodied into something else. It finally represents “what exceeds their mere materialization as objects or their mere utilization as objects – their force as a sensuous presence or as a metaphysical presence, the magic by which objects become values, fetishes, idols and totems” (5). In his opinion, this elusive quality is a latency that exists in any object, waiting to be activated, and, at the same time, an excess, waiting to become something else.

In Jhumpa Lahiri’s case the things cramming her domestic universe, each time differently illustrated in this volume, are circumscribed to an entire process of *management of uncertainty*. They participate in an operation of *disambiguation* that originates in the need for specificity and certainty in a world afflicted by a permanent identity search. She seems interested not only in “plain thinghood” and the essential features of things she uses but also in the values engendered through their transfer, mutual relationships and relations to subjects or to their possessors.

Instead of taking things out of their context, isolating and singularizing them so as to make their features stand out and be analysed against a theoretical background, Lahiri perfectly integrates them into the world of the text. She deepens their significance and sets them against personal, social and ideological problems. In comparison to the alienating postmodern world Lahiri’s characters inhabit, the material world is surprisingly healthy and rejuvenating, offering comfort and remedy, providing emotional support, sometimes even a means of communication and a possibility to censor human responses to alienating circumstances.

The writer succeeds in subtly endowing her material world with an exquisite capacity of acting as a translator of human emotions. The simple material presence of objects, the exquisite nuances of what Heidegger (see 2008: 143-212) once called “the thingness of the Thing” suggestively negotiate between loss and gain, between anxieties and expectations, between a reification of human emotions and an emotional investment in material things. When using objects as mediators between crippled identities inhabiting estranged spaces, Lahiri plays with their iconicity and makes people rely upon the palpable reality of things – translated by visual, olfactory or tactile details – in order to compensate for the fragility of

relationships and for the characters' incapacity of relying upon their own feelings. Objects acquire numerous functions as long as people seem to simultaneously inhabit two cultures since they all are representatives of a second generation immigrants, like Jhumpa Lahiri herself. She confesses she is particularly interested in her characters' "shifting from one situation and one location to another for whatever the circumstances might be," especially if they are "offspring of immigrants" (Chotiner 2008).

The accumulation of descriptive details of different objects acting as carriers of feelings usually brings into discussion problems related to the "imaginative possession of things" and their "metaphysical dimension" (Brown 4). In this case objects are diversely represented as being displayed in the neatly ordered packets, boxes and bags full of Indian spices and food in Shoba and Shukumar's pantry (*A Temporary Matter*), in the daily treasure hunt of Christian religious objects (*This Blessed House*) or in the small, insignificant and humble possessions, witnesses of a lifetime of ordeals and suffering (*A Real Durwan*).

The problem the young couple in the first short story *A Temporary Matter* has to face is the gradual dissolution of their marriage after the wife's miscarriage. Their mutual avoidance and gradual estrangement are subtly reflected by their gradual indifference towards their house, once a very cozy, intimate and lovely house. The warmth of their home was once translated into piles of food boxes neatly arranged in their pantry, in the kitchen. A perfectly functioning kitchen was equated to a perfectly functioning marriage...

There were endless boxes of pasta in all shapes and colours, zippered sacks of basmati rice, whole sides of lambs and goats from the Muslim butchers at Haymarket, chopped up and frozen in endless plastic bags. Every other Saturday they would through the maze of stalls Shukumar eventually knew by heart. He watched in disbelief as she bought more food, trailing behind her with canvas bags [...] brown paper bags of artichokes, plums, gingerroot and yams and dropped them on their scales and tossed them to Shoba one by one. [...] During the drive back home, as the car curved along the Charles, they invariably marveled at how much food they'd bought. It never went to waste." (Lahiri 1999: 6-7)

...whereas an abandoned kitchen and wasted supplies of food reflect a dysfunctional relationship:

Now she treated the house as if it were a hotel. The fact that the yellow cintz armchair in the living room clashed with the blue-and-maroon Turkish carpet no longer bothered her. On the enclosed porch at the back of the house, a crisp white bag still sat on the wicker chaise, filled with lace she had once planned to turn into curtains. (6) [...] For months now they'd served themselves from the stove and he'd taken his plate into his study, letting the meal grow cold on his desk before shoving it into his mouth without a pause, while Shoba took her plate to the living room and watched game shows or proofread file with her arsenal of coloured pencils at hand. (8)

The progressive loss of intimacy and trust is slowly revealed through small details to which Lahiri pays special attention; the possibility of their reconciliation occurs when, for five days in a row their electricity is cut off for an hour in the evening, as a consequence of some electrical repairs. Lighting some birthday candles, cooking dinner and being forced to share the meal like they used to and initiating the game of sincerity - "telling each other something [they've] never told before" (13) – become a ritual that seems to reestablish for a while the lost bond of intimacy.

The same iconic features are also emphasized in *A Real Durwan*, the story of Boori Ma, the sweeper of the stairwell, a survivor of the tragic events following the Partition. While sweeping the stairs she likes speaking about old memories, about much happier times when she was still with her family. Besides her bucket, her ragged quilts and a bundle of reeds serving as a broom, she has nothing but her jumbled memories which change with every occasion and with every listener.

Boori Ma's flimsy possessions come in contradiction with the new acquisitions of the other inhabitants whose new standard of living is represented by Mr. Dalal's two basins which disrupt the normal course of events and bring dissensions among the neighbours. These basins become the "last word in elegance," a "sure sign of changing times" (79) but their solidity and concreteness contrast with the deceptiveness of all the immaterial promises for a better life and a new quilt for Boori Ma. All these promises make her tear her old quilt in order to make rags for cleaning the banisters. The purchase of the basins initiates a fever for acquisitions and modern devices; while the neighbours buy more and more things for their homes, Boori Ma loses her shabby possessions, is robbed of her life savings and is driven away, finally losing her shelter in the building.

The residents tossed her bucket and rags, her baskets and reed broom, down the stairwell, past the letter boxes, through the collapsible gate, and into the alley. Then they tossed out Boori Ma. All were eager to begin their search for a real durwan. (82)

In these two cases of silent mediation between objects and subjects, Lahiri alludes to the first forms of maladies already diagnosed: heart breaks, alienation and estrangement culminating in the loss of a sense of belonging. People who find themselves alone in their own houses, families or relationships, reduced to their incapacity to reach out and express their feelings, unable to find a sense of certainty in the small world they inhabit, turn instead towards insignificant objects that might provide them with a solid, reliable support.

### **3. Material home substitutes**

Marital estrangement is a means to emphasize the lack of communication and the need to find "mediators" between solitary identities that might reestablish a connection long broken by alienating factors like immigration, family traumas, extramarital affairs (*Sexy*). Lahiri explains that this constant coming back to

dysfunctional marriages is inspired by her own childhood memories and the experience of her parents who had an arranged marriage as so many other couples back then, and of their separate lives – his father in America and her mother in India. Sometimes these are the very terms in which she speaks about postcolonial matters – slightly present in this volume – as an arranged marriage which has to find its own mechanisms and solutions for a good functioning. In an interview she confesses:

As a child I was always aware that my parents were struggling on some level: suffering, unhappy, out of place and out of sorts. The two worlds of India and America seem so uninteresting in each other. When I began to write, I started to knit the two worlds together. I tried to confront in writing what I was afraid to do on real life. (O'Reagan 2008)

The second category of objects Jhumpa Lahiri deals with in her volume are those functioning as substitutes in an interplay of cultural codes, private or public spaces, personal or historic accounts. All objects in *Interpreter of Maladies* bear under their surface traces of several worlds, visible in the way in which their possessors try to compensate for cultural displacement and for the general feeling of dislocation and alienation. In *A Temporary Matter*, *Mrs. Sen*, *The Third and Final Continent* objects prove their simultaneous existence in two cultures and succeed, mainly through home and food imagery, in metonymically and synecdochically reconstructing portions of India and at the same time in restoring a homely atmosphere and the ensuing sense of belonging.

In their search for identity characters find themselves caught between worlds, cultures, communities, feelings and emotions. Sometimes the entire endeavour to overcome this feeling of deracination becomes an overwhelming task, illustrated in the short story entitled *When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine*, placed during the war between Pakistan and Bangladesh and depicting Mr Pirzada's ordeal of lingering in the limbo of not knowing whether his family is still alive. This ordeal is seen through the eyes of a child who is unable to understand the absurd arbitrariness of territorial borders and the politically delimited national spaces which may cause the distress of so many families and communities:

'One moment we were free and then we were sliced up', he explained, drawing an X with his finger on the countertop, 'like a pie. Hindus here, Muslims there. Dacca no longer belongs to us'. He told me that during the Partition Hindus and Muslims had set fire to each other's homes. For many, the idea of eating in the other's company was still unthinkable. (Lahiri 1999: 25)

Maps and their arbitrariness seem as transient and momentary as the "foliage of New England" which is Mr. Pirzada's object of study. He gets a scholarship in America where he becomes a regular guest at dinner in the narrator's house. In order to comment upon the traumas provoked by the Partition and the ensuing events, Lahiri uses two sets of objects, mainly viewed in their indexical



features, in order to counterbalance the sense of loss, cultural displacement and uprootedness suggested by one set of objects, with another set meant to heal traumas, restore broken ties and wipe out artificial differences. There is a permanent transaction of objects in this story in the attempt to reestablish broken family, communal and national connections. If the map and its different colours as well as Mr. Pirzada's silver watch set to the local time in Dacca are constant reminders of the differences between the characters, the little gifts Mr. Pirzada always brings his little hostess and all the meals he shares with her family emphasize the unbreakable solidarity in front of human tragedy. They were "a single person, sharing a single meal, a single body, a single silence, a single fear" (41).

For the Indians in this story asserting their identity almost becomes an impossible task since the idea of "Indians" in America is a relatively easily identifiable abstract unitary notion whereas the idea of "Indians" set against the Indian diversity ceases to be something definite and coherent. This is the case of Mr. Pirzada who set against USA is an Indian, set against India is a Pakistani, and set against Pakistan is a Bangladeshi. His daily gifts become a ritual of affection, remembrance and hope that his family might be alive and "heartily fed" (29). His gifts ("honey-filled lozenges, raspberry truffles, slender rolls of sour pastilles, peppermint lollipops") seem to be endowed with a special significance and are accordingly treasured as "jewels" or as "a coin from a buried kingdom" (29) preserved into a keepsake box made of sandalwood which finally becomes a metonym for India, a repository of memories, traditions and forgotten identities. Watching TV in order to find out news about his family becomes another daily ritual for which Mr. Pirzada comes elegantly dressed as if "for a funeral at a moment's notice" (31). The little sweet gifts become the object of another ritual as the little narrator of the story eats them one by one, saying a prayer for the safety of Mr. Pirzada's family; each prayer has the flavor of a chocolate square whereas the meals they all share serve to revive a feeling of belonging, to create a space of peace and security.

Food, sharing meals and eating habits are constant elements that acquire metaphoric values in Jhumpa Lahiri's stories. They are used to recreate homes, to restore the feelings of binding and belonging. On the other hand food is used in order to increase the sense of cultural alienation and loss. In *Mrs Sen* a housewife's longing for India is translated into her obsession with cooking traditional Indian food and her general discontentment with American food. Her way of chopping vegetables in remarkable quantities becomes a metaphor for the way in which she also chops her too much spare time spent in solitude and longing for her native Bengal. Cooking fresh fish – a Bengali common dish - and enduring difficult driving lessons in order to be able to procure it become Mrs. Sen's manner of recreating India and keeping alive the sense of family communion.

In *Interpreter of Maladies* food is used not to bridge cultural gaps but, on the contrary, to enlarge them. This is the story of an Indian family who comes from America to visit India and make the best of this adventure. That is why they hire a professional guide to take them to the Sun Temple at Konarak; the spouses'

attention seems to be constantly distracted by trivial things (Mrs. Das is nervously busying herself with objects in her big handbag and is polishing her nails whereas Mr. Das gets annoyingly obsessed with his camera, becoming an indifferent observer and recorder of events) revealing their estrangement. In the course of the exchange of information between the guide and the visitors, secret failures and ailments come to light. The guide's ordinary job is that of an interpreter in a doctor's office and his profession becomes a larger metaphor for Lahiri's endeavour in this volume, that of bridging two cultural spaces and of translating identities. What is interesting in Lahiri's treatment of these two cultural spaces is the fact that she never adopts a definite perspective when analysing losses and longings; she permanently shifts sides and translates one space in terms of the other without pretending that the translation is ever perfect. This is visible in the way in which food is used this time, never mentioned on its name but rather paraphrased from an American perspective: never jhalmuri but "puffed rice tossed with peanuts and chilly peppers", never pakora but "onions and potatoes deep fried in graham-flour butter" (54). Mrs. Das's interest in the guide's unusual occupation and her confession that one of her sons is not her husband's son make this man realize his personal professional failures and hope for a possible long-distance relationship based on mutual confessions, encouragements and hopes. Their promise seems to be materialized in a scrap of paper upon which he writes his address so that Mrs. Das could send the photo they took together. This future photo, in fact an absent, haunting photo, becomes another hypothetical object of transaction between people. From hypothetical it finally becomes an illusion when the piece of paper is taken by the wind, hinting at the idea that there is always something that escapes translation and proves to be untranslated and untranslatable.

#### **4. Metaphorical transfers and investments**

Envisaged from the perspective of the symbolic function of matter and material things in Lahiri's short stories and their metaphoric investment, objects become containers and symbolic embodiments of people's emotions, sometimes standing for the void engendered by the feeling of loss and estrangement and some other times representing the cure meant to heal this void by means of a permanent metaphorical transfer between the human subject and the inanimate thing. In terms of materiality, Lahiri seems to favour food images including cooking and eating habits as metaphorical means of alluding to claustrophobic marital relationships, lost intimacy and displacement.

It is difficult however to ascribe particular values to things and objects in Lahiri's short stories as they simultaneously accomplish different functions and acquire multiple significances. This is the case of the seventh story, *This Blessed House*, whose action is once again placed at the intersection of American and Indian cultures. In Sanj and Twinkle's house, bought shortly after their marriage, a little domestic crisis occurs when they discover that the former owners of the house crammed it with a "little biblical menagerie" (139). They find hidden in the house

all sorts of little and not so little Christian religious objects and souvenirs which Sanj, as a good Hindu wants to throw away, whereas Twinkle, considers finding them a funny game and her curiosity is incited by this “treasure hunt” (141) which allows her to gather a collection of Christian paraphernalia. This collection represents her longing to break the conventionally rigid boundaries of her marriage and, at the same time, her longing to find “objects of transactions” between their different personalities. The objects discovered in the house have different sizes varying from “miniature” to “life-size” in a constant play with proportions; this dialectic of the miniature and the gigantic, in Stewart’s terms, can be seen as an oscillation between an interior space of intimacy and domesticity and an exterior space of collectivity, between self and the world, and translates Twinkle’s search for identity (1984:xii). Even if cooking Indian food seems to be too complicated to bother, Twinkle enjoys everything Indian or American, Hindu or Christian around her; Sanj, in his turn, projects an entire world of expectations upon this house which comes to be metaphor of their relationship. Anger and misunderstanding threaten to wreck this blessed, unarranged marriage, but Twinkle’s spontaneity and capacity of taking delight in all trivial things succeed in throwing a bridge between cultural spaces and differences.

## 5. Conclusion

Lahiri’s attention to minute details, to a genuine “code of objects” and to their functionality, meta-functionality and schizofunctional – preserving Baudrillard’s classification in *The System of Objects* (2005) – her capacity to go beyond the banality of everyday existence and to reach untold individual and collective dramas have been unanimously acknowledged. She is often praised for “the unique ability to paint the worlds of both immigrant and native in miniature, allowing for immersion in detail while simultaneously placing them in a grand, sweeping perspective of universal truth.” (<http://bookreporter.com/reviews/039592720X.asp>[Accessed 2011 August 28])

The characters in Lahiri’s *Interpreter of Maladies* who suffer from a general feeling of alienation going from individual, to familial and communal estrangement, establish a particular type of connection with the material world of their stage. They are all haunted people – haunted by their past, their former homes and overwhelming emotions – and find refuge in a world of “small things” that embody or absorb part of their overflowing emotions. Jhumpa Lahiri seems to find new illustrations for the “object vs. thing” dialectic by reworking upon what Bill Brown called “a mutual constitution of subject and object” and exorcising her characters’ maladies by reifying their emotions.

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**APPROPRIATING OTHERNESS**  
**IN ANNE DONOVAN'S *BUDDHA DA***

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*Abstract: The papers tackles possible effects of multiculturalism in Scotland, experienced in a typically Glaswegian family, pointing to the ineluctable promise of reconfiguration of homeland - the Caledonian culture - and lifescapes - within the contemporary context of internalization and globalization of identities.*

**Keywords:** *alterity, Buddhism, everyday practices, Scottishness*

**1. Introduction: in lieu of argument**

At R.E. classes, Henderson explains the peculiarities of this certain religion as being the following:

Buddhism. Note the spelling carefully. Two d's and a silent h. (...) Buddha means enlightened one. And the main difference between Buddhism and the other religions we've been studying so far is that in Buddhism there is no god.(...) Most religions have a god, or gods, but Buddhism doesn't. (...) Some people would say that Buddhism is not, in fact, a religion, as there's no god to be worshipped. (Donovan 2003:156-7)

**2. Cultural plurality in Scotland**

Readers of contemporary Scottish fiction might have noticed the dynamics of the writers' cultural concerns from a strong demonstration of a model of stable national identity, constantly foregrounding and maintaining a high degree of authenticity to tendencies of incorporating globalizing processes and effects, from the status of province, of marginalization and peripheralization, to that of an equal participant to the world literary heritage by opening experimental avenues in focusing on the non-Caledonian issues of the everyday life. The latter aspect is facilitated by the present condition and context of the country's becoming highly ethnically-diverse, at least according to the electronic database regarding the demographic structure in Scotland, and the General Register Office for Scotland: the last census in 2001 mentions a percentage of about 15% non-Scottish population out of 5,062,011 to be shared by a multiple combination of visible and non-visible minorities, out of which approximately 1% coming from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, a situation that grants a cohabitation dictated by rules, regulations, policies, all meant to prevent any form of discrimination or segregation. (see [www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/07/29095058/0](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/07/29095058/0); 14 May 2011).

The consequence of the presence of ethnic alterity/diversity in a country, traditionally seen as mono-cultural, leads to a revaluation and reconfiguration of its cultural condition by a process of hybridization and pluralization of different practices (e.g. culinary, community celebrations, etc) and by a discovery of a new national ethos of the multi-sidedness of otherness/sameness. We witness a gradual domestication of the image of the other and of the initial difference that generated it while allowing and supporting its visibility in the general cultural context by the very act of encouraging cultural commodities to thrive and spread, and to display their universality irrespective of historical and geographical positioning.

Scottish writers nowadays share the view that cultural diversity can increase the sense of authenticity of the national values and practices, by revealing those hidden values that one becomes aware of only when either comparing them or lacking them. Fictionalization of cultural identity as is in the book by Andrew O'Hagan, *Personality* (2003), or constructing, by adjustment and completion, a different self, as in Anne Donovan's book, *Buddha Da* (2003), are but instances operating with the emotional perspective, or the cognitive dimension. Emotions that O'Hagan's Italian characters experience are seen here as a site of social control, so crucial in the development of people's knowledge and understanding of the dimensions of the multicultural phenomenon, its process and dynamics (see Wang 2008:10). The search for equanimity, for that evenness of mind is what Donovan's Glaswegian Buddhists need in such a critical moment of Scottishness facing the process of "planetary integration", a process supported by the cultural and social changing realities which interrogate and often subvert the validity of tradition, of national practices, in our example, of Scotland's constant intentions and attempts to preserve a cultural heritage to be passed from one generation to another. The two titles/writers reinforce one of James Kelman's beliefs that "no true Scots man or woman ever was ashamed of any aspect of our society" (Kelman 2002:336), and share his opinion that a new perspective on Scottish culture is needed, a sensibly larger culture now, enriched by the diversity it has been facing once ethnic communities in Scotland were acknowledged as part of the synoptic picture of the traditional culture, fully reflecting "the reality of Scottish life" (338).

These new realities have shaped new tendencies in the Scottish novel today which means that asserting Scottishness through settings and characters, the permanent force of cohesion that impinged the advance of Scottish literature, has recently been paralleled by what Alan Ryan inspiringly calls "adjectival culture," emerging from "the congeries of beliefs, values, and attachments that give societies their character, and allow their members to make sense of their lives and aspirations"(Ryan 1998: 63), a culture devoted to the conservatism of the popular stage, which paradoxically aimed at satisfying the 'consumers'/readers' appetite for cultural difference and variety. Authors are aware of the potential provided by multivocalism in a country that historically was submitted to voicelessness and marginalization even if, like elsewhere, there is the fear of globalization to possibly dilute a much acclaimed national pride, in the process of the vanishing borders between formerly clean-cut entities such as nations, countries, regions, communities due to geopolitical forces. There is also the threat of discrediting any

belief in immutable values, such as grand narratives, histories, traditions, languages, cults, and increasing concern for questions of ontology, characterizing postmodern times, most often expressed as “an uncertainty about the relationship between the real and the unreal, between simulacra and simulation, and about authenticity and fakery, as well as nostalgia for lost and displaced selves and organic communities.”(Bentley 2005:10).

This new facet of Scottish writing can be regarded as a result of the re-positioning of previously marginalized voices within postmodernity, variously linked to multinational, global capitalism and to the fragmentation of the liberal humanist notion of unified subjectivity into multiple/split identities, and to a new manner to work with national imagination while celebrating pluralism and difference. There is so much knowledge of the tendency toward “planetary integration,” as Žižek names it, sensed at the level of both a “sovereign nation state” and of a national culture, that the shift in the importance/influence/weight of ethnic differences in building up a nation’s image is unavoidable; they are preserved but “are submerged in the medium of universal integration, they are posited as particular aspects of the universal many-sidedness” (Žižek 1992:162).

### **3. De-Scotticisation or the Commodification of Otherness?**

David Morley (2000:3) states that “the construction of national identities (the macro-processes) is grounded in an understanding of the micro-processes through which the smaller units which make up the larger community are themselves constituted”, these micro-processes developing against a space of belonging such a domestic home or a neighbourhood, two of the common elements for describing both the private and the public space that individuals relate to in their everyday practices.

Anne Donovan’s protagonists, Jimmy McKenna his wife Liz, and Anne Marie, his daughter, discover that their lives get to a sudden twist because of a local experience which is lived at the level of their home, family, neighbourhood, which is the proximity and the challenge of one of the eight Buddhist centres in Glasgow (and thirty eight in Scotland), a turning point perceived differently by each of them, that is for James it is a necessary destination – “Ah’m just gaun doon the Buddhist Centre for a couple hours, Liz, ah’ll no be lang’(...) Just thought ah’d go and have a wee meditate, try it oot” (Donovan 2003:1), for Anne Marie is one of his father’s weirdnesses,

At first bein a Buddhist didnae seem tae make that much difference tae ma da. He used to go doon the pub on a Tuesday and noo he went to the Buddhist Centre tae meditate. Same difference. (...) He stuck a photie of the Buddha up on the unit in their bedroom and noo and again he’d go in there and shut the door instead of watchin the telly – mediatin, he said. (3),

and Liz, “doesnae really approve.”(64). Jimmy is guided by the common knowledge and belief that meditation can help to make the mind calm and peaceful.

With a clear and happy mind we find a greater sense of wellbeing and our relationships with others improve, as demonstrated in his easily making new acquaintances and finding communication avenues with Barbara with whom he comes to share the feeling of his new discoveries:

Most people think Buddhism's about meditating, but it's really about how you live your whole life. Part of it is the idea that you make your living in a good way, not a harmful or dishonest one(...) You just choose something else. If you don't drink you get clearer; eating vegetables instead of meat, well, it seems lighter somehow, that's all. (57, 63)

Jimmy is aware of the fact that in his case meditation "it's a bit heavy gaun (...) Ma mind keeps fleein. Ah cannae concentrate. And ah thought ah wis gettin a bit better at it."(31) and the Centre becomes the site of his vacillating personality and ambiguous self-defining, it embodies his uncertainty in finding answers to his existential questions, his impossibility to face the void of his life in that moment as it was just a big empty space:

At wan end of the room was a platform about a foot high and on it was a huge statue of the Buddha, some wee nightlights and an incense burner in front of him. The walls were painted white and the floorboards were polished. Compared tae the chapel it was dead bare. Ah didnae know whit tae dae. Were you supposed tae bless yerself? (160-161)

The need to find his peace of mind within this new community makes him visit the Centre more and more often, to the amazement of his teenage daughter who can vaguely understand what her father was trying to demonstrate to the family:

He startit gaun tae the Centre mair often, right enough. Thursdays as well as Tuesdays and sometimes even on a Saturday when his team were playin away. Then wan day while we were daein the dishes he reached up high and sumpn fell oot his pockets. (...)Beads. (...). Prayer beads.(5)

The Centre started to gradually turn into a sort of physicality of a third space, that, according to Homi Bhabha, is "where the familiar and the foreign are conjoined, where it is less clear where home concludes and foreign begins, where we must dwell in home as itself a hybrid space of coeval times and lives." (qtd. in Morley 2000:211). Jimmy McKenna himself feels drowned into a new community whose process of structuration, that is, the formation of a different rule set of a community, he gets to witness. Gradually he becomes part of this continual interaction this continual interaction on individual participants through repeated everyday practices, thus developing them into the rules which form a community structure (see Watson 1997:116); as a result, he will opt for a New Year's Eve spent at the Centre instead of enjoying the regular Scottish family and Scottish friends' traditional celebration of the event, though he finds it hard to admit that: "ah just don't feel that way any mair, cannae be bothered wi the noise and the



people, cannae haundle it? Anyhow ah don't drink noo and whoever heard of seein in the New year wioot a drink in yer haund?"(Donovan 2003:140).

His evening spent in a complete solitude at the Centre recalls the Barthesian way of inscribing the other within the text through a specific text of Absence which, the author says, is a text with two ideograms: there are the raised arms of Desire and there are the wide-open arms of Need (see Shaw 1997:139), noticeable in Jimmy's way of experiencing that particular night:

Ah kept thinkin how great it wid be jist tae sit by masel when everybody else was oot gettin pissed, daein the conga roud the hoose and kissin folk they've met five minutes ago. (...)So at ten o'clock when Liz and Anne Marie were away, ah heided aff tae the Centre nd started tae make ma preparations. Ah set oot a photie of the Rinpoche beside the statue of the Buddha in the meditation room and lit a candle in fronty them. (...)Ah lit ma candle and sat, watchin the flame flicker in the dark while the monks chanted Tibetan words in their singsong voices (on a CD received from Anne Marie with Tibetan Cants). And this incredible feelin of peace come ower me, soft like. So ah just sat. (Donovan 2003:141-143)

The new cultural patterns that he gets initiated into are so much different from the style, the rituals and ways of his old community, so often characterized as being "exclusive, inflexible, isolated, unchanging, monolithic, homogeneous" (Jones 1997a:10) that he indeed felt the need of a new community, one that would be "fundamentally devoted to democratic problem-solving needs to be fashioned from the remnants of the old and needs to have a high degree of awareness, principles and purpose and needs to be focused around action and doing."(10)

Jimmy strongly believes in the practitioners of Buddhism in Scotland, no matter whether they are embodied by lamas, the present (or future) Dalai Lama or just the Rinpoche, best described by his daughter who finds his father's sudden attraction to Buddhism an incomprehensible exoticism. The lamas come to their place and Anne Marie is to answer the door to find that several lamas were standing in front of it:

the genuine Tibetan kind wi maroon robes and shaved heids. Three of them, staundin on the doorstep on a Saturday efternoon and the way the neighbours were lookin at these guys they might as well have been llamas wi humphy backs insteidy lamas. They seemed oblivious tae the commotion; ah suppose they're used tae it, or mibby meditatin really does make ye laid back."(Donovan 2003:6).

They came to Glasgow because of the tip that the next Dalai Lama might be a newly born Galswegian, in Carmunnock, but when they reached the family, to their disappointment, they found out that the new lama proved to be a little girl, Olivia: "Know how thon wean wisnae the new lama – is that because yous had been tellt it definitely wis a boy this time, or does it have tae be a boy?" (14).

The traditional discourses of Scottish culture - Tartanry, Kailyardism, Clydesideism – is added a different one, in which roles are taken by "sumpn like Sammy Rinpoche, Hammy Rinpoche and Ally Rinpoche. Funny that. Wi names

like Sammy, Hammy and Ally they could play for Scotland. Later ah found oot that Rinpoche means holy wan – it’s a bit like callin a priest ’faither’” (8 ). It is creatively completed by the image of Vishana sitting in the lotus position talking “aboot reincarnation.” which did nothing but confuse the Scottish imagination:

This wis sumpn ah couldnae get ma heid roond. (...) Ah mean, at least you’re the same person livin yer life here on earth, then gaun somewhere else. Simple. But if yer reincarnatin aw the time, how come you don’t remember who you were in the previous life? Or are you somebuddy different each time’ (34)

According to Carla Sassi, Scottish fiction, like Scottish culture in general, might have reached a stage of a certain ‘overdefinition’ which could easily lead to the death of “the protean, polyphonic tradition” and of the cultural autonomy and identity established at home and in Europe/the world, because of the spread of a certain process of cultural ‘exoticisation’. Hence we are likely to enter a new phase in the evolution and development of Scottish culture, respectively the Scottish novel, namely that of de-Scotticising Scottish literature thus revealing the fact that “Scottishness comes after an unpredictable consequence of the literary text, and certainly is not its active aim, even less its primary source of inspiration” (Sassi 2005:168-9), as illustrated by writers like Alexander McCall Smith, Brian McCabe or Anne Donovan.

By creating a narrative about the Other, these writers reveal their awareness of a space of multiple sites of “coeval temporality and histories that ground us in a differentiated communality,” (Morley 2000:11), granted by the very space of postmodernity, in which city life, for instance, “embodies difference and necessitates the being together of strangers”(214) and helps that “mixtures and cross-overs of all sorts” get routinised (233) and turn into everydayness, as Jimmy tries to explain to Anne Marie when he took her to the Centre to meet the Rinpoche who stays there while the lamas “come here tae pray and run meditation classes.”(Donovan 2003:160)

Exploring Scottishness and Buddhism is shown as an enterprise that is spilling with self-irony, it is thought-provoking by raising and tackling the image Scots make up when contrasted to other cultural representatives, the dimensions of life and its perception in Scotland, the status of a traditional Scots, a member of a proud community, commonly represented as being geographically isolated, nurturing a sense of the gulf between self and world, of the distance which different lifescapes place between people/s. Jimmy’s curiosity for experiencing Buddhism stems from the dullness and drabness of his life and town and his desire to find an alternative to them; yet he finds it difficult to internalize the strangeness of the new culture and the condition of being himself-as-other in front of another-as-himself, as foregrounded in his praying lesson with Rinpoche who wants him to sit and observe himself:

Observe your breath, observe your body, what it feels like. Take your attention round your body and just note how it’s feeling: don’t correct, don’t judge, just feel.

Then try to think of each of the people in your life that mean the most to you; your daughter, your wife, your brother. Take each of them into your consciousness and allow yourself to be conscious of how you feel about them. Don't try to force a feeling, don't try to feel good about them if you don't - just let the feelings come and go as they wish, but without judgement. (82).

Zygmunt Bauman once stated that "ours is a heterophilic age in which difference comes at a premium. Our postmodern times are marked by an almost universal agreement that difference is good, precious, in need of protection and cultivation, leading to the commodification of otherness, that is, multicultural difference is consumed exploitatively, as a form of spice or seasoning that can liven up the dull dish that is mainstream culture." (qtd in Morley 2000:234). Adopting and accommodating difference may happen through everyday practices such as dietary ones, that is, being a vegetarian to show respect for all living beings, animals as well as people' in order to aim "for mental clarity"(Donovan 2003: 89).

The characters of the book recognize that the co-presence of others is not a threat as long as they can enrich the condition of their community lives by enabling them to construe/construct their identities across the difference provided by their fellow citizens; they somehow grow to understand that nowadays "the notion of community has become a central construct in thinking about the ways humans organize their lives" (Mitra 1997:55) in an age when, communities and nations could be imagined "around shared cultural practices" (55). Buddhism could be one of them mostly if it is about meditation, as Jimmy took it, following the Rinpoche's advice:

'The meditation process is one of clearing. We need to clear the junk from the rooms we don't use, to pull it out, look at it. And it can get very messy for a while. But if we don't do it we don't ever get clear. I think you are just starting, Jimmy.'  
(Donovan 2003:81)

Yet rethinking community issues does not necessarily lead to successful and long-lasting social changes even if one is permitted to discover „the standards such as large size and tight coherence which must be fulfilled to gain public representation in our present democracy" (Watson 1997:130); but definitely it increases one's awareness of the fact that, as Raymond Williams mentioned, "community is necessarily constructed through patterns of communication" (in Morley 2000:99) and that "communication is the heart of social life and social change; it helps us to identify and challenge current cultural views that constrain individuals and create inequities; it enables us to define alternatives to the status quo and to persuade others to share our visions"(Wood 2011:10), as it happens when trying to find bridges of comprehension between Scottish and Buddhist representations during Anne Marie's and her classmates' visit to the Centre as a completion of their Religion studies.

They are waited for by Sammy Rinpoche who has to answer their questions about the monks' meditation time and their common origin in Tibet, providing

details that seem to be even more misleading and confusing for outsiders of the cult.

Explanations, even demonstrations, might often fail to convey the right image about the Other culture submitted to examination or appropriation because the two levels of meanings within the communication process might not create or reflect the symbolic interaction correctly even if the content level, that is the literal meaning of communication, succeeds in indicating “each person’s identity and the communicators’ relationship to each other.”(Wood 2011:34) as seen in the almost hilarious experience Jimmy has when first meeting the Dalai Lama Thonden:

Efter the prayers he spoke tae us foe a while, but he was talkin in French and the guy wi the mobile done the translatin. Somehow it wisnae the same. He was talkin about how we’re enlightened really but hauf the time we don’t realise we are. Accordin tae him all we have tae dae is wake up and realise it. (...) When he’d finished we all had tae file past him and he hit us on the shoulder wi a kind of stick thing.(...) Afore ah knew it it was ower and ah was oot in the hall.”(Donovan 2003:167-8).

It is a fact that “humans create meanings in the process of communicating with one another” (Wood 2011:36) and that these meanings become operational within any community, that is the organizing term by which “we make distinctions among the multitude of individuals in our nation” (Watson 1997:126) and that communities are to be distinguished by the style in which they are imagined by themselves and by the others. Any attempt to discover the structure and functionalities, rules and gratifications deriving from living under those rules can but serve as models for a new map of new world where, as Stuart Hall puts it, “there are people who belong to more than one world, who speak more than one language, who inhabit more that one identity, who have more that one home, who have learnt to negotiate and translate between cultures, who are the product of several interlocking histories and cultures, who have learnt to live with and to speak from difference, who speak from the ‘in-between’ of different cultures, who find ways of being the same as or different from the others among whom they live” (qtd. in Morley 2000: 207). In such a world where difference is so highly praised, miracles, unexpected things are likely to happen such as the new lama to be born in Jimmy’s family, “a new lama born in Glasgow ...It’s Karma.”(Donovan 2003:330), emphasising that the pressure of the Other to intrude is so deep, so powerful that “there is no escape from confrontation, communication, trials of encounter, be it with the beloved, the adversary, the familiar, the strange.”(Borkowska 1996: 225).

#### **4. In lieu of conclusion**

The Scottish couple Liz and Jimmy McKenna has to face the effects of Buddhist discourses and practices on their marriage:

Liz: Ah'd been amazed that this Buddhism cairry-on had lasted mair'n a fortnight in the first place.

Jimmy: There's nothin wrang, hen, it's just, ah've tellt you, ah want tae be celibate for a while. (...) Ah don't know how long it's gonnae be. Ah'm on a journey and ah don't know where ah'm gaun. (...) Ah need mair clarity, tae see things in a different way. Mibbe then we might be able tae, you know...

Liz: 'Of course, that'll be OK, ah mean yous Buddhists believe in reincarnation, don't yous? Mibbe we could have sex in wer next lifetime.' (Donovan 2003:105 - 108).

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**SAMUEL BECKETT AND HAROLD PINTER:  
THE TWO LYRIC POETS OF MODERN STAGE**

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*Abstract: Our intention is to cast light on the captivating fusion of seemingly disparate categories such as lyricism and the absurd that are to be found in the works of the two masters of modern stage. The aesthetics of the avant-garde theatre proved destructive to the previous artistic conventions. The only thing that diverges from the prevailing gloom of modern stage, inhabited by the dramatis personae of unstable identity, is the lyric poetry created by unique poetic techniques. The essay offers a comparative survey of figures of speech, both verbal and non-verbal means, so successfully employed by Beckett and Pinter.*

*Keywords: lyricism, imagism, dialogue, monologue, modernism.*

## **1. Introduction**

Samuel Beckett was known, together with Adamov, Ionesco and Genet, as the chief protagonist of the so-called *anti-theatre*, *avant-garde theatre*, or *new theatre*. The critics who coined these denominations were primarily impressed by its total break with previous theatrical tradition. On the other hand, those who were preoccupied by the new, gloomy vision of man, conveyed by the new and revolutionary theatrical form, used terms like *metaphysical farce*, *theatre of the absurd*, *dark comedy* or *theatre of derision*. It came as a reaction to the three decade long tradition of the literary theatre that starts with the poetic plays of Jean Cocteau and Jean Giraudoux and ends with the philosophical plays of Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre. Avant-gardism in fact subverts the rhetorical convention of these theatrical forms and, above all, the widespread humanistic optimism of the authors believing that man controls his life or at least is given the possibility of making a choice.

Beckett, of course, drew upon the French theatrical tradition of the time and, needless to say, influenced a whole line of authors. The most prominent among them, Harold Pinter, is known as one of the chief protagonists of the theatre revolution in Britain that started with the performance of Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*. One could notice some strikingly similar topical and stylistic elements in Pinter's first play *The Dumb Waiter* (1960, in Pinter 1991) and Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1953, in Beckett 1986). The influence of Beckett on Pinter is a theme that is widely discussed, and Ruby Cohn (1965:235) goes so far as to claim that Pinter's *The Dumb Waiter* is a skilful fashioning of "the basic pattern of *Godot*."

The theatre of the absurd is also seen as anti-historical or rather ahistorical, since it concentrates on something that man has not created and which therefore could not, by any chance, be transformed by him. This completely corresponds with the "ontological view" of modernist writers who, according to Georg Lukács

(2000:761), perceive man as “by nature solitary, asocial, unable to enter into relationships with other human beings.” Such an “ontological view” is the very thing that Lukács used to look down on as the decadence of avant-gardism or modern art.

## 2. *Dramatis Personae*

The theatre of the absurd, Beckett’s or Beckettian theatre is often thought of as a *pure drama* that is not modelled by the rules expounded in any kind of art manifesto. It returns to humanity in its primeval sense, to its basic simplicity, clarity of view and purity of form. In order to explain the Beckett phenomenon, Kenneth Tynan claims that Beckett’s drama “reminds him (or ... ‘the drama’) of all the elements it can do without and without which it still exists.” (Tynan 1979:95) This kind of theatre enthrones the so-called “pure man” and surpasses everything that preceded his existence or is surrounding him at the moment.

It was this metaphysical strain that pervades the whole body of Beckett’s work. His characters, doomed to endless waiting (Vladimir and Estragon) or facing imminent death (Krapp) or even dying (Klov), all are under the burden of existential *angst*. They are in fact seen in the most realistic everyday or “kreatürlich” perspective, as mentioned by Erich Auerbach who used the term in his treatise on classical French tragedy. (Auerbach 1946: 47)

Harold Pinter also puts on stage the characters whose days are numbered. These are Stanley Weber (*The Birthday Party*, in Pinter 1991), Hirst (*No Man’s Land*, in Pinter 1997) and Andy (*Moonlight*, in Pinter 1993). However, Pinter’s stage is neither stripped of bare essentials, nor are his characters deprived of the basic elements of their identity. Beckett’s art of minimalism in language is not, of course, epigonically followed by Pinter. The English author is considered one of the most efficient language experimenters among modern playwrights and his stylistic varieties, one may say, exceed those created by Samuel Beckett. Austin Quigley also praises his ear for the nuances of different speech registers claiming that every substantial analysis of different aspects of Pinter’s work must concentrate upon “an inquiry into the function of language in the plays.” (Quigley 1977)

The world inhabited by Pinter’s and Beckett’s *dramatis personae* is a rather bleak one. The overall disruptive gloom, that is so outstanding a feature in the aesthetics of modernism, is considerably intensified by the deconstruction of dramatic form. Theodor Adorno, in his discussion of *Endgame*, condemns realist drama for the rejection of tragedy on account of its tendency to create the illusion of life and neglect poetic expression. (Adorno 1988:26). According to him in modern plays “... dramatic components reappear after their demise. Exposition, complication, plot, peripeteia, and catastrophe return as decomposed elements.” (Adorno 1988: 26).

### 3. The Sources and Aspects of Beckett's and Pinter's Stage Poetry

The aforementioned atmosphere of the theatre of the absurd is often softened, if not totally dispelled, by the poetic quality of the plays of both authors. Their dramas are as much poetic as they are absurd. Certain parts are noted as purely lyric. It is this magnificent dialectical unity of the opposing elements such as absurdism and lyricism that captivated the attention of both critics and audience.

Robert Kanters (2006) looks upon Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape* as a "lyric poem of solitude". Anthony Easthope claims that Beckett's work is *poetic*. He observes Beckett's skill as "... extraordinary ability of [poet's] language and the stagecraft to imply, suggest, connote, evoke, and set off expressive nuances." (Easthope 1988: 57).

For most critics Pinter is an undisputed stage poet. If we could define poetry as man's expression of his deepest feelings through language, images, rhythm and associations, Pinter's plays could be considered a unique lyric theatre, the true counterpart of Brecht's efforts to situate modern stage within the realm of epic poetry. Gareth Lloyd Evans is fully aware of the complexity of his stage poetry. He observes the poetic quality of Pinter's plays "in the deeper sense that no specific and clear literal meaning can be abstracted from the majority of his plays." (Evans 1977:175)

Poetry is to be found in the whole body of Beckett's dramatic works whereas not all of Pinter's plays are truly "poetic". In his early plays (*The Birthday Party* and *The Caretaker* (Pinter 1996a) but not *The Dwarfs* (Pinter 1996a) which is a fully poetic play), poetic passages are comparatively rare. The plays that are marked by the overwhelming presence of such stage poetry are so-called *stasis plays* - *Landscape, Silence, Night* (Pinter 1977) and later plays such as *Old Times*, *No Man's Land* (Pinter 1997), *Family Voices, A kind of Alaska* (Pinter 1996b) and *Moonlight*.

Both Pinter and Beckett start from the same primary situation. For Pinter, it is the scene of "two people in the room" that looks quite realistic. (Pinter 1982:235) These characters are usually isolated and confronted with their fate. The potential for the transformation of such metaphysical situations of human existence is lavishly exploited by both Beckett and Pinter. The initial standpoints of the characters are gradually transcended in the course of action but they remain unattainable for the ordinary meanings of words. The power of language to express them is brought into question. The statements, uttered by characters, are often unfinished with numerous breaks and pauses so that meaning is implicit or subtextual. Beckett's and Pinter's poetic expression, seemingly inadequate and deprived even of *phatic* function is therefore a tool for reaching the absurd and other mysterious spheres of human existence. The final impression is the one "of mystery, uncertainty and poetic ambiguity." (Esslin 1977: 37).

In order to define reality in a poetic manner both authors used to search for some rather unusual, extraordinary experiences and emotions that cannot be expressed easily. The intertwining of such moods, scenes or poetic images lies in the core of lyric poetry. The initial realistic situations are transformed, owing to the



deft verbal and scenic manoeuvring of both authors, to some grand poetic metaphors. Non-verbal communication and scenography also play a significant role in their creation.

Such memorable metaphors are to be found in Pinter's *The Caretaker* (the last scene when Davis is left motionless, pleading for mercy, words dying on his lips) or in Beckett's *Engage* (the final scene when Ham covers his head with handkerchief). These scenes are played out like *tableaux*. Sometimes certain situations in the plays of both authors do correspond. There is a striking similarity in the *conditio humana* of married couples such as Willie and Winnie in Beckett's *Happy Days* and Andy and Bel in Pinter's *Moonlight*. In Beckett's *Embers* and Pinter's *Family Voices*, chief protagonists try to communicate with their deceased fathers. The scenes in which we see the protagonists are abstract, even cryptic, and this could repel the audience since "the author is not looking for a literal representation ... but for a highly stylized *equivalent*." (Jacquart 1994:79).

We have already mentioned that Beckett's theatre language is often qualified as the art of minimalism. His characters exchange short, erratic statements, usually unfinished, with a lot of pauses. Pinter employs the same technique but in certain situations some of the characters grow "talkative" and what follows is a copious flow of speech. These soliloquies also seem chaotic and illogical but one inevitably comes to the conclusion that every single word is carefully chosen, pauses and silences skilfully balanced and the punctuation serves the purpose of underlying certain meanings. Such speech structuring may be brought into connection with the heritage of *Imagism* in Pinter's work.

#### 4. The Traces of Imagism

Many critics claim that Pinter composed most of his lyric poems in the Imagist manner. Certain qualities of the Imagist style, in our opinion, are to be found in the poetic dialogues and monologues of Pinter's and Beckett's plays. Imagist poets are known to have used colloquial, everyday speech. Besides, both authors tend to find a precise, exact word so – called *mot juste*. The result of their effort can be seen in the fragment of the witty exchange from Pinter's *The Birthday Party*:

Goldberg: You'll be re-orientated  
Mccan: You'll be rich.  
Goldberg: You'll be adjusted.  
Mccan: You'll be our pride and joy.  
Goldberg: You'll be a *mensch*. (Pinter 1991:77)

As we could see the enumeration culminates with the utterance of the German word *mensch* that is carefully chosen so as to create an ironic twist. Its aim is not to connote Weber's future power and reputation but to indicate his tragic downfall.

One of the basic Imagist principles indicates that poets should invent new rhythms that would accurately convey new moods and new spirit of time. Such rhythms could be heard in Beckett's plays such as *Endgame*:

Clov: So you all want me to leave you.  
Hamm: Naturally.  
Clov: Then I'll leave you.  
Hamm: You can't leave us.  
Clov: Then I won't leave you. (*Pause*)  
Hamm: Why don't you finish us? (*Pause*) (Beckett 1986:110)

## 5. The Art of Dialogue

The dialogues, like the one quoted above, are very frequent in Beckett's plays, and their rhythmical vivacity quickens the tempo of action that is usually rather slow. As we see, the characters are engaged in a kind of verbal duel. In his analysis of the figures of speech in Beckett's dialogues, Emmanuel Jacquart (1974:208-209) recognizes the technique of *opposition* as one of the oldest rhetorical devices, widely used by the masters of classical drama.

The next figure of speech that Emmanuel Jacquart analyses in Beckett's plays is *stychomythia* or "Dialogue of alternate single lines, [...] usually a kind of verbal parrying accompanied by antithesis (q.v.) and repetitive patterns." (Cuddon 1999:916) This rapid exchange of short repartees often appears in Pinter's plays too. Here is the extract from *Moonlight*:

"Jake: Which is the price of love.  
Fred: A great price.  
Jake: A great and deadly price.  
Fred: But strictly in accordance with the will of God.  
Jake: And the laws of nature  
Fred: And common or garden astrological logic.  
Jake: It's the first axiom.  
Fred: And the last." (Pinter 1993:58)

## 6. Other Poetic Devices

Jacquart also analyses the use of *répétition* in Beckett's *Happy Days*. It is known that *repetition*, also a very old figure of speech, was frequently used from the times past to heighten the emotional tension in some scenes.

In Beckett's plays, the effect achieved is quite the contrary, since the continual repetition of the same words causes monotony that reduces the tension. It could be seen in Pinter's play *Silence*:

Ellen  
When I run ... when I run ... when I run ... over the grass.  
Rumsey  
She floats ... under me. Floating ... under me.  
Ellen

I turn. I turn. I wheel. I glide. I wheel. In stunning light. The horizon moves from the sun. I am crushed by the light. (Pinter 1997:198)

Frequent figures of *repetition* in Beckett's and Pinter's poetic arsenal are *anaphora*, *epiphora* and *symploce*. We may find all three in the extract from Beckett's *Endgame*:

One day you'll be blind like me. You'll be sitting here, a speck in the void, in the dark, forever, like me.

*(Pause)*

One day you'll say to yourself, I'm tired, I'll sit down, and you'll go and sit down. Then you'll say, I'm hungry, I'll get up and get something to eat. But you won't get up. You'll say, I shouldn't have sat down, but since I have I'll sit on a little longer, then I'll get up and get something to eat. But you won't get up and you won't get anything to eat.

*(Pause)*

You'll look at the wall a while, then you'll say, I'll close my eyes, perhaps have a little sleep, after that I'll feel better, and you'll close them. And when you open them again there'll be no wall any more. (Beckett 1986:109)

The same figures can be located in Harold Pinter's *Landscape*:

Two women looked at me, turned and stared. No. I was walking, they were still. I turned.

Pause.

Why do you look?

*Pause.*

I didn't say that, I stared. Then I was looking at them.

*Pause.*

I am beautiful.

*Pause.*

I walked back over the sand. He had turned. Toes under sand, head buried in his arms. (Pinter 1997:168)

Both Beckett and Pinter are the masters of dialogues. In Pinter's plays, numerous witty and rhythmic dialogues are followed by some slow, static, typically Beckettian ones, when his characters are daydreaming or are consumed by an existential horror. As for Beckett, he rarely enlivens the exchanges of his characters.

## **7. The Art of the Monologue**

The tempo of the plays of the two authors is influenced, apart from other rhetoric devices, by some kind of extended monologues. On certain occasions the characters tend to break into such monologues, often rhythmic ones, which miraculously relieve the basic atmosphere of uncertainty perpetuated by short phatic statements. Frustration and almost aphasia are replaced by an eagerness to

talk. In such moments, the dialogic discourse, to use Bakhtin's words, is transformed into a monologic one thus shifting the attention of audience to man as a microcosm. The tempo is slowed down to the utmost while the solitary protagonists lapse into poetic soliloquies, thus beginning the journey into the depth of their own psyche. We cannot but remember Wordsworth's concept of Poet's mind as one of the central categories of poetic creation. In his musings on poetry, it is qualified as a supreme formative factor and the medium for the selection of emotions. By stating that poetry "takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility" (2003:21), Wordsworth, in fact, predicts the 20th century subjectivism.

The characters engaged in Beckett's and Pinter's dramatic monologues usually do not paraphrase any previous statement but rather keep on meditating and playing with the chimeras of their troubled minds. The soliloquies seem to continue, owing to the powerful flow of free associations whose entropic force usually prevail over someone's rational self. A character from Beckett's *All That Fall* grows distracted in such a manner:

Mrs Rooney: Do not flatter yourselves for one moment, because I hold aloof, that my suffering have ceased. No. The entire scene, the hills, the plain, the racecourse with its miles and miles of white rails and three red stands, the pretty little wayside station, even you yourselves, yes, I mean it, and over all the clouding blue, see it all, I stand here and see it all with eyes. ... [*The voice breaks*] ... through eyes oh if you had my eyes, you would understand ... the things they have seen ... and not looked away ... this is nothing ... nothing ... what did I do with that handkerchief. (Beckett 1986:185)

Similar extended monologues abound in Harold Pinter's play *The Dwarfs*:

Len: ... This is my fixture. There is no web. All's clear, and abundant. Perhaps a morning will arrive. If a morning arrives, it will not destroy my fixture, nor my luxury. If it is dark in the night or light, nothing obtrudes. I have my compartment. I am wedged. Here is my arrangement, and my kingdom. There are no voices. (Pinter 1996a: 84-85)

While reading the monologues we gradually become aware of the transformation of characters. In one moment they cease to be the typically impoverished *personae* of the avant-garde theatre. We do not see them, as Vivian Mercier did, as "grotesques" and "monsters rather than men" whom "we can laugh at... or fear them, but we cannot pity them nor identify with them." (Mercier 1990: 14). They arouse our sympathy instead. One cannot but commiserate with Hirst, the character from Pinter's *No Man's Land*, who, in his last monologue, assumes almost tragic stature. The characters, while soliloquizing, look as if they were free of their worldly pains. On these particular occasions they seem to embody the Cartesian split between self and external reality. It is known that Beckett voraciously read not only Descartes but also later Cartesians like Geulincx and Malebranche. (Knowlson 1996:304) Cartesian philosophy affirmed the principle,

readily accepted by Beckett, that man lives two separate lives, one of the body and one of the soul.

Almost musical orchestration of Pinter's and Beckett's plays is praised by many critics. Alastair Macaulay (2002) emphasizes that "Pinter, like Beckett, should be played like music." Meticulous groupings of certain syllables, words and voices, interspersed with pauses, create a unique musical effect in the works of both authors.

## 8. Conclusion

Although the stage revolution, initiated by the masters of the genre like Beckett and Pinter, does not belong to the recent past we are still attracted by the strength and vitality of their artistic experiment. Their boldness to face existential fear, to expose, like metaphysical poets Webster and Donne, a less pleasing ontology of human existence cannot be easily forgotten. Literal representation of reality is, understandably, not the ideal of modernist authors. Pinter, for example, starts from menacing, realistic and even absurd situations just to achieve a kind of hyper-realism or supra-realism. (Schroll 1972:76) Samuel Beckett, on the other hand, creates a hyper-realism of his own that borders surrealism. The spanning of these spheres contributes a lot to the universality of their plays. The two poets offer a unique poetic view of humanity that equals the one that is to be found in both ancient Greek and early modern tragedy. The mighty flow of stage poetry, created by the variety of poetic means and techniques, heightens the overall effect. The poetic achievements of Beckett and Pinter, both in their own way, confirm the validity of T. S. Eliot's statement that "The ideal medium for poetry ... is the theatre." (Eliot 1975:94)

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**THE POETICS OF THE PUNCHLINE IN GREG BEATTY'S SCIENCE  
FICTION POEM "NO RUINED LUNAR CITY"**

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*Abstract:* The aim of our paper is to examine the narrative strategy which contributed to a particularly effective, recent (2005), axiologically significant use of a literary device, typical for short works in the science fiction genre, called "punchline," by a modern poet who also has a Ph.D in American Literature.

*Keywords:* Beatty, Greg, poetry, science fiction

**1. Introduction: science fiction poetry, its existence and purpose**

We remember the times, thirty or forty years ago, when it was possible to ask whether science fiction poetry existed, and whether it was possible at all; but now, at the beginning of the XXI century (and third millennium), such questions would merely show that we are not well informed; science fiction poetry does exist, obviously, it has its awards, its publications, etc.; and, in the most prestigious of all the encyclopedias of SF, that edited by John Clute and Peter Nicholls, almost a full page, full of names, titles, and other relevant information, is devoted to SF poetry (Clute and Nicholls 1999:941-942).

On the other hand, it is relatively easy to write bad, amateurish SF poetry, easier than to write bad SF prose works (because those must be much *longer*), and, for this simple reason, there is always a quantity of amateurish, untalented, hopelessly unsuccessful science fiction poetry – which is probably the case in other genres also.

But there is still a legitimate reason to wonder whether SF poetry is at all possible. Namely, the purpose of SF is to present new, other, different worlds, but, within our general scientific view of the universe, and within the scientific manner of thinking; that is how the *novum* or at least an effort in that direction should be made (and not explained by magic, pure wish, dream, deluded state of mind, etc., in which case it is another genre, fantasy). *Novum* is the new, imaginary content, as suggested by Darko Suvin; more on this can be found in the article by Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr. in *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, edited not very long ago by Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn (Csicsery-Ronay Jr. 2003:118-119, see also Clute and Nicholls 1999:1190). But the presentation of a new world, or a new and different history, etc., requires many pages, while a poem has only a few lines, perhaps only 14 lines, as a sonnet does; naturally a question arises, whether such a brief form can present a science-fictional world.

It can. The *raison d'être* of SF poetry is to cast short flashes of light, similar to photographic "blitz" (flash-light), at these new worlds; to let us, for a brief time, see and *feel* how it would be to live other lives, meaningfully different from this one, in other worlds and times, but, scientifically possible (or at least not

admittedly impossible). Short poetic *form* makes it hard to achieve, but, not unfeasible; the *content* can and must be science-fictional.

## 2. The nature of punchline

As for punchline, it is a literary device, typically used in SF short stories, somewhere near the end or at the very end (the very last line of the story) in such a manner as to overturn the entire meaning of the story, casting everything suddenly in quite another perspective. Isaac Asimov explained it concisely (Asimov 1967:14-15). An example would be a famous one-page SF story by Frederick Brown, "The Answer," in which the scientists from all the galaxies connect all the super-computers on all the billions of their planets, and then ask this fantastically knowledgeable and powerful new intellect one question, the one they deem the most important: "Is there a God?" and a sudden mighty voice replies, "Yes, *now* there is a God!" (Brown 1975: 323). But punchline is a respectable and efficient device in other genres as well.

## 3. Simplicity and realism as axiological inadequacy?

The poem "No Ruined Lunar City" is excellent SF, and, also, it is competent, as modern poetry, in a purely literary sense. (Those are two separate axiological judgements, but they tend to merge into one.) But there is an axiological catch, here. As Kathryn Cramer says in *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, "Hard science fiction, the most science-oriented sf, enjoys greater popularity with readers and writers than with critics" (Cramer 2003:186), and Beatty's poem definitely qualifies as hard SF. It cannot be described as richly complex; it is eminently *simple* and plain. This is not likely to endear it to some critics, who might call it poor in quality. This poem says what it says, and literally means it, we read it once, we understand it completely, and that's it; that is all. So where is the literary value? they might ask, unimpressed with our argument that value in SF often resides primarily in the *content*, in the SF novum, not necessarily in any rich complexities of *presentation* of that content. Axiology of science fiction differs from the axiology of other genres; this fact should not surprise us. Did we expect that the axiology of this genre would be identical with the axiology of all other genres?

Beatty's poem is not in the arena where, as *The Short Oxford History of English Literature* says, authors are "playing games with narrative, and with the idea of narrative" (Sanders 2000:643); it is not symbolist, or modernist, let alone postmodernist; it is plain realism; and yet, it is brilliant.

## 4. The poet and the strategies of a travel into far future

Greg Beatty, born in 1962, is an award-winning American poet, who concentrates on science fiction. Also, he has a Ph.D; he studied American genre



literature. His doctoral dissertation, at the University of Iowa, was on novels about serial killers. He describes himself as a freelance writer. This poem got the Rhysling Award for best science fiction short poem (which is defined as 49 lines or less; 50 or more verses is defined as long poem, for the purposes of this award) in the year 2005. Here is the poem, entire. We added the numbering on the left, for study purposes.

Greg Beatty  
**No Ruined Lunar City**

1     There is no ruined lunar city,  
      no airless Macchu Picchu  
      on the Moon.  
      No spires rise in leaping

5     Seussian whimsy,  
      enabled by the one-sixth gee.  
      There are no domes cracked  
      by random meteorites,  
      leaving homes below exposed –

10    dead and full of surprised dead.  
      There are no teddy bears  
      worn threadbare by loonie hands,  
      eyes cracked by extreme days and nights.  
      There are no pools of orange

15    Tang swirled with moondust,  
      homage spiraling with artistry.  
      There are no empty spacesuits,  
      their linings dry and cracked  
      from decades without air.

20    No, there are no lost  
      cities on the Moon,  
      with squares that recall Topeka,  
      Vladivostok, Quito, or Rome  
      and streets that run

25    from crater to mare  
      only to stand empty  
      because men have moved on.  
      But there will be.

Every truly qualified, competent, avid reader of SF will instantly see, with clarity, what constitutes the turn-around, the punch-line effect, in the last line. That line, 28<sup>th</sup>, is the point; it brings enthusiasm and courage and wonder. In this poem, that line is the punchline, and it makes the poem excellent.

We should analyze this literary work in detail. But, before we do, let us consider: are people present on the Moon, today? No. Six expeditions landed on the Moon. The first was in July 1969 (and the first words of Neil Armstrong, as he stepped on the Lunar soil, were not, as is popularly believed, “This is one small step for a man, but a giant leap for mankind” – a well-thought-out sentence,

probably prepared for him by professors and propagandists, so that (we think) he probably rehearsed it on Earth, and then said it, though a bit absent-mindedly, a little *after* he stepped on the Moon; as we in ex-Yugoslav countries remember, we who watched the live black-and-white TV transmission from the Moon at dawn of 21<sup>st</sup> July 1969, he first said, while he was still testing the ground with one foot only: “It’s sort of crunchy, but it holds me”) and the last expedition was in December 1972, and that is it – no people ever again went to the Moon. None are expected soon. But there is, in orbit around Earth, a large international space station now, for purely scientific purposes; its mass is 370 tons, its total cost is around 100 billion dollars, and it will probably be allowed to crash down to Earth some twenty years from now. In it, there are always several people. There are a few right now, in 2011. Currently there are no other persons in space.

Turning again to Beatty’s poem, and considering its narrative strategy, we first notice that the poem is almost entirely about the present. Surprisingly, only the last line is in the grammatical Future Tense. This already makes the last line an exception: its narrative time stands out from all the rest of the poem. Close reading reveals that the first 27 lines are either in Present Simple (“There is no... No spires rise... There are no...”, lines 1, 4, 11 etc.) or in Past Simple Tense but used so as to refer to a state of matters already achieved, essentially reflecting a *present* state of matters, adjective-like (“worn threadbare... eyes cracked by extreme days and nights”, lines 12, 13). And there is one Present Perfect (“because men have moved on”, line 27), again reflecting a steady situation because of an action concluded in the past. But this static, present-situation surface of the poem is deceptive, because almost all of these first 27 verses enumerate which things *from the future* we still do not have, for now, on the Moon; therefore the true topic is the (as yet, absent) future. So this is really a poem about the future.

The poet uses the film technique of zooming in, aiming at a single central point towards which he wants to go. Near the beginning, in the second line, Macchu Picchu is mentioned, the ancient Native Americans’ city high in the Andes mountains, in Peru, South America. But it is not just any, randomly chosen, city on Earth; it fits the topic. Macchu Picchu is actually on top of a mountain, on rather barren, rocky terrain (similar to the Moon surface), and its altitude is over 2,400 m above sea level, so, it is, symbolically, close to the sky, close to Cosmos. And, importantly, it is in one sense abandoned, although full of tourists: its original residents, who built it, are not there any more. (Similarly, the Moon cities will be abandoned, in this poem.) Nevertheless, our gaze, our “camera,” is aimed at the Andes, which means, aimed still at the planet Earth.

Then we make the great leap to another celestial body: our view shifts to the tall, playfully arranged towers on the Moon. In our imagination, we look, from the outside, at several of those buildings; the towers we have not built yet. On the Moon, such architecture is technically possible, because the force of gravity is about six times weaker there, and there are no winds, and no storms, because there is no atmosphere; and, also, there are no earthquakes. The poet compares the Moon buildings to the joyful art, somewhat in the spirit of caricature, of an American

artist, known under the pseudonym “Dr. Seuss” (1904-1991); this is why the towers, rising like trees and branches, are “Seussian”.

The city, then, is not Earth-style built, it is characteristically, meaningfully Moon-style built.

In lines 7 and 8 we see the transparent cupolas, which, obviously, were placed there to keep the air inside, for the people to breathe. Outside the cupolas would be the Moon’s near-vacuum.

Line 10 takes us closer, inside one abandoned building. Then, even closer zooming, and we see the teddy-bears (which brings to us a touch of childhood, and nostalgia, too; definitely we get an insight into the private life and ambience of the families who lived there), and then verse 14 is the extreme zoom-in, we are now only a few millimeters away from these toys. They are mentioned in the plural, but our “camera” is recording tiny cracks in their glass eyes, and, at such magnification, we could really only look at one glass eye at a time. Effectively, we are looking at *one*.

It is hard to imagine an approach closer than that; if the camera went to a molecular or quantum level, that would not serve the artistic purpose.

The glass eye is probably spherical, which makes it similar to celestial bodies; and, being an eye, optical organ, it may remind us of telescopes, lenses, and generally of seeing, and of sharp eye-sight. We are watching – and somebody, a small velvet bear, is watching too.

The glass has cracked because, during the Moon night, which lasts 14 of our days, temperatures on the Moon drop below minus 150 degrees Centigrade, and during the Moon day, which lasts also 14 of our days, the temperatures rise high above plus 100°C. Those are extreme temperature differences. That is the meaning of “extreme days and nights” in line 13.

Many millions, perhaps billions of teddy-bears and similar toys also got worn-out, perhaps were damaged in children’s hands, etc., and were finally discarded, on Earth; seeing the teddy-bear we get the impression that the life of a child will be much the same on the Moon.

Many other items would probably be similarly worn and torn – socks and shoes, for instance; but those did not interest the poet, who concentrated his attention on one type of damage *characteristic* for the Lunar environment: a fissure, caused by temperature extremes, in a glass bead which is the teddy-bear’s eye. Thus we have reasons to believe that an eye was carefully and thoughtfully chosen as the final point of zooming.

After this, near the middle of the poem, begins the zooming out. We are retreating now, drifting back, into the distances. We see the swimming pools, near the houses; and we see the space-suits, which people must wear when they venture into the vacuum. But, we also notice two mistakes, weak spots in the poem.

In line 15, “Tang” is mentioned; in July 2009 we asked the poet, Greg Beatty, personally, by e-mail, about this, and he confirmed that he meant, here, an American product, a powder which, mixed with water, gives a refreshment drink with the taste of this-or-that fruit. It is sold in small paper bags. Basically it is dust, and the poet meant to compare it to the Moon dust. But, in our opinion, this “Tang”

product is trivial, and very local, not much known outside the USA, and we think it should not have been included in the poem. (But some of the American astronauts did actually drink Tang, on their flights to the Moon and back, and this may have inspired Beatty to mention it.)

The other weak spot, the greatest weakness of this poem, is in line 19, the mention of “decades” without air; it is not at all probable that the human race would, in only a few decades, completely abandon and forget the cities on the Moon, making them “lost” (line 20). That sort of complete leaving-behind would probably take millennia, at least, if not an eon (a million years). This is because some people would surely remain on the Earth, and some on the Moon, for a very long time; not everybody would leave at once. We can accept as logical and plausible that the majority might move off to settle on other planets in the cosmos, but, even they would probably preserve plenty of data, and memories, about the Solar system, hence the Lunar cities would not be lost. Luckily, there might be a possible, though perhaps a bit contrived, alternative explanation here: perhaps we are being shown what the *space suits* would look like, after a few tens of years, but, the rest of the poem might refer to a much later time-period, when the entire human population has left and has forgotten the Moon cities.

In line 22 we see the empty avenues and boulevards of those futuristic cities, abandoned, and, by line 25 (“from crater to mare”), we have pulled back into the distances so much that we can now observe the big craters, and the “maria” (Latin word), the lunar so-called “seas”, which are in fact completely dry plains, but are, in astronomy, traditionally called *maria*. They are large, hundreds of kilometers across. This means that our point of view has retreated far into space: our “camera” is now at some astronomical distance from Luna. But it has not returned to Earth.

Just in passing we may add that this poem is not lyrical, and not epic, either; such a distinction would be completely irrelevant here. Instead, this poem is science-fictional. And, it is a monolog of the omniscient narrator, but not of any character. There are no characters, except for the omniscient narrator, whose uninterrupted monologue constitutes the entire poem, from beginning to end.

Also we may notice, that the number of lines, 28, makes the poem seemingly twice longer than a sonnet; but some lines are much shorter than in a sonnet, so, if they were rearranged and united, two-into-one, the result might be somewhat similar to a sonnet. But still the poem would not have the versification of a sonnet. In fact, the poem shows very little versification, we might even say: a great poverty of versification, but, much of the American poetry (of any genre) has been such, in recent decades.

Importantly, the poem is not a leap into the impossible, nor into dream: all that this poem shows *can in fact be done*, actually and really. The poem is not metaphorically and symbolically, or ambiguously, playing with the images that it shows; a crater is a crater, here, and a meteorite is here a meteorite, a piece of rock, material, hard and *real*, there is nothing ambiguous about it; hence this entire poem is firmly realistic, in the best traditions of literary realism, although it shows a distant place and a distant time. Thus instead of the “*dichotomy*

*imaginary/rational*", as postulated by Mariana Dan (Dan 1997:26), we have here a typically science-fictional *rational imagining* of a scientifically feasible future.

Near the end of the poem, four more cities of the planet Earth are mentioned. They are on different continents: one is in Asia, in the Far East actually, it is the Russian city of Vladivostok; one in Europe, it is Rome; and cities from the two Americas – one from South America (again, as Macchu Picchu), that is Quito, also in the Andes, and at even higher altitude, 2,800 m, while the other is in North America, it is Topeka, capital of the American mostly flat, lowland state of Kansas. At first glance it looks like a random choice, but there are regularities and correlations there. The choice is typical for an American. All these four cities are (as far as we know) populated mainly by Christians; and all four countries are close to the American mentality – Russia, Italy, USA, and a Latin American country. All these four cities are instantly recognizable, as names, to an averagely-educated Western person; all except Vladivostok are tourist destinations which might readily come to mind to an ordinary American citizen thinking where to go for a holiday. We do not see, among these four cities, any like Gornji Milanovac, Čustendil, Nanchang, or Mankoya, let alone some remote villages. So the choice is not truly random, it is a culturologically directed, internationally easily-recognizable sample from four continents.

The mention of the four cities on Terra (Earth) means that the "camera" of our mind, while we read this poem, has crossed one more time the distance of approximately 380,000 kilometers, and has returned to an overall panorama of our mother planet. This completes the journey, giving us the feeling that an ending is approaching.

But all that we had, for 27 verses *in continuo*, are negative statements: enumerations of what does not exist, and what has not been achieved. The reader had to endure disappointment after disappointment, seemingly without end.

Many *science fiction* enthusiasts are also great *science* enthusiasts (unsurprisingly; those two things naturally go together), they are one nation of the eager-to-know persons, a nation dispersed, today, over many parts of this planet; they read and watch various popularizations of science (books and TV shows about science), because they want to know everything that science can offer today – but they also want to know more, much more: they are impatient to get an inkling, a hint, as to what science *might* discover some day, a hundred years from now, or a thousand, or a million years from now, and how life might then be. Such people want to see, immediately, "the shape of things to come" (to paraphrase H. G. Wells), to observe the future human life, or, if we shall be ruined, they want to know how and when we shall be ruined, or superseded by others. Somewhere among these coordinates is the essence of the attractiveness of SF.

And the poet offers, to such readers, to the enthusiasts of exploration of all Earth and all Cosmos – a sad trek through our non-achievements, 27 lines of unrelenting disappointment: no this, no that, etc.; so that a great "electrostatic potential" of frustration is gathering there; a great charge of energy of the readers' discontent.

But, like a great flash of lightning, reminding us of Nikola Tesla, in this poetic laboratory of spirit, comes the punchline:

*But there will be!*

A brilliant, sudden, out of the blue check-mate to the pessimists, at least within the confines of this poem. This punch-line is not metaphorical at all, it does not stand symbolically for anything else; it, and the entire poem, ought to be taken quite literally.

If, one day, in the future, we discover anti-gravity, and if we become able (and willing) to send millions of tons of cargo, and thousands of people to the Moon, we may build those cities, as transit points for a great migration to the stars. Then, in some even more distant future, we might settle throughout the Milky Way galaxy, and we might then afford to ignore and forget the transit stations on the Moon. It will not be any time soon. But, it might really happen, sooner or later (or, as the Serbs say, “when – then”). As the great Russian rocket scientist Konstantin Tziolkovski (1857-1935) said, “The Earth is the cradle of mankind, but you cannot remain in the cradle forever”(Tziolkovski 1911) . Greg Beatty’s poem is exploring some of the potential vistas of such a future – humankind leaving the cradle behind and moving on (line 27). And there is nothing allegorical about it; let us make clear once again: this entire poem *literally* means what it says.

## 5. Conclusion

This poem does its job splendidly: it gives wings to our imagination, taking us intelligently into one of our distant but possible futures, which we might actually achieve, some day, in some century or millennium, if we are very intelligent and wise in what we do, and very lucky. The poem allows us to experience this possibility, and to live there, for a few moments, although only in our thoughts. From a technical point of view, it provides an excellent and very clear example of a punchline, which is a legitimate literary device, but not often used with such great success, with such a flash, in science fiction poetry.

To explain the “flash” of this award-winning poem, we examined the narrative strategies which the poet used. Our analysis ought to serve, hopefully, as a very modest contribution to the axiology of SF poetry generally.

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# PARODIC DECONSTRUCTION OF THE WEST AND/OR WESTERN IN ISHMAEL REED'S *YELLOW BACK RADIO BROKE DOWN*

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**Abstract:** *Ishmael Reed's Yellow Back Radio Broke Down (1969) provides an outstanding example of the carnivalesque literature and/or "postmodern western," as I dare to name it, of the 1960s by fusing self-reflexive elements and parodying the classic Western clichés. What is more, the novel operates through the African loas of Hoodoo.*

**Keywords:** *parody, intertextuality, loas, Neo-Hoodoo aesthetics, postmodern western*

## 1. Introduction

As it is widely known, the 1960s are typified with the "counter-culture revolution", when preconceived, cultural and artistic values were contested and uprooted to be replaced by more liberal, experimental and revolutionary paradigms pertaining to almost all aspects of life and society. Furthermore, the 1960s, with their general mistrust towards preconceived and media generated images, led to the rise of a new kind of Western, labeled the New Western or Post-Western, which, even though less popular than the classic genre, undertook to re-present the western experience anew by making use of the recently emerging fictional paradigms such as parody, self-reflexivity, intertextuality, to name a few. In fact, the era marked the beginning of the crisis of representation reflected in such assumptions as "the death of the author," "everything is constructed within language," and "'knowledge' is merely a means of preserving power" (Marwick 1998:290). In addition, Raymond Federman, labels the 1960s the "era of suspicion" (1993:25). Likewise, Ihab Hassan in the introduction of *Rumors of Change: Essays of Five Decades* argues on similar lines about the post-Kennedy era (1995:xviii).

That is, in fact, the case with *Yellow Back Radio Broke-Down*. It aims at re-presenting the American West and the Western anew from the high ground of the radical 1960s and postmodern mindset. As such, it contributes to the ambiguous and still unresolved question of how the West was won or lost.

## 2. Neo-Hoodoo Aesthetics in *Yellow Back Radio Broke Down*

Ishmael Reed's *Yellow Back Radio Broke Down* represents the best example of the Post-Western fiction written in the 1960s for various reasons. It parodies the classic Western clichés of larger-than-life-heroes and virginal schoolmarms through Reed's Neo-Hoodoo aesthetics and highlights the emerging images of the 1960s, on the one hand, and it establishes a new paradigm regarding the writing of the "new fiction," often referred to as "the broke-down" technique,



on the other hand. Furthermore, Reed's fiction and nonfiction tends to synthesize and synchronize apparently unrelated elements such as African mythology, Egyptology, history, music, painting, technology, religion, film, video, popular culture, to name a few, into a comprehensive and revealing pastiche labeled "new fiction" (Davis 1983:410).

Above all, *Yellow Back Radio Broke* depicts the emergence of the American Neo-Hoodoo as an embodiment of the African/Yoruba myths and loas interchangeably named Eshu, Elegbara or Signifying Monkey. Furthermore, the novel establishes Neo-Hoodoo as part of the Wild West, that is, America itself, and highlights its appeal to America's cultural amalgamation and multiculturalism by depicting the main character, Loop Garoo Kid, not simply as a cowboy or gunslinger but as a houngan, a conjure man and trickster.

Thus, even though the events happen to take place in the Far West, an analogy between Hoodoo/Voodoo aesthetics and pop and techno culture of the 1960s is clearly made. As such, the "flower-power" children's uprising and their eventual massacre before setting off for the techno-anarchical paradise of The Seven Cities of Cibola acts as a reminiscence of the counter-culture riots of the 1960s. In addition, the children's uprising is mainly directed against the corruption of their "yellow-fevered," materialistic and media brainwashed parents. However, the turning point and the revolving force of the novel remains the introduction of a neo-Hoodoo trickster and houngan: Loop Garoo Kid, who undermines the establishment and avenges the massacred children: "A fundamental source of Reed's subversive imagery is hoodoo, with its rituals, conjure men and women, and its spirits, or loas, of whom chief examples are the trickster deities Legba, Guede, and Erzulie" (Lindroth 1984:228).

In addition, the circus-like nature of Voodoo dominates the novel as Reed "embraces the circus, not the museum," arguing in his Hoodoo manifesto that, "Neo-hoodoo is a Dance and Music closing in on its words. . . the centre of Neo-Hoodoo is the drum, the ankh and the Dance" (qtd in Cowley 1994:1241, 1239). Finally, language and literature in Voodoo turn into magic: "I [Reed] consider myself a fetish-maker. I see my books as amulets, and in ancient African cultures words were considered in this way. Words were considered to have magical meanings and were considered to be charms" (qtd in O'Brien 1995:31).

In fact, the novel traces the initiation of Loop Garoo Kid from an innocent bullwhacker at first, who dresses "like Mortimer Snerd," spills "French fries on his lap" and moves "from town to town quoting Thomas Jefferson" (Reed 1977:9) into a typical hoodoo trickster and houngan. In addition, Loop Garoo Kid performs his Voodoo tricks empowered by the presence of a snake, the representation of Damballah, in fact, the most powerful god in Haiti, as Zora Neale Hurston argues in her intriguing work *Tell My Horse* (1990:19).

Loop Garoo Kid's Voodoo ceremony also matches Reginald Martin's description of major Yoruban elements in a Voodoo practice, that is, "(1) the fetish, a physical icon, (2) trance, (3) Voodoo gods and their spiritual essences (loas), (4) sacrifice, (5) offerings, (6) magic, and (7) an absence of a clear hierarchy in its gods" (1988:69). However, Loop Garoo Kid's initiation in Voodoo or Hoodoo is

brought about mainly by the unexpected death at the hands of Atonists, that is, “Christians, whites, the oppressive-minded” (Martin 1988:77) of the New Orleans Hoodoo priestess and conjure woman called Marie Laveau alias Zozo Labrique, allegedly, “a charter member of the American Hoodoo Church” (Reed 1977:60). As a result, the subsequent plague over Yellow Back Radio: “Me [Drag] getting sick and the cattle dying like that” (Reed 1977:167), the spell on Mustache Sal, that is, Drag Gibson’s mail-order alluring and adulterous wife and even the radio channel’s transmission problem: “The Kid put some kind of a cross on her, had some kind of gris gris dolls placed in her transmitter and the Woman had to sign off and get out of town” (Reed 1977:129) count for the hoodoo presence and its undermining tendency both on the established order and the novel writing process.

Thus, contrary to the linear concept of time, Pope Innocent VIII of the 15<sup>th</sup> century riding on a red bull arrives at Yellow Back Radio to deal with the Hoodoo trickster and remove the plague. Despite the Pope’s success in overpowering Loop’s connoissance by removing the mad dog’s tooth, his affinity with Loop and his acceptance of Voodoo religion prevents him from taking any further steps, as his reaction against Drag Gibson’s lynching proposal clearly reveals.

In fact, from that moment on, *Yellow Back Radio Broke Down* “turns into a book about Neo-Hoodooism” (Schmitz 1999:76) uplifting Reed’s aim “to humble Judeo-Christian culture” (qtd in Davis 1983:406) for being “a warped, antilife, antihuman force ... [and stressing that] blacks and the spirit of their culture are central rather than marginal to human culture and to the continued survival of the human race” (Hume 1993:515). Nevertheless, Reed’s intention remains the introduction of Hoodoo as an innovative, pagan and artistic philosophy fit enough to rival the undeserved supremacy of Christianity as Pope himself observes (Reed 1977:182, 183, 184). To serve this purpose, Reed depicts Loop as the other twin son of God and a former lover of the “Haitian *loa* Erzulie/Yemaya, or ... the Virgin Mary alias Black Diane” (Fabre 1982:167), as his conversation with the Pope reveals (Reed 1977:196).

Such a claim, in fact, links Loop Garoo Kid with the African trickster and the artistic “bohemian type” (Reed 1977:198) who ridicules the prevailing origin myths of Christianity and demands a comeback of Hoodoo, as well as the establishment of the New Western. As such, Loop Garoo Kid remains an ever-present historical jester, a trickster figure “cheated out of martyrdom” (Reed 1977: 209) whose subversive nature needs to be acknowledged. However, his presence shouldn’t be misunderstood with the Christian version of the Devil or Satan, as he represents the Devil’s qualities in an African constructive way (Fox 1995:27).

The novel, in fact, argues that Voodoo lies at the basis of all religions as it means pure paganism. In fact, such a quality makes it a unifying force in a multi-cultural society rather than a dividing one. Therefore, *Yellow Back Radio Broke Down* can be understood and appreciated only through an insightful analysis of the African loas turned into Neo-Hoodoo by Reed. As Reed argues in his nonfiction work *19 Necromancers*, “The Afro-American artist is similar to the necromancer (a word whose etymology is relieving in itself!). He is a conjurer who works Juju

upon its oppressors; a witch doctor who frees his fellow victims from the psychic attack lunched by demons of the outer and inner world” (qtd in Schmitz 1999:74).

In fact, Reed’s Neo-Hoodoo aesthetics is best manifested in the deconstruction of the Western genre where the cliché-free Loop Garoo Kid faces the Western trio, that is, the Marshal, the Reverend and unexpectedly, the rancher, Drag Gibson.

### **3. Parodic Deconstruction of the West/Western in *Yellow Back Radio Broke Down***

As stated earlier, *Yellow Back*, despite its pertaining to Hoodoo aesthetics, represents an exemplary New Western. Thus, it matches one of Reed’s primary goals set before writing the novel, that is, the parodic deconstruction of an already redundant genre through the utilization of Afro-American images and the juxtaposition of formulaic tales.

As a matter of fact, the novel depicts an apparently typical frontier town far in the Wild West sometime in the nineteenth century: “The wooden buildings stood in the shadows. The Jail house, the Hat and Boot store the Hardware store the Hotel and Big Lizzy’s Rabid Black Cougar Saloon” (Reed 1977:16). However, contrary to the classic readers’ expectations, a black circus consisting of Loop Garoo Kid, the bullwhacker, “a Juggler a dancing Bear a fast talking Barker and Zozo Labrique, charter member of the American Hoo-Doo Church” (Reed 1977:10) appear to tour in the Wild West. Furthermore, as the troupe approaches the remote town of Yellow Back Radio where they are invited to end their Western tour, they are unexpectedly surrounded by children “dressed in the attire of the Plains Indians” (Reed 1977:17) who have driven the adults out of town. Such a discrepancy of characterizations is soon restored when three classic authorities on horseback: the Banker, the Marshal and the Doctor, strike a deal with the wealthy rancher Drag Gibson who promises to drive the “flower power” children out of town in exchange of a “stiffycate” (Reed 1977:23), which would verify his legal ownership of the whole town.

Thus, from the very beginning, Reed depicts an atypical West where neither the Indian nor the Western trio seems to act according to the clichés of the genre. In addition, the eventual ambush of the troupe, which brings death to almost all the children and the circus members but Loop Garoo Kid, reverses the classic pattern of the villain and highlights Loop Garoo Kid as a hero who survives even a metaphoric desert on an atypical Indian’s helicopter, the only survivor of his race, before finally settling in a hideout on the Peak of No Mo Snow mountain and delivering Hoodoo spells, curses and mockery on the villainous Drag, his cowhands, and “the establishment”.

That is, in fact, how Reed sets the scene and his priorities. To begin with, *Yellow Back* marks the glorious return of the marginalized races; in this case, the return of “the vanishing American,” as Leslie Fiedler labeled it. As such, *Yellow Back Radio Broke Down* depicts an only Indian survivor, Showcase, in fact, a

showpiece of his vanished race. However, he is the one who frees and rescues Loop on his self-invented helicopter called The Flying Brush Beeve, thus reviving the old relationship between the two ancient cultures: “Besides, Indians and black people have been roaming the plains of America together for hundreds of years” (Reed 1977:48). Moreover, Chief Showcase (in reality, Chief Conchise’s cousin) is portrayed not as an underdog, neither as a villain or a noble savage, but as a sophisticated and resourceful person. In fact, he acts as a double agent for both Drag and the Field Marshal Theda Doompussy Blackwell and is depicted as a creative thinker and a person who undermines the established authority from within. In addition, he leads a life full of comforts: “imported hookahs, Pierre Cardin originals, moccasins decorated with rhinestones, aqua-blue dress, world-wide airplane credit” (Reed 1977:46-47), luxuries unknown to the shabby, uncouth cowpokes and the stinking rancher, Drag Gibson (Reed 1977:46-67).

In addition, Showcase’s well-disguised, apparently militant poetry at Drag’s wedding, presents a sarcastic depiction of the conquest of the West and the extermination of his race. In fact, through his camouflaged poetry, he puts curses, similar to Loop’s Hoodoo spells, on “the paleface.” According to Fabre, Showcase represents the cultural shift, from “genocide to ethnocide” by performing “as a mythological trickster through his use of double entendre. He dissembles and plays several parts, employing language as a tool against white power . . . He is the embodiment of Promethean spirit and also of Apollonian forces, a harmonious blend of mind and body, superior even to the black superlover” (Fabre 1982:170).

However, the “posthumous” appraisal of the Indian in the novel is accompanied with the satiric depiction of a host of historical figures known either as legendary explorers such as Meriwether Lewis and William Clark or founding fathers like Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin for their apparent racist and exploitative practices. Reed also makes quick references to Turner’s thesis and includes other sarcastic fictional characters like the Field Marshal Theda Doompussy Blackwell and the Congressman Pete the Peek who seem to be plotting against Jefferson about the West.

Thus, while Showcase’s subtlety and intelligence are highlighted as natural and representative of his vanished race, Jefferson’s versatility and practicality are reduced to buffoonery. In various conversations between Theda, the field Marshal, and Pete the Peek, the Congressman, for example, Jefferson is further portrayed as impractical: “Gossip has it that he spent most of his time learning the process by which parmesan cheese was made and learning how to make macaroni” (Reed 1977:145), egotistical: “He looks down his nose at us Congressmen, I see him, just because he can do folde rol, calculate an eclipse, tie an artery, plan an edifice, break a horse, do a mean minuet and play da fiddle” (Reed 1977:156), to name a few.

*Yellow Back Radio*’s parodic and deconstructive formula Western, in fact, is best revealed in the depiction of an atypical hero and villain. The hero, Loop Garoo Kid, for instance, is a black hoodoo cowboy, possessor of charms and practitioner of Hoodoo rituals as well as a super lover of insane proportions who

fighters via a white python, an extension of his phallus, and prefers to whip and mock his enemies rather than face them in a breathtaking, classic showdown.

Furthermore, Loop's virtues and vices are deeply rooted in the Afro-American culture rather than the Western tradition initiated with Boone as an archetype. Therefore, the creation of Loop Garou Kid, as Reed argues, was "inspired by Loop Garou legend of Haiti and the Louisiana Bayou" and "a cowboy icon of my youth, Lash Larue, who disciplined his enemies with a whip" (Reed 2000:xv).

As far as the villain, Drag Gibson, is concerned, he is depicted as a hopeless homosexual who marries to secure some future to his obnoxious genes as a serial killer. In fact, he has already killed six of his wives and is about to do away with his seventh, not mentioning the deal with the ousted adults for mere personal gain. Drag, though, is helped in his shameful, greedy and his ill-fated attempts by a bunch of skinny (the foreman is called Skinny McCullough), coward, bowlegged and materialistic cowpokes who are stripped off their mythological qualities beyond recognition and act as Drag's marionettes. In addition, the cowpokes, in *Yellow Back*, are often observed with "their heads buried in magazines" (Reed 1977:139) thus hinting at the idea of "real life imitating fiction".

As for the classic shoot-out, it takes place in a reversed mode and becomes memorable for its sarcasm and irony than for heroism or bravery. In fact, the opponents are implausible as well. Above all, there is nothing heroic about the deed at all, not even a heroic failure either. Drag, faces the head of the governmental troops (The Field Marshal called Theda Doompussy Blackwell, another white homosexual), not the Loop Garou Kid, as the latter's medium seems to be non-Western and non-violent. Ironically enough, no shots have to be fired as the Cavalry use ray guns and Drag seems to have dug his own grave and anticipated his own Hoodoo death by feeding human flesh to his ferocious hogs.

*Yellow Back Radio's* ironic depiction does not leave unscathed even the classic agents of civilization, that is, the preacher, the marshal and the school marm. To start with, the Preacher Reverend Boyd is depicted as a total failure as he has lost his congregation and his Protestant Church is likely to lose the battle with the Catholic Church (Ambler 1972:128). He even drinks his troubles away, frequents Big Lizzy's Rabid Black Cougar Saloon and anticipates punishment by writing a "volume of hip pastorale poetry . . . *Stomp Me O Lord*" (Reed 1977:24) which lacks the sophistication of Chief Showcase's poetry and verges on masochism. As Reverend Boyd himself had prophesied, his religion's end comes sooner than expected. Loop Garou Kid, in one of his raids, lashes the crucifix from his breast: "The crucifix dropped to the floor and the little figure attached to it scrambled into the nearest mouse hole" (Reed 1977:122) and whips him for preaching false dogmas. Finally, it is the Pope who gets rid of him for good with a bug spray. The Marshal, too, is mocked for being a bully and is eventually driven out of town by Loop Garou Kid who expertly deprives him of his symbols of authority and usurpation, that is, the gun and the star and eventually drives him away.

The Marshal's substitute, in fact, the legendary gunman, John Wesley Hardin: "the baddest coon skinner of them all" (Reed 1977:136) who represents "the white society personified," (Ambler 1972:127) proves a failure too and reveals even stronger racist tendencies towards the blacks whom he has always tried to exterminate. As expected, via his phallic python, Loop overpowers Hardin and establishes his authority in the Western genre as a potential hero.

As far as the depiction of the classic schoolmarm is concerned, there seems to be no woman morally fit for her place as Mustache Sal, Drag's mail-order bride and the most detailed female in the novel, apart from being the black super lover's former lover, "indulge[s] in frenzied nymphomania with his employees and guests" and above all "breaks racial taboos by trying Chief Showcase's 'little-man-in-the-canoe' erotic technique" (Fabre 1982:169).

Thus, Reed in *Yellow Back* depicts an atypical West and Western where a couple of atypical heroes such as the black-cowboy-super lover-hoodoo trickster and the "vanishing American" have marked a comeback in the New Western. The once respected characters of the genre and the agents of civilization have been reduced to mockery and vainness.

#### 4. Conclusion

Despite its apparent collage of seemingly unrelated elements, *Yellow Back Radio Broke-Down* exemplifies a typical New Western or postmodern Western whose primary aim remains the deconstruction of the out-dated genre. Thus, instead of an easily identified topography, plot, and characters, the novel operates through the African loas. In addition, the Western's revenge motif is represented by the black Hoodoo cowboy's relentless spells and tricks to overpower "the establishment" and the former respectful characters of the genre epitomized in the novel as the wicked and villainous rancher, a bullying Sheriff, a masochistic Reverend, and an adulterous schoolmarm. Furthermore, *Yellow Back Radio Broke Down* best reflects a multi-layered tall-tale where postmodern free narratology, transgression, and intertextuality reign supreme. Nevertheless, the collage of apparently unrelated elements, which blatantly blurs the distinction between genres, turns out to be more revealing as it questions the legacy of the westward expansion itself.

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**WHO IS THE DARK LADY OF *THE SONNETS*:  
SHAW VERSUS SHAKESPEARE**

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*Abstract:* Many questions have been raised concerning the identity of the two persons to whom Shakespeare dedicated his *Sonnets*. The paper concentrates on Shakespeare's "Dark Lady" and delves into G. B. Shaw's play *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets* whilst trying to disclose the true identity of the woman in question – was she Emilia Lanier, Mary Fitton, or someone else?

*Keywords:* *The Sonnets, the Dark Lady, William Shakespeare, G. B. Shaw*

## **1. Introduction**

Imagine reaching the end of a detective novel and not being told who the killer is! The sensation can be compared to the fascination which surrounds the everlasting mystery of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*. Although indisputably miniature masterpieces in and by themselves, the *Sonnets* are indebted to the undisclosed identities of a Mr. W H and a Dark Lady for their unremitting popularity. This paper is an attempt at unraveling the mystery of the Dark Lady's identity: but, what started with a narrow range of options as for who this woman might have really been has amounted up to a narrow investigation of both the *Sonnets* and the historical context which surrounds them. This investigation in turn provided me, the literary sleuth, with evidence connecting the Dark Lady of the *Sonnets* with as many as seven Elizabethan women! Indubitably, all the women had to share certain characteristics as described in the *Sonnets*, and a sole missing element would be enough to eliminate a lady from the group of suspects. Consequently, the elimination method is what we accepted for a suitable means of finding the "culprit", so to say. The seven women are confronted, their histories compared and contrasted, their relation to Shakespeare examined, the traces of their womanly scent sniffed out. The outcome of this literary investigation may or may not astound us: ultimately, does it really matter what the true name of the Dark Lady was? To answer this, we turn to George Bernard Shaw in the second part of the paper and discuss the parody he wrote based on the sonneteer's misery. After all, as Shaw (1916:24) asserts, "it is the score and not the libretto that keeps the work alive and fresh". Hence, following Mr. Shaw's opinion, the key to the fame of Shakespeare's sonnets is their music (or the music of their lines), for "in a deaf nation" (they) "would have died long ago" (ibid).



## 2. The magnificent seven

The first question we should raise is the following: are Shakespeare's *Sonnets* autobiographical? There exist two opposing schools of thought concerning this question: one which believes we can learn everything we need to know about Shakespeare simply by reading the sonnets, and the other which thinks that Shakespeare's life is of no consequence whatsoever for the pure enjoyment one finds in the sonnets as exclusively verbal icons. Rather than describing these, their critical agenda can be summarized by two outwardly similar, yet fairly different lines by William Wordsworth and Robert Browning:

Scorn not the Sonnet; Critic, you have frowned,  
Mindless of its just honours; with this key  
Shakespeare unlocked his heart.  
*William Wordsworth (1770 - 1850), "Miscellaneous Sonnets"*

'With this same key  
Shakespeare unlocked his heart' once more!  
Did Shakespeare? If so, the less Shakespeare he!  
*Robert Browning (1812 - 1899), "House"*

Wordsworth clearly supported the autobiographical school of thought, whereas in Browning we see the accusation against what W. K. Wimsatt 1954:3-68) called "the Intentional Fallacy" and "the Affective Fallacy":

"The Intentional fallacy is a confusion between the poem and its origins. [...] The Affective fallacy is a confusion between the poem and its results. [...] The outcome of either fallacy is that the poem itself, as an object of a specifically critical judgment, tends to disappear." (Wimsatt 1954: 21)

Literally, when analyzing a poem, we should exclude everything that is external to it, and after we have detached the verbal artifact from its surrounding social context (Petrović 2004:27), we can discard the extrinsic approach to poetry and replace it with the intrinsic and immanent approach. Both approaches seem enticing when we are faced with Shakespeare's sonnets, but the autobiographical/extrinsic approach seems to have resulted in a frenzy of a kind – a reason enough to try and see when, how and why a literary theory became such frenzy.

The seven women who are all in various theories believed to be *the* Dark Lady are: Anne Whateley, Mary Mountjoy, Jane Davenant, Lucy Morgan, Mary (Sidney) Herbert (Countess of Pembroke), Mary Fitton, Emilia Bassano Lanier. One by one needs to be examined. It will be noted, however, that people who supported a particular theory tended to forge the evidence, or adjust and fit the theory to the evidence, or vice versa. This forgery is described in Oscar Wilde's short story "The Portrait of Mr. W H", where Wilde says that these so-called literary forgeries were "merely the result of an artistic desire for perfect

representation; that we had no right to quarrel with an artist for the conditions under which he chooses to present his work; [...] to censure an artist for a forgery was to confuse an ethical with an æsthetical problem.” (Wilde 1889). That is most likely the case with every one of these women. After closely inspecting the evidence, it was found out that Anne Whateley, for example, was actually Shakespeare’s wife Anne Hathaway, but it so happened that her name was misspelled on the marriage license to Shakespeare. Nonetheless, many scholars believe even today that there existed two Annes, one Whateley and one Hathaway, and that Shakespeare was in fact forced into marrying the latter. There are other theories on this question as well, one of them being that Whateley was Anne Hathaway’s alias, or another surname, another that there were in fact two Shakespeares: a Wm Shaxpere and a Wm Shagspere who married two different Annes, etc. But even though we read two somewhat different spellings of the names in the marriage license and the financial guarantee for the wedding – *Wm Shaxpere et Annam Whateley*, and *William Shagspere and Anne Hathwey* respectively, the fact remains that the second was issued the very following day: November 28<sup>th</sup>, 1582, thus making it highly likely that it was a simple spelling error on the part of the cleric.

And what do the sonnets say? The one sonnet in which there is a possible pun on Anne’s surname is 145, in which the Dark Lady altered ‘I hate’ with an end ‘not you’, thus saving the poet. The couplet:

'I hate' from hate away she threw,  
And sav'd my life, saying 'not you',

can be pronounced variously. We can pronounce ‘hate away’ as ‘Hathaway’, or ‘And sav’d my life’ as ‘Anne saved my life’, but this is mere artificial adjustment of the theory to make it fit the libretto of the sonnets. We may safely conclude that there is no hard evidence connecting Shakespeare’s wife or an Anne Whateley, if she ever existed, to the Dark Lady.

The described method of critical forgery can be applied to all the other women. Following the evidence of a lawsuit between Bellott and Mountjoy, Charles Nicholl discovered that Shakespeare was a lodger at the Mountjoys (see Nicholl 2007:3-17). Mary was the daughter of the family, and Shakespeare played a prominent role in the courtship of Mary Mountjoy and Stephen Bellott, who later sued his father-in-law for not paying the promised dowry. The “old” landlady was also called Marie (although her name is spelled differently), and Nicholl at first thinks that “Shakespeare was rather too busy to be conducting the rather exhausting business of having an affair with a married woman while living in her husband's house”. To connect Marie to the persona of the Dark Lady would be a bold step indeed. And then, quite suddenly, Nicholl takes that step boldly, by saying:

“I raise the spectre of the Dark Lady for a moment; I point out that various women have been identified as her, and that Shakespeare's French landlady has as good a claim as any of the others. Whether fictional or real, the Dark Lady is described

within the sonnets as undoubtedly a foreign-looking woman. There are other dark ladies in his comedies, so one gets the general idea, to sum it up somewhat bluntly, he finds foreign women rather sexy!" (Nicholl 2012)

The above shows that this is merely a conjecture, an ironic one for that matter.

The same argument applies to Jane Davenant and her son William Davenant, who was named [Poet Laureate](#) in 1638 and thought by some to have been Shakespeare's illegitimate son. Let us consider the excerpt from Victor Hugo's article "William Shakespeare":

"Shakespeare went from time to time to pass some days at New Place. Half-way upon the short journey he encountered Oxford, and at Oxford the Crown Inn, and at the inn the hostess, a beautiful, intelligent creature, wife of the worthy innkeeper, Davenant. In 1606, Mrs. Davenant was brought to bed of a son, whom they named William; and in 1644 [Sir William Davenant](#), created knight by Charles I., wrote to Rochester: "Know this, which does honor to my mother,--I am the son of Shakespeare;" thus allying himself to Shakespeare." (Hugo 1889: 27)

The truth is that Shakespeare *may* have been William's godfather, and we can only guess that he was a regular guest at the inn owned by Jane Davenant. No hard evidence supports this theory either.

Whichever theory we choose to consider, there is remarkable fervor in all of them. But one deserves our special attention for its astounding story: it is the theory of a "Shakespearean detective", John Leslie Hotson. His passion was solving Elizabethan literary puzzles, and apart from claiming to have discovered the identity of Christopher Marlowe's murderer, his main obsession was Shakespeare. It is from Hotson that we learn about Lucy Negro, or Black Luce, the Abbess of Clerkenwell, whose real name was Lucy Morgan. The fantastic story which Hotson fabricated by "reading the codes" in the sonnets includes a love triangle between Lucy, who was an Elizabethan brothel keeper and whom Shakespeare wanted to bed, and a William Hatcliffe, Mr. W H. in Hotson's version. The plot of the story is always the same: Shakespeare fell in love with a young aristocratic man, and later had a passionate relationship with a dark woman, and in the meantime the dark woman seduced the young man. The novelty in Hotson's theory is that Hatcliffe was in love with Shakespeare, Shakespeare yearned for Lucy, and Lucy wanted Hatcliffe – it was an enchanted circle. In order to get Lucy one way or the other, Shakespeare allegedly agreed to joining Lucy and Hatcliffe in bed. The remainder of the story is equally fantastical (a fine example is Hotson's claim that Lucy found out she was a nymphomaniac after the three-some affair) and need not be mentioned further, but it reinforces our thesis that as far as the "truth" of Shakespeare's sonnets is concerned, anything goes. In an interview for "The Revista Alicantina de Estudios Ingleses" (published yearly by the Department of English at the University of Alicante, Spain), Harold Bloom discusses the mystery of the Sonnets, and says:

“... I wish that all of Shakespeare we could prove was written by a well-known prostitute of the time named Lucy Negro, who was an East Indian black or brown lady, Lucy Negro; and I wish we could prove she was the Dark Lady of the Sonnets, though she wasn't, and that she wrote all of Shakespeare, because it wouldn't make the slightest bit of difference.” (Gurpegui 1996:180)

The authorship question brings us to the next lady, whose name was Mary Sidney, the Countess of Pembroke, and Philip Sidney's younger sister. This theory differs from all the previous ones in so much as Mary is not a candidate for the Dark Lady, but for Shakespeare himself. The question of the authorship of Shakespeare's work has become even ridiculous today, with some scholars arguing that Francis Bacon, Christopher Marlowe, and numerous other people were the true authors of the plays and the sonnets, their argumentation usually based on the fact that Shakespeare had no formal education, and could not have written such time-enduring pieces of art. Bloom's claim that “it wouldn't make the slightest bit of difference” sums it all up, but it is interesting to note the theory according to which Mary Sidney wrote all of Shakespeare because we can then connect it to the story of the sonnets. Firstly, we should imagine that Mary is Shakespeare. Secondly, after her husband's death, when she was 43, she may have had an affair with her doctor, John Lister, ten years her junior. Lister should now be imagined as Mr. W H. After some time, she suspected “her younger lover was having an affair with her dark-haired, dark-eyed niece, Mary Wroth (19 years old and newly married)”. Mary Wroth, the English Renaissance poetess, is supposedly the Dark Lady of the Sonnets. It remains utterly unclear how the scholars who support this theory were going to explain the passionate sexual liaison between the poet, or the poetess, and the Dark Lady: surely the two Mary's were not having an affair! This would be an unjust and incestuous slander for Mary Sidney, who is remembered today for having been one of the most gifted women writers of the English Renaissance.

### **3. Dénouement?**

When this research started, nobody could have imagined the intricate web of relationship between all the Renaissance people already mentioned. And the nexus develops further: Mary Sidney was the mother of William Herbert, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Pembroke, who is one of the two chief pretenders for the Mr. W H of the sonnets! The other pretender is Henry Wriothesley, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Southampton, a beautiful young patron of Shakespeare. These two play a prominent role in our final two theories, which have the greatest support by the scholars today. The two theories in question involve two different love triangles and show the true dramatic quality of the sonnets. The main protagonist of the drama of the sonnets is, of course, Shakespeare. The plot is always the same: he is torn between two loves, an angelic and a devilish one, metaphorically expressed through the play between light and dark all throughout the poems. The plot reaches its climax when the poetic persona confides in us and tells us a heart-throbbing story of a betrayal on

the part of both his loves and ends with a dismal conclusion that not even Cupid's fire can cure love.

The first of the two final triangles comprises of William Herbert, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Pembroke and Mary Fitton, Elizabeth I's lady-in-waiting and Pembroke's mistress. And here we must mention George Bernard Shaw, who did not prefer this theory to the others, but had his own reasons to choose Mary Fitton as the Dark Lady for his famous satirical play *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets*. Shaw was in fact "present at the birth of the Fitton theory" (Shaw 1914: 104) during the 1880's. In order to parody the fuss around Shakespearean sonnets, he made "a scene of jealousy between Elizabeth and the Dark Lady at the expense of the unfortunate Bard" (104). What Shaw is up against in the Preface is the ever-growing "bardolatry", which makes the Bard look ludicrous ("Why was I born with such contemporaries? Why is Shakespeare made ridiculous by such a posterity?" (132). All the theories thus far described only prove the extent to which Mr. Shaw was right. And to prove his point, he says that "she might have been Maria Tompkins for all I cared" (106) – the reason for choosing Mary Fitton for the play was to make the action plausible and to support his friend Thomas Tyler who was the originator of the Fitton theory. When the portrait of Mary was found, one could clearly see she was a fair lady, but her liaison with Pembroke makes her such a good candidate for the Dark Lady that many are reluctant to discard this theory. In Shaw's play there is a typical case of confused identities, used much by Shakespeare in his comedies, where Shaw's Shakespeare mistakes Queen Elizabeth for Mary, the dark lady he is in love with. *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets* was written as an appeal for a National Theatre in London, and Shaw does not miss the opportunity to stress the economic difficulties that Shakespeare had, which forced him to write so many plays. Weary and without inspiration, he finds his new muse in Elizabeth, who utters all the famous Shakespearean lines:

THE MAN (Shakespeare under a cloak): [...] Are you ailing? You walk like the dead. Mary! Mary! (mistaking Elizabeth for Mary Fitton)

THE LADY (Queen Elizabeth unrecognizable under a hood) [echoing him]: Mary Mary! Mary! (Elizabeth is conscience stricken because of the death of her sister)

Who would have thought that woman to have had so much blood in her! Is it my fault that my counsellors put deeds of blood on me?

Fie! If you were women you would have more wit than to stain the floor so foully. Hold not up her head so: the hair is false. I tell you yet again, Mary's buried: she cannot come out of her grave. I fear her not: these cats that dare jump into thrones though they be fit only for men's laps must be put away. What's done cannot be undone. Out, I say. Fie! a queen, and freckled! (136)

A similar intertextual play continues to the end of this short satirical play. And although Mary ultimately proves to be a worthy rival for Shakespeare's affection, the point of Shaw's play is that the Dark Lady could not have broken Shakespeare's heart. This, according to Shaw, is "an extremely unShakespearean hypothesis" (120). Hence the quick infatuation with Elizabeth, since he is in need

of a muse at all times. Shaw did not support the autobiographical approach. For him, as for us, what is important is that we have the sonnets that Shakespeare left us, but this does not mean that he reproved the scholars who wanted to find “the truth”. On the contrary, “it is by exhausting all the hypotheses that we reach the verifiable one; and after all, the wrong road always leads somewhere” (107). Namely, when interpreting a literary work, a critic turns into a hunter who follows the scent left by the prey. These traces can lead to different directions, and it is by showing all the perspectives that one can come closer to the truth. However, if we recall Nietzschean philosophy, the absolute truth cannot and should not be found. In an excellent study of Shakespeare’s sonnets, Helen Vendler stresses that “the ethics of lyric writing lies in the accuracy of its representation of *inner life*, and in that alone. Shakespeare’s duty as a poet of the inner life was not to be fair to women, but to be accurate in the representation of the feelings of his speaker.” (Vendler 1999:17) The human need to identify the speaker of the poems with a person who wrote them is very understandable: the reader turns into “an eavesdropping voyeur of the writer’s sensation” (Vendler 1999:18), and curiosity is all too human a quality. Oscar Wilde described the sensation of discovering the key to the greatest mystery of modern literature most accurately in his *Portrait of Mr. W H*: “I felt as if I had my hand upon Shakespeare’s heart, and was counting each separate throb and pulse of passion.”(<http://www.kingkong.demon.co.uk/gsr/portmrwh.htm>).

To reach a conclusion and explain the 1973 announcement made by A. L. Rowse that Emilia Lanier was the true and only Dark Lady, let us turn to the sonnets themselves and see how this emotion is presented. From time to time critics would have a change of heart and the tide would turn from Pembroke and Mary to Southampton and Emilia. When a miniature painting of a dark haired woman, displayed at the Victoria and Albert Museum, was investigated more closely by the actor and playwright Tony Haygarth, it was concluded that the woman in the picture was Emilia Bassano Lanier, and that she was (yet again) definitely the Dark Lady of the Sonnets. For who else but she could have been Shakespeare’s “woman coloured ill” (sonnet 144)? The painting shows her raven black eyes and a face painted “with art’s false borrowed face” (sonnet 127), but it by no means shows someone whom “others do abhor” (sonnet 150)! It is a painting of a woman whom eyes would be happy to love, as opposed to Shakespeare’s claim:

“In faith I do not love thee with mine eyes,  
For they in thee a thousand errors note” (sonnet 141)

If this be so, why is Rowse so adamant that he has finally revealed the mystery? As with other scholars, it seems that Rowse was a victim himself of unconsciously and desperately trying to fit the known facts from Emilia’s life to the verses. She was the daughter of an Italian musician who worked for the Queen, hence the connection with sonnet 128:

“How oft when thou, my music, music play’st,  
...

Do I envy those jacks that nimble leap,  
To kiss the tender inward of thy hand,  
Whilst my poor lips which should that harvest reap,  
At the wood's boldness by thee blushing stand."

An "Emilia" appears in *Othello* and delivers an indicative speech:

"Tis not a year or two shows us a man:  
They are all but stomachs, and we are all but food;  
They eat us hungerly, and when they are full  
They belch us." (III, 3, 102-106),

partly explaining the Dark Lady's need to become "as black as hell, as dark as night" (sonnet 147). Bassanio from *The Merchant of Venice* is another possible word play with Emilia's maiden surname, etc, etc. But the strongest claim Rowse finds in the notes of Simon Forman, the Elizabethan medical practitioner and astrologer ("without him she never would have been identified", Rowse 1973:106), who seems to have had an affair with Emilia as well. Rowse holds that "there can be no mistake about it" (102) – it was definitely Emilia who broke Shakespeare's heart. His efforts to convert everyone to this idea are so charming that it would be unfair not to quote a part of them:

"The young and discarded mistress of the old Lord Chamberlain, proud and tyrannical, half-Italian and musical, she was married off to another musician, Alfonso Lanier, in October 1592. She was the twenty-three, her husband twenty; Southampton was not twenty till October that year. Will Shakespeare was rising twenty-nine.

These dates and respective ages tell us whole volumes, and confirm the story – where vague conjectures, for generations, have told us nothing, merely created confusion." (Rowse 1973: 106)

Emilia Lanier has one important thing in common with Mary Sidney: they were both female Renaissance poets. And the fact that Rowse stressed so much the connection of Lanier with Shakespeare's Dark Lady prevents us from recognizing her as an important literary figure of the day. As Barbara Kiefer Lewalski suggests in her study *Women Writing in Jacobean England*, "the links to Shakespeare suggested by the few records we have are much too weak to support Rowse's confident claim, even if we grant his very questionable assumption that Shakespeare's sonnets are to be read as straightforward autobiography" (Lewalski 1993:213). Instead, she writes about Lanier's contribution to female Renaissance writing, and discovers in her verse a fascination with Mary Sidney, who is asked "to recognize Lanier as her successor in a female poetic line" (223). Unfortunately, bardolatry prevents these women from having their rightful literary reputation today since the majority of people prefer not to leave Shakespeare, the man, alone and simply enjoy his dramatic poetry.

#### 4. Conclusion

None of the seven women we considered can be categorically posited as being the Dark Lady Shakespeare wrote about. Does it matter who she really was? And what would the readers and scholars gain by pinpointing her identity? Like an avenger who, having finally destroyed the object of his revenge, dies himself because of the emptiness of the heart that follows any revenge, they would be left with a vacant heart in search of a new mystery to solve. But, as for the sonnets, “it seems impossible ever to exhaust their brilliance” (Dickson 2005:427). With or without the real name and surname of Shakespeare’s two loves, they are “impossible to pigeonhole” (432). Ultimately, what really matters are the verses themselves and their unquenchable beauty. At the end of a brilliant essay “On the Ignorance of the Learned”, William Hazlitt sums it all up:

“If we wish to know the force of human genius we should read Shakespeare. If we wish to see the insignificance of human learning we may study his commentators.”  
(Hazlitt 1822)

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# THE GROTESQUE AS A LITERARY STRATEGY FOR EXPRESSING THE INEXPRESSIBLE

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***Abstract:** Literary grotesque is presented as a powerful rhetorical strategy to communicate a range of existential experience difficult to express through conventional verbal means. The discussion concentrates on G.K. Chesterton's *The Man Who Was Thursday*, demonstrating how the framing of the narrative in the grotesque mode serves an epistemological quest.*

***Keywords:** G.K. Chesterton, grotesque, literary strategy, narrative fiction*

## 1. Introduction

The following discussion proposes to bring together visual and literary art, and take under scrutiny their convergence in the concept of the grotesque, which is viewed both as a powerful strategy to generate meaning, and a particularly effective vehicle to represent the inexpressible. It seems that literary grotesque accomplishes with words comparable effects to what painted images or sculpted forms achieve through the same convention in visual arts. On the verbal plane it provokes and calls for the same response from the reader as the grotesque in painting, sculpture and architecture produces and requires from the viewer on the sensual level. What is more, although the very form and idea of the grotesque originate in the realm of images, it is in the realm of words that it reaches the highest peak of its possibilities and produces most spectacular effects. In literature the grotesque combines word and image in a unique way as it allows a curious intertwining of the intellectual and imaginative components to the effect that the resulting aesthetic experience acquires an unusual intensity.

The grotesque as a rhetorical strategy is widely used in all forms of literary art, but it seems to be an especially potent device when it gets incorporated into the discourse of fiction and, consequently, when it is allowed to evolve within the structural framework of the novel.

The ensuing analysis concentrates on G.K. Chesterton and his imaginative writing as exemplified in *The Man Who Was Thursday* (1981/1908). It will demonstrate how the novel uses all the techniques characteristic of the mode of grotesque, especially deformations and incongruities, to communicate a range of existential experience difficult to accommodate within the ordinary conventions of traditional narrative.

Before proceeding to the specific analysis and detailed discussion of the grotesque used in Chesterton's fiction, it is appropriate to take a brief look at the source and nature of the concept of the grotesque, identified in a concise dictionary definition as a mode "characterised by bizarre distortions, especially in the exaggerated or abnormal depiction of human features [and in literature] involves

freakish caricatures of people's appearance and behaviour" (Baldick 1990:93). However, it has to be stressed that no definition does complete justice to the complex nature of the grotesque which, "both require[s] and defeat[s] definition" (Harpham 1982:3).

## **2. Figurative hybrid – a bird's-eye view of history and anatomy of the grotesque**

Undoubtedly the origins of the grotesque can be traced back to a visual representation: first and foremost it is understood as an embellishing element in ornamental painting which intermingles human, animal and vegetable themes and forms. In architecture it is linked with decorations known as gargoyles. Its extension to the domain of verbal language takes place much later, probably in consequence of its association with caricature, and it often points to a complex interweaving of incongruous themes and subjects. The appeal of the grotesque is first of all sensual, and only subsequently does it become intellectual. Therefore it is not surprising that the grotesque is deeply rooted in physicality, where it shows a striking affinity with the physically abnormal.

The aesthetic awareness of the grotesque can be located very early in the history of art and civilisation. Wolfgang Kayser, a German critic who laid the foundations for the critical evaluation of the grotesque in modern times, evokes the name and the authority of another German, the art historian Ludwig Curtius, who looks back to the reign of Emperor Augustus, i.e. the very beginning of the first century AD, and quotes a Roman writer, Marcus Vitruvius Polio, who speaks with considerable distaste and disapproval of a new tendency in decorating objects with "monstrous forms [and] half-figures crowned by human and animal heads. Such things [which] never existed, do not now exist, and shall never come into being" (Kayser 1963:20). The perceptive Roman writer and viewer of the grotesque further asks with an easily detectable note of shock and disgust, typical of the response provoked by the grotesque: "...how can the stem of a flower support a roof...? How can a tender shoot carry a human figure, and how can bastard forms composed of flowers and human bodies grow out of roots and tendrils?" (Kayser 1963:20).

The extravagant decorations described by Marcus Vitruvius came to light around the sixteenth century as the result of excavations carried out in Rome. Around that time the term 'grotesque' comes into being, derived from the Italian word for caves, i.e. *grotte*. Hence come the adjective *grottesco* and the noun *la grottesca*, both initially rather pejorative because denoting the artistic manner which violates the classical order and generally accepted conventions.

Arthur Clayborough, in his illuminating, though highly individual, account of the development of the grotesque, speaks of the prevailing negative attitudes to the grotesque and he stresses its lower status with regard to recognised canons in art which come to the foreground in critical writings in the eighteenth century. The age of Neo-Classicism perceives the grotesque in terms of "extravagance, fantasy,

individual taste, and the rejection of ‘the natural conditions of organisation’.... [it sees it as something] ‘ridiculous, distorted, unnatural’ (adj.); ‘an absurdity, a distortion of nature’ (noun)” (Clayborough 1965:6). In consequence the grotesque gets associated primarily with the ludicrous and playful, and it is often regarded merely as an aspect of the comic.

Later criticism, however, tends to see more serious qualities in the grotesque. Just as Neo-Classicism inevitably leads to its anti-thesis and reaction in the age of Romanticism, so the eighteenth-century grotesque, cast in the frivolous farcical mould, acquires a new and profounder dimension in the nineteenth century, where it starts to be regarded as a vehicle of the monstrous, ominous and horrifying; something that touches the inmost nerve of existence confronted with the frightening Inscrutable.

John Ruskin, an influential writer and also, significantly, a painter, is one of the most distinguished English art critics of the Victorian era, who in a sense rehabilitated the grotesque as a mode of expression, and elevated it to the status of an alternative version of aesthetic categories of beauty and the sublime. In the English critical writings of the nineteenth century it is primarily Ruskin who is responsible for orchestrating a marriage of the aesthetics of the grotesque with metaphysics, which in consequence opens the concept to the notions of awesome and numinous, and so paves the way for the grotesque to address human condition specifically. In the chapter entitled “Grotesque Renaissance” of the third volume of *The Stones of Venice*, Ruskin (2003) makes a significant distinction between two kinds of the grotesque: one is identified as noble and true, the other as ignoble and false. The former type seems to be particularly suited to render man’s imperfect nature and his paradoxical position in the universe. Ruskin’s idea of the true and noble grotesque is in keeping with the views of Friedrich Schlegel, the leading theoretician of German Romantics, in whose philosophical musings on the tragic irony of human plight Kayser discerns the element of the grotesque and identifies it as “the explosive force of the paradoxical, which is both ridiculous and terrifying” (Kayser 1963:53).

The capacity of the grotesque to incorporate the paradoxical on the one hand and its curious grasp upon the impenetrable metaphysics on the other present a particular interest and attraction for G.K. Chesterton, the enthusiast of the Middle Ages and the great admirer of Gothic cathedrals where the grotesque has left its lasting impression. As will be demonstrated subsequently, Chesterton’s *oeuvre* seems to be an especially fitting example to bring to light all the richness and complexity of the literary grotesque.

### **3. G. K. Chesterton: the visionary inscribing the grotesque into art and life**

G.K. Chesterton has a reputation of the master of paradox and a writer with a sense of wonder. On the literary and cultural scene of the first decades of the twentieth century he appears as an impressive figure of a debater and a poet committed to the service of ideas who believes that it is his public mission to help those whom he sees as crippled with ordinary custom and blinded with everyday

routine to recognise the miraculous nature of existence. It is noteworthy that the writer in Chesterton has a special propensity for adventure stories which the mature thinker extrapolates so as to apply the paradigm of adventure to man's existential situation in the world and in the universe. As a consequence of such attitude life is perceived as a narrative of fascinating adventure.

It has to be remembered that Chesterton is above all a thinker with a natural philosophical slant of mind whose literary output combines imaginative writing with an intellectual debate on crucial issues in man's life. But Chesterton is also a visual artist, with a professional training at London Slade School of Arts, in whose creative output the man of letters merges with a painter, and both fall back upon the strategy of the grotesque to construct the vision of the world that will illuminate some of the riddles posed by reality. The grotesque provides G.K. Chesterton with the best means to tell that story of existential and metaphysical adventure. What is more, it is in the grotesque that all Chesterton's views and ideas converge to find there a perfect fulfilment, and to form his own identifiable *Weltanschauung*.

### **3.1. G.K. Chesterton's fascination with the grotesque**

All Chesterton's imaginative writing is either permeated with the sense of the grotesqueness, or it incorporates entire specific images or fictional characters that can be identified as distinctly grotesque. Likewise much of his criticism and non-fiction prose is dedicated to what amounts to an apology for the grotesque. Chesterton's books *Robert Browning* (1903) and *Charles Dickens* (1906) as well as his essays: "On Gargoyles," "A Defence of Ugly Things," "A Defence of Nonsense" and "A Defence of Skeletons" are just a few examples of his persistent attempts to restore the correct perspective in the aesthetic appraisal and critical assessment of the ugly, apparently incongruous or deviating from the norm and convention that build up the style in art, with which Chesterton feels strong affinity and which is known as the grotesque.

The most important claim which Chesterton makes is that the grotesque is not an aberration of nature or solely a hideous distortion of what complies with the established criteria of harmony and beauty, but that it represents a profound reflection of reality by reaching out to its hidden layers and encoded messages. Thus the grotesque gets its inspiration from the inherent nature of things and it draws its force from the very core of reality. That is why in his discussion of the work of Browning Chesterton puts forward the opinion that grotesque forms in art are justifiable by natural order and legitimate in nature: "Browning's verse, in so far as it is grotesque, is not complex or artificial; it is ragged like the thunder-cloud, it is top-heavy, like the toadstool. Energy which disregards the standard of classical art is in nature as it is in Browning" (Auden 1970:26). Chesterton never ceases to promote and propagate the human beings' deep-seated affinity with what he calls the "ruggedness," which in observable reality contravenes abstract orderliness and conformity to custom.

Ruggedness being an essential quality in the universe, there is that in man which responds to it as to the striking of any other chord of the eternal harmonies. As the children of nature, we are akin not only to the stars and flowers, but also to the toadstools and the monstrous tropical birds. And it is to be repeated as the essential of the question that on this side of our nature we do emphatically love the form of the toadstools, and not merely some complicated and botanical moral lessons which the philosopher may draw from them. (Auden 1970:22)

Chesterton is enthralled and intrigued by the exuberant variety and oddities perceivable in the artistic mode of the grotesque, and he deeply believes that they correspond to the richness and inexhaustible, though sometimes hidden and not fully realised, resources of reality. G.K. Chesterton, the defender of ugly things and skeletons, and the admirer of the art of Dickens and Browning, is fascinated with what he sees as the paradoxical nature of the grotesque: on the one hand, through its bold disregard of the principles of mimesis, it represents an outrageous transgression upon the laws of nature and the rules of decorum, on the other hand, however, it offers the most faithful and complete reflection of reality. And it is so because the grotesque truly imitates what is irregular and irrational, what challenges the sense of order and what unsettles the mind by posing unanswerable questions. For Chesterton the grotesque turns out to be a crucial strategy first to take hold of the diversity of life experience, then to shape it into his own philosophy, and eventually to render it in his imaginative writing. In both his philosophical reflection and artistic vision grotesque forms perfectly comply with what Harpham stresses in his succinct summation: “They stand at a margin of consciousness between the known and the unknown, the perceived and the unperceived, calling into question the adequacy of our ways of organising the world, of dividing the continuum of experience into knowable particles” (Harpham 1982:3).

### **3.2. The function of the grotesque**

Chesterton believes that “Energy and joy [are] the father and the mother of the grotesque” (Auden 1970:25), and they are both responsible for its two pivotal functions, i.e. the reawakening of the sense of wonder at the marvellous nature of all creation, and liberating man from various forms of mental and spiritual oppression.

According to Chesterton, the grotesque, which brings together incongruent elements and apparently turns things upside down, compels people to look at the world with the fresh eyes of a child, and discover exquisite beauty in the commonplace and ordinary objects: “To present a matter in a grotesque manner does certainly tend to touch the nerve of surprise and thus to draw attention to the intrinsically miraculous character of the object itself” (Auden 1970:26-27). The caricature of man and the world, which the grotesque apparently offers, operates as a magnifying glass that enables the viewer to see the vibrant splendour in the

surrounding world. Thus the topsy-turvy and lop-sided domain of the grotesque becomes a breeding ground for a renewed perception. In consequence it establishes a vantage point for Chestertonian sense of wonder which comprises delight, surprise and gratitude for the marvels of Being. Chesterton elaborates on this function of the grotesque in a great body of his writing, and particularly in his study of Robert Browning, where he introduces the concept of the philosopher of the grotesque and defines his role: “it is the supreme function of the philosopher of the grotesque to make the world stand on its head that people may look at it” (Auden 1970:27).

Furthermore, by interweaving the totally disparate components of the ludicrous and the monstrous, the grotesque achieves the apparently impossible task of combining terror with laughter. Chesterton argues that by doing so it tames all the menacing presences that haunt human life, which as a result gets released from existential trembling in the nets of nihilism and pessimism that blur the vision and paralyse capability. Therefore for Chesterton the grotesque is an important therapeutic mode which art administers to life so as to cure the most insidious ills of the modern man. Aidan Nichols in his study of Chesterton as a theologian refers to the notion of “therapy of perception” (Nichols 2009:113), and it seems most appropriate to apply this term to Chesterton’s views on the function of the grotesque and its role as a weapon against the paralysing routine.

#### **4. Narrative fiction in the grotesque convention – therapy and metaphysical quest**

Therapy of perception certainly applies to G.K. Chesterton’s most puzzling novel *The Man Who Was Thursday* (1908). It is noteworthy that the novel was inspired by an autobiographical impulse and written as part of the process of recovery from a serious nervous crisis Chesterton was undergoing in connection with the impact of ideas of solipsism, agnosticism, relativism, nihilism and pessimism, which overpowered and incapacitated his mind and will. Therefore in the light of the autobiographical data the novel’s subtitle, *A Nightmare*, is highly significant. But the significance of the subtitle reaches even further. It may be related to Chesterton’s view of dreams as cryptic grotesque comments on the nature of reality: “In this subconscious world, in short, *existence betrays itself*; it shows it is full of spiritual forces which disguise themselves as lions and lamp-posts, which can as easily disguise themselves as butterflies and Babylonian temples” (Chesterton 1938:82-3). The novel also bears another important authorial impression. While in post-modern critical jargon narratives can be either ‘writerly’ or ‘readerly’, one could venture the statement that *The Man Who Was Thursday* is the most ‘painterly’ among Chesterton’s novels because Chesterton’s training at London Slade School of Art and his experience as an illustrator conspicuously figure out both in its imagery and character portrayal.

On the personal plane the writing of *The Man Who Was Thursday* evidently assisted its author in regaining the mental balance which was seriously

shaken as the result of Chesterton's encounter with what he regards as maladies of modernity. On the artistic level the novel represents a perfect example of the grotesque inscribed into the narrative structure and operative within the boundaries of the world of fiction. *The Man Who Was Thursday* is a quintessentially grotesque novel, which uses the grotesque mode to perform its fundamental task of reaching out into the very heart of Being, where joy and fear lie side by side, and comedy and terror have the same face. In the novel the grotesque face belongs to Sunday who thus resembles a gargoyle enigma on the Gothic cathedral.

#### **4.1. *The Man Who Was Thursday* – a sobering nightmare**

The novel presents the world at the beginning of the 20th century, where nothing is what it seems or pretends to be, and there are no clear and objective points of reference. Instead, chaos and confusion rule everywhere, and they seem to belong intrinsically to the character of life. The portrayed world lives in the shadow of some undefined, but dangerous conspiracy that presents a serious threat to civilisation as its aim is to bring in anarchy and to abolish "all those arbitrary distinctions of vice and virtue, honour and treachery" (Chesterton 1981:23). Already at the beginning of the narrative the main goal of the anarchist conspiracy is presented in very clear terms as the demolition of the foundations of existential order. One of the main exponents of the anarchist ideology spells out their objective most succinctly when he shouts that eventually they mean "to abolish God!" (Chesterton 1981:23).

The plot begins with the encounter of two poets: Lucian Gregory, fully dedicated and zealous poet of anarchy, and Gabriel Syme, the eponymous Thursday, who is a poet of common sense and order. The narrative mostly consists of a chase, running away and a number of surrealist adventures of seven members of the Central Anarchist Council who, for reasons of security and conspiracy, are called by the names of the days of the week. They are all presided by the Chief Anarchist bearing the name of Sunday. Gradually all the anarchists turn out to be disguised detectives under a secret command of the chief police officer, who turns out to be Sunday himself.

#### **4.2. Clash of anarchy and order**

At the centre of the plot of *The Man Who Was Thursday* is the collision between two extremes and at the same time two irreconcilable opposites. At first they are embodied in the figures of the two poets: Gregory – the poet of anarchy, and Syme – the poet of order. It is worthwhile to notice that the principal exponents of what can be seen as ontological and existential incompatibility between anarchy and order, are artists belonging to the domain of literature and poetic sensitivity. Therefore it is valid to assume that they are privileged with a profounder insight and granted special means for its expression. Chesterton fully endorses the



romantic view of poetry in its assertion that the poet, thanks to his poetic ability, can see more and better.

Not surprisingly Chesterton casts Gabriel Syme in the mould of a poet-detective who is called to find out some truth, while being at the same time a sensitive artist contemplating a grotesque design which evolves before his eyes.

Gabriel Syme was not merely a detective who pretended to be a poet; he was really a poet who had become a detective. (Chesterton 1981:41)

In the dialectic between order and anarchy Syme, through the distorting mirror of the grotesque, becomes a revolutionary who “revolted into the only thing left – sanity” (Chesterton 1981:41). Thus, in the plot of the novel, anarchy and order get continually interchanged with madness and sanity, and revolutions are made not to overthrow, but to establish order. Furthermore the revolutionary poet of order has the face of a medieval knight seeking adventure and ready to “cross swords with the enemy of all creation” (118). There is also a prophetic streak in the character of Syme who has been always warning people of the “deluge of barbaric denial” (42) and now unequivocally responds to what another camouflaged detective calls “fight for civilisation” (122).

In his bizarre adventure Gabriel Syme encounters a colourful pageant of other characters, above all other disguised detectives, who have a twofold function in Chesterton’s fictitious world of grotesquery: they are in the service of sanity and order on the one hand, and that of madness and anarchy on the other. In the course of the preposterously odd pursuit the demarcation line separating the pursuers from the pursued becomes more and more apparent. Gradually it dawns upon them that in fact they are all chasing the elusive and enigmatic Sunday. They also begin to realise that their strange mission is not solely related to that singular situation, but concerns the broad canvas of life, their metaphysical status and the overall shape and foundations of civilisation which forms the cultural and social milieu of their existence.

#### **4.3. Reality intensified**

It is one of Chesterton’s strongest beliefs that in order to get a foretaste of the metaphysical, one has got to have a solid hold upon the physical. In the grotesque the visual appeal comes before the verbal, and the bodily tangible is put before the ephemeral and the abstract. It is not surprising therefore that the grotesque is for Chesterton an especially potent channel and a meaningful artistic intermediary for his philosophy.

As a curious mingling of incongruities, the grotesque is closely akin to paradox, and that is why it may “wake men up to a neglected truth” (Chesterton 1981:18), as Syme puts it in his conversation with Gregory. Although the grotesque diverges from the norm and proclaims affinity with the corporally abnormal, it derives its force and effect from being presented within the realistic frame, for it

enhances and intensifies reality. When Syme observes the frolics and freakish behaviour of Professor de Worms, and then juxtaposes it with the man's solid appearance and visible respectability, he cannot help being shaken by "unbearable reality" of the whole scene.

About the Professor's make-up and all his antics there was always something merely grotesque, like a golliwog. Syme remembered those wild woes of yesterday as one remembers being afraid of Bogy in childhood. But here was daylight; here was a healthy square-shouldered man in tweeds, not odd save for the accident of his ugly spectacles, not glaring or grinning at all, but smiling steadily and not saying a word. The whole had a sense of unbearable reality. Under the increasing sunlight the Doctor's complexion, the pattern of his tweeds, grew and expanded outrageously, as such things grow too important in a realistic novel. (Chesterton 1981: 99)

In the artistic treatment through the grotesque reality gets intensified and illuminated so as to reveal, at least fragmentarily, its hidden aspects and deeply buried layers. As the result, reality so compellingly impinges upon sensual perception that the mind is terrified into a shock. Eventually the shock therapy of the grotesque may be beneficial for the recipient because it allows to see the already defamiliarized world in a new light and from a fresh perspective. And such perception, as Chesterton deeply believes, is salutary to man's mental balance and his standing in the world.

When reality gets reinforced in the grotesque, it begins to point out to everything that transcends the material realm and enters the spiritual. In consequence the observable world, with all its ordinary constituents, becomes an ingenious network of symbols and allegories which reflect the metaphysical dimension and elevated status of each commonplace object. It is well illustrated in the scene where the pursuit, which is getting more and more frantic and wild, like a "chaos of chiaroscuro" (Chesterton 1981:126), leads through the forest into an open space. There Syme notices a peasant in the field:

... in the middle of this forest clearing was a figure that might well stand for that common sense in an almost awful actuality. Burnt by the sun and stained with perspiration, and grave with the bottomless gravity of small necessary toils, a heavy French peasant was cutting wood with a hatchet. [...] The man was a Norman, taller than the average of the French and very angular; and his swarthy figure stood dark against a square of sunlight, almost like some allegoric figure of labour frescoed on a ground of gold. (Chesterton 1981:128-9)

The scene shows how Chesterton tries to grasp imaginatively that which is incomprehensible in strictly intellectual categories. He does it through the 'painterly' discourse of the novel which very often draws heavily on the artistic strategies of the grotesque.

#### 4.4. The gallery of grotesque portraits framed in a dance

Syme's nightmarish, but at the same time sobering, adventure involves a whole gallery of portraits where all the anarchists-detectives are like grotesque gargoyles filling with fright and trepidation while simultaneously provoking laughter. Professor de Worms, for example, is depicted as having an "unnatural form [...] recalling that very imaginative figure in the nursery rhymes, 'the crooked man who went the crooked mile'. He really looked as if he had been twisted out of shape..." (Chesterton 1981:78). And the Professor is by no means exceptional in his appearance; on the contrary, he is just an instance of what can be found in all the participants of the ambiguous game of hide-and-seek.

Each man had something about him, [...], which was not normal, and which seemed hardly human. The only metaphor he [Syme] could think of was this, that they all looked as men of fashion and presence would look, with the additional twist given in a false and curved mirror. (Chesterton 1981:58)

Twisting out of the normal, bringing together disparate elements and incompatibilities, deforming and disfiguring are Chesterton's methods of constructing the appearances of the principal characters, where each man, like in the grotesque ornament, "seemed to be, somehow, on the borderline of things" (Chesterton 1981:61).

The most misshapen and self-contradictory is the figure of Sunday who, while talking with his pursuers "made a grimace like a gargoyle" (Chesterton 1981:170), but he is also "like a father playing hide-and-seek with his children" (170). He is huge and fat, but at the same time he seems to be unbelievably light. "His face was very large, but it was still possible to humanity" (56). Furthermore what Syme finds most intriguing and unsettling is that Sunday's face curiously blends with his back. The detectives talk to Sunday in a "pitch dark room like a coal cellar" (104), but the encounter "startle[s] [them] like a blaze of light" (48). Sunday ignores or violates the laws of physics and suggestively hints at the realm of metaphysics. The grotesque component in the novel finds its culmination in Sunday, who embodies all the wonders, terrors and riddles of the universe, and hence may be regarded as the quintessentially grotesque character.

The gallery of grotesque portraits is inscribed into a burlesque inspired by the choreography of group dancing. In fact the sense of dancing, its rhythm, characteristic movements like jumping, and attributes like costume, underlie most of the narrative. It is interesting that even those sections of the discourse which strictly speaking refer to the pursuit, are charged with the element of dance. For example, Sunday running away from his pursuers

fell from the balcony, bouncing on the stones below like a great ball of india-rubber, and went bounding toward the corner of the Alhambra, where he hailed a hansom-cab and sprang inside it. [...] Shops and streets shot by like rattling arrows. At the highest ecstasy of speed, Sunday turned round on the splashboard

where he stood [...] raising his right hand swiftly, he flung a ball of paper in Syme's face ... (Chesterton 1981:155-6)

It may be said that *The Man Who Was Thursday*, like much of Chesterton's fictional writing, is saturated with Chesterton's medievalism which apart from his fascination with grotesque gargoyles of Gothic architecture, also comprises his love of chivalry, tournaments and colourful robes. However, in this novel medieval *dance macabre*, the Dance of Death, which to some extent embodies the sensibility of the Middle Ages, gets replaced with the Bakhtinian carnival, and the gruesome reminder of death is substituted with the joyful affirmation of life. In combining the principle of dancing with the convention of the grotesque, Chesterton makes ample use of artificial masks, costumes and uncanny exhibits, but in spite of the artificiality of all that masquerade, he puts across an existential message which explodes with the exuberance of real life.

The burlesque of the six defenders of order pursuing the enigmatic Sunday, whom they consider the most menacing and dangerous presence in the world, finds its climax in the fancy dress ball to which all the detectives-and-anarchists are invited. The fancy dress ball presents a parade of masks and ingenious disguises, where "every shape in Nature [is] imitated in some crazy costume" (Chesterton 1981:177). These disguises, however, do not really conceal, but reveal what seems to be most essential. So at this closing stage the farcical elements of the chase get absorbed into what turns out to be a cosmic dance, in which the ordinary and pedestrian are redeemed, and the transcendent seems to be shining through the commonplace aspects of things that resound with the echoes of the goodness of all Being.

There was a dancing lamp-post, a dancing apple-tree, a dancing ship. One would have thought that the untamable tune of some mad musician had set all the common objects of field and street dancing an eternal jig. And long afterwards, when Syme was middle-aged and at rest, he could never see one of those particular objects – a lamp-post, or an apple-tree, or a windmill – without thinking that it was a strayed reveller from that revel of masquerade. (Chesterton 1981:177)

## **5. Grotesque riddles: pursuit of Sunday and search for meaning**

In Chesterton's handling the element of playfulness is always conducive to epistemological discoveries. Accordingly, in *The Man Who Was Thursday* the search for meaning, which contains but also transcends the immediate experience, takes place via the transgressive, nonsensical, motley and jocular route of the grotesque. On the plane of fictional discourse the epistemological quest assumes the form of a question which reverberates throughout the whole narrative: "What can it all mean?" (Chesterton 1981:172) The question may slightly vary: "Was anyone anything?" (126), "Whatever all this pandemonium means..." (145), "What did it all mean?" (151), or even more desperately: "I want to know what the devil all this means..." (174) In spite of minor variations in purely verbal expression, the

core of that fundamental query remains the same, and it comes down to the enigma of Sunday.

So the question ‘what does it mean?’ gets transformed into an enquiry about the identity of Sunday: “Who and what are you?” (Chesterton 1981:180)

Who are you? What are you? Why did you get us all here? Do you know who and what we are? Are you a half-witted man playing the conspirator, or are you a clever man playing the fool? (Chesterton 1981: 154)

Sunday, first as Police Officer who organises the entire undertaking aimed at destroying the anarchist conspiracy, and then the Chief Anarchist himself, is not only in the centre of Chesterton’s adventure of pursuit, but he is also in the centre of the quest for meaning. Moreover Sunday, who combines apparent contradictions, challenges the laws of nature and transcends limitations, has the narrative status of the pivotal metaphor sustained throughout the novel. Although the only clues which he leaves for his pursuers are paper balls with absurd clusters of words, it does not prevent the detectives from comparing him not only to the whole world, but also to the entire universe.

Each man of you finds Sunday quite different, yet each man of you can only find one thing to compare him to – the universe itself [...] I think of Sunday as I think of the whole world. (Chesterton 1981:168)

Thus the question about Sunday becomes in fact a philosophical investigation into the nature of Being, with its metaphysical dimension inextricably tied up with the physical. Sunday is full of contradictions, capable of invoking and taming demons that haunt man’s life, but eventually he appears to the detectives as a colossal jester, who is both mischievous and benevolent. Paradoxically, the adventure of Syme and his companions offers and at the same time precludes a satisfactory solution; it baffles and simultaneously leads to an elucidation. When Sunday is directly approached with the question about his identity, he gives the answer which is just as enigmatic as the absurd messages in the paper balls, but it is also illuminating in its inscrutability:

You will understand the sea, and I shall be still a riddle; you shall know what the stars are, and not know what I am. Since the beginning of the world all men have hunted me like a wolf – kings and sages, and poets and law-givers, all the churches, and all the philosophers. But I have never been caught yet, and the skies will fall in the time I turn to bay. (Chesterton 1981:154-5)

In the fictitious world of “disguises [which] do not disguise but reveal” (Chesterton 1981:175) the movement of the narrative discourse is directed from the state of ignorance and anxious confusion to the state of serenity, relief and joyous elation. The massive face of Sunday, “filling the whole sky” (Chesterton 1981:183), which at the end of *The Man Who Was Thursday* grows larger and

larger to dominate the cognitive horizon that has been outlined during the novel's discourse, does not provide any explicit answer that could be contained in a logical verbal formula. Nevertheless it is justifiable to claim that within the grotesque framework, constructed and maintained in Chesterton's narrative, the grotesque itself is an answer for it gives an insight into the overwhelming and elusive nature of Being lying beyond words.

## 6. Conclusion

At the heart of the grotesque art lies what Philip Thomson identifies as "the unresolved clash of incompatibles in work and response" (Thomson 1972:27). The clash, resulting from the encounter of the incompatibles, intrinsically belongs to the nature of the grotesque and refers to all its constituent elements. It should be emphasized, however, that the defining category of the grotesque is not only the clash, but also the strategic absence of solution. It makes the literary grotesque an especially apposite rhetorical strategy to convey the complexity, obscurity and the unsettling nature of existence. The words which Gregory addresses to Syme at the beginning of their epistemological adventure: "no human words can give you any notion of why I brought you here" (Chesterton 1981:23) capture the essence of the meaning and function of the grotesque in literature. Where the logic of the orderly discourse fails, and words prove their inadequacy, the grotesque remains a potent artistic device and a particularly fitting instrument to express the otherwise inexpressible reality, though most intensely and acutely experienced.

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**SCI-FI THAT IS NO LONGER ONE:  
CYBERPUNK AND POSTMODERNITY IN LITERATURE**

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***Abstract:** The article focuses upon literary cyberpunk from the perspective of its relevance in the formation of literary modes no longer relying upon modern age metaphysical principles. The paper argues that cyberpunk absorbs and transforms the features of its mainstream contemporary, literary postmodernism, to the point where they can provide a productive groundwork for the formation of postmodern literary production.*

***Keywords:** cyberpunk, sci-fi, postmodernism, postmodernity, modern age*

## **1. Introduction**

Throughout the second half of the 1980s, more or less substantiated obituaries to postmodernism have been appearing in both specialized and general media, as well as more or less justified claims to its succession. If nothing else, the latter signalled the increasingly obvious incapacity of postmodernism to adequately represent and significantly comment upon the existing reality. From the perspective of the *Geistesgeschichte* approach to the transformations of the historical and literary epochs, examining the statuses of the subject, reality, transcendence and truth within a given historical time-frame, the problems with finding new modes of expression, which would significantly differ from the established postmodernist *dictum*, are understandable. Analysed in terms of its historical and spiritual foundation, postmodernism reveals itself as the ultimate realisation of metaphysical nihilism in literature; the phase which represents the definitive disintegration of the modern age metaphysical order in the development of modern age literature. Consequently, its rightful successors should move away from the Cartesian metaphysics entirely and abide by a new, postmodern structuring of the world.

Radical shifts from the established tradition were first detectable in the production of the Avant-Pop movement, formed in the United States of America at the beginning of the 1990s. From the perspective of the philosophical, sociological, economic and anthropological characteristics of the epoch succeeding the modern age as charted by the leading theoreticians of postmodernity (e.g. Jean Baudrillard, Fredric Jameson, Jean-François Lyotard, Marshal McLuhan, Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, the Avant-Pop movement, as I will show in the following section, was the first to thoroughly internalize the conditions of postmodernity.

The focal point of this paper is an attempt to elucidate what happened in between the still essentially modern age defined postmodernism and the already fully postmodern Avant-Pop; in other words, how literature in general has managed to bridge the epochal gap in less than a decade. The article proposes that in the plethora of literary attempts to transcend postmodernism, appearing throughout the



1980s, literary cyberpunk offered the most productive groundwork for the Avant-Pop to successfully carry literature to the new, postmodern epoch.

## **2. The Desert of the Real and the Avant-Pop**

The beginnings of the postmodern epoch coincide with the formation of the postindustrial society after the Second World War. The drastic changes in the fields of trade, economy and finance, brought about by the extremely rapid development of advertising, media and information technology, were soon followed by very tangible alterations in the domains of society and culture. Tracing the changes and establishing their incompatibility with the Cartesian categories, Marshal McLuhan (2001), Jean-François Lyotard (1984), Jean Baudrillard (1994), Fredric Jameson (2000), Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (2005) and others have provided a surprisingly congruent array of observations on the governing mechanisms of the postmodern epoch. In the outline of the postmodern *Geistesgeschichte* model, discernable from existing theoretizations, which will serve as a springboard for detection of the first major deviations from the postmodernist tradition, I will rely on the terminology developed by Jean Baudrillard, which in my opinion most aptly articulates and encapsulates the observations of his colleagues.

The category of reality, the postmodern version of which Baudrillard terms hyperreality, is a convenient starting point. Hyperreality refers to the reality of the third-order simulacra (cf. Baudrillard 1994:121-127) conditioned by the shift in production relations which signalled the beginning of the postindustrial stage of capitalism after the Second World War. This is a reality created from copies, models without originals, in which consumption is no longer bound to the functional value of the products. The objects of consumption acquire social meaning and function as a basis of identity creation. The postmodern subject is, like hyperreality, a network system of differential signs that can be arbitrarily manipulated according to one's preferences. Postmodern subjects are therefore completely fluid, unstable systems of information, and their existence is guaranteed by the constant influx of data from the media, which consequently assume the status of the postmodern transcendence. The category of truth, which describes the relation between the subject and the transcendence, in postmodern societies anticipates perpetual rhizomatous decentralization (cf. Kreveel 2010:157).

My decision to examine the production of the Avant-Pop in terms of the *Geistesgeschichte* framework described above was based on a seemingly shallow reason: these 1990s authors were the first generation to have thoroughly internalized the hypertextual medium. Remembering, however, Marshall McLuhan's (2001:8) claim that the nature of the media used for communication shapes societies more than the content of the communication does, provides my selection with a much more solid base – the change in medium typically accompanies the changing of epochs; as Jay David Bolter observes in relation to the dawning of modernity, “[w]hen the printed word supplanted and marginalized

the codex, the writing space took on the qualities of linearity, replicability and fixity” (2001:22).

These qualities represent the foundation of the modern age’s structuring of the world and they establish the notion of the author of the printed text as an authority, the ultimate metaphor of the Cartesian subject. However, the qualities of flexibility, instability and interactivity, which Bolter (2001:xiii) assigns to hypertext, clearly echo the defining qualities of Baudrillard’s concept of hyperreality as a network of signs freely manipulated according to one’s desires. The electronic medium therefore embodies the principles of the social, economic and cultural reality of our everyday existence and provides the perfect medium for commenting on it.

My analyses of the literary characters, literary worlds and stylistic features of the most representative Avant-Pop works (e. g. Mark America's *The Kafka Chronicles*, Ron Sukenick's *Doggy Bag* and *Mosaic Man*, Mark Leyner's fiction, Kathy Acker's *Empire of the Senseless*, Douglas Coupland’s *Generation X*, short stories in the Avant-Pop anthology edited by McCaffery, L. *Avant-Pop: Fiction for a Daydream Nation*) in terms of the postmodern metaphysical framework charted above revealed that the governing principle in deed predominantly corresponds to Baudrillard’s notion of simulacra of simulation, forming hyperreal systems foreign to the Cartesian dialectics and principles of organicity, hierarchization and linearity (Krevel 2010:89-137).

The Avant-Pop subject is best described as an open, unstable system of information on the subject, meaning that it is prone to changing completely with the introduction of new data into the system of objectivity. The validity of these data depends on the stability of the potential systems they might create between themselves and in connection to the systems already confirmed in hyperreality, which present the fluid core of identity. If the clusters of new data entering the system create a more stable structure, the core is replaced or updated. The hypertextual logic of the subject’s creation furthermore dissolves – much as is the case on Internet pages – the traditional distinction between the author, the reader and the protagonists.

The existence of such an identity-in-flux is crucially connected to the constant supply of data from the environment. In the Avant-Pop the environment into which the characters are placed is the defining factor in identity creation. With introduction of new information into the system of environment, the identity arbitrarily changes. Avant-Pop landscapes are completely fluid systems, within which places or locations are no longer the sum total of a finite number of characteristics, but established only with regard to the placing of these characteristics into the system of more or less stable environments. The precondition for their existence is the constant influx of new information, enabling the verification and stability of the environments introduced. The device providing them – in most Avant-Pop works the task is performed by television, print, radio, internet or their derivatives – thus becomes the guarantee of each immediate reality, while its logic assumes the status of truth in the sense of experiencing the world (cf. Krevel 2010:105-114).

The defining feature of the Avant-Pop style is the absence of a system of familiar references. Its abundant neologisms have no symbolic correspondents, and they have yet to be actualized in the manner of the third order simulacra in the hyperrealities of individual receivers. In that respect, they decisively define the direction of the possibilities for a story and its meaning. The Avant-Pop metaphors are probably the best example of how a third order simulacrum attracts and incorporates raw data within its hyperreality. Fulfilling the traditional function of describing the unknown with the familiar, the Avant-Pop metaphors rely exclusively upon the artefacts of the mediagenic society – those artefacts which have already become part of our everyday hyperreality. These function much like hypertext links, since the receiver's familiarity with them conditions the creation of the story (cf. Krevet 2010:126-133).

### **3. Cyberpunk**

The governing principle of the Avant-Pop's activity and production, then, corresponds to Baudrillard's notion of simulacra of simulation, forming hyperreal systems foreign to the Cartesian dialectics and principles of organicity, hierarchization and linearity. Such major transformations in literature do not and never have happened overnight. There were indeed numerous attempts throughout the 1980s to move away from the unproductive and increasingly unattractive postmodernist modes, returning to the concrete everyday reality and addressing various contemporary social and economic issues instead.

The tendency to focus on the more tangible aspects of (contemporary) existence was not restricted to the domain of mainstream fiction. In their attempt to revolutionise the obsolete modes of science fiction, the founding members of the cyberpunk movement (i.e. William Gibson, Bruce Sterling, Rudy Rucker, John Shirley and Lewis Shiner) turned away from the psychologising of the New Wave soft sci-fi and from traditional hard sci-fi's spaceships, Martians and galaxies far far away, to the "overlapping of worlds that were formerly separate: the realm of high tech, and the modern pop underground" (Sterling 1986:iv). The latter would also be quite an accurate description of the 1980s experiential reality, in which, after all, the computer became personal. In what follows I will explain why I consider cyberpunk to be the most productive missing link between the unstable and unreliable realities of postmodernism, and the productive hyperrealities of the Avant-Pop.

#### **3.1. Cyberpunk and Sci-Fi**

Literary cyberpunk had never questioned its science fiction status. Still, in Bruce Sterling's 1986 cyberpunk manifesto, the aim of which was to establish the movement as the next step in the development of science fiction, there is a statement, which makes both the placement of cyberpunk within science fiction as well as the existence of the genre itself highly problematic: "The cyberpunks are

perhaps the first SF generation to grow up not only within the literary tradition of science fiction but in a truly science-fictional world” (1986: ix).

The terminal impact of this statement becomes clear when we observe the relation between the development of science fiction and mainstream literary production. After its declaration of independence from the mainstream production in 1926, science fiction has rapidly achieved the status of a self-contained subculture, developing independently from the mainstream. From the existing theoretizations on the specifics of the genre in relation to the mainstream one can deduce two major reasons for their separation. As science fiction is primarily about the research of alternative worlds, the questions it is addressing are, as Brian McHale (1992:247-248) proposes, essentially ontological, while the mainstream with its observations about the experiential world addresses issues which are essentially epistemological. At the same time, owing to its connection to the tradition of fantastic literature, science fiction relies for its effect on providing the element of the fantastic, which is achieved by forcing the reader to doubt the existing ontological order.

It is rather obvious why science fiction as an independent genre might encounter a serious identity crisis when entering the social, cultural and economic reality of the 1980s. With postmodernism as its mainstream contemporary, the most important defining feature of science fiction – that of addressing ontological issues – was rendered irrelevant, as postmodernism was doing exactly the same thing. Furthermore, despite the seeming incompatibility, the genre and the mainstream have kept each other in check since at least the 1960s. At that time, as Brian McHale shows in *Constructing Postmodernism* (227-236), a feedback loop of influences was established between the two, with mainstream writers borrowing themes, motifs and materials from science fiction, while science fiction authors drew from mainstream poetics. The two initially absorbed the models with a certain delay; however, throughout the years the delay began to decrease, until, with cyberpunk, it disappeared. Science fiction and mainstream fiction found themselves within the same aesthetic frame, treating similar themes and motifs, and using similar writing strategies.

The rise of the information society and culture defined by technology contributed to the waning of the other defining feature: the element of the fantastic. A techno-culture defined reader can hardly doubt the unity of the ontological order as that order had been ruined for quite some time. In a world where the real is constructed according to one’s preferences and desires (by changing TV channels, using a walkman, playing video or computer games, not to mention the possibilities offered by the Internet), concepts like ‘impossible’, ‘unreal’ or ‘fantastic’ lose their traditional meaning – especially when supported by science.

### **3.2. Cyberpunk and Postmodernism**

From the perspective of science fiction, cyberpunk therefore merges the genre with the mainstream by bringing technology to the core of literary creation.

However, to fully understand its role in the development of literature after postmodernism, we must also clarify the relation between cyberpunk and its mainstream contemporary.

Postmodernism was a literary reaction to a historical environment, in which the postmodern condition was still predominantly a matter of theoretical and philosophical discourse, and much less of the actual, lived experience. The problematics of indefinableness of a subject, reality or a higher, transcendental truth were reflected merely on the level of form, conveyed with metafictional practices, mixing of genres, quotations and so on. In cyberpunk, however, these elements move into the story, or in the words of Brian McHale, cyberpunk “translates or transcodes postmodernist motifs from the level of form (the verbal continuum, narrative strategies) to the level of content” (1992:246). To illustrate, Fowles’ juxtaposition of the Victorian world and the mid-twentieth century experience in his *French Lieutenant’s Woman* formally undermines the notion of a unified, stable reality. In cyberpunk, protagonists *actually* inhabit different realities at the same time, which in the 1980s seemed much less ‘fictional’ than Fowles’ formal implications, because at that time multiple realities had already become part of the every-day experiential reality.

Taking into account what has been said, we can agree with Brian McHale’s theory that cyberpunk materializes postmodernist stylistic practices. Since the latter quintessentially define postmodernism, the claim that cyberpunk literature enhances and upgrades postmodernism in the sense that it fully realizes its possibilities seems the most convincing. But does it, unlike postmodernism, offer any productive alternatives?

### **3.3. Protagonists of Cyberpunk**

Cyberpunk writing was, of course, not yet affected by the actual hypertext medium. The great majority of works were written on a typewriter or at best using very primitive word processors. The categories of author, reader, literary reality and so on are therefore still completely traditional. However, its main thematic concern was technology, the functioning of which corresponded to the *modus operandi* of the society, in which the movement emerged. Cyberpunk thus offered an accurate reflection of the society and its functioning which had little to do with traditional science fiction. Furthermore, its popularity and thematic coolness endowed it with a reality forming potential of other, already postmodernized media.

Cyberpunk emerged at a time of disintegration of the modern age subjects and their identity, mirrored in an over-all crisis of representation, which is in the centre of both the works of postmodernist authors as well as theoreticians of postmodernity. The main problem of postmodernist creation of character and identity lies precisely in the paradigmatic postmodernist equality of discourses which can never conform to a meaning-providing hierarchic system. In the works of postmodernist writers, the incompatibility of discourses is reflected in the usage

of pastiches, simulacra, intertextuality and in other metafictional manoeuvres. In cyberpunk, however, postmodernist techniques materialize on the level of the story; they are no longer a metaphor for the contemporary world. Quite the opposite, the world becomes a metaphor of the technique, a copy of the simulacrum. In his *Postmodern Sublime*, Joseph Tabbi (1995: 215) makes a similar observation:

Indeed, it often seems as if cyberpunk's characters *cannot help* but represent to themselves the surrounding structure of mediations, simulacra, and machinic repetitions that have produced, for example, Baudrillard's simulation culture, Lyotard's postmodern sublime, or the dream space of Jameson's political unconscious.

Cyberpunk characters are therefore representations, and as such best described by the traditional concept of a type. However, cyberpunk 'types' are not the classical cross-section of features typical of a certain group of people, they are no longer metaphors but material for metaphorization (cf. Krevel 2001:86-104). As such, they correspond to Baudrillard's third order simulacra: they are artificial constructs of various segments of reality that have yet to find their place in hyperreality. And indeed they found it in the form of a late 1980s and early 1990s cyberpunk subculture, the image, credo and activities of which were based upon those of the heroes in cyberpunk novels.

The logic of character creation in the Avant-Pop is very similar. There is, however, an important difference between the two. In cyberpunk, the author does not enter the simulacric process but remains throughout the meaning-providing entity outside the literary reality. Cyberpunk authors were, after all, still essentially products of traditional approaches to and understanding of literature. Their characters were therefore created as traditional science fiction second order simulacra, as extrapolated versions of existing people and technologies. However, the technology they based their extrapolating upon functioned according to the principles which not only translated extrapolation into the generation of information but also contributed to its immediate realization. The same principles also governed the functioning of the environment, within which the reception took place – the reality of third order simulacra. Such double existence reveals in practice the borderline status of cyberpunk.

### **3.4. Cyberpunk Spaces**

In formation of its worlds, cyberpunk relies upon traditional sci-fi locations (e.g. space colonies, space stations in the orbit, megalopoli), however, with an explicit tendency to provide 'worldness' to the alternative worlds. Although millions of miles away, these worlds are like our world, except for some minor technical details. The cyberpunk versions of, for example, space colonies are almost parodic in comparison with their established counterparts as they are mostly derelict slums, ghettos or luxury resorts for the rich. Similarly, Gibson's *Sprawl*, a

massive urban area covering the entire East Coast from Boston to Atlanta, may not (as yet) be our immediate environment; however, as it is constructed from the elements of the existing reality, it functions in the same way as our media-generated notions of existing places we may never have actually visited. Sprawl is therefore not perceived as a sci-fi extrapolation of the existing reality, but as a simultaneity that is typical for the functioning of hyperreality.

If physical spaces can to some extent still be related to those in classical science fiction and even postmodernist production, the introduction of the concept of cyberspace separates cyberpunk from both the canon of traditional science fiction as well as from postmodernist metanarrative experiments. Cyberspace is the ultimate example of 'reality before reality'. Like Sprawl, it is a product of Gibson's imagination, a combination of existing entities of reality (video games) into a concept which did not yet exist *per se*. It was not until a decade later that the Internet, functioning very similarly to Gibson's cyberspace, became a household utility. The world of cyberpunk is no longer a postmodernist simulation of the one we live in; quite the opposite, the world we live in is a simulation of the cyberpunk world.

The structure of cyberpunk spaces, especially the notion of cyberspace, is therefore very similar to the concept of creation of the Avant-Pop media landscapes from our media conditioned ideas of places. The main difference between the two is the already discussed double status of cyberpunk. Its places start functioning as third order simulacra within the social and economic reality of their reception, while in the Avant-pop, the mediageniety is the defining factor throughout.

### **3.5. Cyberpunk Style**

The most radical innovations cyberpunk offered in terms of its style and literary styles in general are to be found in the formation of neologisms and metaphors. Gibson's technological neologisms, for example, seem strangely familiar at first: we understand individual parts, but not their combination. Consequently, when we come across a cyberpunk technology-based neologism, we do what we usually do with new technological words – we ascribe it an image we are capable of creating according to our existing knowledge and experience. With that, we typically accelerate our everyday models, and the simulacric wheel comes full circle: we do exactly what Gibson was doing, borrowing the components for his neologisms from computer handbooks. Thus, the main characteristic of words that provide cyberpunk style with its specifics is that they do not have symbolic counterparts. But unlike the poststructuralist never-ending chains of signifiers, pointing to the instability of reality created through words, cyberpunk neologisms function as third order simulacra, they create their hyperreal signifieds such as 'cyberspace', for example.

The most obvious novelty that cyberpunk introduced in terms of metaphors is – stated plainly – the usage of technology for description of natural phenomena. However, the matter goes deeper, as these metaphors namely represent

the merging of the literary and the scientific metaphors (Krevel 2001:111-115), which is best illustrated by the central cyberpunk metaphor: the computer. In cyberpunk, this quite often-used sci-fi motif appears in a double function. On the one hand, it retains the characteristics of the traditional sci-fi Frankenstein's monster metaphor, which is essentially scientific; on the other hand and additionally, it becomes a metaphor for the creator of the Frankenstein monster. Consequently, the computer becomes a genuine ontological metaphor, a generator of an infinite number of meanings, from connotations with transcendence and mythologies (as is the case especially in the *Neuromancer* sequel *Count Zero*) to allusions to motherhood and creation in general.

Cyberpunk neologisms and metaphors seem to be the elements which already fully agree with the *modus operandi* of postmodernity both in the manner of their conception as well as their reception. Their structuring and functioning are generally comparable to those of the Avant-Pop. However, the main difference between the cyberpunk technological neologisms without symbolic correspondents, which provides their simulacric status, and the style in the Avant-Pop works, is that in cyberpunk all systems eventually conform to a single, closed system of a linear story with a distinct beginning and end. The absence of such a system of 'familiar references', enabling the unknown to lean upon the familiar and thus contributing to the creation of a clear, linear story, is what seems to be the defining feature of the Avant-Pop style. If cyberpunk neologisms predominantly serve as stylistic devices spicing up the manifestation of an undisputed cover story, the Avant-Pop neologisms define the direction of the possibilities for a story and its meaning.

Similarly, Avant-Pop develops the potential of cyberpunk technological metaphors, whose simulacric status is provided by the fact that technological notions in themselves function as copies without the original and that their meaning is generally ascribed to them through verification in reality. In the media-governed society that fully came into effect with the spread of the Internet to the social reality of individuals at the end of the 1980s, each event, or for that matter each individual, is essentially technological, that is, enabled by technology. The border between nature and technology is eliminated, or better, technology becomes the guarantee of nature's existence – like everything else, our concepts of nature and of the natural are media-generated. And only within such completely technologized, mediagenic reality, could the Avant-Pop practice broaden cyberpunk's technological metaphors across the entire spectrum of media phenomena forming the basis for the creation and understanding of the more complex segments of every-day hyperreality.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Postmodernist disqualification of reality as a source of certainty for the subject's existence in the Cartesian world reflected the actual disappearance of the metaphysical bases upon which modern age societies functioned. The world was moving into a new epoch and postmodernists, with their obsolete traditional literary tools, could do little but endlessly reflect upon how they can reflect no



more. Cyberpunk, on the other hand, had the advantage of its genre origins not to care particularly about its metaphysical grounding. Its sole intention was to make science fiction exciting and attractive to pop-cultural audiences. By latching their production to the then still largely primitive computer technology and the possibilities it implied, they managed, on the one hand, to embody on the level of the story what was only implicit in postmodernist decisively formal attempts to render the disappearance of the Cartesian notion of reality. On the other hand, by submitting their narrative to the central theme of technology, the functioning of which metaphorizes the functioning of the new world order, cyberpunk authors offered literary interpretations of experiences to which readers of the 1980s could relate.

The analyses of the structures of cyberpunk protagonists and literary worlds showed that they correspond to the structuring of Baudrillard's postmodern subjects and hyperreality. Even though conceived as second order simulacra, with the author clearly separated from the literary reality, they were received in society as third order simulacra and they further functioned as such, accelerating into the fully postmodernized subjects and landscapes of the Avant-Pop. The examination of cyberpunk technology-based neologisms and metaphors, which are the trademarks of its style, determined their full status of third order simulacra both on the level of production as well as reception. Cyberpunk may therefore be considered the ultimate realization of the possibilities offered by postmodernism, and at the same time also the movement which brought literature into the immediate vicinity of its postmodern incarnations.

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**THE IMAGE OF FRANCE  
IN HENRY JAMES'S INTERNATIONAL NOVELS<sup>1</sup>**

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***Abstract:** In his international novels, Henry James builds the image of France through the eyes of the American characters that travel in this country. For the innocent Americans, France is an invented landscape, an imagined standard of civilization and historical tradition, but also a land of corruption, hypocrisy and cynicism.*

***Keywords:** aristocracy, corruption, France, history, Old World, tradition*

### **1. Introduction**

Many American writers were aware of their cultural ties to the Old World. Henry James's motivation for the expatriation to Europe and for his international theme can be found in a passage in his book on Hawthorne: "the flower of art blooms only where the soil is deep...it takes a great deal of history to produce a little literature...it needs a complex social machinery to set a writer in motion." (James 1967:25) Europe represented for him a place to live and work because it offered greater complexity of social relations as material for fiction. Herbert Croly said that Europe was for him "life itself raised to a higher power, because more richly charged, more significantly composed, and more completely informed." (Dupee 1945:29) Europe was history and history was continuity of experience. His intention was to see his native society against the background of the older European civilization, instead of seeing it within its local limits only. Henry James's relation to Europe had early roots as he was brought to Europe by his father when he was only six months old. Later on he himself said that: "the nostalgic cup had been applied to my lips even before I was conscious of it- I had been hurried off to London and to Paris immediately after my birth." (James 1962:195)

James never lost the sense of romance with which his youthful apprehensions of Europe were tinged. "He wrote of the European scene with warmth and luster and enchantment; even his dull passages have their inner glow." (Rourke 1991:61) His treatment of Europe is based on a deep vision:

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And what most distinguishes him from earlier Americans is the gradual deepening of his perceptions. From surfaces and 'superstitious' stereotypes of behavior his focus shifted to motives and causes. At first painting manners, he proceeded to analyze morals, and ended by creating his own image of Europe, richer and subtler than the earlier ones though still clearly the product of American eyes." (Wegelin 1958:19)

Henry James's most recurring theme was the attitude in which America and England stand toward each other on the social field. Even if he presented the supremacy of American values, he couldn't avoid the endless possibilities offered by the European civilization. Europe is neither paradise lost, nor Promised Land, but a field of life, it is experience available to the imagination. It is the cultural location of his main concern: the constitution of the Self in relation to the Other, and the possibilities of existence despite the entrenched interests and the threat of failure.

Henry James also talked about the "most general appearance of the American (of those days) in Europe, that of being almost incredibly unaware of life – as the European order expressed life...." (James 1962:187) Europe was complex, experienced, culturally infused, but also corrupt. James is primarily concerned with "innocence and worldliness...or in other variations, youthful ignorant America and wise and civilized Europe." (Edel 1969:280) The moral contrast between Europe and America is a part of the complex contrast of civilizations affected by history. The moral spontaneity of America is juxtaposed to the carefully cultivated manners of Europeans, the manners of a democratic society without "classes" to those of a society organized hierarchically.

If his earliest novels reflect the traditional image of Europe, later on James creates his own Europe, which is the result of a closer vision. He replaces the comedy based on the conflict between American and European manners with a tragic problem, in which manners act like conventions determining morals. In his novels and short novels Europe is an invented landscape, an imagined standard of civilization, of "wit, of grace, of good manners, of vivacity, of urbanity, of intelligence, of what makes an easy and natural style of intercourse!" (James 1920:239-240)

In England, Italy, and France, James is also captivated by the pervasive influence of beauty and romance in homes, churches, gardens, in the common substances of brick and stone and wood. Despite his sentiment for the European places, he doesn't treat them equally, he preserves his objectivity:

The light of his Italy is never the light of his England; the light of his England is as far as possible removed from that of his America. His Paris haze is possessed of an entirely different personality from his London fog; he respects the facial idiosyncrasies of an English country-house or an Alpine hostelry with as much honorable exactitude as the great portrait painters have employed in the service of their sitters. (Luther 1991:71)

Europe gained a form by contrast to American features and to the three types of American characters present in his international fiction: the artist, the businessman and the girl. Europe's role is an ambivalent and contradictory one, as it is up in manners but low in morals.

She is glamorous and enticing, but treacherous and corrupting; rich in history and art, in social graces and social ease, but lacking in fundamental decencies and moral values, in honesty and human kindness, in seriousness of purpose. She pays with carelessness and corruption, moral insensitivity, physical as well as psychological violence, for her *savoir faire*, her historical depth, her artistic refinement. (Perosa 1990:50)

## 2. The Image of France

Henry James's intention to live in Italy and assimilate the high standard didn't succeed. He hoped his residence in Paris would have turned him into "an old, and very contented, Parisian" who had "struck roots into the Parisian soil," and was "likely to let them grow tangled and tenacious there." (James 1974-84:48) He actually didn't have the privilege to enter the aristocratic society in Faubourg St. Germain, but only that of the American colony in Paris.

As a child, James travelled to France with his family, either to Paris or to Boulogne-sur-Mer. If this country wasn't in his heart, it was in his memory, as it could be seen in his remembrances: "Conveyed along the Rue St- Honoré while I waggled my small feet, as I definitely remember doing, under my flowing robe, I had crossed the Rue de Castiglione and taken in, for all my time, the admirable aspect of the Place and the column Vendôme." (James 1956:33) Later on he met important literary figures, such as Turgenev, Flaubert, Zola, Maupassant, Edmond de Goncourt, with whom he shared the preoccupation for style.

So started his artistic emancipation, from the decency which so evidently printed James's evolution as critic, between *French Poets and Novelists* written in his youth and the *Notes on the Novelists* from his maturity, without forgetting *Partial Portraits* and *Essays in London*....James discovered the serious passion those 'unclean' writers invested in their discussions about art. This seriousness was about form, while the Anglo-Saxon novel, maybe because it was mainly illustrated by women, did not care about formal requirements. (Ozouf 1998:200-1)

Henry James builds the image of France through the eyes of the American characters that travel in this country. Concerning his representation of France in fiction, it is not so often present in his novels.

Through the years, James enriched his experience and knowledge of France, without ever departing from a certain reserve toward the country: England reassured him, Italy seduced him, but French history and habits remained

unfamiliar to him. So that France, compared to its two European neighbors, did not appear very often in his work. (Wolkenstein 2008:417)

James's early treatment of France is different from that of Italy and England.

If Italy functions in his early stories as a land of art and the picturesque, England as a shrine for cultural pilgrims or as an object lesson in the social injustice of hereditary aristocracy, 'Madame de Mauves'(1874) and *The American* (1876-77) form their image of France largely in terms of contrast between French and American character. (Wegelin 1958:38)

Henry James could only imagine the exclusive Parisian society and helped by his knowledge of the fiction of Balzac, Flaubert, Turgenev and of the Theatre Français, he claimed the Faubourg as a fictional setting for his novel *The American* (1877):

...the situation, in another country and an aristocratic society, of some robust but insidiously beguiled and betrayed, some cruelly wronged, compatriot, the point being in especial that he should suffer at the hands of persons pretending to represent the highest possible civilization and to be of an order in every way superior to his own. (James 1978:2)

The preface to *The American* written nearly thirty years after the publication of the novel illustrates how the idea came to Henry James while he was riding in a horse carriage:

...I found myself, of a sudden, considering with enthusiasm, as the theme of a 'story', the situation, in another country and an aristocratic society, of some robust but insidiously beguiled and betrayed, some cruelly wronged, compatriot: the point being in especial that he should suffer at the hands of persons pretending to represent the highest possible civilization and to be of an order in every way superior to his own. (James 1962:21-22)

This was the germinal idea for the story of Christopher Newman courting an aristocratic French woman and being thwarted by her family. Christopher Newman is ignorant of the hierarchical class arrangements and of the social forms in the polite French society. As he is "baffled on the aesthetic question," for him Raphael, Titian, Rubens are "a new kind of arithmetic" and inspire him "for the first time in his life, with a vague self- mistrust" (James 1978:17) He has only recently discovered in Europe "a very rich and beautiful world" that had "not all been made by sharp railroad men and stock-brokers." (106) He believes that "Europe was made for him, and not he for Europe." (93) For Newman, Madame de Cintré is the most beautiful aspect of Paris.

Christopher Newman is presented in contrast to a confined and enclosed Europe. He is introduced to the reader within the typically European limited space of the Museum, "his head thrown back and his legs outstretched ...in profound

enjoyment of his posture” (17). The novel opens in Louvre, a microcosmic expression of all the Europe’s differences from the extra-historical and aesthetically innocent America. Actually, Christopher approaches European culture not in an aesthetical and historical manner but as an unexplored territory to be discovered. He feels the Cathedral of Notre-Dame “the best place he could be in” (19).

The novel begins as a ‘realistic’ one in its social observation, but it is seen through the eyes of a man who has a ‘romantic’ vision of Europe. It ends in a melodramatic way, as the ‘romantic’ events, such as duels, dark secrets, murders, show the reality of Europe, beyond the surface of appearances. The American is victimized by a social order which he supposes to be superior to his own.

Madame de Bellegarde and Urbain are Europeans of the aristocratic order, whose brutality is hidden under sophistication. They do not only ruin Claire’s chances of happiness but also murder Monsieur de Bellegarde when they find him inconvenient. They actually come very close to Valentin’s observation: “Old trees have crooked branches, old houses have queer cracks, old races have odd secrets.” (105) Claire de Cintré and Valentin are also typical Europeans. Claire represents the daughter of the nineteenth-century European aristocracy who submits to the parental authority and who can’t flourish elsewhere than in Europe. Valentin is the youngest of the Bellegardes and Newman’s friend. Before dying he apologizes to Newman for the name of Bellegarde which once was noble.

The moral contrast is completed in this novel by the contrast between two different social and political systems. The European system is described as artificial, based on the aristocrats’ pretense.

They assert that the marriage of their daughter to a ‘commercial person’ is incompatible with their high traditions, but in the very act of doing so prove their speciousness: because the Bellegardes covet Newman’s millions, they have first pledged their honor not to obstruct his suit, only to break their word as soon as he has won the daughter’s love. (Wegelin 1958:40)

If the first part of the novel describes their shining urbanity, the second part illustrates what is hidden under this apparent surface, “abysses of criminal enormity- the coercion of the daughter by means only the uglier for being left vague, and the murder of the husband by the wife with an acquiescence of the son amounting almost to parricide.” (Wegelin 1958:40)

The image of French hypocrisy and cynicism is completed on a lower social level by the Nioches. The daughter is “a determined little damsel climbing the social ladder by a competent barter of her God-given graces” and the father is “volubly asserting his respectability while living on the profits of her trade” (James 1978:21). Even if Valentin admires her determination and capacity, he pays with his life as his admiration lands him in a duel.

The novel presents a black and white moral contrast, an idealized American virtue doing honourable battle with an aristocratic villainy, a self-made man’s naiveté and the French aristocracy’s corruption.

In the novel *The Ambassadors* (1903), Henry James follows Strether's experience of his peculiar mission to Europe. He goes to Paris as an ambassador representing principle and duty to save a New England widow's son from a lady who is believed to have beguiled him. His intention is to win the hand of the widow. Surprisingly, he changes his opinion of life and freedom. Strether thinks that Chad would be more fulfilled in Europe with Madame de Vionnet but he cannot convince him to stay. Strether chooses to return to the United States, too. He is too old to seize the Other and he has missed the opportunity of youth.

The setting of the novel is Paris and it perfectly blends with the elegiac tone chosen by James. In his notebook entry, he mentions that his hero's "live all you can" advice can be successful only if rendered in a setting full of meaning.

But think of the place itself again first- the charming June afternoon in Paris, the tea under the trees, the 'intimate' nook, consecrated to 'artistic and literary' talk, types, freedoms of (for the *desorienté* elderly American) an unprecedented sort; think above all of the so-possible presence of a charming woman or two, of peculiarly 'European' tradition, such as it had never yet been given him to encounter. Well, this is what the whole thing, as with a slow rush the sense of it came over him, made him say. (James 1947:142)

The novel deals with two delegations to Paris on behalf of the absent Mrs. Newsome, who wants to save her son from the bad influence that has made him linger there: Strether's mission which turns to be a failure and Sarah Pocock's more efficient one. From the moment of his arrival in Liverpool, Strether starts experimenting a "personal freedom...he hadn't known for years" (James 1907-1909:4). He notices the "civilized" life in "the vast bright Babylon" (89) of Paris that Woollett had never had, but at the same time he becomes conscious of the fact that "almost any acceptance of Paris might give one's authority away" (89) because it would create a connection between him and Chad. His long stay in Paris makes him aware of having grown old without experiencing youth.

The beautiful French Madame de Vionnet represents the Other for Strether. She is fascinating but Strether prefers to keep her at a distance because for him "the loneliness and isolation of the self are thus preferable to the danger of connection and intimacy with the Other." (Fowler 1993:191) His final encounter with Madame de Vionnet shows that he is frightened by the passion from a woman.

It might have made Strether hot or shy, as such secrets of others brought home sometimes do make us; but he was held there by something so hard that it was fairly grim. This was not the discomposure of last night; that had quite passed- such discomposures were a detail; the real coercion was to see a man ineffably adored. There it was again- it took women, it took women; if to deal with them was to walk on water what wonder that the water rose? (James 1907-1909: 285)

Even if he says to little Bilham in a regretting tone: "it's as if the train had fairly waited at the station for me without my having had the gumption to know it was there. Now I hear its faint receding whistle miles and miles down the line.



What one loses one loses; make no mistake about that” (James 1907-1909: 217-218), he doesn’t make any effort to catch the train. He has missed in life something he ultimately has not wanted and misses it again, at this late moment of his life.

The characters in the novel seem to gravitate around the ‘wonderful’ Europe: Gloriani and Madame de Vionnet embody Europe, Waymarsh doesn’t understand it, Strether appreciates it, Chad has learned from it and Mamie Pocock is quite alien to it. For most of the book Europe seems magnificent to Strether. He is at last meeting the requirements of his imagination and is finding his true position. His life has left him separated from his best self. “In Europe, so it is implied, this self might have found an objective place. The burden of self-doubt and subjectivity would have been eased by the continuities of meaning European civilization affords the individual.” (Hutchinson 1991:49)

Sarah Pocock, the second Woollett ambassador, knows in advance what she will find in Europe, like Henrietta Stackpole in *The Portrait of a Lady*. “To her, Paris is the ‘consecrated sense of rash infatuations’; to her an attachment of a young American to a French woman is ‘wicked’ by definition, since it is what the Woollett image of Paris prescribes.” (Wegelin 1958:92-3) The irony is that her view turns out to have been right, at least at the physical level, because Strether finally discovers the real type of relationship Chad and Madame de Vionnet have, even if argued against Sarah’s crude assumption of their corruption.

The French setting is also very suggestive. Gloriani’s garden suggests to Strether “survival, transmission, association, a strong indifferent persistent order”, the open air being “all a chamber of state” (James 1985:38), in contrast to America. Madame de Vionnet’s house expresses ‘the peace of intervals, the dignity of distances and approaches’ amid which ‘the mistress of the scene before him, beautifully passive and under the spell of transmission...had only received, accepted and been quiet.’ (James 1985:56) Strether believes that European traditions provide sustenance, a vital thing that their nation unendingly seeks. He is convinced that he has found in Paris what he has always believed in and longed for. Europe is a treasure-house in which Americans must assert their purchasing power. This aspect undermines the more reverent pilgrimage to Europe’s cultural past they make.

Paris is for Strether, as it has been for many generations of Americans, and Englishmen “the *Ville Lumière*, the place where ideas are everywhere in circulation, and subject to free and animated discussion- and that in this respect it is the absolute antithesis to Woollett, Mass., where Strether had been spending his starved life”. (Beach 1954: XLVIII) It is the perfect setting,

where one can exercise and communicate with ‘an ideal civilized sensibility; a humanity capable of the finest shades of inflection and implication’, where ‘a nuance may engage a whole complex moral economy and the perceptive response be the index of a major valuation or choice?’ It is not clear that what Paris gives to Strether, under the helpful direction of Maria Gostrey, is a ‘glimpse of a possible civilization in which the manners belonging to a ripe social intercourse shall be the index of a moral refinement’- well, if not ‘of the best American kind’ as conceived

in Woollett, at least of the kind that was implicit in every turn of James's father's ethical philosophy? (Beach 1954: XLVIII)

The novel shows how American innocents become wiser and mellowed after their rich and varied experience of Europe. Though Lambert Strether had been to Europe when he was twenty-five years old, he had missed the charm of it and now the "views of cathedral tower and water-side fields, of huddled English town and ordered English country" (James 1985:13) delight him. He is enthusiastic to see Chester, London, and Paris. Europe and Europeans are exotic for Strether, as his response to hearing Mme de Vionnet speaking French shows:

the result was odd, fairly veiling her identity, shifting her back into a mere voluble class or race to the intense audibility of which he was by this time inured. When she spoke the charming, slightly strange English he best knew her by he seemed to feel her as a creature, among all the millions, with a language quite to herself, the real monopoly of a special shade of speech, beautifully easy for her, yet of a colour and a cadence that were both inimitable and matters of accident. (James 1907-1909: 261)

*The Ambassadors* analyzes the European scene itself and Paris represents the beautiful order which results from a continuity of social experience.

### **3. Conclusion**

Henry James's image of Europe is differently shaped in his international novels. Thus, if in his early literary work Henry James was preoccupied with the 'international situation', Europe being seen as a place for the moral destruction of the innocent Americans who were deceived by the more experienced Europeans, in his late novels the international contrast is no longer an external conflict alone. It is presented in terms of individual awareness of the foreign aspects of Europe, of exploring the origins and possibilities of contrasting models of moral life.

No other major novelist of the nineteenth century wrote more about European cities than Henry James. Paris, Rome, Venice, Florence and especially London form the settings for much of his international novels. The exterior image of these cities is completed by their interior reflections as one of his main tendencies and aspirations was to internalize scenery and action. He also expressed his preferences towards the European countries and cities by treating them differently. He chose to judge England, France morally as exponents of civilized values, while Italy represented aesthetic values.

In his international novels, Henry James builds the image of France through the eyes of the American characters that travel in this country. For the innocent Americans, France is an invented landscape, an imagined standard of civilization and historical tradition, but also a land of corruption, hypocrisy and cynicism.

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## ***WORDS AND PROCESSES***

# ENGLISH WITHIN AND ACROSS BOUNDARIES

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***Abstract:** The paper explores the consequences of the expansion of English both in its use as a second language in many countries and as the lingua franca for international communication. The paper also discusses the emergence of various local varieties and the fragmentation of English into several forms of usage (ESL, EFL, ELF) as well as the pedagogical implications of this phenomenon.*

***Keywords:** EFL, ELF, ESL, lingua franca varieties, communication, globalization*

## 1. Introduction

In recent years it has become routine to speak of English as ‘the world’s lingua franca’ and to underline its widespread use as a language for basic communication in a very wide range of contexts and purposes all over the world. Indeed, with the growing process of globalisation, the need for a universal language has become more and more widely felt, and the availability of a lexically rich language, endowed with a well-structured morpho-syntactic system such as English, has certainly helped to solve this problem. Of course, the global prevalence of English has undoubtedly been favoured by the considerable advantages that this language offers, such as its relatively simple derivational and inflectional morphology and the international dimension of its lexicon, mainly increased through borrowing from several different languages. But the linguistic features of English cannot be considered the principal explanation for its global use in international communication, as the position of a language as a lingua franca is not merely based on its intrinsic properties, but on more general political and cultural factors. Colonization was responsible for the first stages of the spread of English; its expansion was favoured by such factors as technological developments, economic globalisation and improved communications.

On a worldwide level, English is perceived as having the highest ‘utility and exchange values’ (Coulmas 1991), as it offers the possibility of making use of the language for the widest range of purposes and in the largest number of places all over the world. These high utility and exchange values have caused a growing need for learning English as an international language, which in turn has determined a dramatic increase in its teaching (Gagliardi and Maley 2010), with the result that nowadays young people in many parts of the world are much better able to communicate with foreigners than their parents were (for a discussion of the situation in some Eastern European countries cf. Frăţilă and Pârlog 2010). Even a country such as China, which for decades placed limits on the teaching of English for ideological reasons, has recently decided to favour the improvement of the competence of its population in this language. At present, the role and status of English in China is higher than ever before in history, as evidenced by its position as a key subject in the curriculum, and as a crucial determinant for university

entrance and procuring well-paid jobs in the commercial sector (Zhongshi and Yu 2002).

## **2. English for internal communication**

The utility and exchange values of English are considered so high that in several countries it has been adopted as the main language for internal communication. This is the case of Singapore, which has four official languages: English, Mandarin, Tamil and Malay. However, the only language common to the whole country is English as the other three national languages are spoken by only a part of the population. Thus, English has become dominant for all purposes in Singapore, to such an extent that middle class communities and families are starting to speak Singaporean English in the home more than they speak other languages. As this is a recent phenomenon, it has mainly affected the younger generation, with the consequence that many grandparents have often been unable to communicate with their grandchildren owing to the loss of the mother tongue; however, this limitation is accepted in view of the material well-being of the younger generation in a fast-changing world (Chew 1999). This spread of the use of English as an ethnic link-language is also favoured by the government's policy to make English the principal school language as well as the language of the government and a major workplace language (Pakir 1994). This choice on the part of the Singapore government has been determined both by economic and political reasons: English is seen as the language which can attract foreign investments and give the country the leading edge in education, academic achievement, international trade and business. Moreover, the deep ethnic and linguistic fragmentation of the country has favoured the adoption of a dominant external language to enable the country to survive politically, socially and culturally. However, this adoption of the English language has not necessarily meant the absorption of western cultural values. Indeed, Singaporeans like to think of their country as 'modern', but not as 'western'.

The Singaporean situation is not an isolated case, but is indicative of the change in the status of English in several Asian and African countries, where – after a few decades of independence – English is no longer seen as the colonial oppressor's language, but rather as an advantageous tool for national development and international communication. In many ex-colonial countries, the local languages are seen as inferior to English, which continues to be the language in which the elite is educated and through which one climbs into positions of power, affluence and cultural significance. The number of schools that promise to teach English or use English as a medium of instruction is large enough to indicate how keen people are to learn English so as to empower themselves. However, the high cost of quality schools causes a situation that can well be compared to a 'linguistic apartheid' (Rahman 2001). Indeed, the promotion of widespread use of English in some of these countries often leads to the emergence of a variety which differs somewhat from that of the model they wish to imitate. This is due, in particular, to

the reduction in the number of native-speaking teachers in those places and the employment of local teachers not always possessing near-native competence; this gives rise to a growing gap between the local variety of English and the standard of a mother-tongue English speaker, with resulting problems connected with a lack of intelligibility and dangers of misunderstanding when communicating with foreigners. An example of this development of a local variety is Malaysia, as a consequence of the local government's decision to promote the Malay language soon after independence. There has recently been concern that the standard of English in Malaysia is becoming lower and that this is having a detrimental impact on Malaysia's position in the global economy and in international negotiating forums. As a consequence the government has decided that greater stress should be put on English as a second language and that English-medium teaching should be encouraged once more in some university subjects.

Another case in which English is used for internal purposes is India, where English was adopted as an official language when that country became independent in 1947, although only fewer than three per cent of its population spoke it, as the vast majority of the Indian people spoke the numerous national languages. In spite of the constitutional requirement that English should be replaced by Hindi as the only national language within 15 years after independence, growing resistance in Southern Indian states forced the Parliament to amend the constitution so that English could be granted co-official status (Nayar 1969). Even in Varanasi, which is the heart of the movement to promote the use of Hindi, the citizens "vote for Hindi education, yet send their own children to English-medium schools" (Laitin 1992: 69). Indeed, India is a good example of a multilingual country with a complex linguistic hierarchy: over 190 recognized languages exist, 87 of which are used in the media, 58 taught as a school subject, 41 used as a medium of instruction in schools, 18 recognized for the purposes of government in the states, and two (Hindi and English) recognised as national languages (Graddol 1996). Language shift usually occurs from a small, low-status vernacular to one of the languages higher in the hierarchy, usually one with a larger number of speakers and wider currency in the region. As a consequence of their limited functional value, the existence of low-status vernaculars is now threatened.

This situation is part of a more global phenomenon commonly referred to with the expression 'language ecology', which discusses the concern about the gradual disappearance of the languages and cultures of many small but distinct communities and peoples. This 'language death' (Crystal 2000) is often attributed to the globalising action of a small number of the world's languages, predominantly English. However, although the spread of English and the loss of lesser-spoken languages are indeed linked, they are not connected in a causal way, as speakers of lesser-used languages do not, on the whole, abandon their native tongues in order to adopt the English language, but they often opt for other regional languages. This is the case, for example, of Vilela (the sole surviving language of a group of Indian languages in Argentina), which has been supplanted by Spanish, or of Ubykh (a language of the northwest Caucasus) replaced by Armenian (Diamond 1994). What usually happens in these cases is that young adults of the minority

groups tend to become bilingual; subsequently, their children become monolingual in the majority language; eventually, the minority language is spoken only by older people, until the last of them dies off.

### **3. Globalising trends**

Even if not officially considered a national tongue, in several countries English is becoming the second language of many people. In Europe, English has become so widely known that it is not only used with foreigners but at times for internal communication. This is the case of Denmark, where English is sometimes used by Danes to communicate with other Danes; examples are popular music (where a substantial proportion of popular lyrics heard on Danish radio and TV – often written by Danes – are in English), foreign films and programmes (shown at the cinema or on TV in the original language), advertisements and commercials (partially or completely in English, often produced by Danes to give them an international flavour), instruction manuals (sometimes written in different languages, but often available only in English) and news media. Code-mixing with English is extremely common; for example, when announcing in Danish the arrival of many V.I.P.s (pronounced in English) for an international conference in Copenhagen, one newsreader explained that “V.I.P. betyder [means] *very important person*”, but omitted to translate *very important person* into Danish (Preisler 1999:243). This widespread use of English for internal purposes seems to completely ignore the fact that at least 20 per cent of the population (usually including the older generation) have little or no knowledge of English; this large minority of Danes, therefore, cannot have access to texts that are instead understood by the rest of the population, thus experiencing a new kind of functional illiteracy.

The same widespread use of English for internal purposes can be seen in another country where that language is not the mother tongue, i.e. Switzerland. In the late 1990s, the Swiss government made use of English in its campaign to discourage driving under the influence of drink and drugs. The slogan used in the posters was: “NO DRINKS – NO DRUGS – NO PROBLEMS” (Cheshire and Moser 1994). Dröshel’s (2011) analysis of a large amount of data obtained from written and spoken English produced by Swiss speakers has confirmed the widespread use of English in several fields. In this country, the awareness of the important role that the knowledge of English plays in people’s professional and private lives has sometimes led to controversial issues and to a critical reconsideration by some authorities of the local language policy of this multilingual country, where the maintenance of Swiss identity itself is linked to the people’s ability to speak as many as possible of the country’s national languages. According to the traditional policy, Swiss children are usually taught one of the other national languages as their first foreign language. However, in 2000 Zurich’s Education Director announced that his canton intended to make English the first foreign language taught in primary school instead of French. This proposal caused a strong reaction on the part of the Education Directors of the



other cantons, which – although emphasising the importance of the knowledge of English on the part of Swiss citizens – reaffirmed the existing first foreign language teaching policy, for fear that English might become the lingua franca of Switzerland.

#### 4. Linguistic borrowing

The widespread use of English as an international language is causing the adoption of its forms by local languages, and sometimes the alteration of some of its elements. This is due to the fact that language contact and language use have always favoured linguistic borrowing, particularly from the richer or more prestigious languages. The higher status enjoyed by English at present is exerting massive influence on all the languages with which it interacts. English loanwords are present in most major languages (for recent loans in European languages cf. Görlach 2002). Also Italian lexis has been experiencing this considerable impact of English: 30 per cent of business and commercial terms in Italian have been taken from this language (Pulcini 2002) and the increasing intake of anglicisms in the last few years seems to have made this share even larger. Another language which can be quoted to show this remarkable influence of English is Danish; as shown by Jarvad's (1999) dictionary, 38% of the neologisms are linked to English: 13% have retained their English form (*virtual reality*), 14% are hybrids with one English element (*computerspiel* '-game', *jobsamtale* '-interview', *joggingsko* '-shoe(s)'), 2% are pseudo-English words (*airguide* 'charter flight hostess', *black horse* 'dark horse', *monkeyclass* 'economy class') and 9% are translations or semantic loans from English (*forbrugersamfund* 'consumer society', *jordskredssejr* 'landslide victory', *kerne familie* 'nuclear family').

In the process of borrowing, the meanings of loanwords are often affected; as words are usually borrowed in specific contexts, only one sense of polysemic words is commonly involved in the process. This explains the narrowing of meaning of several words borrowed from English; typical examples are the loanwords *shopping* and *drink* in Italian, the former usually limited to the purchasing of clothes and luxury goods, the latter specifically used with reference to alcoholic beverages. It is also possible, although less frequent, to find the opposite phenomenon, i.e. the use of a loanword in a wider context than in the original language; the lexeme *doping*, for instance, is used in the Italian context very generally for anything from race-horse doping – for which it is still used in British English – to a reference to drug tests, anti-drug campaigns and drug charges, and more generally to drug abuse, for which it is rather dated in British English (cf. Pearsall 1998 at *dope*). Some diversification can also be seen as regards compounds; these can be clipped in the recipient language, giving birth to expressions that may be unrecognizable to native speakers of English, as in the reduction of *basketball*, *camping-site* and *night-club* to *basket*, *camping* and *night* in Italian contexts (for more examples cf. Kermas 2003). The local language sometimes uses English words to create new expressions that do not exist in English, such as the compounds *Showmaster*, *Dressman*, *Pullunder* or *Highboard*

in German (Carstensen 1986) or *paper driver* (someone who has a driver's licence but rarely drives), *golden time* (TV prime time) or *free dial* (toll free phone number) in Japanese (MacGregor 2003). Another example of local creativity is the verb *prepone* (to bring something forward to an earlier date or time), formed on the analogy of *postpone* and first recorded in India in the 1970s (Pearsall 1998:1464).

In some cases, English mixes with local languages and creates new versions such as creoles and pidgins, as can be seen in the Caribbean, where the local variety of English co-exists with a majority usage commonly known as 'Creole'. Also, in other cases, English is used alongside the local language and strictly interacts with it, creating hybrid forms of expression, as in the case of English and Malay in Malaysia, where dialogues in television serials may present instances of code-switching like the following:

A: Thanks, Ita, for house-sitting for me.

B: No problem. Apartment kau lebih cantik daripada apartment apu [Your apartment is much more beautiful than mine]. Anyway, it's all yours again. (Preshous 2001:52)

These cases of code-switching are not only typical of the spoken language (for more examples cf. McArthur 1998:11-12), but are also visible in written texts. This is the result of the linguistic conflict existing in Malaysia: on the one hand, the state is actively promoting the local tongue as the national language; on the other, English is still considered important on an international stage. This situation of conflict has determined the rise of an intermediary informal variety – Malaysian English – which is highly valued as an expression of cultural identity (Preshous 2001). This is not an isolated case; although English is becoming the second language in many countries, it is still thought of as a foreign language, in the sense that the people using it have no intention of acquiring a British or American identity and abandoning their own. The local languages – together with religion and shared history – are still acting as important factors in the maintenance of national identity.

## **5. Pedagogical implications**

What pedagogical implications are we to draw from the considerations on the globalisation of English presented so far? The proposals made by various scholars are quite different and are not always compatible with one another (cf., among others, the various contributions to Dziubalska-Kołaczyk and Przedlacka 2005, Facchinetti, Crystal and Seidlhofer 2010, Cagliero and Jenkins 2011). Some scholars have argued that international English should be based on simplified models; Wong (1982), for example, argues that local varieties would be better models than any native-speaker variety, as they are based on simpler grammatical structures. As an illustration, she points out that the complexity of 'tag questions' in British and American English is generally reduced in Malaysian usage to a general 'isn't it?' form. However, it is to be noted that the adoption of these

simplified varieties would create great pedagogic problems, because each usually conveys local features; moreover, their diversification would lead speakers away from that common unifying point of reference, which is the true motivation for the adoption of a common language in effective worldwide communication. The teaching of a simplified language is also favoured by several specialists involved in the production of materials for teaching English as a foreign language in various countries of the world. For example, the caption of one of the leaflets promoting language courses in Africa reads: “Simple English is better English”; the philosophy behind the courses is stated as follows:

Simplifying language means improving it. Most often, English is simplified to improve technical communication to non-native English speakers. Simplified English is not only easier to read, but also it is much easier to translate. Writing for the non-native English speaker is important, because so much technical information is only available in English. (qtd. in Laurén 2002:88)

This simplified form of English is, however, often criticised by other scholars, as its teaching might lead to inadequate competence and unsuitable linguistic behaviour:

English has a reputation of being a socially primitive language, and therefore is abused by many. It is not uncommon for English to be used by Japanese – and not only by Japanese – as if they had forgotten about linguistic etiquette. Speaking English means that you can just walk up to anyone, say ‘hi!’ and you’re in the middle of a conversation between equals. Thus the English language is being reduced to a lingua franca of social cripples. (Coulmas 1987:105)

Indeed, the English to be taught cannot be a limited language similar to Ogden’s and Richards’ Basic English (cf. Ogden 1932, Richards 1943), as the definition of a satisfactory set of essential lexis and grammatical structures to be used for international communication has proved non-feasible. The model for teaching should be the language with all its richness and complexity – obviously presented in easy-to-assimilate ‘doses’ and in specific relevant contexts –, as this is the language students are likely to meet in the real situations of communication in which they will be involved. Moreover, the criticism of simplified teaching models does not imply the adoption of a native-like competence target in all cases. On the contrary, the awareness of the need to free international English from native-speaker ethnocentricity is essential if educational authorities wish to set goals which are central rather than peripheral to the expectations of learners. In all cases, as English is now spoken in so many different contexts and with so many accents, teachers should be aware of the need to widen the range of their students’ listening and reading experience and expose them to a number of varieties of spoken and written English. Although English as a foreign language will usually be taught according to a specific model – British English or American English – depending

on the cultural or geographical relationship with either Britain or America, with the enormous impact of mass-media, students will be exposed to many varieties of English, so their output will probably include a combination of forms and uses deriving from a number of different models.

## 6. Conclusion

As has been seen, in the great, rapid changes taking place all over the world, two contrasting trends seem to be emerging: on the one hand the risk that a single world standard might arise and dominate all others; on the other, the danger that English might fragment into mutually unintelligible local varieties. Indeed, many speakers of the so-called New Englishes think that the existence of linguistic variation should be acknowledged and that each variety of English should be given an opportunity to develop into an independent language. The opposite opinion has, however, also been expressed, i.e. that the norm – identified in British or American English – cannot be stretched indefinitely, as deviations from the norm for ethnic or regional reasons will sooner or later lead to communication difficulties. Such conflicts, stemming from the diverging interests of monolingual and multilingual societies, will undoubtedly be difficult to solve as they clearly show that a norm, in the last instance, is more a question of social identity than linguistics.

Although there are clear instances of disintegration, the position of English as the language for international communication is still strong and is to become even stronger, due to the need for a common global language. Indeed, the growing demand for and importance of English for international communication requires mutual intelligibility and common standards among varieties. Moreover, the use of English as a common language is an important tool in increasing our opportunities for mutual understanding and international cooperation. This is why, although an increasingly greater number of varieties of English will tend to appear as a result of the construction of more localised cultural identities, these diverging trends will not threaten the role of English as a lingua franca, since the widespread use of English as a language for wider communication will continue to exert pressure towards global uniformity, requiring mutual intelligibility and common standards. As the analysis carried out in this paper has shown, many changes are now in progress – even though some are gradual and not immediately apparent. But these changes should not be ignored, as they may provide interesting clues to the present situation and help us anticipate possible evolutions.

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## BACK-FORMATION RECONSIDERED

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***Abstract:** Traditionally, back-formation is regarded in English as a diachronic process with no synchronic relevance. The paper argues that in the light of recent research and growing empirical evidence this view must be reconsidered. In present-day English back-formation displays considerable potential for coining new words and it tends to be on a par with other word-formation techniques such as derivation, compounding and conversion. The paper argues that despite its strong synchronic potential, back-formation should be interpreted as a thriving pattern based on analogy, rather than a word-building rule with clearly definable input and output conditions.*

***Keywords:** analogy, deletion, diachronic / synchronic relevance, reanalysis, reversed derivation*

### 1. Introduction

The treatment of back-formation in English morphology is surrounded by a certain degree of controversy manifest not only in relegating this morphological phenomenon alternatively either to the synchronic or to the diachronic plane, but also in its description as a word-building technique. Concretely, while Marchand (1969) views back-formation as a basically diachronic process with limited synchronic relevance, Kiparsky (1982), who in many respects draws on Marchand (1969), insists that back-formation is an exclusively diachronic process and synchronic back-formation is both unnecessary and unjustifiable. By contrast, in a recent study Nagano (2007) seeks to prove the synchronic relevance of back-formation, claiming that it results from the joint operation of two synchronic processes: conversion and clipping. Based on Martsa (2011), this paper also intends to argue for the synchronic relevance of back-formation.

Not less controversial is the morphological description of back-formation as a word-building technique. Most frequently it is regarded as the morphological reanalysis of an (allegedly) complex word. Alternatively, the fact that the output of back-formation is always shorter than its input is also interpreted either as reversed derivation (Aronoff 1976) or as deletion of some material, usually a suffix, from the end of the base (Bauer 2001).

In the following discussion first, in section 2, I will examine the scope and the current interpretations of the morphological status of back-formation. Then, in sections 3 and 4, after giving a brief account of Marchand's and Kiparsky's respective views on the genesis of back-formation, I will present some evidence in favour of the synchronic relevance of this phenomenon. Finally, in section 5, I will argue that, in spite of its strong synchronic potential, back-formation should be viewed as an analogy operation based on a powerful pattern to create new words and not as a rule-governed process. If not indicated otherwise, examples used in the

paper are taken from Marchand (1969), Kiparsky (1982), Nagano (2007) and OED2 on CD-ROM.

## 2. The morphological status of back-formation

### 2.1 The scope of back-formation

Processes belonging to the scope of back-formation are of two types: inflectional (class-maintaining) and derivational (class-changing). The former, rather marginal type includes examples given in (1a), whereas the latter representing cases of back-formation proper are illustrated in (1b): (Dates indicate the earliest attested occurrences of the given word-forms according to OED2; the question mark replacing dates signals that in OED2 no distinct entries are found for the word in question.)

(1a)

*pea*<sub>Nsing</sub> (1611) ← *pease* (see also Bauer 1991:231)  
*eave*<sub>Nsing</sub> (1580) ← *eaves* (1000)  
(see <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/eave>),  
*kudo*<sub>Nsing</sub> (?) ← *kudos* (1831; see also Akmajian et al. 1990:38)  
*Chinee*<sub>Nsing</sub> (1871) ← *Chinese* (1606)  
(see <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/Chinee>)

(1b)

*cose*<sub>V</sub> (1857) ← *cosy*<sub>A</sub> (1709),  
*emote*<sub>V</sub> (1917) ← *emotion*<sub>N</sub> (1603),  
*ill-treat*<sub>V</sub> (1794) ← *ill-treatment*<sub>N</sub> (1667)  
*greed*<sub>N</sub> (1609) ← *greedy*<sub>A</sub> (971),  
*greensick*<sub>A</sub> (1681) ← *greensickness*<sub>N</sub> (1583)  
*ginger*<sub>A</sub> (1600) ← *gingerly*<sub>ADV/A</sub> (1519)

For reasons of space, in the rest of the paper only back-formations V ← N/A illustrated in (1b) will come under scrutiny, less frequent types like N ← A, A ← N, A ← ADV and the inflectional type of back-formation exemplified in (1a), will only be touched upon in section 5.

### 2.2 Back-formation viewed as reanalysis

According to a widely accepted view back-formation is a process whereby a complex word or a word held to be complex is reanalyzed to form a shorter word from it. In practical terms, reanalysis, also known as metanalysis (cf. Jespersen 1954:538), involves the derivation of a new word by deleting some material, in fact a suffix or a segment reminiscent of a suffix, from the motivating base word (cf. Bauer 1991:64-65, Szymanek 1993:92-93, Plag 2003:36). This is illustrated in (2)



where the dates show that the back-formed words are usually attested later than the corresponding base words. Cf.:

(2)

<i>burgle</i> <sub>V</sub> (1872)	←	<i>burglar</i> <sub>N</sub> (1268)
<i>edit</i> <sub>V</sub> (1791)	←	<i>editor</i> <sub>N</sub> (1649)
<i>laze</i> <sub>V</sub> (1592)	←	<i>lazy</i> <sub>A</sub> (1549)
<i>orate</i> <sub>V</sub> (1600)	←	<i>oration</i> <sub>N</sub> (1375)
<i>peddle</i> <sub>V</sub> (1532)	←	<i>peddler</i> <sub>N</sub> (1377)
<i>babysit</i> <sub>V</sub> (?)	←	<i>babysitter</i> <sub>N</sub> (?)
<i>emote</i> <sub>V</sub> (1917)	←	<i>emotion</i> <sub>N</sub> (1603)
<i>sedate</i> <sub>V</sub> (1942)	←	<i>sedative</i> <sub>A</sub> (1425)
<i>televise</i> <sub>V</sub> (1927)	←	<i>television</i> <sub>N</sub> (1904)

Back-formation is also called back-derivation, which, however does not mean that this process can as well be taken to be reversed derivation, that is, the undoing of previous derivation as it is claimed, among others, by Pennanen (1975:227), Aronoff (1976:27), and Adams (2001:136). In her extensive study on back-formation, Nagano (2007:42-45) demonstrates that Aronoff's definition of back-formation as "backwards application of a word-formation rule" is not tenable for at least two reasons. One is that in certain cases of back-formations such as *frivol*<sub>V</sub> (1866) ← *frivolous*<sub>A</sub> (1549), *gondole*<sub>V</sub> (1874) ← *gondola*<sub>N</sub> (1549) or *peeve*<sub>V</sub> (1908) ← *peevish*<sub>A</sub> (1393) the undoing of a preceding suffixation rule is irrelevant either because of the synchronic unproductivity of this rule (*-ish* is no longer used in English to derive verbs) or because of the non-existence of such a rule in English (*-ous* is not used to derive adjectives from verbs, and *-a* as a deverbal suffix does not exist).

Another, perhaps more important reason for rejecting Aronoff's view is that if back-formation were the reverse application of a word-formation rule that has added a derivative suffix plus some semantic content to the base, it would be logical to expect that the removal of this suffix would entail the simultaneous removal of this semantic content. However, what happens instead is that, despite the deletion of the agentive suffix *-er*, for instance in *babysitter*, its semantic content, i.e. the expression of agentivity, remains part of the semantic description of the back-formed verb *babysit*<sub>V</sub>, which means 'act as a babysitter'. A general consequence of this is that words created by back-formation become anti-iconic in the semiotic sense, for there is an obvious mismatch between their form and meaning.

Anti-iconicity is even more prominent in the interpretation of irregular, i.e. etymologically incorrect back-formations such as *self-destruct*<sub>V</sub> (1969) ← *self-destruction*<sub>N</sub> (1586). Bauer (1991:232, 2001:71-73, 83-84) and Booij (2005:40) observe that such verbs arise from the deletion or subtraction (see also Manova and Dressler 2005) of some material from the base rather than from undoing a derivational rule. Consequently, the claim can be made that if back-formation were reversed derivation, we would expect that the verb back-formed from *self-destruction*<sub>N</sub> is *\*self-destroy*<sub>V</sub>, since *destruction* is formed from *destroy* (involving

base-allomorphy), and the deletion of *-ion* would have to result in the recovery of the base morph *-stroy*. But obviously this does not happen: the verb back-formed from *self-destruction*<sub>N</sub> is *self-destruct*<sub>V</sub>, which speaks for the mere deletion of *-ion* from *self-destruction* and not for the reversal of a preceding derivational rule of adding it to *destroy*. Further examples and an alternative explanation of irregular back-formation, also based on Bauer (2001), will be given in sections 3 and 4.

### 2.3 Back-formation: the combination of conversion and clipping

Relying on Marchand's (1960, 1969) similar view, Nagano (2007: 56-67) proposes that the aforesaid problems related to the morphological and semantic aspects of the interpretation of back-formation as reanalysis, namely that it cannot be treated as reversed derivation and it is anti-iconic in the sense that less form corresponds to more meaning, can be disposed of if this process is treated as the joint operation of two word-formation processes: conversion and clipping. This is illustrated in (3):

(3)					
	base	→	conversion	→	clipping
	[usher] <sub>N</sub>	→	[[usher] <sub>N</sub> ] <sub>V</sub>	→	[ush] <sub>V</sub>
	[chain-smoker] <sub>N</sub>	→	[[chain-smoker] <sub>N</sub> ] <sub>V</sub>	→	[chain-smoke] <sub>V</sub>

In morpho-semantic terms, back-formation really parallels conversion (e.g., *clean*<sub>A</sub> → *clean*<sub>V</sub>, *bicycle*<sub>N</sub> → *bicycle*<sub>V</sub>) in that it is also a non-concatenative process (Szymanek 1993: 34) and the output of conversion as well as back-formation in most of the cases is a verb. Moreover, verbs formed by conversion and back-formation share in common a number of semantic patterns including, for instance, locatum verbs with the meaning 'put N on/in or provide with N' (cf., *roof*<sub>N</sub> → *roof*<sub>V</sub> // *bibliograph*<sub>V</sub> ← *bibliography*<sub>N</sub>), location verbs with the meaning 'put on/in N' (cf., *beach*<sub>N</sub> → *beach*<sub>V</sub> // *televize*<sub>V</sub> ← *television*<sub>N</sub>) and instrument verbs with the meaning 'use N' (cf., *bicycle*<sub>N</sub> → *bicycle*<sub>V</sub> // *escalate*<sub>V</sub> ← *escalator*<sub>N</sub>). Note, however, that there is an important morpho-semantic difference between back-formation and conversion: while the former is anti-iconic in the sense specified above, conversion is non-iconic, for no change of form corresponds to the change of meaning (see Manova and Dressler 2005:68-69).

The deletion of the final segment of the converted base in the process of back-formation, so Nagano's argument goes, is caused by clipping. In her opinion it is clipping following conversion that accounts for the fact that the deleted segment is often not a derivational morpheme, as we have seen above in the case of *gondole*<sub>V</sub> ← *gondola*<sub>N</sub>. Other examples of this kind include *pegase*<sub>V</sub> (?) ← *Pegasus*<sub>N</sub> (1515) and *bolsh*<sub>V</sub> (1921) ← *Bolshevik*<sub>N</sub> (1917). Moreover, the presence of clipping also explains why such instances of back-formation as *auth*<sub>V</sub> (?) (← *author*<sub>N</sub> (1384)), *butch*<sub>V</sub> (1785) (← *butcher*<sub>N</sub> (1292)), *salv*<sub>V</sub> (1706) (← *salvage*<sub>N</sub> (1645)), *ush*<sub>V</sub> (1824) (← *usher*<sub>N</sub> (1386)) are often felt to be facetious, jocular and

occasionally even non-standard by many speakers. As Nagano (2007: 65) notes, this characteristic of back-derived verbs is traceable in back-formation - conversion doublets as well (cf., *auth<sub>V</sub>* - *author<sub>V</sub>*, *butch<sub>V</sub>* - *butcher<sub>N</sub>*, *salve<sub>V</sub>* - *salvage<sub>V</sub>*, *ush<sub>V</sub>* - *usher<sub>V</sub>*), where the clipped forms appear to have the similar stylistic value as clippings in word-pairs like *doc* ← *doctor*, *prof* ← *professor*.

Nagano's interpretation above aims to account for the synchronic relevance and productivity of back-formation by linking it to the productive and rule-governed process of conversion. In addition, assuming that back-formation also involves non-rule-governed clipping explains the stylistic and morpho-semantic peculiarities characterizing its application as a means of word-formation. Convincing as it may seem to be, I find Nagano's argumentation problematic, because methodologically it is rather difficult to subscribe to a proposal that contends that the productivity of a word-formation process is underlain by two other processes, one being rule-governed and the other non-rule-governed. I will return to this issue in section 5.

### **3. Back-formation: a diachronic or a synchronic process?**

As was stated in the *Introduction*, the judgement of the genesis of back-formation is surrounded by some controversy. Indeed, a close inspection of the corresponding literature reveals that while some linguists, including Pennanen (1975), Bauer (1991, 2001), Quirk et al. (1985), Becker (1993), Szymanek (1993), Booij (2005) and, more recently, Nagano (2007), allow for the synchronic interpretation of back-formation, for other linguists, such as Marchand (1969), Aronoff (1976), Kiparsky (1982) and Aronoff & Fudeman (2005), back-formation is basically a diachronic process with little or no synchronic relevance. In this section I intend to argue for the former view; nevertheless, first I shall briefly present the two most influential interpretations of back-formation as a diachronic process proposed by Marchand (1969) and Kiparsky (1982).

Although for many authors treating back-formation as an exclusively diachronic phenomenon Marchand's (1969) seminal work on English word-formation is a basic source of reference, his treatment of back-formation, as we will see presently, leaves room for the synchronic interpretation as well (cf. Bauer 2001:25-26, Martsa 2011:196-197). First, consider the following quotations taken from Marchand (1969):

[...] back-formation has often diachronic relevance only. (p. 3)

The term backformation, backderivation therefore has diachronic relevance only. (p. 391)

The statement [...] that the term backderivation has diachronic relevance only, does not therefore apply to *burgle/burglar* or similarly structured pairs [...]. (p. 393)

Concerning the diachronic relevance of back-formation, Marchand (1969:391) points out, in line with the second quotation, that the fact that *peddle*<sub>V</sub> is back-formed from *peddler*<sub>N</sub> by deleting *-er* is only interesting historically; for present-day speakers the derivational relationship between *peddle*<sub>V</sub> and *peddler*<sub>N</sub> is the same as between *write*<sub>V</sub> and *writer*<sub>N</sub>; or, put differently, in synchronic terms *peddler*<sub>N</sub> is derived from *peddle*<sub>V</sub> just like *writer*<sub>N</sub> from *write*<sub>V</sub>. Consequently, the appropriate synchronic semantic description of *peddler*<sub>N</sub> is ‘one who peddles’, whereas *peddle*<sub>V</sub> is analyzed not as ‘act as a peddler’, but rather as ‘sell things by going from door to door’. Other examples of the *peddle*<sub>V</sub> ← *peddler*<sub>N</sub> type, where there is a clash between the diachronic process of back-formation and its synchronic semantic analysis, include *edit*<sub>V</sub> ← *editor*<sub>N</sub>, *sculpt*<sub>V</sub> (1864) ← *sculptor*<sub>N</sub> (1634), *scavage*<sub>V</sub> (1644) ← *scavenger*<sub>N</sub> (1547) *broke*<sub>V</sub> (1496) ← *broker*<sub>N</sub> (1393), *buttle*<sub>V</sub> (1867) ← *butler*<sub>N</sub> (c. 1250), *lase* (1962) ← *laser* (1960), *ush*<sub>V</sub> ← *usher*<sub>N</sub>, *auth*<sub>V</sub> ← *author*<sub>N</sub>. It needs to be noted that some of the back-formed verbs in these word-pairs have very low token frequency.

As we have seen, in Marchand’s analysis the main criterion to determine the direction of a derivational relationship is semantic content. The same criterion, however, applies in the opposite direction as well in word-pairs, where the diachronically primary nouns and adjectives serve as derivational bases for back-formations. Word-pairs of this kind, by far outnumbering those mentioned in the previous paragraph (Marchand 1969:394), include, for example, *burgle*<sub>V</sub> ← *burglar*<sub>N</sub>, *laze*<sub>V</sub> ← *lazy*<sub>A</sub>, *televise*<sub>V</sub> ← *television*<sub>V</sub>, *babysit*<sub>V</sub> ← *babysitter*<sub>N</sub>, *air-condition*<sub>V</sub> (1937) ← *air-conditioning*<sub>N</sub> (1909). While the semantic description of *peddler*<sub>N</sub> is ‘one who peddles’, *burglar*<sub>N</sub> cannot be described as ‘one who burgles’, since semantically it is not derived from *burgle*<sub>V</sub> as *peddler*<sub>N</sub> is from *peddle*<sub>V</sub>. Similarly, then, *laze*<sub>V</sub> is semantically analyzable as ‘be lazy’, *televise*<sub>V</sub> as ‘put on television’, *babysit*<sub>V</sub> as ‘act as a babysitter’ and finally *air-condition*<sub>V</sub> as ‘do air-conditioning’. In my opinion these cases of back-formation speak for the synchronic relevance of this process in present-day English and exactly this is what the first and third quotations above also suggest.

As was stated in the *Introduction*, Kiparsky (1982) in many respects draws on Marchand (1969), especially on the aforementioned second quotation, when he rejects the synchronic relevance of English back-formation. Similarly to Marchand, he also argues that that *beg*<sub>V</sub> (c. 897) *mix*<sub>V</sub> (1538) and *injure*<sub>V</sub> (1592) are back-formations from *beggar*<sub>N</sub> (1225) *mixt*<sub>A</sub> (1300) and *injury*<sub>N</sub> (1382) is only interesting for experts; “linguistically unsophisticated speakers” (1982:22) view these verbs as bases underlying *beggar*<sub>N</sub>, *mixt*<sub>A</sub> and *injury*<sub>N</sub> and not as derived forms. (Notice, however, that the back-derivation of *beg*<sub>V</sub> from *beggar*<sub>N</sub> is not confirmed by OED2). As regards verbs like *air-condition*<sub>V</sub> back-formed from *air-conditioning*<sub>N</sub>, Kiparsky insists that historically the back-formed compound verb realizes the generalization inherent in the derivational schema [Y Z]<sub>X</sub> proposed by him to account for the derivation of synthetic compounds. In this schema squared brackets signal a categorial frame and the variables Y, Z and X are in principle freely chosen lexical categories. All English compounds are derived by inserting Y and Z

in the categorial frame  $X$ . If  $X$  is a noun subcategorized as Agent, Instrument or Action,  $Z$  must be a noun suffixed with *-er* or *-ing* as in *chain-smoker<sub>N</sub>* and *air-conditioning<sub>N</sub>*. If, on the other hand,  $X$  is verb, compound verbs or verb-headed compounds are derived. This entails that these verbs, just like *beg<sub>V</sub>*, *mix<sub>V</sub>* and *injure<sub>V</sub>* mentioned earlier, synchronically cannot be seen as denominal verbs. If back-formation were a synchronic process, a rule, similar to what Nagano proposed (see section 2.3), would have to be formulated which subtracts nominalizing suffixes and recategorizes back-formed bases. Kiparsky (1982:22) insists that neither a rule deleting a suffix, nor a rule which deletes a suffix and at the same time causes category-change is conceivable. Since compound verbs of the type discussed here can be derived from the above schema directly, synchronic back-formation is not necessary.

Before considering another argument against synchronic back-formation, we should take a brief detour to review lexical phonology also known as lexical morphology, which is an empirically based model of the mental lexicon to account for various word-formation processes and which constitutes the theoretical framework for Kiparsky's study. This model is based on Siegel's (1979) level ordered morphology, hypothesizing that different word-formation processes in the mental lexicon are accommodated on different levels or strata, where morphological and phonological rules operate hand in hand and where, due to the hierarchy of levels, processes taking place on a higher level have no access to processes operating on lower levels. In Kiparsky's version of lexical morphology there are three hierarchically ordered levels: on level 1 primary affixation and primary (irregular) inflection take place together with noun to verb conversion; level 2 accommodates secondary affixation, compounding and noun/adjective to verb conversion; regular inflections are added to eligible stems on level 3.

Contrasting compound verbs derived via conversion and back-formation from compound nouns provides another argument for Kiparsky to reject synchronic back-formation. Whereas compound verbs converted from compound nouns on level 2 always take level 3 regular inflection, irrespective of the type of the verb head (cf., *grandstand* - *grandstanded* - \**grandstood* vs. *wallpaper* - *wallpapered*), in the case of compound verbs back-formed from compound nouns also on level 2, the strong verb head takes irregular inflection inherited from level 1 (cf., *proofread* - *proofred* - \**proofreaded* vs. *crash-land* - *crash-landed*). If *proofread<sub>V</sub>* were back-formed synchronically from *proofreading<sub>N</sub>*, it would behave in the same way as *grandstand<sub>V</sub>*, namely its strong verb head would have to be regularly inflected. But this is not the case, because *proofread<sub>V</sub>* does not result from back-formation, but from the combination of *proof* and *read* in the categorial schema specified above: cf., [*proof<sub>N</sub> read<sub>V</sub>*]<sub>Vtransitive</sub>. However, one should observe that this is not a particularly convincing argument, since a quick search of web sources returns compound verbs which have regularly inflected strong verb heads, though they are not underlain by conversion. Consider sentences in (4):

(4)

My mum is an experienced babysitter who has *babysitted* both my sons since birth till 2yrs old. Available: <http://www.mummysg.com/forums/f81/babysitter-available-jurong-west-16363/> [2010, Nov 27]

Reinhard, can you sent it out as soon as someone else *proofreaded* it? Available: <http://blog.gmane.org/gmane.org.fsf.europe.translators/month=20081201/page=6> [2011, Jun 25]

Ben stole a Ferrari and they *joyrided* in it. Available: <http://www.bluelight.ru/vb/archive/index.php/t-123508.html> [2010, Sept 16]

Undoubtedly, these forms may be seen as colloquial or even non-standard; but, similarly to the second group of word-pairs mentioned by Marchand (see above), they may as well signal the emerging synchronic relevance of back-formation, further evidence of which is entertained in the next section.

#### 4. Further evidence for the synchronic relevance of back-formation

In this section first I will consider some examples of back-formation, including standard as well as innovative uses and nonce-formations. Then I will revisit irregular cases of back-formation already discussed in section 2.2.

We have seen in section 3 that the arguments for treating back-formation as a diachronic process are of semantic and formal nature. We have also seen that quite a few instances of back-formation, especially back-formed compound verbs, allow for synchronic interpretation as well. Taking into account the fact that in present-day English the morphological means to create verb-headed compounds are rather limited, it seems that, along with conversions from compound nouns (e.g., *snowball<sub>V</sub>*, *padlock<sub>V</sub>*, *wheelbarrow<sub>V</sub>*), another readily available source to yield compound verbs is back-formation from synthetic compound nouns. Cases in point include, for instance, *chain-smoke<sub>V</sub>* (?) ← *chain-smoker<sub>N</sub>* (?) *globe-trot<sub>V</sub>* (?) ← *globe-trotter<sub>N</sub>* (?) *hang-glide<sub>V</sub>* (?) ← *hang-glider<sub>N</sub>* (?), *free-associate<sub>V</sub>* (?) ← *free association<sub>N</sub>* (?), *sleep-walk<sub>V</sub>* (1923) ← *sleep-walking<sub>N</sub>* (?). In spite of the fact only *sleep-walk<sub>V</sub>* is given a separate entry in OED2, all the other verbs mentioned here can already be considered established lexemes and as such they signal the synchronic potential of back-formation in present-day English. Some innovative compound verbs supposedly back-formed from synthetic compound nouns, on the other hand, are still in need of pragmatic strengthening in order to become established lexemes; nevertheless, as the attested examples in (5) show, they can also be taken to be manifestations of the synchronic word-formation pattern of back-formation. The first three examples in (5) were obtained by Lehrer (1996:66-67) from spontaneous conversations; the last example was adopted from *Newsweek* magazine.

(5)

The American people can *reality-test* for (← *reality-testing*<sub>N</sub>) themselves.  
[This electronic dictionary] *spell-corrects* (← ?*spell-correction*<sub>N</sub>) 83,000 words.  
I like to *channel-surf* (← ?*channel-surfing*<sub>N</sub>).

If you were a Sunni, having watched government-allied squads kill and *ethnic-cleans* (← *ethnic-cleansing*<sub>N</sub> (1991)) your people, would you accept a piece of paper that said that this government will now give you one third of Iraq's oil revenues if you disarm? (*Newsweek*, 2006, Oct 26; p. 21)

Another case of back-formed compound verbs to reckon with is demonstrated in (6). It seems reasonable to assume that these formations which – perhaps for the time being – are still rejected as non-standard forms or non-formations by most speakers of English, also may signal the emerging synchronic potential of back-formation.

(6)

Mr Alivijeh, who has been *taxi-driving* for 17 years, always maintained his innocence and also reported the matter to the Police Ombudsman. Available: <http://www.taxi-driver.co.uk/?cat=33> [2010, Dec 12]

Pet *taxi drove* defensively but expanded during recession. Available: <http://news.medill.northwestern.edu/chicago/news.aspx?id=166276> [2010, June 3]

But if you're not a God fearing person, it doesn't matter to you even if God *skywrote* it on a blue sky one day, you'd still not believe. Available: <http://www.libertynewsforum.com/cgi-bin/news/YaBB.pl?num=1284358412/15> [2011, May 5]

The synchronic potential of back-formation is noticeable not only in forming compound verbs, but also in forming verbs from some derived nouns. With respect to this type of back-formations Plag (1999:207-209) notes that nouns with the putatively composite suffix *-ation* are bases from which verbs in *-ate* can be derived: cf. *formate*<sub>V</sub> (1929) ← *formation*<sub>N</sub> (1450), *starvate*<sub>V</sub> (?) ← *starvation*<sub>N</sub> (1775). Other examples will be mentioned in the next section.

Finally, there is good reason to suppose that instances of irregular, etymologically incorrect back-formations, mentioned in section 2.2, represent a further piece of evidence to justify the synchronic relevance of this process. Below, in (7), are a few other attested examples quoted in Bauer (2001:72-73):

(7)

If you have to, *seduct* (1490) (← *seduction* (1526)) him. (Prachett, Terry, *Wyrds Sisters*. London: Corgi, 1988:205)

Piotr Borisovich learned...how to *surveille* (1960) (← *surveillance* (1799)) others, how to detect and evade the surveillance of others. (Littell, Robert, *The Sisters*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1986:129).

The crowd... thought Carella looked like a baseball player. They *deducted* (1439) (← *deduction* (1483)) this because of his athletic stance and his long slender body. (McBain, Ed, *Eight Black Horses*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1985:3).

Commenting on the back-formed verbs in these examples, Bauer assumes that they could as well have resulted from paradigm pressure, a kind of analogy operation, on the basis of which the form of a derivative is predicted from the form of other semantically unrelated members of the given derivational paradigm. So, *self-destruct*<sub>V</sub> (← *self-destruction*<sub>N</sub>) may also have arisen from the analogy with word-pairs such as *construct-construction*, *instruct-instruction* representing the same word-formation paradigm. Note, however, that *deduct*<sub>V</sub> and *seduct*<sub>V</sub> are attested earlier in OED2 than *deduction*<sub>N</sub> and *seduction*<sub>N</sub>, which, if correct, rules out back-formation in these cases.

In respect of the types of back-formation entertained in this section we can conclude that the claim made by Marchand, Kiparsky and other linguists that English back-formation is an exclusively diachronic process with no synchronic relevance is not sustainable any more. While the diachronic motivation of this process cannot be denied, the growing number of attested innovative formations, verb-headed compounds and etymologically incorrect back-derived verbs, points to its strong synchronic potential, a tentative description of which is given in the following section.

## 5. Back-formation: an analogy operation or a rule?

The title of this section could alternatively be formulated as follows: is back-formation a kind of analogy operation exploiting a historically-based pattern or is it a rule-governed process on a par with other word-formation processes like derivation and compounding? In earlier sections arguments were put forward mostly in favour of an analogy operation. In respect of irregular back-formations discussed in 2.2 and at the end the previous section, Bauer (2001:84) makes a similar claim, saying that if this kind of back-formation is taken to have emerged from paradigm pressure, i.e. a kind of analogy, it must be relegated to the non-rule-governed part of morphology.

Intriguingly, Bauer also proposes, expressly disagreeing with Kiparsky, but in agreement with Aronoff's stance on back-formation (see sections 2.2 and 3.),

“[...] that if back-formation is seen as a rule of deleting affixes or forms homophonous with affixes under appropriate semantic circumstances rather than as a rule undoing a formation rule, there is no paradox involved in talking about a rule of back-formation” (2001:84).

He does not clarify what the appropriate semantic circumstances might be for a rule of back-formation to apply, and this is not the only problem with the



postulation of a rule like this. It is not clear enough either whether such a rule, if it exists at all, accounts only for irregular back-formations or for other types as well. A further problem is that if we assume that back-formation is a rule-governed process, then its input and output conditions must be identifiable in a principled way (see Kiefer 2005:189). Considering the cases and types of back-formation discussed in the previous sections, it seems that such conditions, presumably including the semantic conditions mentioned in the above quote, are not easy to pin down unequivocally. Therefore, it is more prudent to assume, as Bauer himself suggested in an earlier publication (1991:65), that it is irrelevant whether back-formation as a word-formation process is allowed by a rule or a simple analogy. What is important is that if back-formation is a current method of coining new words, it must be allowed for in a synchronic grammar (*ibid.*).

However, viewing back-formation as an analogy operation and not a rule does not mean that some formal and semantic features of this process are not possible to specify. In the rest of this section I propose a tentative set of these features, many of which have already been alluded to in the previous sections. To begin with, in (8), following Nagano (2007:37), the schematic description of a pattern of back-formation is suggested in which *a* stands for the segment to be deleted from the input base *Xa*:

$$(8) \\ X \leftarrow Xa$$

The most comprehensive formal feature, already mentioned in connection with the interpretations of back-formation, is that *Xa* must be a complex item or an item seen as complex by speakers, in which *a* is either a real suffix, as in *chain-smoker*, or a segment reminiscent of (or homonymous with) a real suffix, as in *laser*. Other formal features to consider are that *Xa* must be an open class item but not a verb, and *a* may not be stressed. As we saw in 2.1, prototypical input bases in back-formation are nouns; adjectives and adverbs occur relatively rarely. That *a* may not be stressed is extremely important, since it is this feature that sets back-formation and back-clipping apart: in the case of the latter, stressed as well as unstressed segments can be deleted: cf. *prof* ← *professor*, *cab* ← *cábriolet*. (Other differences, not relevant for the present discussion, are that back-clippings, as other types of clipping, are category maintaining and the deleted segment is not a suffix, not even something similar to a suffix.) Some instances of (non-standard) inflectional back-formation (e.g., (a) *Chinee* ‘a Chinese person’, see 2.1; other example adopted from OED2 are *Maltee* ← *Maltese*, *Portugee* ← *Portugese*) are exceptions in the sense that a part of the stressed segment is deleted from them.

As was repeatedly mentioned in earlier sections, the input bases of back-formation are mainly derived nouns or synthetic compound nouns. As for the former, they are predominantly agentive and instrumental nominals in *-ar*, *-er*, *-or* (cf., (*burglar*<sub>v</sub> ← *burglar*, (*mase*<sub>v</sub> (1962) ← *maser* (1578), (*curate*<sub>v</sub> (1870) ← *curator* (1413), (*escalate*<sub>v</sub> (1922) ← *escalator* (1900), etc.) and action nominals in

-ence, -ion/-(a)tion (cf., (*fluoresce*<sub>V</sub> (1874) ←) *fluorescence* (1852), (*adsorp*<sub>V</sub> (?) ←) *adsorption* (1882), (*co-vary*<sub>V</sub> (1950) ←) *co-variation* (1925), (*proliferate*<sub>V</sub> (1873) ←) *proliferation* (1867), etc.) The same semantic features can be attributed to synthetic compound nouns, which are also agentive or instrumental nominals in -er (cf., (*block-bust*<sub>V</sub> (?) ←) *block-buster* (?), (*caretake*<sub>V</sub> (1893) ←) *caretaker* (1958), (*pettifog*<sub>V</sub> (1611) ←) *pettifogger* (1564-78), (*typewrite*<sub>V</sub> (1887) ←) *typewriter* (1868), etc.) and action nominals in -ing, -ation (cf., *clean*<sub>V</sub> (?) ←) *dry-cleaning* (?), (*lip-read*<sub>V</sub> (?) ←) *lip-reading* (?), (*sight-see*<sub>V</sub> (1824) ←) *sight-seeing* (1824), (*free-associate*<sub>V</sub> (?) ←) *free association* (?), etc.) Based on these examples, the conclusion presents itself that the major semantic features of input base nouns, whether they are derivatives or synthetic compounds, are agentivity, instrumentality and actionality.

As was also mentioned in 2.2, the output item of back-formation is usually a verb, typically a transitive one. Nouns and adjectives as output items are rather rare, cf. *creep*<sub>N</sub> (1818) (← *creepy*<sub>A</sub> (1794)), *greed*<sub>N</sub> (1609) (← *greedy*<sub>A</sub> (971)), *ginger*<sub>A</sub> (← *gingerly*<sub>ADV/A</sub>), *greensick*<sub>A</sub> (← *greensickness*<sub>N</sub>). In spite of the anti-iconic nature of back-formation, with the exception of a few instances of lexicalization (Bauer 1991:42-61) as in *stage-manage*<sub>V</sub> (1879) ‘to arrange a public event (often used with disapproval)’ ← *stage-manager*<sub>N</sub> (1805) ‘one who controls the stage during a performance’, the semantic relation between the input base and the output word derived from it in most cases is fairly straightforward, viz. the meaning of the latter incorporates the meaning of the former as in *televize*<sub>V</sub> ‘put on television’ and *greed*<sub>N</sub> ‘the state of being greedy’. It can be stated then that on the first place it is semantic predictability implicit in the mechanism of back-formation that makes this process a synchronically productive means of word-building in English.

## 6. Conclusion

In this paper an attempt has been made to demonstrate that the claim, still dominant in the corresponding literature on English word-formation, that back-formation is a diachronic process with little or no synchronic relevance at all must be reconsidered. The fact that back-formation is historically grounded of course cannot be denied; nevertheless the steady growth of tokens of back-formation points to the increasing synchronic potential of this process. This is especially evident in forming verbs from nouns and adjectives. Owing to the lack of productive means of creating verbs through derivation and compounding, back-formation, along with conversion, has become a major source of coining new verbs in English.

Despite its strong synchronic potential, however, back-formation cannot be regarded as a rule-governed process, since sufficiently restrictive input and output conditions for the formulation of a rule of back-formation are not yet available. Until such conditions are identified unequivocally, back-formation must be seen as a thriving word-building pattern based on analogy.

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# ZOOMORPHISATION OF INFLATION – LETTING THE HORSE OUT OF THE BARN\*

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*Abstract:* Within the theoretical frameworks of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson 1980) and Critical Metaphor Analysis (Charteris-Black 2004) in this paper we deal with the conceptualisation of INFLATION as a HORSE in English. We classify the conceptually superior INFLATION IS A HORSE metaphor into several submetaphors, illustrating them with relevant metaphorical expressions. As metaphors are often evaluatively loaded, we point out some ideological aspects of the INFLATION IS A HORSE metaphor in line with the key ability of metaphors to highlight desirable aspects of a concept, at the same time hiding its negative and undesirable aspects.

*Keywords:* conceptual metaphor, HORSE metaphor, inflation, critical metaphor analysis, English.

## 1. Introduction

Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson 1980) and Critical Metaphor Analysis (Charteris-Black 2004) and focuses on the conceptualisation of INFLATION as a HORSE in English, where the most salient properties of HORSE as a source domain are mapped onto the target domain, INFLATION. Although ANIMAL metaphors are conventional in many languages, their metaphorical use is not limited only to human beings. Non-physical domains may also be understood in terms of assumed properties of animals (Kövecses 2002:17). Inflation is a rather abstract and hard-to-understand economic phenomenon and as such is often interpreted in terms of more concrete, tangible entities. Hence it is not surprising that it is often metaphorically structured as an animal, since our experience with animals may help in structuring abstract concepts. Thus, “‘horse’ metaphors have been used to describe rates of inflation with danger being suggested by the increasing speed of the horse e.g. trotting inflation; galloping inflation; run-away inflation and even, [...] inflation – the riderless horse” (Henderson 1986:112-13). Still, apart from sporadic references to the conceptualisation of INFLATION as a HORSE within studies of a wider scope, this particular metaphor has not attracted much systematic scholarly interest so far. In this article we show how metaphor creators, being confronted with the most severe global economic crisis ever, resort to animal metaphoric imagery conceptualising inflation and its devastating effects as a HORSE, wild, violent and out of control.

The data for the analysis that follows has been gathered by means of an Internet search, which has provided us with numerous examples of the INFLATION IS A HORSE metaphor, especially in light of the current world economic crisis. We conducted a Google search in which the query was *inflation*, combined with a

small number of words referring to the salient features of horses (mainly verbs which describe the ways horses *move* – e.g. gallop, canter, hack, trotter, etc., together with verbs which describe the ways wild animals are tamed – e.g. control, tame, flog, etc.). The texts obtained in this way were extracted and compiled in one Word file, totalling around 45,000 words. The research then proceeded in the following way: the texts were read carefully in order to identify those metaphorical expressions which we intuitively felt provided instantiations of the INFLATION IS A HORSE metaphor. In order to verify the validity of our intuitive judgement as regards the conceptualisation of INFLATION as a HORSE – since “intuitions are not necessarily explicit and systematic” (Semino 2008:14) – we applied the *metaphor identification procedure* (MIP) proposed by the Pragglejaz Group (2007) in order to check the metaphoricity of the lexical units relating to the salient features of horses as well as to establish their basic and contextual meaning.

In line with Lakoff and Johnson’s “metaphorical systematicity” or “metaphorical hiding and highlighting” (1980:10), the INFLATION IS A HORSE metaphor foregrounds only certain aspects of the target, at the same time hiding its other aspects, primarily the fact that there are ways in which inflation can be forecast and prevented (similar to a wild horse which can be domesticated), and if already there, controlled and overcome. Therefore, as metaphors are generally rarely void of evaluative stance, we also point out some ideological aspects of the INFLATION IS A HORSE metaphor. We argue that the use of the HORSE metaphor for the conceptualisation of inflation provides economists and politicians in power with a good justification for being unable or unwilling to predict, control and curtail inflation as one of the greatest dangers that may occur in any economy. As the texts from which the metaphorical expressions as linguistic realisations of the INFLATION IS A HORSE metaphor were excerpted proved to be mainly aimed at the general public, i.e. ordinary people, not specifically at experts, such discourse may be termed *popular economic and business discourse*, which refers to “journalistic texts that deal with current economic and business matters for an audience of experts and nonexperts, and seek to inform and entertain more generally” (Skorczynska & Deignan 2006:89). Writing about inflation, journalists and newspaper reporters accept such a cognitive framework which serves as “a means of expressing a collective evaluation” (MacArthur 2005a:72), in this case, of a phenomenon which poses a potential threat to every economy in the world.

## **2. Inflation as an entity**

At its core, the INFLATION IS AN ANIMAL metaphor belongs to the class of entity and substance metaphors, also known as *ontological metaphors* (Lakoff & Johnson 1980:25), which are connected with our experiences with physical objects, including our bodies. One type of ontological metaphors is viewing the abstract notion of inflation as an entity, as the following examples show: inflation *is lowering* our standard of living; inflation *is backing us* into a corner; inflation *makes me sick* (Lakoff & Johnson 1980:26).

An ontological metaphor such as the INFLATION IS AN ENTITY metaphor is “necessary for even attempting to deal rationally with our experiences” (Lakoff & Johnson 1980:26). Viewing inflation as an entity enables its quantification, identification of its particular aspects, seeing it as a cause, and even believing that we understand it (Lakoff & Johnson 1980).

The INFLATION IS AN ANIMAL metaphor entails a particular type of ontological metaphor where we “zoomorphise” an inanimate concept, *inflation*, presenting it in terms of animal characteristics, their way of moving, eating, attacking, etc. (see Silaški & Đurović 2010). Attributing animate features to inanimate concepts such as inflation “not only gives us a very specific way of thinking about inflation but also a way of acting toward it” (Lakoff & Johnson 1980: 34).

### **3. The INFLATION IS A HORSE metaphor**

THINFLATION IS A HORSE metaphor is a subset of the INFLATION IS AN ANIMAL metaphor and by far one of the most widespread metaphors used to categorise inflation and to “make sense” of it. What is the epistemological basis of this metaphor? We know that a horse is a strong animal (with four legs, solid hoofs, flowing mane and a tail) which was long ago domesticated for carrying loads, riders, etc. The Keywords here are “strong” and “domesticated”, indicating that because of the horses’ strength and suppressed wild instincts, they need constant harnessing. Inflation being viewed as an ever-present threat to people, their savings, currency and a country’s economy in general is also in need of harnessing, i.e. control. Therefore, the most salient properties of horses which are likened to inflation in the INFLATION IS A HORSE metaphor are being dangerous, violent, speedy, or untamed if not harnessed with leather straps, i.e. various economic measures and policies, and controlled by a rider, i.e. an economist. Hence this metaphor does not foreground hard-working and endurance as the most important qualities usually associated with horses (cf. Deignan 2003), but it rather “depends on knowledge of the attributes of wild horses: their frightening power and strength” (Deignan 2003:267).

As Charteris-Black claims, “[a]nimals therefore serve as prototypes for threats and dangers to mankind” and in turn are “typically employed to construct negative evaluations” (2004:184-5). Such a conceptualisation of inflation, not as a horse prototypically used as a means of transport, previously in war or more recently in racing, but rather as a wild horse that defies control, is thus better labelled as the INFLATION IS AN UNRULY HORSE metaphor. This, in turn, corroborates MacArthur’s view that “the entities or processes assessed as in need of control in English are figuratively seen as a horse, whose power is partially subject to the judicious skill of its human controller.” (MacArthur 2005b). Thus the INFLATION IS AN UNRULY HORSE metaphor presents one of the many examples of the CONTROL OF AN UNDESIRABLE/UNPREDICTABLE FORCE IS A RIDER’S CONTROL OF A HORSE metaphor, which “arises from the horseman’s experience of what it is to submit the power of a horse to human skill and knowledge”. This also illustrates

one of the ways in which “a physical experience of riding horses structures reasoning about control” (MacArthur 2005a:87-88) in inflation as a target domain.

What follows are some linguistic instantiations of the INFLATION IS AN UNRULY HORSE metaphor, accompanied by the most likely evaluations of this pervasive metaphor in popular economic and business discourse.

#### 4. Inflation as an unruly horse

Inflation is an unpredictable and most usually undesirable force regarded as harmful to an overall economy. As it is a highly complex and abstract phenomenon, metaphor creators try to visualise it in order to facilitate its understanding and suggest policies of coping with it. Therefore, one of the most salient aspects of the scope of the INFLATION IS AN UNRULY HORSE metaphor is “that any process negatively evaluated may be seen as a horse in need of skilled control” (MacArthur 2005a:80). On the basis of the selected metaphorical expressions, several sub-metaphors of the INFLATION IS AN UNRULY HORSE metaphor may be identified. They will be illustrated in the sections to follow.

##### 4.1. Inflation as an unruly horse that moves fast and without control

The following examples show that a good deal of metaphorical expressions in the data as regards movement of horses prove to be very productive:

- (1) Ma Kai, China’s chief planner, alternated at a news conference between giving bold pledges to ensure that inflation doesn’t accelerate from trot to canter and suggesting that there are justifiable reasons for some price increases.
- (2) By then the *inflation horse* will be well off and running.
- (3) Relax – *inflation is not galloping out of control*.
- (4) And if you hold cash as actual cash, well, *inflation* just keeps hacking away, leaving you with less than you started with.
- (5) The increase is more than expected but far short of the *runaway inflation* some fear may result from the Obama stimulus package.
- (6) US inflation *is* still running wild as recession looms.

On a semantic level, *gallop* (example [3]), *canter* and *trot* (example [1]) are subsets of *run* (examples [2] and [6]), with horses used as prototypical agents. These expressions share a saliency of speed (of running), which gradually increases from *trotting* to *galloping*. “If a horse canters, it *runs fairly fast*. If it *runs slowly*, it trots, and if it *runs as fast as it can*, it gallops.” (our italics) (*Macmillan English Dictionary* 2002:199). In all examples (1)-(6), inflation is visualised as a horse whose motion (speed) is in no way tempered or restricted by an agent (an economist). This, on the one hand, serves to rationalise risk and danger of inflation, conceptualising it as an uncontrolled, wild and untamed animal. Since conceptual metaphors are never seen as a mere decoration but always as a device which entails deeper levels of meaning and thought, examples (1)-(6), although not openly

depicting, presuppose the image of the controller, i.e. an economist, who, being assumed to have expert knowledge of all the detrimental effects of inflation, should not let inflation *canter* (example [1]), *gallop* unchecked (example [3]), let alone *run wild* (example [6]), devastating the economic system of one country. On the other hand, perceiving inflation as *runaway* (example [5]) and the speed of inflation as *galloping* (example [3]) or *running* (examples [2] and [6]), serves to aptly deny any sort of responsibility for the damage caused by inflation. Attempts aimed at fully domesticating wild animals, i.e. making an inflation horse subservient to the intentions of economic policy-makers, call for know-how, knowledge and skill which are in this case subdued or at best hinted at. Hence “failure to control the process may not be seen as anyone’s fault” (MacArthur 2005a: 84), thus lifting the burden from economic experts as those who are expected to be problem-solvers. Conceptualising inflation as a horse that *trots*, *canters*, *gallops* or *runs* without any control may be used to convey the impression that this way of viewing inflation is an unassailable fact. The contextual evidence which shows inflation as a self-propelled force, explicitly represented as devoid of any agent, lends support to negative evaluations of such a force, distantly evoking the image of an economic expert who should intervene and have a hand in controlling those equine features profiled as the most prominent when mapped onto inflation, such as movement and speed of movement in particular.

If in the previous metaphorical expressions an economic expert is at best envisioned, in the linguistic metaphors that follow his/her presence is attested by the context. Since metaphorical expressions below share the underlying aspect of negatively evaluated absence of control, they can be regarded as a subset of the INFLATION IS AN UNRULY HORSE THAT MOVES FAST AND WITHOUT CONTROL metaphor. However, letting inflation go beyond any limits is not represented via agentless expressions as in the above examples, but as induced by those who are most liable to prevent this unwelcome lack of control.

(7) So in reality *inflation is really going out of hand.*

(8) Plosser says Fed’s rate cut may *spur* inflation

(9) US Food Price *Inflation Gets Out Of Hand*

(10) Inflation – *the riderless horse*

(11) The dual mandate makes it more likely that they’re going *to let the inflation horse out of the barn and it’s going to run away.*

(12) We are doing our best *to keep the door closed before the core inflation horse leaves the barn.*

(13) *Unbridled inflation* is eroding income.

The metaphorical expressions *go/get out of hand* (examples [7] and [9]) and the *riderless horse* (in example [10]) are linguistic realisations of the conceptual metonym HAND FOR CONTROL or the metaphor CONTROL IS HOLDING (SOMETHING IN THE HAND) and the CONTROL OF AN UNPREDICTABLE/ UNDESIRABLE FORCE IS A RIDER’S CONTROL OF A HORSE metaphor, respectively. “If we hold an object in the hand, we can do whatever we wish to do with it”,



writes Kövecses (2002: 209), which implies that if we want to manipulate and control some process, it has to be in hand, otherwise it goes or gets out of hand, i.e. beyond our reach and possibility to control it. The *riderless horse* expression corroborates MacArthur's insightful analysis which shows that the concept of control in English is motivated by the horse-riding scenario. This author claims that the CONTROL IS HOLDING THE REINS IN THE HAND mapping is a sub-mapping of the metaphoric theme CONTROL OF AN UNPREDICTABLE/UNDESIRABLE FORCE IS A RIDER'S CONTROL OF A HORSE (MacArthur 2005b). Thus the rider, i.e. an economist who does not have enough knowledge and professional "power", one who does not hold reins to control the inflation horse and has not put a bridle over inflation's head, may *spur* inflation (example [8]), let it go out of hand and wreak havoc on the whole economy. The selected metaphorical expressions (7)-(13) also lend support to negative evaluations of undertaken activities and policies. Although they should serve as the rationalisation of bad effects of inflation by perceiving it as a strong horse that can easily open the barn door (examples [12] and [13], and thwart the measures implemented by financial authorities, the selected scenario seems to focus on the negative evaluation of loss of control, i.e. incapability or ignorance of economic policy-makers to properly restrain the inflation horse and keep it in the barn, within its tolerable limits, not *unbridled* (example [13]), i.e. uncontrolled. The weakness of the rider who cannot submit the power of the horse to his control leads to lost control, which in turn results in doing harm to everyone affected, because, as MacArthur claims, "it is one thing for the horseman to decide to allow a horse to move freely and quite another to be incompetent or rash." (2005a:82). Furthermore, the INFLATION IS AN UNRULY HORSE THAT MOVES FAST AND WITHOUT CONTROL metaphor connotes inability of the controller (i.e. the economist) to anticipate the forthcoming speed of inflation being conceptualised as a horse, which should in turn expedite certain precautionary measures.

#### **4.2. Inflation as an unruly horse that must be kept under control**

Lakoff and Johnson (1987:79) say that "[m]etaphor is not a harmless exercise in naming", but "one of the principal means by which we understand our experience and reason on the basis of that understanding" and that "[t]o the extent that we act on our reasoning, metaphor plays a role in the creation of reality." In other words, by choosing a particular metaphor, metaphor creators do not only give new insights into a particular issue or process, but they also suggest a possible course of action in response to this issue or process. While the link between perception and action is not so evident in the previous INFLATION IS AN UNRULY HORSE THAT MOVES FAST AND WITHOUT CONTROL metaphor, the metaphorical expressions that follow show the full extent of argumentative use of metaphors. We label the selected metaphorical expressions as instantiations of the INFLATION IS AN UNRULY HORSE THAT MUST BE KEPT UNDER CONTROL metaphor, as illustrated in the following examples:

- (14) Korea to double efforts to tame inflation.

- (15) In other words, from time to time governments deliberately squeezed credit as an act of policy to curb inflation.
- (16) ...but for now we think the Fed's tightening campaign will successfully reign in the "inflation beast".
- (17) And that gave politicians of all hues just the stick to flog the inflation horse with though only the naïve would expect them to suggest corrective steps.
- (18) Committed to speeding his inflation horse by credit expansion, the President was busy last week pushing on the reins of credit.
- (19) The Fed keeps a tight rein on both inflation and deflation, trying to create a happy medium that encourages moderate economic growth for the United States.
- (20) Getting more income coming in will definitely make inflation easier to ride out.
- (21) Ukraine pledged before the International Monetary Fund to bridle inflation within 16% in 2009.

Unlike the previous INFLATION IS AN UNRULY HORSE THAT MOVES FAST AND WITHOUT CONTROL metaphor, the underlying notion of the metaphorical expressions belonging to the INFLATION IS AN UNRULY HORSE THAT MUST BE KEPT UNDER CONTROL metaphor is the positive assessment of control gained by *taming* the inflation (example [14]), *curbing* it (example [15]), *keeping a tight rein on* it (examples [19]), *flogging* it (example [17]), *bridling* it (example [21]), and *riding it out* (example [20]). Therefore, the focus here shifts from the sheer force of relentless and unstoppable inflation to an active role of the agent, i.e. an economist who is supposed to subdue this force, i.e. exercise control by holding the reins on inflation. Mustang-like properties on which the previous metaphor hinges, such as uncontrollable speed, tamelessness and wildness, are somewhat shadowed by accentuating the role of the tamer, i.e. "the human controller" (MacArthur 2005a:74) and his/her assumed ability and knowledge to impose desirable restraint on the inflation horse (perceived even as a beast in example [16]).

As MacArthur claims, "the domestication of the horse and the subjection of its will and power to that of the human astride is no simple matter" (2005a:74) and it demands horsemanship and expertise. Hence the INFLATION IS AN UNRULY HORSE THAT MUST BE KEPT UNDER CONTROL metaphor is a highly persuasive and convenient rhetorical device to justify any policy or measure taken irrespective of its final outcome, such as *squeezing credit* (example [15]), *the Fed's tightening campaign* (example [16]), or perhaps *riding inflation out* by *getting more income coming in* (example [20]). "The main meaning focus of the source (control of a powerful and often unpredictable force)" is thus transferred to inflation as a target domain "via the elements that are most salient for the rider – control of the horse's speed and gaits through the reins and the hands that hold them" (MacArthur 2005b). In addition, the conceptualisation of inflation as AN UNRULY HORSE THAT MUST BE KEPT UNDER CONTROL allows us to quantify inflation, feel its consequences, identify it as a cause of certain events and undertake actions to control it.

However, what this sub-metaphor seems to hide is the awareness that in spite of all expertise, policies and forecasts, inflation defies belief that it is a

phenomenon which may be completely kept under control due to the obvious impossibility (as well as inability or, perhaps, incompetence) of fully domesticating wild animals. Thus, the ingrained properties of (wild) horses (speed, loss of control) mapped onto inflation may be conveniently used as a cover in case of failure on the part of economists, who know, or at least are believed to know, how to keep inflation horse in check. If they do not succeed, the rationale will be found in adverse and profound impacts of inflation whose influence sometimes goes unnoticed.

## 5. Conclusion

In this paper, an attempt has been made to study one particular way of conceptualising inflation in English. It turned out that the use of the INFLATION IS A FEROCIOUS ANIMAL metaphor implies that inflation derives from forces which are beyond the control of economists, which in turn serves to rationalise both the absence of the economists' ability to predict inflation as well as a lack of means to overcome it. It also implies that trying to somehow overcome inflationary periods is like "taming a wild horse", which in itself gives an impression of huge amounts of effort which need to be expended into this task, most often in vain. In this way, the economist (as well as the politician) "seeks to create a very different social perception of his role" (Charteris-Black 2000:160). Namely, economists are generally expected to be able to find ways to keep inflation at a reasonable and sustainable level so that it inflicts as little damage to the economy and citizens as possible. However, the conceptualisation of INFLATION as a HORSE frees them of the responsibility in this regard, giving the impression that inflation is beyond human control. The equation of inflation with a horse seems to serve as an effective defence mechanism used by the people in power by which they protect their position and social status, thus becoming justified in the eyes of ordinary citizens for their untimeliness. Newspaper reporters reiterate this cognitive framework, thus reinforcing the affective force the INFLATION IS A HORSE metaphor is characterised by.

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# HAIR MATTERS: METAPHORICAL RECONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF HAIR IN PRINT ADS

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***Abstract:** Based on a corpus of print advertisements in British glossy magazines, the present paper is part of a broader research project in which Conceptual Metaphor Theory is used in an attempt to analyze the way in which copywriters rely on metaphor to reconceptualize a woman’s body for rhetorical purposes. The focus of this paper is on the conceptual metaphor HAIR IS AN OBJECT. More specifically, its linguistic instantiations and its rhetorical function in advertising discourse will be considered.*

***Keywords:** metaphor; metaphorical reconceptualization, hair; rhetorical function, print ads*

## 1. Introduction

Ever since ancient times, a woman’s hair (particularly long hair) has had a significant place in the collective imagination. Both images of “folktale beauties”, such as Rapunzel, Lorelei, Lady Godiva or Ileana Cosânzeana, and depictions of beauty in art throughout history show that hair has always been important for a woman’s appearance, functioning as a prime cultural signifier of femininity. Nowadays, in an era characterized by mass-consumption and mass-communication, obsessed with images and the body, discursive representations of hair as a gendered sign have become significantly more widespread and visible.

Based on a corpus of five hundred print advertisements for hair care products present in British women’s glossy magazines (mainly *Cosmopolitan*, but also *Glamour* and *Woman and Home*), the present paper draws on Conceptual Metaphor Theory, in an attempt to analyze the way in which copywriters rely on metaphor to reconceptualize a woman’s hair as an object for rhetorical purposes.

Conceptual Metaphor Theory has developed from Lakoff and Johnson’s highly influential study *Metaphors we live by* (1980), which has brought about remarkable changes regarding the status of metaphor in its relation to thought and language. In what follows, I shall first outline the concepts of the cognitive linguistic approach to metaphor which are most relevant to my paper, and then I shall comment briefly on the metaphor analysis method used.

If metaphor was traditionally regarded as a figure of speech used for rhetorical flourish, various cognitive and philosophical studies have now proved that metaphor goes far beyond language (e.g. Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Lakoff 1987; Lakoff 1993; Gibbs 1994; Kövecses 2002; etc.). The locus of metaphor is thought, not language, as emphasized by Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 3): “our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature”. Metaphor seems to be deeply embedded in our way of conceptualizing the world and as a result, metaphors realized in language, i.e.

metaphorical expressions (Kövecses 2002: 4), are only possible due to the conceptual metaphors that structure our thinking.

As such, metaphor becomes a “basic scheme by which people conceptualize their experience and the external world” (Gibbs 1994: 1) or, in more detail, a central cognitive process that “allows us to understand a relatively abstract or inherently unstructured subject matter in terms of a more concrete, or at least a more highly structured subject matter” (Lakoff 1993: 244). Although this process may typically be formulated as TARGET DOMAIN IS SOURCE DOMAIN (Lakoff 1993: 207), it does not mean that the two domains are identical. As will become evident in my analysis of the conceptual metaphor HAIR IS AN OBJECT, only certain aspects of the source domain are mapped onto the target domain, depending on which aspects of the target one intends to highlight (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 10-13, Kövecses 2002: 79-92).

I have analysed the above-mentioned conceptual metaphor according to the cognitive paradigm of Lakoff and Johnson (1980). More specifically, this has involved two operations: first, the identification and extraction of all the metaphorical instantiations expressing the HAIR IS AN OBJECT metaphor in my corpus, and then, their classification into smaller groups, according to the kind of object functioning as a source.

## **2. Hair is an object**

The conceptual metaphor HAIR IS AN OBJECT is based on the more general THE BODY IS AN OBJECT. Although I have not encountered this metaphor as such in any cognitive linguistic studies, there are (at least) three well-established conventional metaphors in our culture that may justify its existence. One of them is the longstanding THE BODY IS A MACHINE, which is explored at great length in Goatly (2007: 103-110). The second is the ontological metaphor THE BODY IS A CONTAINER, which has been analyzed by scholars especially in relation to emotions (cf. Kövecses 2002, Kövecses et al. 2003), while the third is HUMAN PROPERTIES ARE PROPERTIES OF INANIMATE THINGS/OBJECTS (cf. Kövecses 2002: 126). These metaphors attest the fact that the body (and its various parts) is often conceptualized in terms of its physicality in our culture, either as an object or as having properties that normally characterize objects.

One can conceive of this metaphor as a reversal of the conventional metaphors INANIMATE IS ANIMATE and OBJECTS ARE PEOPLE, which can be accounted for by Lakoff and Turner’s (1989) Great Chain of Being metaphor, where any level in the hierarchy can be understood in terms of another, irrespective of its position in the hierarchy. Goatly (2007: 121-122), for instance, provides numerous examples of metaphorical linguistic expressions where human beings, in general, and the human body, in particular, sometimes function as a source, while at other times as a target for the domain LANDSCAPE/ EARTH. In addition, Kövecses (2002: 127) points out that animate beings, which obviously include human beings and, consequently, their bodies, “are *commonly* [my emphasis] comprehended in terms of inanimate things”, which brings a further argument in

favour of THE BODY IS AN OBJECT as the reversal of INANIMATE IS ANIMATE / OBJECTS ARE PEOPLE.

Corpus evidence reveals that the HAIR IS AN OBJECT metaphor in advertisements for hair products is elaborated in several ways, as discussed below.

### 2.1. Hair is a fashion accessory

Copywriters seem to show a clear preference for this particular source domain, which suggests that a woman's hair is a decorative item, meant to complement the clothes she wears in order to enhance her looks. Although the linguistic expressions reflecting this metaphor display little lexical variation, they are nevertheless recurrent occurrences in my corpus of print ads. As can be seen in the examples below, hair is usually referred to as *an accessory* and the metaphor is further elaborated to a greater or a lesser extent by means of various lexical units from the same semantic field, e.g. verbs: *to wear*, *to take off*, and nouns: *ring*, *necklace*, *style*, *look*:

- Luscious locks are *the perfect accessory to complete any sophisticated style*. Adding that funky *necklace* or chunky *ring* is certainly important in *adding a wow-factor* to your overall *look* but your hair is *essential in pulling it all together* (Herbal Essences)
- *the ultimate fashion accessory*: your hair (Tony and Guy)
- Hair is the only *thing* you never *take off*. Make sure *it stands out*. *Wear* your hair, it's your *most powerful accessory* (Frederic Fekkai)

The linguistic expressions articulating this metaphor point to an important mapping: hair is never some irrelevant fashion accessory; it is always conceptualized as an extremely valuable one. Advertisements tell women that, compared to other accessories which may or may not *add a wow-factor* to their looks, hair is the one that really makes the difference (consider, for instance, the verbal phrases *to complete any sophisticated style* and *to pull it all together* in the first example) and therefore they should *make sure it stands out*. Similarly, evaluative adjectives in the superlative degree are always used to provide some positive assessment of this accessory, with the observation that implicit superlatives (Gieszinger 2001: 132), such as *perfect*, *ultimate* and *essential*, are undoubtedly preferred to morphological ones (e.g. *the most powerful*).

The same effect is sometimes achieved through the elaboration of the metaphor as HAIR IS A DESIGNER ACCESSORY. As such, in the collocations *Pantene hair* and *Fekkai hair*, the choice of the brand name as a modifier of *hair* points again to the increased value and prestige of this accessory.

Instances where the metaphor is realized through highly conventional linguistic means and/or less explicitly are rather occasional. For example, in "So how are you going *to wear* your new smooth hair?" (Garnier), the vehicle-term (Goatly 1998: 9) is absent and can only be inferred, and the instantiation of the metaphor is limited to the verb *to wear*, which makes this metaphor barely noticeable.

## 2.2. Hair is a fabric

The reconceptualization of a woman's hair as a fabric is another common hair metaphor in advertising discourse. There are three types of fabric used to refer to a woman's hair, namely silk, cashmere and satin. This choice can obviously be accounted for by the highly appreciated characteristics of these particular fabrics, e.g. soft to the touch, fine, naturally shiny, expensive, high quality.

In language, however, this metaphor finds expression through a very limited number of terms. Its linguistic instantiations always follow the same structural pattern: the premodification of the noun *hair* by the adjective *silky* (e.g. *silky hair*) or by compound adjectives of the type noun+adjective, in which the noun is either *cashmere* or *satin* (e.g. *cashmere soft hair*, *satin-sleek hair*).

One interesting, though isolated, exception to this pattern is the use of the adjective *swishable*: "Pantene leaves your hair perfectly *swisshable*". Here, the metaphor centers on the rustling sound made by fine glossy fabrics such as silk or satin, thus appealing to the readers' auditory perception, and is conveyed through both unusual affixation (the verb *swish* + the suffix *-able*; though grammatically correct, there is no such adjective listed in English language dictionaries; the adjective *swish* is old-fashioned, and means 'expensive and fashionable') and exploitation of paralinguistic meaning derived from misspelling the word (i.e. the repetition of the letter "s" in "sssh" is reminiscent of the actual sound made by the fabric). Hence, linguistic innovation results in a more creative instantiation of the same conceptual metaphor.

## 2.3. Hair is food

Although the more general conceptual metaphor WOMAN IS FOOD is "one of the most frequent metaphors used by the written media in English" according to Lopez Rodriguez (2007: 180), my corpus of hair metaphors in print advertisements reveals that the source domain FOOD is hardly ever used by copywriters; more specifically, I could find three instantiations of this metaphor, among which only the second one is used recurrently:

- your hair is *yummier* (Herbal Essences);
- *luscious* locks (Herbal Essences);
- Can't *cook*, won't *cook*. *Neither will my hair*. (Aussi)

It is interesting to notice that the three linguistic realizations of the same conceptual metaphor focus on completely different aspects of the source domain. On the one hand, the first two clearly highlight sexual desirability of a woman's hair. As illustrated by Lakoff (1987), the experience of sexuality is often perceived from a culinary point of view and is structured by the conceptual metaphors LUST IS HUNGER and THE OBJECT OF LUST IS FOOD. The fact that the hair is conceptualized in terms of appetizing food through the use of the two synonymous



adjectives, *yummy* and *luscious* - meaning “extremely pleasing to the sense of taste” (www.thefreedictionary.com) - thus reflects the long-standing sexist association in our culture of a woman’s body with a sexual object to be consumed.

The third instantiation, on the other hand, rests on the food preparation process and is almost neutral as far as gender stereotypes are concerned. In this advertisement we are actually dealing with two hair metaphors due to the polysemy of the verb *to cook*. At first glance, one may think that this is an example of personification: following the logic of the first sentence, which is (presumably) uttered by the female character depicted in the ad, the reader may infer that the rest of the statement, i.e. “Neither will my hair”, refers to the hair’s similar refusal, as if in a feminist vein, to engage in this particular kitchen activity. At the same time, however, “Neither will my hair” can be understood differently. Namely, the underlying conceptual metaphor may well not be HAIR IS A HUMAN BEING (WHO DOES NOT WANT TO COOK), but HAIR IS FOOD; the hair is not the performer of the action, i.e. the one who does the cooking, but the object that undergoes it, i.e. the object being cooked. This is due to the use of “to cook” with a passive meaning denoting the action of being subjected to intense heat in order to become suitable for eating.

Both metaphors are at work here, but for different purposes: the metaphor HAIR IS A HUMAN BEING (WHO DOES NOT WANT TO COOK) ensures sentence coherence at a grammatical level (i.e. Neither I nor my hair will cook), while HAIR IS FOOD does it at a semantic level. Given that the advertisement promotes a hair conditioner designed to protect the hair from styling tools such as hairdryers and hair irons, which use hot air to dry or style it, it is much more likely that the reading based on the latter metaphor be the preferred one, as it creates a favorable claim about the advertised product. Graphology further reinforces this assumption, as the words “won’t cook” and “my hair” stand out in bigger letters, while the picture of the product is placed right above the sentence (the utterance is split into three parts written one below the other). This arrangement of visual and verbal signs (product image + won’t cook + my hair) thus emphasizes the fact that the advertised hair conditioner is worth buying, as it will prevent heat from “cooking”, i.e. damaging, the hair. Compared to the other two instantiations of the same conceptual metaphor, which focus on the sense of taste and on consumption, this metaphor uses another aspect of the source domain FOOD, namely, the change in state due to exposure to intense heat. Consequently, it suggests that, thanks to the product, hair quality will not suffer any transformation (i.e. damage) caused by the heated appliances used by women in their quest for beauty.

#### **2.4. Hair is an object that needs mending**

As explained in Kilyeni (2008), the advertising discourse on the body constantly emphasizes the idea that a woman’s body, as given by nature, is incomplete and deficient, and hence in constant need of maintenance and improvement.

As far as the hair is concerned, the linguistic instantiations used to articulate the conceptual metaphor HAIR IS AN OBJECT THAT NEEDS MENDING usually take the form of verbs that refer to the process of undergoing improvement or reparation (more specifically, there are only three such verbs: *to repair*, *to restore*, *to rebuild*), but the past participial adjective *damaged* is also a frequent occurrence. It is always the (personified) product or an ingredient in the product that performs these actions in the “war” against various “enemies”, such as the Sun, styling tools, pollution, etc., which damage the hair. Here is an example in which all the above-mentioned linguistic means are used:

- Awapuhi helps *restore damaged* hair; keratin – used to *rebuild* and *repair* every strand of hair.

However, this example is an exception, as in most ads there are generally only one or two instantiations of this particular conceptual metaphor. Compared to the other hair-as-object metaphors discussed in this section, this one seems to be the least visible. From a conceptual point of view, it has become so natural and pervasive in media discourses on the female body that it can easily be taken for granted as self-evident (cf. Kilyeni 2009). By the same token, the corresponding metaphorical expressions have become so usual, i.e. conventionally fixed, in the language of advertising that readers hardly ever become aware of them (ibid.).

## 2.5. Hair is a device

Two different elaborations can be grouped within the generic metaphor HAIR IS A DEVICE, namely HAIR IS AN ELECTRICAL DEVICE and HAIR IS AN AIRCRAFT, depending on the features of the source domain which get mapped onto the target domain. The first elaboration highlights the capacity of hair-as-an electrical device to start operating in order to perform a certain task and is instantiated by the verbs *to turn on* and *to switch on*. For example, copywriters advise women to “*turn on* the shine” with Garnier hair care products and “*switch on* [your] highlights” with Pantene. The advertised product is implicitly conceptualized as the switch that activates this device, thus causing the shine and the highlights to become functional. Similarly to electrical devices, which work through the transmission of signals, the hair becomes operational, allowing for the display of various positively connoted signs related to feminine beauty (here, shine and colour brightness). As for the purpose of this device, it can be easily inferred, given the type of product advertised and the target audience, on the one hand, and the semantic characteristics of advertisements as text types (cf. Gieszinger 2001: 88-123), on the other. The fact that the ads promote hair care products for women, and that copywriters chose to focus on the (metaphorical) benefits of the product (i.e. gaining beauty and a positive image) as the main topic of the text (cf. Gieszinger 2001: 121) reveals that this particular device is designed to make itself highly noticeable and to attract attention upon itself. What is more, the verb *to turn on* adds an extra feature to the device. While both *to turn on* and *to switch on* are employed in their literal sense in these metaphorical expressions,

when the former is chosen, its metaphorical sense of causing somebody to become sexually aroused becomes equally active and gives rise to another entailment: a woman's hair is an electrical device that sends out erotic stimuli. Whereas this idea is only remotely implied if the two verbs are taken literally, as the signs of feminine beauty mentioned above also include sex appeal to a certain extent, the overlapping presence of this particular meaning of *to turn on* within the same utterance states it openly by means of metaphor.

An advertisement for Wella is more explicit about the nature of this device, in that it provides additional information related to its features. The concept used as a source is not merely that of "electrical device"; the mappings involved in the reconceptualization of the hair in the present ad point to a more complex device, namely, an electronic one, an audio device, such as a CD player. Here is the copy:

Sarah's style spoke volumes on how to capture a guy.  
*Turn down* heat damage and *up* the *volume* with Shockwaves Volumising Mousse.

Style.  
Attract. *Play*.



Besides its capacity to start operating, this device can also produce sounds whose volume can be adjusted. In language, this characteristic is rendered through the verb pair *to turn up* – *to turn down*, as well as through the (elliptical) collocation of the latter with the noun *volume* in the second line: "[turn] up the volume". This is again an example of pun-metaphor (cf. 2.3.), where the pun hinges on the word *volume*: the two meanings present here, i.e. amplitude of the hair and loudness of the sound, overlap completely and combine within the same utterance. It is worth noting how yet another meaning of the noun *volume* (i.e. a large amount / a great deal) is to be found in the first line of the ad, more precisely, in the idiom *to speak volumes*. Although this idiom does not reflect the conceptual metaphor under discussion, it does nevertheless contribute to the overall rhetorical effect of the advert as it increases ambiguity, which results in more implication on the part of the reader in deciphering the advertising message.

The source domain AUDIO DEVICE is further reinforced by the word *Play* in the last line, accompanied by the visual symbol for the play button in any audio device. Although the presence of this symbol obviously hints at the reading of *Play* as the command which activates the device, i.e. which makes it emit sounds, this word is open to another interpretation as well. One of its meanings, namely that of engaging and amusing oneself in a game, is present simultaneously in the collocation "Style. Attract. Play.", which, taken as a whole, is in turn metaphorical. Its metaphoricity can be accounted for by a combination of the underlying conceptual metaphors LOVE/LUST IS A GAME OR SPORT and LOVE/LUST IS A PHYSICAL FORCE (Lakoff 1987, Kövecses 2002). The former is manifested both in the imperative *Play* and in the structural pattern of the collocation, which alludes to the three-command start in a game or sport: "Ready. Steady. Go." / "On your mark. Get

set. Go.”; the latter finds expression in the imperative *Attract* and combines with the former in the collocation. Just as a participant in a game has to follow the three commands in order to be able to engage in the game, a woman is urged to do the same in order to engage in the game of love. The following mappings emerge as a result: *Style* corresponds metaphorically to the first command, i.e. styling the hair is conceptualized as getting ready for the game, *Attract* to the second, i.e. drawing attention upon oneself and getting noticed is understood as getting set, and *Play* to the third, i.e. starting dating equates starting playing the game.

The same two conceptual metaphors, LOVE/LUST IS A GAME OR SPORT and LOVE/LUST IS A PHYSICAL FORCE, are also embodied in the verb *to capture*, which means taking possession or control over something by force in a game or sport. This verb clearly reveals another underlying love metaphor detected by Kövecses (2002: 27), namely, THE OBJECT OF LOVE/LUST IS A POSSESSED OBJECT. So, the metaphor present in the verbal phrase *to capture a guy* in the first line of the ad draws attention upon one particular action in the game of love, i.e. that of seducing (conceptualized as *capturing*), upon the effort involved in performing this action, i.e. the need for hair styling skills (conceptualized implicitly as physical force), and the object to be possessed as a result of the action, i.e. a man. (expressed literally by the noun *guy*). The focus of the metaphor is, however, on “the how”, i.e. on the enabling quality for the activity “seduction”, as expressed in the corresponding sentence both explicitly, through the adverb *how*, and implicitly, through the idiom *to speak volumes*, i.e. to reveal a lot.

In the first line of the advert, we thus have a situation where a woman’s ability to seduce men is understood in terms of styling her hair in a certain way. By making use of the HAIR IS AN AUDIO DEVICE metaphor, the second sentence gives insight into how this ability can be accomplished successfully: that is, both the way, i.e. decreasing heat damage and increasing the volume, and the means, i.e. using the advertised product, are suggested. Now that we have the know-how, the third line announces the start of the (seduction) game.

This original hair metaphor thus combines with several other conventional love/lust metaphors; their blending eventually results in a further elaboration of the former into HAIR IS A MEN-ALLURING AUDIO DEVICE. In discourse, this elaboration is achieved through the creative use of both polysemous words, such as *to capture*, *play*, *to turn up*, *volume*, and visual symbols, such as the one for the play button in an audio device.

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, the other equally innovative elaboration of the hair-as-device metaphor is HAIR IS AN AIRCRAFT. Consider the following lines taken from an ad for shampoo:

- Prepare for take-off, [...] fasten your seatbelts. *Uplifting* volume from Herbal Essences.

The metaphorical reconceptualization of hair as an aircraft is realized linguistically through the use of the word *uplifting*, which indicates upward movement, as well as through two other verbal cues related to air travel, namely the verbal phrases *to prepare for take-off* and *to fasten one’s seatbelt*. According to

the ad, it is the promoted product that is responsible for this metamorphosis of the hair into an aircraft which women can embark for a flight; this results in the following metaphor: USING THE HAIR PRODUCT IS FLYING. Since flying simultaneously involves both upward and forward movement, which is generally evaluated as positive in our culture based on the image-schemas *up-down* and *front-back* (Kövecses 2002: 36-38), this particular entailment suggests that the flight is going to be a pleasurable experience for women. It is worth mentioning that this flight metaphor is also rendered visually in the image of the ad, which shows a woman with big hair (i.e. with *volume*), whose body posture is strongly reminiscent of an airplane that has just taken off.

Meanwhile, the same idea of pleasure is stated explicitly by the non-literal, metaphorical meaning of the adjective *uplifting*, i.e. inducing a state of exaltation or improving social status, which expresses the underlying highly conventional conceptual metaphors GOOD IS UP and HAPPY IS UP (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 14-18). Again, a pun is generated in the ad by the simultaneous activation of two senses for the word *uplifting*, i.e. the underlying literal “raising from the ground”, which refers to the upward movement of aircrafts, and the figurative “elevating the spirits/one’s social condition”, which refers to a woman’s state of well-being. As a final point, this pun creates a situation where happiness and prestige are understood in terms of flying and where these states are achieved by having hair with volume, which in turn is conceptualized as an aircraft. All these mappings eventually blend into the metaphor HAIR IS AN AIRCRAFT THAT ENHANCES WOMEN’S SPIRITS AND STATUS.

### **3. Hair is an object: rhetorical considerations**

It is interesting to note that, contrary to Conceptual Metaphor Theory, the HAIR IS AN OBJECT metaphor is not used to articulate the abstract (i.e. a woman’s hair) in terms of the concrete (i.e. an object). Instead, the hair, which is something concrete enough, is metaphorically reconceptualised as something not necessarily more abstract, but more complex for certain rhetorical purposes.

Most obviously, this particular metaphor is used in advertising discourse in order to catch the readers’ attention and generate humour. On the one hand, this effect is triggered by the choice of certain elaborations of the source domain OBJECT, such as ELECTRICAL/AUDIO DEVICE, AIRCRAFT, and FOOD, which are highly unconventional, and are used to conceptualise the target HAIR. While the metaphors are set up to emphasize some alleged similarities between the two concepts (i.e. source and target), a humorous, or at least witty, effect emerges as a result of the striking incongruities between them. The same outcome is sometimes reached by the metaphor’s highly creative linguistic instantiations or by the reactivation of the same source domain through various more or less original linguistic expressions throughout the advertisement (cf. 2.1. and 2.5.). However, humour is most visible in pun-metaphors, where two meanings of the same word are active at the same time and form part of the novel conceptualization that emerges. The pun may center on one word (cf. *to turn on* in 2.4.), it may be cleverly highlighted in the graphology or the picture of the advertisement (cf. HAIR IS FOOD

instantiated by the verb *to cook* in 2.3 and respectively, HAIR IS AN AUDIO device and HAIR IS AN AIRCRAFT in 2.4), or it may be, alternatively or concurrently, playfully reactivated throughout the copy through lexical choices that reinforce one or the other meaning (ibid.). The shift in meaning as well as the tension between the two contrasting, yet overlapping, situations both acts as an attention-seeking device and creates an entertaining effect as a result of riddle-like ambiguity, which readers are supposed to identify and clarify (cf. Lundmark 2005). This leads to a relaxed atmosphere and a good mood for the readers, which, in turn, brings them closer to the advertised product (cf. Cook 1992, Attardo 1994).

Secondly, and less obviously, the reconceptualisation of a woman's hair as various kinds of objects, however funny, also fulfils a multi-levelled ideological function. Besides adding an entertaining element to advertising, the HAIR IS AN OBJECT metaphor points to a more covert rhetorical effect related to ideology, in that it transmits, and hence reinforces, stereotyped images of femininity. No doubt that this metaphor is set up to argue the case for the product. However, it should not be neglected that in doing so, it simultaneously argues the case for its benefits to the hair (i.e. physical benefits), on the one hand, and to women (i.e. social benefits), on the other. Needless to say, these benefits are essentially linked to contemporary gender ideology. In particular, the former mirror aesthetic canons of feminine physical beauty, which, if observed, will lead to the latter. The HAIR IS AN OBJECT metaphors presented in the paper either express both or only one type of benefits, which is implicitly conditioned by or results in the other. For instance, the instantiations of HAIR IS A FABRIC emphasize certain qualities of a woman's hair which are highly appreciated in our culture, such as smoothness, softness and shine, while only implying subsequent social benefits, such as being admired by or attractive to men (note that smoothness and softness make reference to the sense of touch). Similarly, the use of the source domain OBJECT THAT NEEDS MENDING stresses the idea that the advertised product will help the hair gain such physical qualities in case it is *damaged* and does not possess them. By contrast, it is the above-mentioned social benefits that come into direct focus through reconceptualisation by means of the source domains FASHION ACCESSORY and FOOD. However, the implication is that these social benefits can only be achieved if the physical characteristics (which are sometimes explicitly referred to in the copy of the ad) are fulfilled. As for the source domain DEVICE, both physical and social benefits are metaphorically highlighted: hair with volume functions either as a means of seducing men or of enhancing personal/social well-being.

The focus of these hair metaphors on the various benefits of the product to a woman's hair and/or to women in general reveals some underlying gender stereotypes, and therefore, it can be argued that the HAIR IS AN OBJECT metaphor is an example of what Velasco-Sacristan (2009: 118-127) calls "advertising gender metaphors". First, the physical qualities emerging from source to target metaphorical mappings support the contemporary feminine beauty canon, i.e. they bolster up those "must have" attributes of what is perceived in our society as "beautiful hair" and without which the hair is somehow defective (cf. Kilyeni 2008:146). Second, the ideology behind the social benefits (derived from having such hair) that these metaphors bring to the

foreground comprises two aspects. On the one hand, these social benefits point to the fact that this objectified body part is of utmost importance for a woman's self-expression and self-fulfillment; a woman thus becomes her hair, i.e. is reduced to an objectified body part. On the other hand, benefits related to sexual attractiveness reveal that this body part is treated as a sexual object to be consumed by men.

Finally, the analysis of these hair metaphors in print ads has led to another observation, namely that metaphor, traditionally perceived as a highly valuable tool in the promotion of commodities, is equally important and functions in the same way when it comes to advertising feminine hair (i.e. hair conforming to contemporary beauty standards). This parallels my findings concerning the heavy use of adjectives (which is another very important strategy in advertising) for promoting another part of the body (the skin), following more or less the same grammatical patterns as in product promotion (Kilyeni 2011). Consequently, once objectified through metaphor, a woman's hair also becomes a very attractive commodity to be advertised.

#### **4. Conclusion**

In line with cognitive linguistic research on metaphor, my study has hopefully proved that the use of the HAIR IS AN OBJECT metaphor in print advertisement for hair care products is, above all, systematic. There are five salient elaborations of this particular conceptual metaphor in advertising discourse, which use the following source domains to reconceptualise a woman's hair: FASHION ACCESSORY, FABRIC, FOOD, OBJECT THAT NEEDS MENDING, AND DEVICE. From a semantic standpoint, each of these conceptual metaphors is realized by various linguistic instantiations that range from highly conventional, i.e. hardly perceived as metaphorical any longer (e.g. *to wear, silky, damaged, to repair, to restore, to rebuild*), to highly creative, coined by copywriters for more marked rhetorical effects (e.g. *swissshable, to cook, to switch on, to turn up/down*).

As for the rhetorical functions of the HAIR IS AN OBJECT metaphor in print advertisements targeted at women, it can be argued that it is twofold. The creative way in which this metaphor is elaborated so as to create similarities between the two otherwise disparate domains adds a fiction-like entertaining element to the advertising message, meant to push the advertised product, via the world of fantasy, into the real world of the reader (cf. Cook 1992: 177). However, the metaphor's ideological potential is at work as well, although less manifestly, in that it supports and thus maintains the status quo in society in what concerns gender issues (i.e. the feminine beauty standard, the objectification and commodification of the female body).

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# CHANGES IN THE SYNTACTIC FUNCTIONS OF FINITE/NON-FINITE CLAUSES IN NEWSPAPER LANGUAGE

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**Abstract:** *The paper presents the results of a diachronic small-scale exploratory study into newspaper language, focusing on the change in syntactic functions of finite and non-finite clauses. The findings are compared with the results of research into academic English, with the aim of ascertaining which changes seem more universally valid and which can be considered register-dependent only.*

**Keywords:** *newspaper language, academic English, syntactic functions, finite/non-finite subordinate clauses, language change*

## 1. Introduction

This paper is part of a long-term diachronic research which aims to pinpoint possible changes in functions of finite/non-finite clauses in written English. It analyses newspaper language and compares the results with my previous research into academic English. Its main aim is to ascertain which changes seem more universally valid and which can be considered register-dependent only. In my research into academic English, excerpts of continuous running texts taken from three disciplines (psychology, economics and sociology) were analysed with reference to the occurrence of every finite and non-finite predication which was expressed explicitly. Each discipline was represented by two texts: one written towards the end of the 19th century or the beginning of the 20th and the other a hundred years later. The texts were always on the same or similar topic. Units of analysis were portions of continuous running texts containing 100 consecutive sentences. The corpus of academic English, which consisted of 600 sentences, contained 2,090 finite and non-finite clauses. The present study as a whole is contextualised mainly with the results of my previous small-scale exploratory studies into academic English (Malá 2009, Malá 2010, Malá 2011), since, to my knowledge, no other study has been conducted on the specific topic of the present research paper. However, parts of my research are linked with some other research findings, as will be mentioned below.

## 2. Methodology

The study is mainly based on the theoretical framework of *A comprehensive grammar of the English language* (Quirk et al. 2003 (1985)) and *Longman grammar of spoken and written English* (Biber et al. 1999). The methodology of newspaper language analysis was the same as the methodology of academic prose analysis. An effort was made to find texts on the same or similar topic in two issues of *The Guardian*. Finally, reports of conferences were found in

*The Guardian* published in April 1907 and November 2010. Stretches of 100 sentences of continuous running texts were then chosen at random for analysis. The analysis was carried out manually, just like in the previous exploratory studies. The key task was to find every explicitly expressed finite and non-finite predication.

### **3. Explicitly expressed finite and non-finite predication**

Explicitly expressed finite and non-finite predications are put into the categories of main clauses and finite and non-finite subordinate clauses. Subordinate clauses are then divided into four subcategories according to the syntactic functions they perform in sentences: there is a subcategory of finite and non-finite clauses substituting for clause elements normally expressed by noun phrases, e.g. a subject, object or complement, a subcategory of clauses used as adverbials, a subcategory of clauses developing noun phrases, and finally a subcategory of finite and non-finite clauses used as comment clauses. Each subcategory is illustrated by an example below. Parts of sentences demonstrating individual points are italicized.

#### **3.1. Clauses substituting for noun phrases**

Sentences (1) and (2) contain clauses substituting for clause elements commonly expressed by noun phrases. Example (1) shows a nominal *that* clause which functions as a direct object. In (2) there is a *to*- clause used as direct object.

(1) They agreed when the despatch of the Canadian Government came into their hands *that there would be no objection of the adoption of the title „Imperial Conference“* ... (Guardian/old)

(2) The US, despite proclaiming a new commitment to multilateralism, refuses *to ratify the convention on biological diversity*. (Guardian/modern)

#### **3.2. Clauses used as adverbials**

In examples (3) and (4), the structures in italics show finite and non-finite clauses substituting for adverbials. In (3) there is an adverbial clause of reason, in (4) an infinitive of purpose.

(3) General Botha wished the link between the Conference and the Agents general drawn closer, *because the Agents general really represent colonies in this country*. (Guardian/old)

(4) When they meet *to consider the gradual collapse of the natural world*, they send their office cleaners .....(Guardian/modern)

#### **3.3. Clauses developing noun phrases in the form of pre- and post-modification.**

Since the most essential criterion of the analysis is explicitly expressed finite and non-finite predication, *-ing* and *-ed* participles used as premodification of noun phrases which are formed by adding the suffixes *-ing* and *-ed* to a verb base are analysed as non-finite clauses. They clearly imply a finite relative clause. Therefore, *the proposed Imperial Council* in (5) can be easily converted into *the Imperial Council which was proposed*.

(5) After some preliminary discussion, the representatives of those colonies proceeded to state in outline their views as to the functions of the *proposed* Imperial Council. (Guardian/old)

Italicized structures in examples (6) and (7) demonstrate postmodification by a defining relative clause (a finite clause) and an *-ed* participle (a non-finite clause) respectively.

(6) Having secured the headlines *it wanted*, the entire senior staff of the convention on biological diversity has gone to ground, ... (Guardian/ modern)

(7) Lord Elgin said he had drafted purely for consideration a resolution *based on the resolution of the last Conference with the necessary alterations* ... (Guardian/old)

### 3.4. Comment clauses

Comment clauses, which express a speaker's comment, are independent of the rest of the sentence (Quirk et al. 2003: 1112). In the analysed texts from *The Guardian*, comment clauses in the classic sense occurred in the old text. They had the form of a main clause (8) or an adverbial clause (9):

(8) In reply ..., Lord Elgin explained that the phrase ...was understood by him in the sense that in the departmental reorganisation which, *he had stated*, was contemplated ... (Guardian/old)

(9) The position of the adjunct body to the Conference ... did not seem to him clear, nor was he satisfied that it was practicable, *as it seemed to him* that it would be independent ... (Guardian/old)

In the modern text, the only clause type that could be analysed as comment clauses are finite reporting clauses in sentence final position that have the form of a main clause. Quirk et al. (2003:1114) state that such clauses are, in fact, "not independent clauses, since they are defective syntactically: the verb or adjective lacks its normally obligatory complementation", even though it is transitive. This can be seen in example (10).

(10) "Countries join forces to save life on Earth", *the front page of the Independent told us*. (Guardian/modern)

There is an interesting change that must be made if the clauses should function like that, because the original relationship of superordination – subordination must be reversed. Thus originally *the front page of the Independent told us* could be a main clause and *countries join forces to save life on Earth* could be a subordinate nominal *that* clause functioning as a direct object. The original subordinate clause becomes the main clause, the subordinator *that* is omitted, and the original main clause becomes a comment clause (Quirk et al. 2003:1113).

Altogether, within the syntactic categories mentioned above, 10 types of finite clauses (the various semantic relations of adverbial clauses were counted as one type) and 14 types of non-finite clauses occurred in both *Guardian* texts. Their list with examples is given in the Appendix.

#### 4. Results and discussion

In this section, the results of the analysis of the two texts from the *Guardian* are contrasted with the results of the exploratory studies into academic English (Malá 2009, Malá 2010, Malá 2011), with the aim of finding similarities and differences between the research results. In academic English, the basic difference between the older and the modern texts was that in the modern texts one hundred sentences were shorter in terms of the numbers of words they contained, and the number of clauses was smaller. This is the same in the *Guardian* texts, as can be seen in Table 1.

	No. of sentences	No. of clauses	No. of words
Guardian – old	100	392	3, 236
Guardian – modern	100	304	1, 933
Total	200	696	5, 169

**Table 1:** The number of clauses and words in 100 sentences of the 2 *Guardian* texts

##### 4.1. Main, finite, and non-finite clauses

In academic English main, finite subordinate and non-finite clauses were fewer in the modern texts, with finite subordinate clauses being more reduced in number than non-finite clauses. Table 2 shows the situation for the *Guardian* texts. Next to the absolute numbers of clauses in the modern text, there are arrows pointing upwards or downwards and next to them percentages by which the particular kinds of clauses de/increased in the modern text. We can see that, with reference to the main clauses, there is a disagreement between academic English and the *Guardian* texts. However, the other finding, namely that finite subordinate clauses were fewer than non-finite clauses holds true for the modern *Guardian* text. Table 2 shows that finite clauses were reduced by 41 per cent, while non-finite clauses only by 31.5 per cent.

Main clauses	Finite sub. Clauses	Non-finite clauses
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	Abs*.	%	Abs.	%	Abs.	%
Guardian–old	106		143		143	
Guardian –mod.	122	↑15 %	84	↓41 %	98	↓31.5 %

**Table 2:** Main, finite, non-finite clauses in the two texts  
Abs.\* - absolute numbers of clauses

In the analysis of academic texts, this was interpreted as indicating a tendency towards a non-finite mode of expression, resulting in stronger syntactic condensation, because clause elements (e.g. subjects) that are apparent from the surrounding context are omitted when we use non-finite verb forms (Hladký 1961:114). Some researchers have also noticed that non-finite forms have “become more functionally prominent, and correspondingly more frequent in discourse”, even though, unfortunately, there is little research into these issues (Mair and Leech 2006: 329).

#### 4.2. Change in syntactic functions of clauses

Table 3 displays the percentages of the four syntactic categories of finite and non-finite clauses in the newspaper texts. The findings reveal that there is again considerable overlap between academic prose and the *Guardian* texts.

	Finite clauses		Non-Finite clauses	
	old	Modern	Old	modern
Postmodification	40	37	45	26
Adverbial	13	19	16	19
Noun phrase slot	43	40	29	35
Comment clauses	4	4	-	-
Premodification	-	-	10	20
Total	100	100	100	100

**Table 3:** Percentages of finite and non-finite clauses according to functions

Postmodification by means of finite and non-finite clauses was by far the most frequently used category in the old academic texts. It was also the category that was reduced the most in the modern texts. In the newspaper texts, this holds mainly for the non-finite clauses (the reduction from 45 per cent to 26 per cent).

As regards the percentages of finite and non-finite clauses functioning as adverbials, the academic texts analysed always displayed a rise in the modern texts. The *Guardian* texts present similar results: there is an increase in the number of finite clauses (from 13 per cent to 19 per cent) and of non-finite clauses (from 16 per cent to 19 per cent).

In the academic texts, clauses used instead of sentence elements normally expressed by noun phrases showed a rise both in the percentage of finite and non-finite clauses. The same happens in the *Guardian* texts for non-finite clauses only (from 29 per cent to 35 per cent).

As far as comment clauses are concerned, they occurred in very small numbers. These findings are also similar to those obtained from the *Guardian* texts.

The results referring to premodification by *-ing* and *-ed* participles were not unequivocal in the research into academic English. In the modern academic texts, the percentages were slightly higher or lower than in the older texts. In the extracts from the *Guardian*, there is a substantial increase of the *-ing* and *-ed* participles used in premodification (from 10 per cent to 20 per cent). The use of participles as premodifiers represents a very economical way of expression, because just one word is employed instead of a whole clause (usually a relative clause), which would occur in postmodification. These *-ing* and *-ed* participles derived from a verb base behave like adjectives, making noun phrases more complex. They can be graded, intensified, can form other adjectives, etc. A tendency towards a more compressed noun phrase in current newspaper language is a well-known fact, described in detail in research into this type of discourse (Ljung 2000, Biber 2003).

### 4.3. Individual clause types

As regards individual clause types, the findings suggest some differences between academic texts and the *Guardian* texts. One of them refers to relative clauses. There are three kinds of finite clauses used as postmodifiers in both *Guardian* texts (See the Appendix). The most common is a defining relative clause. The research into academic English focused on the use of relative pronouns in subject/object positions. The findings showed that, in the old texts, the most common pronouns used in subject position were *who/which*, while in the modern texts they were *who/which/that*. The same holds true for the *Guardian* texts. As regards relative pronouns in object position, in the old academic texts they were preserved, but such clause types were almost entirely absent in the modern academic texts. In the old *Guardian* text, the situation was the same as in the old academic texts. However, unlike the modern academic texts, the modern *Guardian* text contained relative clauses in which the relative pronouns could be used in object position. In most cases, the pronouns were omitted, as can be seen in example (11):

- (11) Every international agreement *I've followed* was published as soon as it was approved. (*Guardian/modern*).

Biber et al. (1999:620) state that the zero relativizer is used mainly when the subject of the relative clause is a pronoun, and it is preserved when the subject is a full noun-phrase.

Another interesting difference occurred among the finite clauses used instead of sentence elements commonly expressed by noun phrases. Here the most frequent clause type both in the academic texts and the *Guardian* texts was a nominal *that* clause used as a direct object. In the academic texts, *that* was preserved in the old as well as the modern texts. In the *Guardian* texts, *that* was preserved in the old text and very often omitted in the modern one. It was absent mainly in some cases mentioned by Biber et al. (1999: 681), namely after the verb *say* and when the subject of the *that* clause was a personal pronoun.

## 5. Conclusion

The comparison of the findings of the diachronic research into academic English and the *Guardian* texts has revealed some similarities as well as differences.

The differences lie mainly in the frequency of occurrence of *-ing* and *-ed* participles used in premodification, and in some clause types having individual functions.

The main similarities could be summarised as follows. There is an overlap between the two registers in the tendency towards a non-finite mode of expression and simplification of sentence structure. Sentences in the modern texts contain fewer words and fewer clauses and are syntactically more condensed. Moreover, there is an increase in the use of clauses that articulate clause elements normally expressed by noun phrases and of clauses used instead of adverbials. At the same time, there is a decrease in the percentage of clauses used as finite and non-finite postmodifiers.

According to Bazerman (1984:175-176), relative clauses (the most common clause type in postmodification) do not contribute to the “intellectual complexity” of a sentence, because they usually only specify a noun phrase. Nominal clauses and adverbial clauses are more important for the development of argument. Nominal clauses present thoughts and adverbial clauses different kinds of circumstances. The increase in the percentage of such clauses in the modern texts contributes to enhancing the intellectual complexity of sentences. On the other hand, the decline of postmodification improves straightforwardness of expression. When finite and non-finite clauses are used as postmodification, it puts more stress on the concentration of the reader, because they interrupt the flow of the text by giving details about noun phrases. This can be seen in example (12), taken from the old *Guardian* text. Out of the eight clauses that the sentence contains, five occur in postmodification (one finite: *which must be felt by anyone* and four non-finite: *representing the Imperial Government at the discussion /spoken / put forward and of increasing the unity of strength of the British Empire*).

(12) Lord Elgin began by expressing the satisfaction which must be felt by anyone representing the Imperial Government at the discussion, every word spoken and every suggestion put forward having been made in the spirit of increasing the unity and strength of the British Empire.

The findings presented in this study are based on small-scale descriptive exploratory studies into academic English and newspaper language. They point to some possible developmental tendencies in the written language. However, so far they are by no means representative. Therefore, they must be taken only as preliminary and further research is necessary to prove their validity.

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### Appendix

#### *Finite clauses substituting for noun phrases*

1. *That-* clauses after verbs  
The evidence suggests *that we've been conned*. (Guardian – modern)
2. Extraposed *that-* clauses



The position of the adjunct body to the Conference ... did not seem to him clear, nor was he satisfied that it was practicable, as it seemed to him, *that it would be independent and not a dependent body*. (Guardian – old)

3. *That*- clauses after a copular verb

Against the received wisdom of the 1990s, it turns out *that you can be half-pregnant*. (Guardian - modern)

4. Nominal *Wh*- interrogative clauses

*How soon the change would be effected* he could not say. (Guardian – old)

5. Nominal relative clauses

This is *how much they value the world's living systems*. (Guardian – modern)

***Finite clauses occupying an adverbial element slot***

6. Adverbial clauses (different semantic relationships; the most frequent being time, condition, reason and comparison)

*When they meet* to consider the gradual collapse of the natural world, they send their office cleaners and defer the hard choices for another 10 years. (Guardian – modern)

He stated that *if the Conference would call upon the Colonial Office* to provide for the continuity which it desires, then the Colonial Office would do its best ... (Guardian – old)

To this the Canadian Government suggested that the name “Conference” should be retained, but that the word “Imperial” should be prefixed, these conferences being really imperial in character, *since they are not composed only of self-governing colonies...* (Guardian – old)

It is not just that big business gains more *than it loses* ... (Guardian – modern)

***Finite clauses contributing to the complexity of noun phrases in the form of postmodification***

7. Defining relative clauses

He referred incidentally to the effect *which such a new arrangement would have upon the position of the Governor or Governor General*. (Guardian – old)

8. Non-defining relative clause

The British government, *which lavishly praised the declaration*, tells me it has no printed copies. (Guardian - modern)

9. Appositive clauses

Sir Wilfrid Laurier thought that the suggestion *that the Prime Minister should be joined in the Conference* was worthy of consideration. (Guardian - old)

***Finite comment clauses***

10. Finite comment clauses

The Secretariat might be, *he suggested*, an office of all the Governments under the executive discretion of the Prime Minister. (Guardian - old)

***Non-finite clauses substituting for noun phrases***

1. *To*- clauses after verbs

Dr. Jameson recognised the importance of securing unanimity, and made it clear that his colony did not wish *to initiate any new scheme* ... (Guardian - old)

2. *To*- clauses after a copular verb

Maybe in the long run these words will prove *to be right*. (Guardian – modern)

3. *To*- clauses as adjectival complementation

He was anxious *to build slowly*. (Guardian - old)

4. *To-* clauses involved in the subject to subject raising construction

The meeting in Japan was supposed *to be a summit*, bringing together heads of government or state. (Guardian - modern)

5. *-ed* clauses after a verb

Western capitalism survives *wounded* ... (Guardian – modern)

6. *To-* infinitive clauses after direct object

Lord Elgin informed the Conference that he had consulted the Prime Minister, and that the Prime Minister authorised him *to say* that he did not see his way ... (Guardian - old)

#### ***Non-finite clauses occupying an adverbial element slot***

7. *-ing* clauses with overt subordinators

Sir Joseph Ward, Prime Minister of New Zealand, had no objection to the term „Conference“ so long as its functions were defined, though he had preferred the word „Council“ *as indicating more permanency*. (Guardian – old)

8. *-ing* clauses without subordinators

*Having secured the headlines* it wanted, the entire senior staff of the convention on biological diversity has gone to ground ... ((Guardian – modern)

9. Infinitive of purpose

He stated that if the Conference would call upon the Colonial Office *to provide for the continuity* which it desires ... (Guardian - old)

#### ***Non-finite clauses contributing to the complexity of noun phrases in the form of postmodification***

10. *-ed* postmodification

The declaration *agreed last week at the summit in Japan* to protect the world's wild species and places was proclaimed by almost everyone a great success. (Guardian - modern)

11. *-ing* postmodification

On Saturday the Conference unanimously proposed the draft resolution *dealing with the constitution of future Conference*, which had been discussed in a provisional form on Wednesday and Thursday. (Guardian – old)

12. Infinitival postmodification

The declaration *agreed last week at the summit in Japan to protect the world's wild species and places* was proclaimed by almost everyone a great success. (Guardian - modern)

#### ***Non-finite clauses contributing to the complexity of noun phrases in the form of premodification***

13. *-ed* premodification

... he would also endeavour so to separate the departments of the Colonial Office that there would be a distinct division dealing with the affairs of the responsibly *governed* colonies. (Guardian – old)

14. *-ing* premodification

Russia signed a new agreement in September to protect its tigers (the world's largest *remaining* population) ... (Guardian - modern)

# THE CONCEPT OF RAISING IN GENERATIVE AND COGNITIVE GRAMMAR

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*Abstract:* The paper first presents the concept of raising as it is defined, explained and exemplified by generative grammar. Then it moves on to show what a radically different view of the same concept is taken by cognitive grammar (especially Langacker's version of it), and draws relevant conclusions in the end.

*Keywords:* cognitive grammar, generative grammar, raising.

## 1. Introduction

The subject of this paper are raising constructions in English, i.e. those constructions where an argument that belongs semantically to a subordinate clause is realized syntactically as a constituent of a higher clause, as in the following example: *John is likely to propose to Mary* (the underlined unit can be seen as belonging semantically to the non-finite clause, in which it functions as the subject, but is syntactically realized as the subject of the higher clause).

The goals of the paper are: a) to present the generative grammar and the cognitive grammar treatment of the raising constructions in English on the basis of the relevant literature; b) to contrast the two treatments, and c) to present the relevant conclusions, along with their pedagogical implications.

The examples used in this paper have been taken from the literature used and from *Collins Cobuild Resource Pack* (2003). London: HarperCollins Publishers Ltd. (on CD ROM).

## 2. Generative Grammar and Cognitive Linguistics

In what follows, I shall give a brief overview of the most important tenets of generative grammar on the one hand, and of cognitive linguistics in general, and cognitive linguistics in particular, on the other hand. I will do this on the basis of the following literature: Chomsky (1984 (1957), 1965, 1993 (1981)); also Langacker (2008:13), Antović (2007) for generative grammar, and Langacker (1987:1-30), Langacker (2008: 3-26, 43, 66-73) and Antović (2007: 33-37), for cognitive linguistics and cognitive grammar.

### 2.1. Generative grammar

Generative grammar (henceforward GG) (also known as *generative linguistics, formal linguistics* and *cognitive linguistics in the broader sense*), as is well-known, started with Chomsky's *Syntactic Structures* (1957), marking a break with structuralism, behaviourism and a return to Cartesian cognitivism and

rationalism. In the meantime, dozens of very diversified theories have emerged, related by the same fundamental epistemological framework (among them being the Government and Binding Theory, that emerged in the 1980s, and that I will primarily rely on here as far as the GG view of raising is concerned). In addition, generative grammar: a) makes use of abstract formalized models whose purpose is to achieve the so-called *descriptive* and *explanatory* adequacy of the theory; b) sees language as clearly delimited and self-contained (with respect to other mental faculties and related phenomena, e.g. gesture); c) divides language into separate components (phonetics, phonology, lexicon, morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics); d) relies on “digital” representations composed of discrete symbols; e) relies on classical categories with strict boundaries (as opposed to prototype categories with degrees of membership); f) focuses on regular patterns permitting crisp generalizations; g) typically formulates questions in terms of mutually exclusive alternatives; h) makes sharp distinctions between synchronic and diachronic studies of language, competence and performance, literal and figurative language, etc.; i) relies on (the presumed adequacy of) simple yes/no judgments of well-formedness; j) considers absolute predictability to be the norm (i.e. it adopts the standpoint that anything failing to achieve it is of little interest); k) formulates questions in terms of mutually exclusive alternatives; l) often neglects linguistic variation.

## 2.2. Cognitive linguistics

Cognitive linguistics (in the narrower sense) (henceforward CL) and cognitive grammar actually started developing within cognitive linguistics in the broader sense (i.e. within generative grammar). Namely, in the late 1960s and in the 1970s, there appeared a separate school (the “school of cognitive linguistics” as opposed to the “MIT school”), led by linguists like G. Lakoff, J. Ross, P. Postal, J. McCawley, and others. They disagreed with Chomsky’s views, interpreting meaning quite differently from Chomsky; from this a split into generative and interpretive semantics emerged, especially with the publication of Jackendoff’s *Semantic Interpretation in Generative Grammar* (1972), and Lakoff and Johnson’s *Metaphors We Live by* (1980). In addition, CL represents a part of functional tradition (i.e. it sees language as shaped and constrained by the (semiological, interactive and other) functions it serves).

Some of the strands of CL in the narrower sense would be: a) metaphor theory (e.g. Lakoff, Johnson 1980; Kövecses 2000); b) the theory of blends and mental spaces (e.g. Fauconnier 1985; Fauconnier and Turner 2002; Coulson 2001); c) conceptual semantics (e.g., Wierzbicka 1996); d) discourse-pragmatics (e.g., Hopper and Thompson 1980); e) grammaticalization (e.g., Hopper and Traugott 2003); f) universals-typology (e.g., Croft 1990); g) cognitive grammar, within which there are the following strands: *construction grammar* (e.g., Goldberg 1995, Goldberg and Jackendoff 2004; Goldberg 2006), *unification construction grammar* (e.g., Fillmore, Kay and O’Connor 1988), *radical construction grammar* (Croft 2001), and eventually Langacker’s *Cognitive Grammar* (as presented in his books

such as Langacker 1987, 1991, 2000, 2008), that I will especially focus on here as far as the CL treatment of the concept of raising is concerned.

Some basic postulates of the cognitive grammars in general and of Langacker's Cognitive Grammar (with the capital letters of the phrase) in particular, that I will rely on in this paper, are given below.

Grammar (syntax and morphology) is taken to be meaningful or symbolic. In other words, elements of grammar, such as syntactic constructions and other grammatical categories, are taken to be meaningful in their own right, and grammar is thought to enable construction and symbolization of meanings. In addition, grammar is taken: a) to be an integral part of cognition (i.e. not a distinct, autonomous and self-contained cognitive system), and a key to understanding cognition; b) to rely extensively on imaginative phenomena; and c) to reflect our basic experience of moving, perceiving, categorizing and acting on the world. In accordance with that, grammar and the lexicon are thought to constitute a gradation consisting solely of assemblies of symbolic structure, and grammatical structure to be overt (i.e. no need for the d-structure and for transformations is ever posited here): "things really are what they appear to be, provided we know how to interpret them properly" (Langacker 2008:27) (it must also be stressed here that the Minimalist Program also dispenses with the distinction between d-structure and s-structure).

In addition to this, meaning is taken to reside in conceptualization, and to be dynamic, interactive, imagistic and imaginative (i.e. to involve, for example, blending, metaphor and mental space construction), and to consist of conceptual content combined with particular ways of *construing* that concept. *Construal* is taken to represent the ability to portray the same situation in alternate ways. Closely related to this is the concept of *profiling*, which represents focusing attention on a particular thing or relation. For example, it is said that in a phrase such as *the glass with water in it*, it is the *glass* that the speaker focuses on, whereas in *the water in the glass*, the thing being focused on (i.e. profiled) is *water*.

In connection with this, subject and object relations in a sentence are considered to be matters of prominence, and not of any specific conceptual content, logical or semantic (i.e. the subject and the object are taken to have no clear and uniform semantic role). They are taken to be *spotlights of focal prominence* that can be directed at various entities within a scene. In that sense, the subject is defined as a clause level *trajector* (henceforward TR), or *the primary figure/focus* within a profiled relationship (and is prototypically an agent, but not necessarily), the entity being located, evaluated or otherwise described. The *object* is defined as a clause level *landmark* (henceforward LM) (*secondary figure/focus*). Certain sentence elements have a natural attraction for the highlighted status; these tendencies, however, can sometimes get overridden, for example by discourse considerations, as we will soon see. Various expressions can have the same content and profile the same relationship, but differ in meaning because they make different choices of TR and LM (e.g. compare *The lamp* [TR] *is above the table* [LM] and *The table* [TR] *is below the lamp* [LM]).

### 3. The Concept of Raising – Analysis and Discussion

#### 3.1. Raising in Generative Grammar

Different types of raising have been proposed in generative grammar, whereby no uniform approach towards the given phenomenon within the given theory itself has been developed. Here I shall give a brief overview of the treatment of the given phenomenon in the relevant literature, starting with Chomsky's *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (1965) and ending with the Minimalist Program.

Several types of raising have been proposed in the generative grammar so far.

First of all, one must mention *subject-to-object raising* (henceforward SOR). The development of this type of given concept can be said to have been set by Chomsky in his treatment of the sentences containing the verbs *persuade* and *expect* (Chomsky 1965:128-147). Chomsky states that in a sentence such as *She persuaded a specialist a specialist to examine her mother*, a specialist was both the logical object of *persuade* and logical subject of *examine*, i.e. (*She persuaded a specialist ((a specialist to examine her mother))*). From such an approach, the "identity erasure transformation" developed later (Rosenbaum 1967:10, 32, 33, 105-107), which became known as "equi NP deletion", and later still led to the development of the concept of *control* (e.g. Chomsky, 1981:74-79).

As opposed to that, in the sentence *She expected a specialist to examine her mother*, a specialist was taken to be the logical subject of the non-finite subordinate clause only: (*She expected ((a specialist to examine her mother))*), from which analysis the concept of raising itself developed later.

As it is known, the SOR was rejected in the Government and Binding (GB) model (see e.g. Chomsky 1981:38, 107-108, 146), when it was claimed that the second nominal in a sentence such as the one that has just been quoted is just the subject of the subordinate clause. In addition to this, no mention of this type of raising appears in Haegeman, 1984. However, this type of raising, at least partly, reappears in Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 65, 226, 1201) (e.g. in the treatment of sentences such as *Everyone believed Kim to be guilty*). However, the approach taken in this grammar insists on the standpoint that there is no underlying structure, and that consequently there can possibly be no actual raising transformation, so the verb *expect* can be treated as a *raised object verb*.

The second type of raising that addressed here is *subject-to-subject raising* (henceforward SSR) (i.e. raising with intransitive verbs and adjectives) (Wekker and Haegeman 1985:165-167). This type of raising can be exemplified by the following sentences: *John seems to have convinced them*, i.e. (*[e] seem ((John to have convinced them))*), or *John is likely to propose to Mary*, i.e. (*[e] is likely ((John to propose to Mary))*).

The third type of raising that I will focus on here is *raising with passive verbs* (henceforward RPV) (Wekker and Haegeman, 1985:163-165). It is said to take place when the subject of a lower clause becomes the subject of a higher, but

this time passivized, clause, as in the following example: *The political parts of the book were intended to reveal many things* (cf. with ([e] *intended* ((*the political parts of the book to reveal many things*))))).

Yet another type of raising proposed in the literature is *object-to-subject raising* (henceforward OSR) (also known as *Tough Movement*) (see e.g. Chomsky 1981:308-314), as in the following example: *John<sub>i</sub> is [AdjP[<sub>Adj</sub> easy to please]<sub>t<sub>i</sub>]</sub>*. This type of raising has been proposed on the basis of the insight that the subject in the example given above (*John*) is logically the direct object of the verb *please*, as the given analysis shows. As it is known, later on (see e.g. Haegeman 1994: 469-470), such a subject was said to actually originate in the subject position of the main clause itself, in addition to which a *wh*-movement of an empty operator in the complement clause was posited (*John<sub>i</sub> is easy [CP OP<sub>i</sub> [PRO to please e<sub>i</sub>]]*). The above-mentioned grammar by Huddleston and Pullum (2002:1247) refers to such a subject simply as a *raised subject*, stressing thereby that such a subject is the object argument within the subordinate clause (and once again pointing to the fact that it allows no movement transformation).

The last type of raising that will be mentioned here is *subject-to-subject raising* (or just *subject raising*) proposed in Minimalism (see e.g. Radford 1997:151-168 *et passim*). The given type of raising has been proposed within the so-called *VP internal subject hypothesis*, that says that subjects often originate in the specifier position of the verb phrase and are then raised in the specifier position of the inflection phrase for checking purposes (which process does not occur, for example, in expletive structures such as *There is nobody living there*). The following example can be provided here: (*IP He<sub>i</sub> certainly (has (VP t<sub>i</sub> (V compromised) himself)*)).

At the end of this short account of the concept of raising in GG, I would like to stress that the examples in which SSR and OSR are posited can be paraphrased with a finite subordinate clause and *it*-extraposition (cf. *John seems to have disappeared* and *It seems that John has disappeared*, *John is likely to propose to Mary* and *It is likely that John will propose to Mary*, *That is fun to play* and *It is fun to play that*).

### 3.2 Raising in Cognitive Grammar

Cognitive grammar offers a view of raising that is radically different from that above. In the presentation of that view, I will especially focus on Langacker (2000:317-360), Langacker (2008: 433-437) and Achard (2007: 795-797).

In order to account for the given linguistic phenomenon, Langacker first relies on the well-known concept of polysemy. He claims that predicates may have alternate but related senses in different (in our case raising and non-raising) constructions, so that different kinds of entities can be ‘‘true’’, ‘‘semantic’’ or ‘‘logical’’ subjects and objects, and that one aspect of lexical meaning is dependent on the choice of participants accorded focal prominence as trajector and landmark. In order to make this clearer, let us take a look at the following examples (Langacker 1999:327-330): a) *I washed the car*, b) *\*I washed the mud* and c) *I*

washed the mud off the car. In that sense, Langacker says that a possible generative grammar analysis for the sentence under c) (parallel to the above-mentioned analysis of a sentence like *She expected a specialist to examine her mother*) would be that *the mud* in the given sentence cannot be the object of *wash*, therefore *raising* must again be posited here: *I washed ((the mud {be/go} off the car))*, bringing us to the conclusion that raising is much more widespread than generally believed. Langacker quickly dismisses such interpretation and offers another one, which I will try to briefly outline here.

First of all, he states that the verb *wash* in the sentence under c) is polysemous, and that, moreover, the conceptual content in a) and c) is the same, i.e. somebody applies force to an object's surface containing dirt-like substance and removes that substance, which results in the objects change of state. In other words, the TR in both sentences a) and c) is the same (*I*), but the LMs are different (it is *the car* in the former and *the mud* in the latter). This contrast in relational prominence signals a contrast in meaning. Namely, what is salient in the sentence under a) (*I washed the car*) is the object's (the car's) change of state, whereas under c) (*I washed the mud off the car*), it is the object's (the mud's) change of location. When this line of thought gets applied to "raising" constructions, such as: a) *That Don will leave is likely* and b) *Don is likely to leave*, the following conclusions can be drawn: the conceptual content in both constructions is again the same (something or somebody is situated within a region on a scale of probability), and the difference in the choice of the TR in the given constructions signals that the focal status under a) belongs to the overall process (*That Don will leave*), whereas under b) it belongs to the most salient participant in that process (i.e. *Don*); in addition, the subject's volition is claimed to be critical in the sentence under b), which is an issue that I will return to very soon.

Langacker also makes this very important point: sometimes, he says (in the sources quoted above), there exist sentences that are parallel to those where raising is posited, but that *lack* the complement clause, so that the raised subjects/objects *effectively have no apparent source*. For example, whereas it is possible to say *The Settlers of Catan is fun to play* (an example of OSR), one can also just say *The Settlers of Catan is fun*. A similar comment can be made on some examples that purportedly exemplify SSR and OSR (compare *Another war is certain/sure/likely to break out* and *Another war is certain/sure/likely*, as well as *I expect Tom and Mary to come to the party* and *I expect Tom and Mary*).

These data bring Langacker to posit what he calls the "active zone" (henceforward AZ) analysis. The AZ of an entity can be defined as portions of an entity which participate most directly and crucially in a relationship. For example, when we say *He isn't in the phone book*, we understand that portions of the referent of the pronoun *he* that are most directly and crucially involved in the relationship designated by the given example is simply just the referent's name (i.e. *his name* isn't in the phone book), all of which is an obvious example of metonymy. When this gets applied to the raising examples, e.g. *John is likely to propose to Mary*, the following important conclusion can be drawn. Namely, *John* is here seen as *metonymically standing for the subordinated process* (because it is the most



prominent participant in it, i.e. other likely candidates for focal prominence in the given sentence are missing). In other words, the AZ of TR (*John*) with respect to the scale of probability is the process in which the TR engages, namely the process of John proposing to Mary, i.e. *John's proposing to Mary* is likely).

The AZ is (usually) made explicit when it does not represent a default. For example, in the given sentence, the subordinate clause *to propose to Mary* must explicitly be mentioned (cf. *\*John is likely*; compare also *That surgeon is really fast when it comes to sending his bill* and *That surgeon is really fast*). On the other hand, it can be left implicit if predictable (i.e. if the words given are sufficient to invoke it), cf. *That car is really fast when driving* and *That car is really fast*, *The Settlers of Catan is fun to play* and *The Settlers of Catan is fun*, *Another war is certain/sure/likely to break out* and *Another war is certain/sure/likely*, etc. (defaults are usually easier to find in OSR than SSR and SOR).

Similar explanations are valid for OSR and SOR. Let us take a look at the OSR first, as exemplified by the following pair of examples: a) *To like Don is difficult* and b) *Don is difficult to like*. Obviously, once again the given pair of sentences can be said to express the same conceptual content, but also to do that in two different ways, which in turn gives rise to two slightly different interpretations. Namely, whereas in the sentence under a) the subject, which refers to an entire process (*To like Don*) is the TR, in the sentence under b) the subject (*Don*) is both the TR of *be difficult* and LM of *like* (rather than TR of both). In addition, in the latter sentence, the given subject can be thought of as *responsible for the state of affairs presented*, unlike the sentence under a); this can be proved if we compare the following examples: *He's difficult to live with – he's irritable and ill-tempered*, on the one hand, and *\*He's difficult to live with – he's been in prison for the last 5 years*, on the other hand.

The SOR can be approached in a similar way. For example, in the sentence *I was expecting you to help him*, the pronoun *you* can be considered to be the LM of *expect* (i.e. the "true object" of *expect*) and the TR of *help*, with the *to help him* part being viewed as the AZ with regard to *expect*.

I shall now summarize what I have said on the cognitive grammar view of raising. Firstly, the 'raised' subjects or objects are in this theory treated as the *true* subjects or objects of the main clause, both syntactically and semantically. Secondly, raising is seen a special case of metonymy (the ability to invoke one conceived entity as a reference point for purposes of establishing mental contact with another). Thirdly, the 'raised' subjects or objects are taken to stand metonymically for their corresponding active zones. Fourthly, no underlying structures are posited (which is also true of some strands within GG, namely the Minimalist Program, which is a fact that I have also referred to above). Fifthly, the general function of raising is claimed to be ensuring linguistic prominence of salient entities. Sixthly, the various construction types provided here are taken to be *separate and parallel* constructions, each of which construes / represents and symbolizes situations in its own way, and those differences in construal, in turn, are considered to signal differences in meaning. Let us in that sense once again go through the examples: a) *That Don will leave is likely*, b) *Don is likely to leave* and

c) *It is likely that Don will leave* (obviously, the first two examples involve raising, whereas the third one is characterized by *it*-extraposition). In that sense, in the sentence under a) it is the underlined unit (*That Don will leave*) that has focal prominence. In the sentence under b), the most salient participant in the process (the one that has the TR status) is *Don*; in addition to that, the subject referent's volition is critical here, as opposed to the sentence under a), which is something that has also already been addressed above. Finally, in the last given example (the one with *it*-extraposition rather than raising), the pronoun *it* (often referred to as the "dummy" or "empty" *it*) is in Langacker's Cognitive Grammar actually taken to be *meaningful*, i.e. it is considered to be an abstract setting or a presentational frame used to announce the intention of subsequently introducing something (a state/process) in that frame. In that sense, it is claimed to be selected for primary focal prominence in constructions that serve to introduce a new participant into the scene or that lack a suitable participant to put in focus (e.g. with weather verbs, where *it* is the TR of e.g. *rain/snow*, etc., as in *It is raining*). In that sense, raising sentences and their non-raising counterparts (i.e. those with *it*-extraposition) are *not* seen as derived from the same underlying structure, nor one from the other. All this once again proves the thesis put forward above that in Cognitive Grammar functional considerations are quite important in analysing language structure.

### 3. Conclusion

In view of everything said above, it is obvious that the differences between the two approaches, the generative and the cognitive one, to the concept of raising are great. In that sense, a question can be asked whether there can be any reconciliation between them, especially in view of the fact that the latter developed out of the former, which was pointed to above. In that sense, some authors claim that such a thing can indeed be expected:

The key concern of younger linguists in the near future should be an attempt of a reconciliation of cognitive and generative linguistics (Antović 2007:44).

The same author together with Milivojević (in a paper written in Serbian) claims that the world of syntactocentric GG and metaphor-obsessed cognitivism are on the wane, that great changes are ahead of us and that therefore we should get ready for a major paradigm change in the Kuhnian sense (Milivojević and Antović 2008:302).

Be that as it may, I would here also like to briefly mention some of the pedagogical implications (at the academic level) of my analysis. Firstly, the given analysis may point to the fact that it would be fruitful to try and develop the students' awareness that one and the same phenomenon may be approached from different theoretically grounded angles and that such a fact is normal and necessary. Secondly, it may speak in favour of developing the students' critical (and possibly also creative) stance towards the materials they study and the theoretical perspectives they study them from. Thereby, I deem it quite important

to let the students choose the approach they consider more worthwhile, rather than impose either of the two on them. And thirdly, the presented analysis may also speak in favour of the need to induce the students to compare and contrast various theoretical approaches to language phenomena, as such an approach can foster both their theoretical and practical knowledge of both language and linguistics.

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# ON THE DERIVATION OF CLEFT AND PSEUDO-CLEFT CONSTRUCTIONS IN ENGLISH: A MINIMALIST ACCOUNT

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**Abstract:** The paper gives an overview of existing generative approaches to the derivation of cleft and pseudo-cleft constructions in English and attempts to offer a simple, minimalist account of the way in which these constructions are generated, with focus on the possibility of reversing the order of the *wh*-clause and the counterweight in specificational, but not predicational pseudo-clefts.

**Keywords:** cleft construction, pseudo-cleft construction, reverse pseudo-cleft construction, minimalism, information structure.

## 1. Introduction

One important part of the context-dependent meaning of a sentence is its information structure, where a distinction is made between the topic, roughly as ‘what the sentence is about’, and the focus, as the new information in the sentence. Cross-linguistically, different ways of expressing information structure can be observed: word order, morphology and prosody, very often interacting with each other to signal the discourse function of a sentential constituent.

Although English is a so-called intonation language, in which information structuring is signaled by the intonation (contour) of an utterance, including pitch accents (Steedman 1996: 2000), it also has special structural means of expressing information structure, with cleft constructions (1), pseudo-cleft constructions (2) and reverse pseudo-cleft constructions (3) being among the most typical representatives of these structures:

- (1) It was John who opened door.
- (2) Who opened the door was John.
- (3) John was (the one) who opened the door.

As the accounts of these structures are few and mostly set in Government and Binding Theory (Chomsky 1981), the aim of the present paper is to propose a derivation of these constructions in the minimalist framework (Chomsky 1995 *et seq.*).

## 2. Earlier accounts of cleft constructions

The early generative accounts of cleft constructions (Akmajian 1970a, b, Emonds 1976, Chomsky 1977) assumed a pretty complicated initial structure and movement rules. Akmajian (1970a, in Kiss 1998a) derived cleft constructions from

pseudo-clefts with a headless relative clause in subject positions, via cleft extraposition. Thus, example (1) above would in this approach be derived from (2), as shown below:

- (4) a. [<sub>CP</sub> who opened the door] was John. →  
 b. it<sub>i</sub> was John [who opened the door]<sub>i</sub>

However, an analysis along these lines cannot account for those cases when the focused constituent is a PP and the relative clause is introduced by the complementizer *that* (5a), because the structure such sentences should be derived from (5b) are ungrammatical in English:

- (5) a. It was to Peter [that I gave the money]  
 b. \*[that I gave the money] was to Peter

Chomsky (1977) claims that the cleft constituent and the *wh*-clause represent a kind of a topic construction involving *wh*-movement, which is an analysis that can also account for the problematic sentence in (5): the adverbial is preposed into topic position, as shown in (6):

- (6) It was [to Peter [<sub>CP</sub> t<sub>i</sub> that I gave the money t<sub>i</sub> ]]

Yet, new problems arise with this approach, notably there is no clear reason why topic preposing should involve *wh*-movement or an overt complementizer.

In Emonds' (1976) proposal, the cleft constituent is focus-moved out of the extraposed relative clause prior to extraposition. For (5), then, the suggested source is (7), from which the focus placement transformation removes the NP *John* or the PP *to John*, yielding (8a) and (8b), respectively:

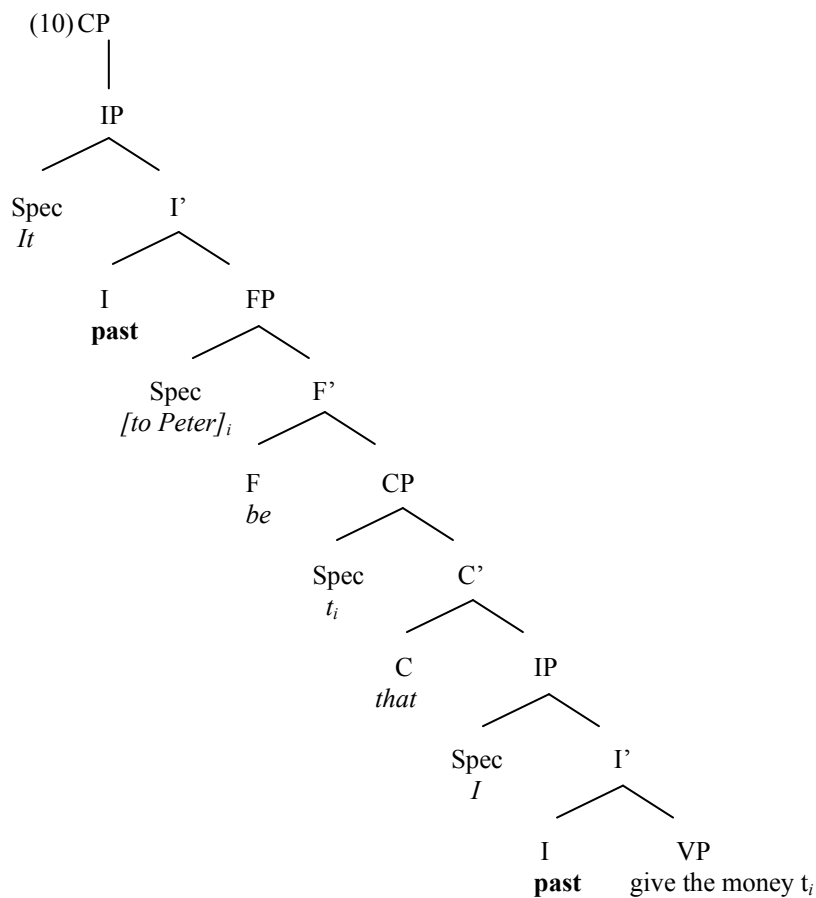
- (7) [that I gave the money to John] was  
 (8) a. [that I gave the money to (him)] was John  
 b. [that I gave the money] was to John

Next, a *wh*-feature is added to the NP or PP, the *wh*-word is fronted and the relative clause is extraposed, resulting in any of the following four possibilities:

- (9) a. It was Peter who I gave to money to.  
 b. It was Peter to whom I gave the money.  
 c. It was Peter I gave the money to.  
 d. It was to Peter that I gave the money.

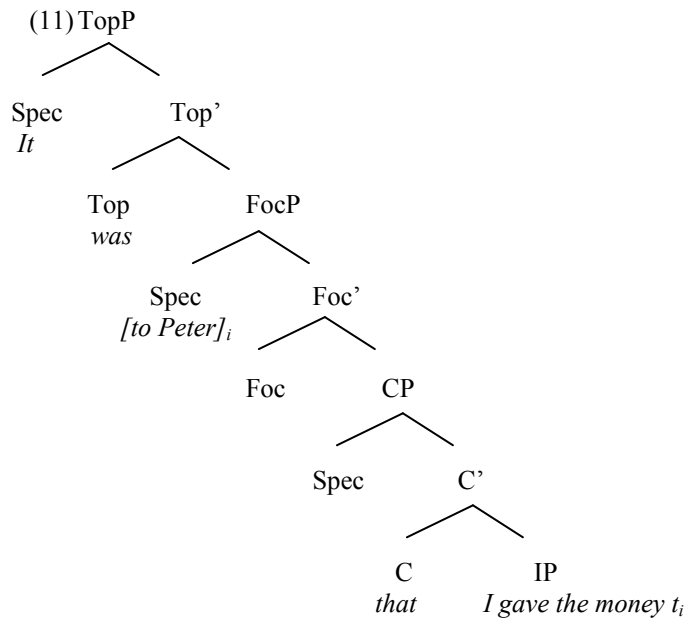
Naturally, the various S-structures that can be derived from the same source give rise to unwanted optionality and the rightward movement analysis of focus placement lacks independent motivation.

More recent accounts (Bródy 1990, 1995, Meinunger 1997, 1998, Kiss 1998a) mostly view cleft structures as sentences which contain an F(ocus)P projection associated with exhaustive identification interpretation, into the specifier node of which contrastively focused (i.e. clefted) elements (must) move. There are no constraints onto the category of the XP in SpecFP, which means that the problematic example (5a) receives a straightforward account in É. Kiss's operator-in-SpecFP analysis, as shown in the following tree diagram (based on example (41) in Kiss 1998a: 258):



Brody (1990, 1995) suggests a similar analysis. In his FP theory, the F head does not subcategorize for a VP in every language. In fact, in English it subcategorizes for a CP. Furthermore, the phonologically empty head F needs to lexicalize and this happens by raising the verb to this position. However, if F selects a CP complement, the overt complementizer will block V-to-F raising and so F is filled by the expletive verb *be* which ultimately moves into matrix I, with the expletive *it* in SpecIP position, yielding the cleft sentence.

In Meinunger's (1997) approach, cleft sentences are analysed as monosentential constructions derived from simplex sentences by extracting a focus phrase out of the projection of C into some higher FocP within the split Comp area. Example (5a) would have a structure along the following lines:



What the FocP analyses have in common is that the focalized phrase is moved into the specifier of a functional projection responsible for focus interpretation. The copula is considered to be no more than a link between the focalized XP and the incomplete sentence, hence the observed lack of agreement between these two:

- (12) a. It was / \*were to John that I / we gave the money.  
 b. It was / \*were to the children that I / we gave the money.

The pseudo-cleft construction was a hot topic in generative linguistics some 50 years ago (see Bošković 1997 for an overview), but not much has been said about its derivation in the minimalist framework. Meinunger (1997) derives pseudo-cleft sentences from clefts by moving the focused element into SpecFocP, generating the copula in Foc and subsequently raising it to Top, and finally moving the non-focal CP complement of the focus head into SpecTopP, as in the following bracketed representation:

- (13) [<sub>TopP</sub> [<sub>CP</sub> who [<sub>IP</sub> Mary loves t<sub>k</sub>]]<sub>i</sub> [<sub>Top</sub> is<sub>j</sub> [<sub>FocP</sub> John<sub>k</sub> [<sub>Foc</sub> t<sub>j</sub> [<sub>CP</sub> ...]]]]].



In an attempt to resolve the problems of Meinunger's analysis (most notably the fact that the *wh*-word is generated in SpecCP rather than moved into this position, as well as the fact that *John* has moved out of a *wh*-island in the above example) and to account for the connectivity effect existing between the relative clause and the counterweight (the portion of the sentence following the copula) in examples like (14), but not on the specificational reading of (15), Bošković (1997) proposes that the *wh*-word and the counterweight must be clause mates at some point in the derivation, so that (16) and (17) must be steps in deriving (14) and (15), respectively:

- (14) What John<sub>i</sub> saw in the mirror was himself<sub>i</sub>.
- (15) \*What John<sub>i</sub> is is important to him<sub>i</sub>.
- (16) John<sub>i</sub> saw himself<sub>i</sub> in the mirror.
- (17) \*John<sub>i</sub> is important to him<sub>i</sub>.

However, as connectivity is only checked at LF, the author suggests that (14-15) are generated as such, the ungrammaticality of the latter example being due to a Binding Condition B violation once the counterweight raises into the *wh*-clause at LF – connectivity is thus banned in specificational pseudo-clefts involving overt movement:

- (18) \*What John<sub>i</sub> [VP t<sub>i</sub> gave<sub>j</sub> was [VP Mary t<sub>j</sub> a book]].
- (19) \*What John<sub>i</sub> seems is [t<sub>i</sub> to be crazy].

Note that pseudo-cleft constructions can have a predicational (20a) and a specificational reading (20b) (Akmajian 1970):

- (20) What John is is important.  
[ *wh*-clause ] BE [counterweight]
- a. If John is e.g. a linguist, his being a linguist (and not a mathematician) is important.
- b. The person by the name of John is (an) important (person), being important is an attribute of him.

The key differences between the two types of pseudo-clefts (henceforth PCC) are captured in the following table:

PREDICATIONAL PCC	SPECIFICATIONAL PCC
connectivity effects <i>What John<sub>i</sub> saw in the mirror was himself<sub>i</sub>.</i>	no connectivity effects <i>*What John<sub>i</sub> is is important to him<sub>i</sub>.</i>
raising a <i>wh</i> -clause is allowed <i>[What John is] seems to be silly.</i>	raising a <i>wh</i> -clause is disallowed <i>*[What John is] seems to be proud.</i>
A <sup>2</sup> -movement of the counterweight is possible <i>I wonder [how important] [what John is] is [<del>how important</del>].</i>	A <sup>2</sup> -movement of the counterweight is disallowed <i>*I wonder [how proud] [ what Mary is] is [<del>how proud</del>].</i>
extraction out of counterweight is (mostly) allowed <i>This is the person who<sub>i</sub> what John is is [important to t<sub>i</sub>]</i>	extraction out of counterweight is disallowed <i>*This is the car Op<sub>i</sub> that what John is is [proud of t<sub>i</sub>]</i>

On the basis of the above differences, Bošković (1997) reaches the following conclusions concerning the typology of PCCs:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p style="text-align: center;">in predicational PCCs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the <i>wh</i>-clause functions as an R-expression (free relative)</li> <li>- the counterweight is a predicate assigning a <math>\theta</math>-role to the <i>wh</i>-clause</li> <li>- the <i>wh</i>-clause must be generated within the XP of the counter-weight in order to be <math>\theta</math>-marked</li> <li>- the counterweight stays in its SS position (it needs no case since it is a predicate)</li> <li>- the <i>wh</i>-clause moves to get cased</li> </ul> | <p style="text-align: center;">In specificational PCCs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the <i>wh</i>-word is a surface anaphor, so it cannot be interpreted as an R-expression</li> <li>- the <i>wh</i>-clause cannot be moved so it must be generated in its SS position, in SpecIP</li> <li>- the counterweight is an R-expression, it must be located in a <math>\theta</math>-position and receive case by LF. This can be achieved by moving the counterweight to replace the <i>wh</i>-anaphor in LF</li> </ul> |
|---|--|

Furthermore, as the copula *be* can be inverted in predicational PCCs (21a), but not in specificational PCCs (21b), Bošković (following Higgins 1979) concludes that the two types of sentence must also differ in structure.

- (21) a. Is [what John is] important?  
b. \*Is [what John is] proud?

In the latter case, the copular clause contains no TP or AgrSP projection, and both the *wh*-clause and the counterweight are generated in the VP of the copula, in the specifier position and adjoined to the VP, respectively. Since there is no TP/AgrSP (IP) or CP, there can clearly be no inversion, modals or question tags. However, predicational PCCs like (21a) do have an IP projection (and a CP on top), making inversion, modals and question tags possible.

A third type of cleft structures which this author discusses in some detail is exemplified by (22), where the counterweight is in subject position and the *wh*-element follows the copula:

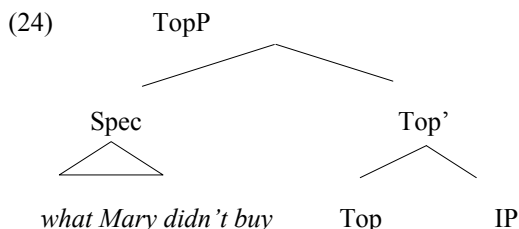
- (22) Proud of himself is what John is.

This type of sentences, called reverse (or inverse) PCCs, can only have a specificational reading, but they differ from regular specificational PCCs in that they allow verb movement across negation and sentential adverbs. This can be accounted for by assuming that this type of PCCs *does* have a TP/AgrSP on top of the copular VP. Furthermore, the counterweight and the *wh*-clause are not in a thematic relation, so they do not have to be generated within the same XP or even on the same side of the copula. Bošković (1997) assumes that both the *wh*-clause and the counterweight can be generated on either side of *be*, resulting in either a specificational PCC (23a) or a (necessarily specificational) reverse PCC (23b):

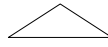
- (23) a. What John ate was an apple.  
 b. An apple was what John ate.

Thus, the syntactic patterning of reverse PCCs with predicational PCCs, but not with regular specificational PCCs, is reducible to the presence or absence of functional projections above the VP of the copula *be*.

Den Dikken et al. (2000) reject Bošković's syntactic reconstruction approach to specificational PCCs and argue that these constructions come in two types: (a) Type A, with the order *wh*-clause – *be* – counterweight, where the *wh*-clause is a question and the counterweight is a full finite IP (i.e. this type is biclausal throughout the derivation, see (24)), optionally reduced by ellipsis of the type found in question-answer pairs, and (b) Type B specificational PCCs, with the order counterweight – *be* – *wh*-clause, where the counterweight is not reduced from an IP by ellipsis. This type of constructions are actually predicative copular sentences (cf. Williams 1983), in which the counterweight is the subject and the *wh*-clause is a free relative (DP? or CP?) acting as the predicate, along the lines of (25) (assuming the small clause hypothesis):



*is/was*



~~*she didn't buy*~~ any wine

- (25) a. [Proud of himself] is what John is.  
b. ... be [<sub>FP=SC</sub> counterweight [<sub>F</sub> *wh*-CP]]

Although the above analysis does explain several facts concerning the difference between the two types of PCCs (especially so with respect to negative polarity item connectivity), nothing is said about predicational PCCs, so the striking similarity in behaviour between these and reverse (specificational) PCCs (Type B in the terminology of den Dikken et al. 2000) remains unaccounted for.

### 3. A proposal for the derivation of (pseudo-)cleft constructions

Den Dikken et al. (2000) claim that specificational PCCs are self-answering questions, i.e. sentences containing a question and its answer (but see also Higgins 1979, Bošković 1997). Unlike regular questions, however, in these constructions there is no subject-Aux inversion (21b), so the structure cannot be a CP. The counterweight is the new information focus of the sentence and it can be of various syntactic categories – NP PP, VP, CP, etc. So, the *wh*-clause (necessarily of the category CP) in specificational PCCs represents old information and the counterweight gives the new information.

Assume now that [i(nformation) f(ocus)] is an interpretable feature which can be freely assigned to any element, depending on the discourse and the communicative intention of the speaker. As this feature is associated with sentential stress, the carrier of the feature [if] also gets assigned sentential stress and it is interpreted as the new information focus, e.g.

- (26) (Who did Ann invite?) Ann invited PETER[+if].  
\*Ann INVITED Peter[+if]

In specificational PCCs like [*What John is*] *is important to himself*, the copula *be* is just link between the old information in the *wh*-clause and the new information counterweight. It has no independent temporal value, and consequently no AgrS projection, either (Tense and Agr being fused in English under the Split INFL Hypothesis). Rather, *be* has default 3p.sg. agreement features, which explains why it only occurs in the forms *is* and *was* (27)(Bošković 1997: 267):

- (27) a. [What he is] is / \*are / \*was / \*were PROUD.  
b. [What we were] \*is / \*are / was / \*were PROUD OF OUR SUCCESS.

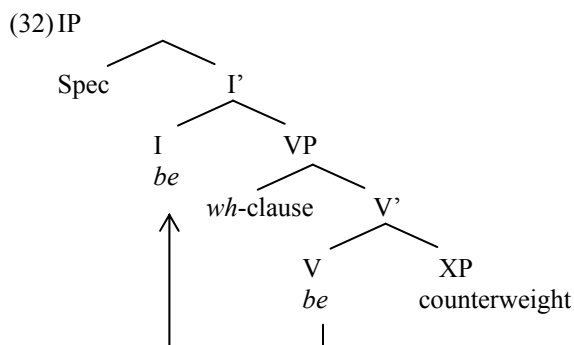
The whole sentence is of the category IP/TP, thus the observed lack of S-Aux Inversion (21b), A-raising of the *wh*-clause (28), extraction out of the counterweight (29) follow:

- (28) \**[What John is] seems <[what John is]> to be proud*.  
 (29) \**I wonder [how proud of our success] [[what we were] was <[how proud of our success]>]*.

There are also reverse specificational PCCs, with the counterweight in initial position and the *wh*-clause following the copula, although such sentences more readily express contrastive/identificational focus, as can be seen in the following examples:

- (30) a. (What did John send to Mary?) ?A LETTER is what John sent to Mary.  
 b. (Did John really send a box of chocolates to Mary?) (No,) **A letter** is what John sent to Mary.  
 (31) a. (How are you today?) ?PROUD OF OUR SUCCESS is what we are.  
 b. (Are you disappointed at not having won the gold medal?) **Proud of our success** is what we are.

The structure suggested for specificational PCCs will clearly not suffice for the reverse type of PCCs: as these constructions allow subject-auxiliary inversion, as well as verb movement across negation and sentential adverbs, the TP and AgrSP projections are clearly needed here. Let us assume then that the *wh*-clause starts out in the specifier of the copular VP, with the counterweight in its complement position. The fact that the verb form of the copula (*is* or *was*) depends on the tense of the *wh*-clause is reducible to Agreement between these two categories, while the possibility of either the *wh*-clause or the counterweight becoming the subject of the sentence is due to raising the copula to a higher functional head position (for the sake of simplicity we shall refer to this position as I), thus making the specifier and the complement position of the copula equidistant from this head. If the two are equidistant, either one of them may raise to check off the EPP feature of the relevant head. Moving the counterweight to SpecIP will yield a reverse PCC in the manner shown below:



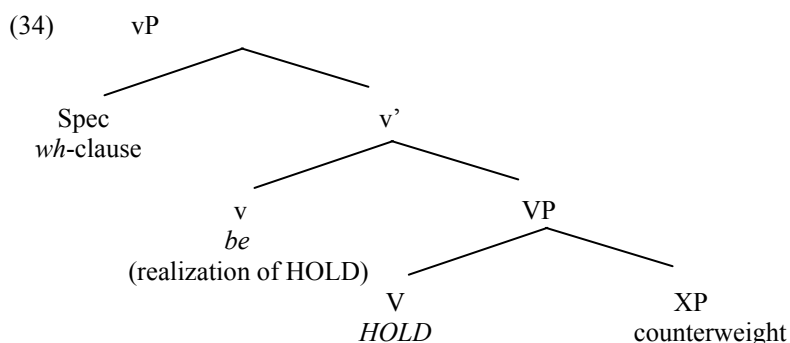
However, while raising the *wh*-clause should be blocked by some mechanism if one is to retain a principled account of specificational PCCs (at least the impossibility of subject-auxiliary inversion, the ban on A-raising the *wh*-clause and on extraction out of the counterweight), the functional projections above vP *are* needed to account for the fact that such sentences (also) serve the purpose of contrastive focusing and the contrastive focus feature is standardly taken to be checked by a functional head in the left periphery. The fact that specificational PCCs (can) also express contrastive/exhaustive focus represents a further challenge to theories of focus.

Although an account along the above lines might face problems concerning theta role assignment, Chomsky's (1993) standard lexicalist approach is lacking, too. Namely, in his approach, verbs are inserted/merged into the structure in a particular form, and their features must then be checked in certain functional projections. Features may be strong or weak, a distinction which provides a very neat way of explaining crosslinguistic differences regarding overt vs. covert movement of lexical verbs (e.g. Serbian vs. English). What also receives an account is the fact that auxiliaries may move in English (too), but it falls short of an explanation as to why *have* and *be* may also raise when they are lexical verbs, as in *I am happy* or *I have two sons*. Chomsky assumes that lexical *have* and *be* are semantically vacuous and thus may not raise at LF like other lexical verbs, but must undergo (overt) syntactic movement. Lasnik (2003) disagrees with this view and proposes his own, hybrid system, in which I(nfl) may be a feature or an affix, while the lexical verb may be either in infinitive or inflected form. The inflected form of the semantically light *be* (Larson 1988; Chomsky 1993, 1995) is inserted directly from the lexicon in this system and it must raise to I(nfl) to check the strong features of this head.

The idea of viewing copulative *be* as a semantically light verb, a mere link between two elements, will be adopted in the approach put forward in this paper. Following Wang and Gu (2007), let us assume that copular *be* is in essence the overt form of the predicate *HOLD*, referring to a (temporary or permanent) state and with the function of changing non-verbal predicates to verbal ones, as in the following examples:

- (33) a. John is a good fellow.  
b. John is insane.  
c. John is in the bathroom.

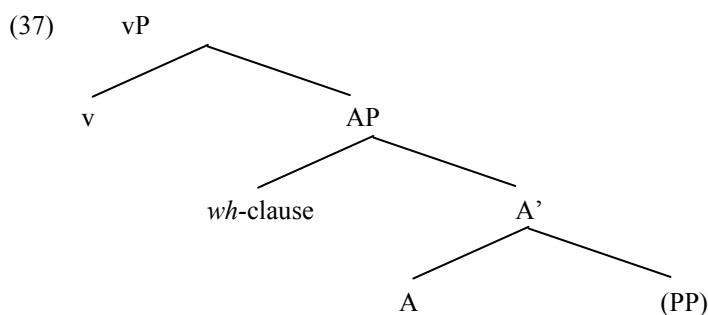
The VP of (32) will then have a more elaborate structure presented in the tree diagram below:



Recall also that only specificational PCC may have a reverse order, the reverse (specificational) PCC, but that they differ considerably from specificational PCCs and pattern with predicational PCCs. However, predicational PCCs differ from specificational PCC in several respects, so their derivation should be different, too. It has already been pointed out that in predicational pseudo-clefts, raising of the *wh*-clause is allowed (35), and so is A'-movement of the counterweight (36).

- (35) [What John is] seems [~~what John is~~ to be silly].  
 (36) I wonder [how silly [what John is] is ~~how silly~~].

No reverse version is possible in this type of constructions, so what raises to SpecIP is important. It has already been pointed out that the counterweight is a predicate and the *wh*-clause is its external argument. Let us assume then that the *wh*-clause of a predicational PCC like (35) is merged in SpecAP, as shown in (37):



Clearly, only the *wh*-clause, theta-marked by the adjective, may eventually raise to SpecIP to check the EPP feature, the counterweight may not do so.

Thus, it appears that while the exact category of specificational PCCs, as opposed to reverse PCCs, remains a controversial issue, the present analysis offers new insights into the derivation of these two related structures by assuming that *be* is the overt realization of the non-verbal state-denoting predicate HOLD, which, when raised to I, makes the *wh*-clause in SpecvP and the counterweight in VP

equidistant from SpecIP. Thus, either one may raise to check off the EPP feature of I, resulting in either a specificational PCC (if the *wh*-clause raises) or a reverse PCCs (if the counterweight does so). The latter type of structures must be assumed to have a richer system of functional projections above the vP if one is to explain the possibility of verb movement across negation and sentential adverbs in this type of construction. Predicational PCCs are analysed as vPs with the copula *be* in v. This vP is, however, the extension of the (typically adjectival) counterweight-predicate. The fact that only the *wh*-clause may raise to subject position here (i. e. there is no reverse version of predicational PCCs) is due to the fact that it is the only argument in this structure.

#### 4. Conclusion

The paper focuses on the derivation of cleft and pseudo-cleft constructions in English. While clefts are treated fairly uniformly in the literature, by assuming a monoclausal structure, pseudo-clefts (specificational, predicational and reverse (specificational) PCCs) have been discussed from various points of view, but not much has been said about their derivation.

A way of deriving the differences between the types of PCCs has been proposed here, in which the counterweight and the *wh*-clause are generated in different nodes of a vP headed by the copula *be* (a realization of the predicate HOLD), predicting the reverse PCC in the case of specificational PCCs, but not with predicational PCCs, where the counterweight is a predicate (rather than an R-expression-argument of the vP, as is the case with specificational PCCs), while the *wh*-clause functions as a free relative and is merged in SpecAP.

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# THE “NEURAL ARGUMENT

”

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**Abstract:** *This paper highlights two developments in neurocognition: Pulvermüller’s (1999) approach to representing word meaning and Van der Velde and de Kamps’s (2006) idea of accounting for the combinatorial nature of language through implementing a neural version of argument structure. The paper will also briefly review the notion of argument structure from a linguistic, theoretical perspective.*

**Keywords:** *argument structure, connectionism, neural modelling, syntax*

## 1. Introduction

The HunGram team at the University of Debrecen is working on a grammar-writing project (Laczkó, Rákosi, and Tóth 2010) in the framework of Lexical Functional Grammar (LFG). Our work involves full computational implementation of a Hungarian generative grammar in a syntactic parser. We test the system against massive quantities of text and also build a 1.5 million word corpus that contains parsed sentences.

A proper encoding of the argument structure in the lexicon is a crucial step toward a successful syntactic analysis, and it is also the basis for extending the scope of our syntax-oriented enterprise toward semantics. This corresponds with the goals of the international ParGram (Parallel Grammars) cooperation, in which we participate with our grammar.

The structure of this article is as follows. In the spirit of Pléh (2000), who argues for *taking neuroscience “seriously”* in building or evaluating linguistic models, we devote sections 2 and 3 to a brief overview of how word meaning and some aspects of syntax can be represented in a way that is compatible with what we currently know about connectionist neural systems. In connectionist systems, a massively parallel, self-modifying, interconnected structure of very simple processing units (neurons) gathers and produces activation information, and learns to respond to stimuli correctly. Since our brain is a connectionist structure rather than a number-crunching device, the consideration of connectionism cannot be avoided in modelling cognition in general, language in particular.

As section 3 presents argument structure as the key to explaining the combinatorial property of language by trying to introduce a corresponding neural implementation of argument structure, section 4 deals with argument structure in more detail. Finally, section 5 adds the concluding remarks.

## 2. Neural architecture of storing and retrieving lexical information

We seem to know relatively little about the exact neurophysiological processes responsible for language. Although probing the brain's functioning has evolved considerably since Paul Broca identified the cause of specific speech disorders using post-mortem examinations in the 1860s, we still do not have ideal capabilities for assessing language-related brain activity.

Pulvermüller (1999) argues that we may be able to account for how and where certain pieces of word meaning can be represented in the brain. He argues that the answer lies in Hebb (1949)'s theory of *cell assemblies*. Pulvermüller (1999) also supports his argument by referring to research papers that report on relevant neuroimaging experiments.

A cell assembly is a group of neurons that become associated when getting activated at the same time (Pulvermüller 1999:254). The author points out that distant neurons can get associated, too (e.g. neurons in the visual cortex, neurons in Broca's area, motor cortex neurons, etc.), although adjacent neurons are more likely to form functional groups due to anatomical reasons. When a sufficient subset of the assembly neurons is stimulated, the whole assembly (including its remote parts) becomes active, which is called *ignition*. Another operating mode of the cell assemblies is called *reverberation*: subgroups in the cell assembly form loops and therefore, they can fire again and again after ignition, which results in a "wave of excitation circulating and reverberating in the many loops of the assembly", creating a "spatiotemporal pattern" (Pulvermüller 1999:255). Pulvermüller argues that, at the level of cognition, "ignition may correspond to perception of a meaningful stimulus and to activation of its representation", while reverberation "may represent an elementary process underlying short-term or active memory (Pulvermüller 1999:256).

The *perisylvian area* (which consists of structures around the Sylvian fissure) seems to have a key role in human language representation and processing. Broca's area and Wernicke's area are situated here, which were found to be related to various types of aphasia back in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. According to Pulvermüller, "[t]he Hebbian view implies that the motor and acoustic representations of a word form are not separate, but that they are strongly connected so that they form a distributed functional unit" (Pulvermüller 1999: 259).

In this framework, *word meaning* is captured in the connectivity pattern and functioning of a self-organizing associative memory, which is facilitated and determined by the neuroanatomy of the brain. The underlying process is explained in the following way:

When the meaning of a concrete content word is being acquired, the learner may be exposed to stimuli of various modalities related to the word's meaning, or the learner may perform actions to which the word refers... If this coactivation happens frequently, it will change the assembly representing the word. ... [T]he phonological signal will be sufficient for igniting the entire ensemble, including the semantic

representation and, vice versa, the assembly may also become ignited by input only to its semantic part. (Pulvermüller 1999:260)

The following “modalities” are supposed to contribute to the encoding of words: motor modality, visual input, odour, taste, pain, touch, sounds (Pulvermüller 1999:262). The author also points out that fine-grained distinctions can be made within the modalities, too. For instance, the muscles relevant to performing various movements can differentiate between *chew*, *write* and *kick*. Within the visual modality, it may also be possible to differentiate between static objects (e.g. *house*) and moving objects (*train*), coloured objects (*iguana*) vs. black and white objects (*penguin*), and so on.

Words that are less connected to the modalities listed above are hypothesized to have a less robust distributed representation. Function words have a more restricted, much less distributed representation which is located in the perisylvian cortex only (Pulvermüller 1999:260-261).

Pulvermüller (1999) suggests that *homonymy* is represented by overlapping cell assemblies that share a common perisylvian phonological part, while mutual inhibitory processes make sure that only one assembly fires (Pulvermüller 1999:262). You will notice that Cruse’s (2000:108) description of *antagonism* (i.e. only one antagonistic reading of a word can be active at a time) corresponds to this view.

Pulvermüller’s approach to lexical meaning is not without criticism in the literature. Pléh (2000) and Bierwisch (1999) point out that there are semantic traits that are unaccounted for, for example those that depend on the speaker’s perspective, or on intentionality, rather than sensory modalities. Consider, for instance, the difference between *watch* and *see*, or *buy* and *sell*. Bierwisch (1999) goes on to argue that the spectrum of linguistic facts Pulvermüller’s model is supposed to cover is too narrow, and arrives at a rather radical conclusion: “[s]tudying cell assemblies and their properties, to understand the brain’s language, does not make sense if one does not also go beyond the properties allowed by these mechanisms” (Bierwisch 1999:282). To support his view, he refers to idioms, phrasal verbs, suprasegmental features, German separable prefixes, etc. Other critiques miss a way for making it possible to take the textual context into account (Greenberg and Nisslein 1999, Haase and Rothe-Neves 1999).

### 3. Neural architecture of sentence structure

Reverberating cell assemblies, which represent single words, cannot account for the linguistic competence of a human adult on their own. Children do have a *one-word stage* during language acquisition, but they also learn how to form long utterances by the age of three.

Van der Velde and de Kamps (2006) rely on Pulvermüller’s idea of cell assemblies as far as the representation of words is concerned. They note that this representation is fully *grounded* and cannot be moved or duplicated, they only work *in situ* when ignited by an incoming activation or pattern of activations. This

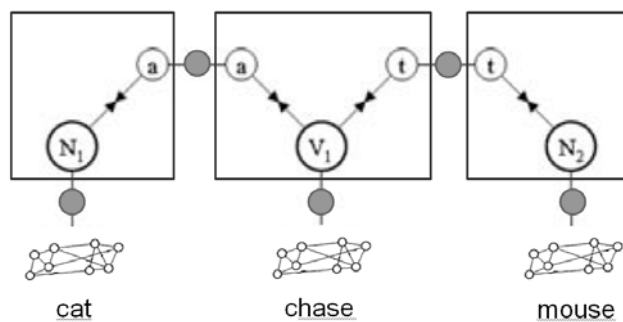
is completely different from what we see in symbol manipulating systems, in which “symbols can be duplicated easily because they are not embedded in an overall structure that provides the grounding of the symbol” (Van der Velde and de Kamps 2006:39).

The authors argue that the neural machinery that accounts for the combinatorial nature of language is the following. A subassembly that can bind the word temporarily to a *structure assembly* (see below) is part of the word assembly. The binding process establishes a controlled, temporary physical connection between cell assemblies. The authors suggest neural network implementations for both the binding and the delayed deactivation processes (Van der Velde and de Kamps 2006:44-46).

Van der Velde and de Kamps attribute direct linguistic meaning to the structural subassemblies in the following way:

Structure assemblies are selective. For example, nouns and verbs bind to different kinds of structure assemblies. Furthermore, the internal structure of structure assemblies allows selective activation of specific parts within each structure assembly. Structure assemblies of a given kind can selectively bind temporarily to specific other structure assemblies so that a (temporal) neural structure of a given sentence is created. Hence structure assemblies ... can bind word assemblies in line with the syntactic structure of the sentence. (Van der Velde and de Kamps 2006:44)

Word assemblies possess part of speech subassemblies (nouns, verbs). This makes them compatible with structure assemblies, which feature *thematic role* (e.g. agent, theme) connectors, using which they can be bound to each other “to encode the verb-argument structure of the sentence” (Van der Velde and de Kamps 2006:44).



**Figure 1.** Neural sentence structure representation of “cat chases mouse”. At the bottom, words are represented as cell assemblies. The subassemblies *a* and *t* represent the *agent* and *theme* thematic roles

The authors continue to refine the system in many ways. One of them is the possibility of using simple morphosyntactic connectors (that match parts of speech)

instead of the thematic connectors in the structure assemblies, so that function words can also be included in the description.

While it *is* an open question whether thematic roles are determining factors in sentence structure and it was not too long ago when linguists started to take this option very seriously (it probably began with Fillmore 1968), the above fluctuation in Van der Velde and de Kamps's theory is still intimidating, since their underlying assumption is that *argument structure* has a key role in explaining *the combinatorial property of languages*, which makes us expect that the authors have a very firm understanding of the nature of argument structure. A lot is at stake here, so the next section provides us with additional information on argument structure.

Also note that Van der Velde and de Kamps (2006) do not seem to be able to account for all the combinatorial phenomena in this framework. Most importantly, while the authors keep referring to NP arguments and their charts also resemble tree structures, the theory does not describe constituency. An NP is just the temporary interplay of a single world-level cell assembly and a compatible structure assembly. Therefore, coordination, anaphoric relations, long-distance dependencies, scope relations and other linguistic phenomena may all need further attention in this framework. This situation precisely shows how difficult it is to account for familiar syntactic phenomena in neural terms, and how immature existing neurocognitive models are in this field.

#### 4. The multi-faceted nature of argument structure

Argument structure describes the relationship between the predicate and its arguments. Argument structure is at least partly idiosyncratic and is usually treated as a lexical property of the predicate.

Some frameworks rely on a two-level (or multi-level) lexical representation that bifurcates argument structure into a semantic and a syntactic component. The following lexical entry is from Lieber (1992):

```
enter          [V ____ ] /phonetic transcription/  
LCS: [EVENT GO ([THING ____ ], [PATH TO ([PLACE IN ([THING])])])]  
PAS: x <y>
```

The Predicate Argument Structure (PAS) in the example tells us the number of expected arguments and adds some grammatical annotation: it expresses that *x* is external, which tells us that it stands for the subject NP. The entry also includes a semantic representation in the form of Lexical Conceptual Structure (LCS). PAS is constructed from the LCS to form “an explicit representation of hierarchical relations between the verb and its arguments” (Lieber 1992:118); in other words, PAS is a projection of LCS. Nevertheless, since PAS represents “the part of conceptual structure that is visible to the syntax” (Jackendoff 1987:405), it does introduce new (largely idiosyncratic) information, i.e. it makes certain aspects of LCS relevant or irrelevant to syntax, and this is vital for a grammar to work correctly.

Defining argument structure involves answering at least the following questions:

1. How many syntactic arguments does the word have?
2. How can we annotate them for syntactic categories, location in constituent structure, etc.?

The number of the visible syntactic arguments seems to rely on the number of semantic arguments (described by the LCS, for instance). It would be natural if the number of syntactic arguments was always less (or it equalled) the number of semantic arguments, but *a*) it is not always the case, just consider the constructions *John behaved himself* and *the towel has a stain on it* (supernumerary reflexive and locative (Jackendoff 2002)); *b*) when there are fewer syntactic arguments than semantic arguments, selecting (licensing) syntactic arguments becomes a pressing issue: it seems to depend on the semantic (and even on the pragmatic) *context* (Németh 2001). On a side note: this is probably not a major problem for neural modelling since the interplay of contextual (and real-world) knowledge and lexical idiosyncrasies can dynamically prime or inhibit each other, but actual implementation, especially in handmade lexicons and grammars, is not easy. This is probably an area where machine learning (through automatic acquisition and classification of contributing factors) could help.

As far as annotation is concerned, each framework has its conventions and solutions. At this point, I would like to briefly review how FrameNet approaches this problem.

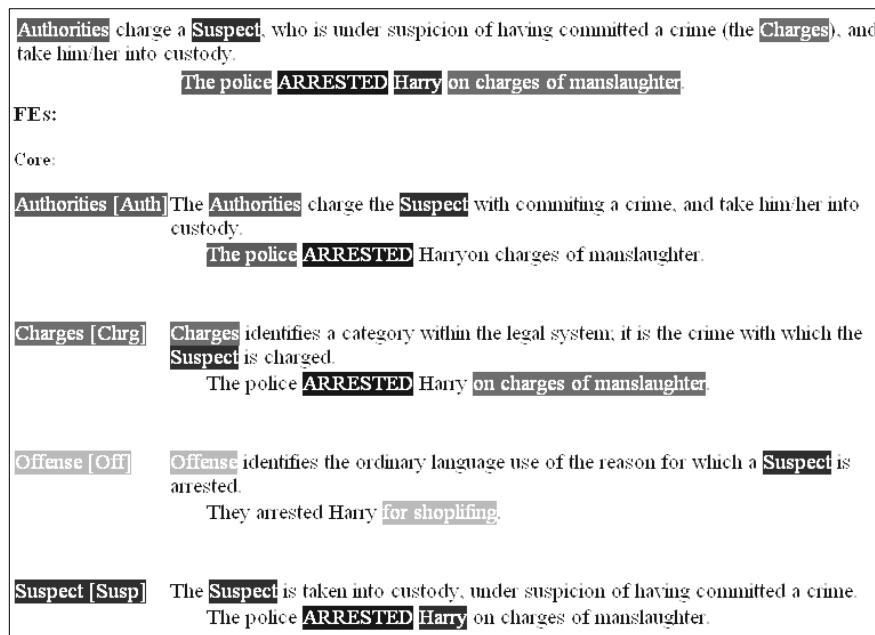
FrameNet (Baker, Fillmore and Lowe 1998) relies on the notion of *semantic frame*, which is like a script that characterizes the type of situation or event. Frame elements (FEs) are the participants and “props” of the semantic frame. Through exploiting corpus evidence, the editors find *target words* that instantiate a frame, and look for visible arguments of the target words. Having selected the target(s) in a sentence, linguists annotate the arguments for Frame Element (FE), Phrase Type (PT) and Grammatical Function (GF) labels. Only those phrases are annotated that are related to the target. The following example shows two possible valence patterns (in terms of FEs, PTs and GFs) for the verb *give* (taken from Fillmore, Johnson and Petruck (2003:238)):

<i>give</i>	<b>FEs:</b>	Donor	Theme	Recipient
	<b>PTs:</b>	NP	NP	NP
	<b>GFs:</b>	Ext	Comp	Obj
<i>give</i>	<b>FEs:</b>	Donor	Theme	Recipient
	<b>PTs:</b>	NP	NP	PP-to
	<b>GFs:</b>	Ext	Obj	Comp

The list of *Phrase Types* includes Noun Phrases, Prepositional Phrases, Verb Phrases, Complement Clause, Subordinate Clause, Adjective Phrase types, Adverb Phrase Quantifier Phrases and their subtypes. As far as *Grammatical Function* annotation is concerned, we have the following options for verbs: external argument, object, complement, modifier. On noun targets, they use the

labels external argument, complement, genitive determiner, modifier and appositive. They have similar lists for adjective, adverb and preposition targets.

FrameNet is more than a corpus annotation enterprise: the editors also build a *frame specifications* database. Primarily, frame specifications summarize and visually represent FE options. Figure 2 shows the *ARREST* frame (retrieved from the FrameNet website available at <https://framenet.icsi.berkeley.edu/>):



**Figure 2** Frame specification for the ARREST frame (partial)

“Non-core” Frame Elements, including Manner, Means and Place in this frame, are not shown in Figure 2, but they are annotated in the corpus and stored in the frame specifications. Also part of the frame specification is a list of related lexical units (apprehend.v, apprehension.n, arrest.n, arrest.v, book.v, bust.n, bust.v, collar.v, cop.v, nab.v) and information on the place of the ARREST frame in a frame hierarchy. The hierarchy is important, since it captures generalizations across frames. The FrameNet data shows that the ARREST frame makes reference to a more abstract (“schematic”) frame, CAUSE\_CONFINEMENT, and is used by the SURRENDERING frame. The ARREST frame also inherits information from the INTENTIONALLY AFFECT frame, and ARREST is a subframe of CRIMINAL PROCESS.

In FrameNet, frame elements are relative to frames (and frame hierarchies). The Agent FE of the CAUSE\_HARM frame is not related to the Authorities FE of the ARREST frame. One may argue that I overlook important generalizations in this way (the agent thematic role, not to mention Dowty’s proto-agent, etc.). But FrameNet’s approach makes perfect sense if one wants to establish better and more



straightforward correspondence between argument-taking items and their arguments in a given context.

In Lexical Functional Grammar (LFG), which is the generative framework our research group works in, we expect the argument structure to determine the syntactic role of the semantic arguments of the predicate (Dalrymple 2001:195), so the basic philosophy is the same as what we have seen in the LCS/PAS system above.

Kaplan and Bresnan (1982) suggest that the semantic form of a predicate should describe the relation between semantic and syntactic function. The following is their example.

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} & \text{SUBJ} & & \text{OBJ} & & \text{OBL}_{\text{GOAL}} & \\ \text{'give} & \text{---} & , & \text{---} & , & \text{---} & \text{'} \\ < & & & & & & \\ & \text{AGENT} & & \text{THEME} & & \text{GOAL} & \end{array}$$

The above semantic form of the verb *give* associates the AGENT role with the SUBJ syntactic function, the THEME with OBJ and GOAL with OBLIQUE<sub>GOAL</sub>.

As the framework evolved, other approaches to argument structure appeared, as surveyed in Dalrymple (2001). Butt et al. (1997), for instance, assumes a projection  $\alpha$  that relates LFG constituent structure nodes and argument structure (a-structure), where thematic roles are tackled, too, and another function,  $\lambda$ , relates argument structure to LFG functional structure. Argument structure is seen as a new level of grammatical representation. For instance, “the English verb *cut* has two arguments, an AGENT and a THEME. The f-structure is related to the a-structure through the  $\lambda$  projection, just as the AGENT and THEME arguments of *cut* are related to the SUBJ and OBJ, respectively” (Butt et al. 1997). Lexical entries must be adjusted accordingly. Here I will ignore the quite complex formalism; the following paraphrase of an example entry for the verb *cut* is from the authors: “If my [that of *cut*] AGENT’s f-structure’s semantic projection means  $X$  and my THEME’s f-structure’s semantic projection means  $Y$ , then my f-structure’s semantic projection means  $cut(X,Y)$ ” (Butt et al. 1997). As far as actual implementation is concerned, the argument-function mapping produces candidate mappings which should be evaluated and the highest-ranking method will be selected as winner.

A common property of all approaches is that they attribute argument structure an interface function between syntax and semantics. As far as implementations are concerned, argument structure is usually encoded in the lexicon as a property of a lexical item (either completely idiosyncratic or covered by a redundancy rule). When argument licencing has to be implemented in the description (in cases of reduced number of syntactic arguments), you may expect to

see systems that encode those distinctions only that make the (current state of) grammar work.

## 5. Conclusion

Our work in HunGram involves a labour intensive manual lexicon-writing task, including the description of argument structure, and we realize how carefully this issue must be handled to control ambiguity or just to make the grammar work. The neurocognitive perspective is included in this paper to show an aspect of the notion of argument structure that we are usually unaware of, and also to highlight the differences between current algorithmic, symbol-manipulation solutions and neural systems.

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# NAMED ENTITIES AND THEIR TREATMENT IN A COMPUTATIONAL LINGUISTIC IMPLEMENTATION

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*Abstract:* The aim of this paper is to provide an overview of the nature of names that are relevant for rule-based (syntactic and morphosyntactic) parsing, and it also presents a method for the treatment of names using the framework of *Lexical-Functional Grammar*, in connection with a Hungarian treebank project.

*Keywords:* computational linguistics, Hungarian, *Lexical-Functional Grammar*, named entity

## 1. Introduction

The study of *named entities* (or names, in general terms) is a well-known field of *Natural Language Processing* (NLP) and as Nadeau and Sekine (2007) also reports, it has been dealt with in the literature as a distinct area since the 1990s with respect to the recognition and classification of names in raw text (i.e. *Named Entity Recognition*, or *NER*, for short). However, it is not only their identification and categorization that appear to be challenging issues, but the treatment of names in syntactic and semantic models as well raise serious questions both from the theoretical and the computational linguistic perspective.

This paper, with examples from English and Hungarian, discusses those properties of names that might cause problems in terms of writing computational grammars for parsing and outlines a computational implementation, using the theoretical framework of *Lexical-Functional Grammar*. The need for an adequate, consistent analysis of names is also to be reflected by the results of an experiment carried out on the Hungarian Szeged Treebank.

## 2. The concept of names

In order to give an overall account of names regarding both recognition and processing (or parsing), it is essential first to give a definition of names, and to specify those characteristics of names that NLP applications should be able to deal with. Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that named entity recognition and parsing structures containing named entities will be distinctly discussed, with special emphasis on the latter issue. This section is concerned with the concept *name*, and with concrete examples, reviews those factors of names that applications of both types have to account for.

## 2.1. What is a name?

From the theoretical and the computational linguistic aspect and for the purpose of text processing, it is generally desirable to outline what phenomenon should be considered a *name*. When providing a definition the focus of attention, by necessity, should be limited to those cases which pose problems to parsing systems and to computer-based, automated identification that can even allow for tagging. If we compare in this respect

- (1) Bank of England
- (2) the center of financial issues,

the field of interest is rather an example like (1), representing proper names (or rigid designators, in Kripke's (1980) words), while examples like (2) are excluded from this analysis. Phrases like (2) should not be difficult to handle syntactically without special lexicons, as opposed to examples like (1), which, in the majority of cases, require special gazetteers (i.e. lexicon of names, especially geographical ones).

My paper adopts Simon's (2008) definition, according to which an expression can only be a name if it refers to an entity in a unique way. Consequently, those expressions or phrases that are not unique (though referring to unique entities) are not to be identified as names. Therefore, along these lines, (1) is a name, while (2) is not.

## 2.2. General characteristics

Other facts characteristic of names are that they can often be multiwords (e.g.: European Union), and that they can appear in text as acronyms (e.g.: UNESCO). Regarding constituency issues, it is also common that they occur with a common noun which describes the type of entity the name itself refers to, like in (3). Such common nouns, again, following Simon (2008), are not to be treated as part of the name, as opposed to counterexamples in which the common noun is "institutionalized" with the name as one, reflected by (4).

- (3) Mississippi *river*
- (4) Black Sea

Moreover, specifiers and other modifiers of noun phrases containing a name as their head, exemplified in (5),

- (5) *the wonderful* Grand Canyon

are generally not to be taken as parts of the name. It is not the task of named entity recognition to identify names together with other constituents belonging to the

same phrase, but rather the head alone (that is the name itself). (However, as will be seen, named entity recognizers do not necessarily operate on syntactic categories or pre-syntactic analyses.) Furthermore, parsers are expected to account for these constituents at the syntactic level of analysis in such a way that the name itself should be understood as one syntactic (and semantic) unit on its own, functioning as a head.

### **3. Natural language processing and names**

#### **3.1. Recognition and classification**

In the last decade numerous named entity recognition tasks were carried out to show improving results regarding the identification and even classification of names in raw text. The machine learning oriented, statistics-based models used in the experiments range from *artificial neural networks* (ANN) to *decision trees* and *support vector machines* (SVM). The main idea behind these systems is that after a learning phase in which these systems are exposed to (annotated) corpora especially designed for the purpose of training, they derive generalizations based on which they can recognize names in plain text and sort them into categories as organizations, personal names, etc. A sample comparing the accuracy of such models trained on the named entity subcorpus of the Hungarian Szeged Treebank can be found in Szarvas et al. (2006).

Unlike some of these named entity recognizers that are mainly language-dependent, Varga and Simon (2007) outlines a maximum-entropy method that, as claimed, is more flexible concerning language-dependency issues and considers several factors (of name candidates) including positional and morphological ones, making the model work quite efficiently and with high precision. For details, see Varga and Simon (2007).

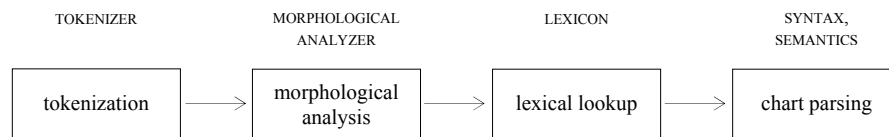
As for the parsing side, where structures should be morphologically and syntactically (and semantically) adequately processed and analyzed, rule-based systems (i.e., applications that use phrase-structure rules and operate on categories when parsing) tend to be reliable, better-known and more popular. However, the challenge in these cases, as will be seen, is to prepare the parser to provide analysis of structures possibly containing names (single words, multiwords and acronyms) that are, by default, not part of their core or basic lexicon. The real problem is that, if such a system is not able to analyze fragments (phrase/clause chunks), an unknown expression in the text, like a name, might result in an output without a single parse. The following subsection discusses a Hungarian LFG-approach and its implementational capabilities in relation with names.

#### **3.2. HunGram: an implementational LFG-approach**

*HunGram* (*Hungarian Grammar*) is a computational linguistic project that aims at developing a *Lexical-Functional Grammar* (LFG) analysis of the Hungarian language and using it for building a 1.5 million word treebank.

HunGram was initiated as part of the *Parallel Grammar (ParGram)* research project, which is an international cooperation of generative and computational linguists within the theory of LFG. The main idea of the cooperation is to analyze more and more languages and develop large-scale grammars using the framework of LFG. As the theory was also designed for computational application, its main principles are *strong lexicalism, modularism, rule system based on mathematical formalism and parallel architecture*. (For details on LFG, see Bresnan 2001, on ParGram, see <http://pargram.b.uib.no>; on the *HunGram* project, see Laczkó – Rákosi – Tóth 2010, and <http://hungram.unideb.hu>).

The *Xerox Linguistics Environment (XLE)*, the implementational platform (Butt et al. 1997), is a rich system comprising a series of tools that make it possible to parse sentences. The architecture reflects a modular pattern (see *Figure 1*). First the sentence to be parsed is tokenized by finite-state transducers, after which the tokens are sent to the morphological component. Morphological analysis is followed by lexical lookup in the manually created and tagged lexicon that stores subcategorization frames and semantic information. The *lexicon*, with special lexical entries including grammatical functional annotations as well, is a crucial part of the system, this is the module on which the essence of the theory lies. Its importance together with the morphological analyzer is even more emphasized in case of highly inflectional languages like Hungarian.



**Figure 1:** Parsing with XLE

The morphological features the morphological analyzer provides are mapped on lexical entries which, in turn, are used by the chart parser to determine the syntactic structures available. (If no morphological analyzer exists, the tokens are forwarded directly to the lexicon after tokenization. In this case, the lexicon has to be powerful, containing all the forms.)

### 3.2.1. Names in the model

In relation with names, the task in such a model is either to build a rich lexicon of names or to prepare the morphological component which should produce the relevant morphological analysis for names, including inflections, and which should also add a distinct feature tag, marking that the particular token is a name. The output of an analysis of this kind is demonstrated by the Hungarian example *Európai Unióban* ‘in the European Union’ in (6), in which the stem is *Európai Unió* in the inessive case.

- (6) *Európai Unióban*: Európai Unió +Noun +Prop +Sg +Ine

However, as this example suggests, and as it has been claimed in section 2.2, names are often multiwords, which means they are to be treated as one token, a fact to prepare the tokenizer for. Although this component, by default, takes every word as a separate, single token, it is possible to configure XLE, through the grammar configuration file, not to process multiword tokens as individual items in case they constitute a multiword that is either listed in the lexicon and/or the morphology accounts for it.

Morphologies relying on finite-state techniques have proved to be quite efficient in the ParGram projects, because they are quite fast, they can provide multiple analyses in case of ambiguity, and they can easily be extended by additional transducers like guessers (c.f. Kaplan et al. 2004). Embedding names into already built morphologies has the advantage that there is no need for including all the names in all possible forms (concerning inflections), only stems have to be inserted under the appropriate category or group (which can serve as filter to what inflections can be accepted with the name). In addition, guesser transducers can also promote parsing results. All these, however, require a rich morphological analyzer of the particular language and, more importantly, the base lexicon of this module (which is, by nature, completely different from the lexicon containing entries with grammatical features and predicate-relations as in (7) below) should also be accessible.

Another possibility, apart from the morphological solution, is to put the names into the lexical component (i.e. build a lexicon for names). While (6) gave an example of how names should be represented in the morphological component, (7) is a counterpart of it in the form of a lexical entry.

(7) *Európai Unióban*: N (↑ PRED) = ‘Európai Unió’  
 (↑ NUM) = sg  
 (↑ PERS) = 3  
 (↑ CASE) = ine  
 @(NSYN proper)  
 @(NSEM organization).

This lexical entry produces exactly the same analysis as the morphology output in (6). The only additional information in this case is introduced by the template call claiming that the name semantically represents an organization, but, as grammatical functional annotations can be assigned to morphological tags in the lexicon, this is not to be understood as a difference.

(8)	a. NP	b.	PRED ‘Európai Unió’ NTYPE  NSEM  PROPER  PROPER-TYPE organization    NSYN proper CASE ine NUM sg, PERS 3
	N		
	Európai Unióban		



Therefore, no matter which method is used in this particular case, *Európai Unióban* parsed as a noun phrase produces the output shown in (8). These two structures represent the core syntactic levels of LFG: the constituent structure (8a), that reflects surface-level properties like word order and constituency, and the functional structure (8b), responsible for language-invariant features, like predicate-argument relations and grammatical features. For a detailed explanation, see Bresnan (2001).

### 3.2.2. Form and orthography

Apart from the fact mentioned in section 2.2 that names can also take the form of acronyms, there are several other form-related and orthographically questionable variations among names, to which attention must be called. This subsection reflects patterns that one might come across when examining data in corpora.

- (9) a. Magyar Nemzeti Bank vs. MNB  
Hungarian National Bank
- b. *Ady Endre Gimnázium* vs. *Ady Gimnázium*  
Ady Endre Grammar School

Examples in (9) represent the problem referred above well. It is not uncommon that within the same text a name takes different forms. In some cases, the name occurs in its full form, while in others it is an acronym, see (9a). Moreover, in informal texts, elements of names (compared to the full name) can also be missing, as (9b) shows. However, it is not only form-variation of this kind that can suggest a sort of inconsistency and makes it difficult to cover such cases, but questions related to orthography can also be raised.

- (10) a. *iPhone*
- b. *Mastercard* vs. *MasterCard*
- c. *Noname Ltd.* vs. *Noname Ltd*
- d. *Földhitel- és Jelzálogbank* vs. *\*Földhitel és Jelzálogbank*

As parsing is generally case-sensitive (it does matter, for example, if a lexical entry contains uppercase letters or not), it is of crucial importance to consider instances like (10a) and (10b). The problem with forms like (10b) is that they require inserting all the form-variants into the lexicon. Deciding on the morphological module and not the lexicon to account for the names, lowercasing before determining the appropriate morphological features might turn out to be a solution. Utilizing transducers to normalize input in general (e.g., to remove or add dots in company names and company type markers) might be beneficial for avoiding problems of punctuation and minor form-alternations of this kind to keep

representation consistent. Unfortunately, there can still be orthographically ill-formed patterns that are quite difficult to cover (10d).

### 3.2.3. Morphological issues

Names in some languages, just like other nouns, are open to morphological processes as suffixation. In Hungarian, certain inflections are attached to the stem without morphophonological changes (11), others affect the stem, or the inflection itself, as in the case of assimilation (12).

(11) Kovács-*nak*                    (Kovács + *-nak*)  
Smith-DAT  
'to Smith'

(12) János-*sal*                    (János + *-val*)  
John-with  
'with John'

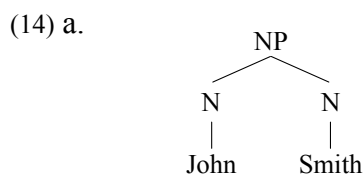
In Hungarian, according to the orthography, when the derivational suffix *-i* is added to a name stem (to derive an adjective), the initial uppercase letter should be lowercased (13)

(13)    Vietnam + *-i*            → vietnámi  
          Vietnam + *-ese*        → Vietnamese

If it is the morphological component of the grammar that is responsible for the lexical-level analysis of forms, then these problems can be easily overcome: as names can only receive those inflectional suffixes that common nouns can have, the task is just to configure those suffix continuation classes to the names in the morphological analyzer that common nouns are set to. When it is not possible to extend the morphology module with names, the grammar writer needs to list all the relevant forms of a name that s/he wants the parser to analyze.

### 3.2.4. Further issues: syntax and semantics

An even more challenging question that does not seem to have been covered in detail in implementational models is the syntactic and semantic representation of names. While single-word name forms are inserted under a nominal node in the constituent structure, multiword names allow for exploiting as many different (sub)categories under a branching nominal node as many tokens the name consists of. According to this view, the tokens are considered distinct lexical units. However, this also entails that one of the parts of the name has to be the head of the whole name. An example from the English ParGram is given in (14).



b.

PRED	'Smith'								
NAME_MOD	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>PRED</td> <td>'John'</td> </tr> <tr> <td>NTYPE</td> <td>NSEM   PROPER   PROPER-TYPE name, NAME-TYPE first_name   </td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>NSYN proper</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>GEND-SEM male, HUMAN +, NUM sg, PERS 3</td> </tr> </table>	PRED	'John'	NTYPE	NSEM   PROPER   PROPER-TYPE name, NAME-TYPE first_name		NSYN proper		GEND-SEM male, HUMAN +, NUM sg, PERS 3
PRED	'John'								
NTYPE	NSEM   PROPER   PROPER-TYPE name, NAME-TYPE first_name								
	NSYN proper								
	GEND-SEM male, HUMAN +, NUM sg, PERS 3								
NTYPE	NSEM   PROPER   PROPER-TYPE name, NAME-TYPE last_name								
	NSYN proper								
	HUMAN +, NUM sg, PERS 3								

*Smith*,

daughter of the *NP* node (see 14a). The functional structure (14b) also shows that in this analysis the last name is the head, and the first name is its modifier. In Hungarian, on the other hand, it is the last name that comes first in sequential order and inflections are always attached to the first name. This means that it is the first name that, from a morphological perspective, calls for being treated as the head, not the last name. One possibility of avoiding this problem is to represent the full name as a single lexical unit, and then the inflectional endings are attached to the whole lexical complex. In the English ParGram, there are also examples for this type of analysis, like *Trafalgar Square* in (15). (In highly inflectional languages, like Hungarian, inflectional endings are attached to the whole lexical complex in this approach.)

(15) a.

NP
N
Trafalgar Square

b.

PRED	'Trafalgar Square'
NTYPE	NSEM   PROPER   PROPER-TYPE location
	NSYN proper
	NUM sg, PERS 3

The need for a unified and consistent analysis is even better reflected by instances of brand + type (+subtype) multiword name constructions (e.g., 'Ford Model T'). These patterns might have a preference for taking each token of multiword names, in general, as separate lexical items, but this approach still appears to be difficult to implement, as seen in the treatment of Hungarian full names in this way. On the other hand, a less economic way of storing whole multiwords, each as a single lexical item, might require a lot of work on the part of the grammar writer, resulting in large lexicons; nevertheless, this option poses fewer problems computationally.

### 3.3. A case study: names in the Szeged Treebank

The evidence for the high frequency of names in corpora is proved by the following experiment meant to extract all the names from the Szeged Treebank for statistics and for lexicon building purposes. This treebank is based on a 1.2 million word corpus, in which the texts are categorized thematically; they are written texts

collected from a variety of sources, ranging from business papers to essays by students aged 14 to 16 (for details, see Csendes et al. 2005). The results of this study, shown in *Figure 2*, illustrate that 25.904 out of 82.099 sentences (the total number) contain at least one name, which also entails that there is one in every fourth sentence.

Subcorpus	Ss	Ss with Nes	NEs	NE lemmas	multiword NE lemmas
/business-news/newsm1.xml	9574	6735	13650	4214	2810
/compositions/10elb.xml	9541	1316	1 659	753	179
/compositions/10erv.xml	7604	160	202	147	37
/compositions/8oelb.xml	7 575	995	1 219	599	156
/computer/cwszt.xml	6 676	3 219	5 699	2 410	1 373
/computer/win200.xml	3 083	1 254	2 550	735	430
/fiction/1984.xml	6 658	1 729	2 140	185	56
/fiction/pfred.xml	6 485	1 421	1 692	225	78
/fiction/utas.xml	5 415	1 946	2 634	307	92
/law/gazdtar.xml	5 734	1 657	2 119	79	31
/law/szerzj.xml	3 544	1 166	1 764	311	200
/newspapers/hvg.xml	2 369	1 286	2 623	1 469	843
/newspapers/mh.xml	2 435	954	1 692	971	509
/newspapers/np.xml	4 107	1 497	2 570	1 452	732
/newspapers/nv.xml	1 299	569	1 079	729	385
<b>whole corpus (all included):</b>	<b>82099</b>	<b>25904</b>	<b>43292</b>	<b>12546</b>	<b>7386</b>

**Figure 2:** Named entities (NE) in the Szeged Treebank

This index is even lower in the case of business news (where, on the average, every second sentence has a name in it) and computer texts and newspaper articles (in which every third sentence contains a name). Statistics also indicate that the number of name lemmas extracted concerning the whole corpus is 12.546, which appear in 43.292 different forms, and, out of this considerably high number of name lemmas, 7.386 are multiword ones.

Taking a look at the data based on the type of texts might help decide on the type of source for testing a computational grammar described in section 3.2 without preparing it for analyzing names. But even those parts of the corpus in which the number of sentences with names is quite representative, and except for compositions by students, the parser will still not give an analysis for at least 21% of the sentences (see line */fiction/pred.xml* in *Figure 2*).

## 4. Conclusion

This article has hopefully demonstrated the basic problems that computational LFG grammar writers face in connection with parsing structures containing (proper) names. Augmenting grammar implementations of this kind with a statistics-based machine learning approach that identifies and extracts names from the texts to be parsed in a preprocessing phase to build named entity lexicons, either for morphological analyzers or as part of the lexicons of the system, might improve parsing efficiency; however, a detailed analysis of the syntactic inner structure of names is still desirable if it can reduce the size of such lexicons and introduce a consistent language independent treatment of names, especially multiword ones, reflecting their syntactic complexity.

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**IDENTIFYING (IN)CONGRUENCE  
AND TRACKING PRESUPPOSITIONS IN NLP:  
A LINGUISTIC APPROACH TO BUSINESS COMMUNICATION**

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***Abstract:** The aim of my paper is an analysis of how the technique of (in)congruence is used in business contexts. In NeuroLinguistic Programming (NLP), congruence is that state where our words, body language and actions all complement and point in the same direction. Incongruence may show itself externally in the clash between words and body language, and internally between representational systems. The paper also examines the role of linguistic presuppositions in helping us lead the person we are having a conversation with.*

***Keywords:** business communication, conflicting 'parts', linguistic presuppositions, sequential incongruity, simultaneous incongruity.*

## **1. Introduction**

In the context of language, the notion of congruence is important because of the huge impact it can have on organizational effectiveness. From the NLP perspective, congruence means communicating holistically, in such a way that every 'part' of us goes in the same direction and pursues the same outcome. In business, congruence requires managers to become a model for others to follow. The old statements of leadership apply – lead by example, set standards for others, be an inspiration to others. This usually reveals itself in the way leaders respond congruently by adapting the answers to the diversity of representational systems, or, as Alder (2002:289) states “by simply accruing successful public speaking experiences through multi-sensory mental rehearsal”.

Being *congruent linguistically* is the property of delivering convergent answers, being in alignment and responding to a certain context. Webster's Dictionary defines congruence as being “marked by inner harmony, coherence, or agreement of its parts”.

Originally defined by Bandler and Grinder (1976:45) as “a situation in which the person communicating has aligned all of his output channels so that each of them is representing, carrying or conveying the same or a compatible message”, the concept of congruence involved all of a person's output channels, i.e. body posture, gestures, voice tonality, words, each of them contributing to a person's achieving or regaining a state of congruency.

In Dilts and DeLozier's opinion, congruence is “a result of all of a person's internal beliefs, strategies and behaviours being in full agreement and oriented toward securing a desired outcome” (2000:214).

## 2. Identifying congruence and incongruence: the NLP and linguistic perspectives

In agreement with Bandler and Grinder (1976) and Dilts and De Lozier (2000), O'Connor (2001) carries out an in-depth analysis of congruence, especially of incongruence and its different types. His work on what he calls "these *two opposite ends of a continuum*" (O'Connor 2001:216) is likely to reveal that, although we are not always completely congruent, it is useful to find our incongruence signal in order to succeed. According to O'Connor, "In NLP, *congruence* is that state where your *words, body language and actions all complement, agree and point in the same direction*" (O'Connor 2001:215, my emphasis). On the contrary, *incongruence* replaces compatibility with incompatibility, certainty with uncertainty, harmony with disharmony. It expresses a state of inner conflict and leads to confusion. While *congruence* means "agreement of parts", *incongruence* is perceived as a "disagreement of parts; lack of symmetry or of harmony" (Webster's Dictionary).

Bandler and Grinder (1976:46) associate this state of being out of rapport with "paramessages", arguing that "if messages carried by two output systems [i.e. body posture and movements, voice tonality and tempo, words] are incompatible, do not fit, do not match, they are incongruent". They also mention two forms of incongruence, i.e. *simultaneous* and *sequential incongruence*. In his *NLP Workbook* (2001), O'Connor enlarges upon these two types of incongruence from a *linguistic point of view*; all the examples given below are mine.

Firstly, he analyses them from the representational systems perspective.

Secondly, he subdivides them into: 1) "Dealing with your own sequential incongruity" and "Dealing with another person's sequential incongruity", on the one hand, and 2) "Dealing with your own simultaneous incongruence" and "Dealing with other people's simultaneous incongruence", on the other.

Thirdly, he pays special attention to the role of the word *but*, which is responsible for separating the message in two conflicting "parts".

O'Connor's first distinction about incongruence is that it can "show itself externally in the clash between words and body language" (2001:216). An example is *I'm so glad for you* (uttered with an insincere smile). His second distinction is that it can show itself internally, through the use of representational systems, as in:

*I feel that my skills and experience are a great match for this position, but the competition **sounds** much fiercer than I have imagined.*

The two verbs associated with one's experience belong to two different channels of sensory representation: the verb *feel* is kinesthetic, whereas the verb *sounds* refers to the auditory system.

O'Connor's first type of sequential incongruity refers to *dealing with one's own sequential incongruity*, or, as he puts it "It is as if one part of you is in charge at one time and does the action, then another part takes over and regrets it. The different parts have different values" (2001:216). For example,

*Last week I lent a bigger amount of money than I had originally budgeted, **but now** I seem to be caught off guard and I swear I will never do it again.*

The second type of sequential incongruity suggested by O'Connor focuses on *dealing with another person's sequential incongruity*:

e.g. *Last month you **urgently needed** my professional expertise for your firm, **but this month you have constantly delayed** confirming a start date. Could you let me know when I may learn of your decision? When I call, you put me off from day to day. Have you reconsidered my offer?*

On the other hand, simultaneous incongruence also allows for two types:

a) One's own simultaneous incongruence occurs when one expresses two conflicting ideas (the actual statement – one's words, and its understatement – one's body language) at the same time:

e.g. *It's so encouraging (when uttered in a rasping voicetone).  
I'm following you (said while s/he is looking at his/her watch or glancing out of the window).*

In this example, words and body language do not match. However, it is possible to *agree verbally*, but one's words are mismatched (are incongruent with) one's body language.

b) Dealing with other people's simultaneous incongruence requires a meta position, i.e. an observer's position.

e.g. *You **beat (past tense) the drum** for my new perfume rollout, **but** I saw that you **didn't do your best to promote it.***

The third aspect that O'Connor draws one's attention to is the word *but*, a characteristic of *sequential incongruity*. It is usually bound to connect two "parts" which are at cross purposes. One part restricts the positive intention of the other part, that is to say "the word 'but' is double-edged. It immediately counteracts what precedes it and introduces a conflict" (O'Connor 2001:219, my emphasis). The two *antithetical parts* are linked by the *incongruence signal 'but'*, which discounts the first part of the statement:

e.g. *He says he wants to design the graphics for those advertisements, **but** he puts off doing it.*

I consider sequential incongruity in NLP closely related to Greenbaum and Quirk's (1990:268) opinion that *but* expresses a contrast. The two linguists point out that "the *content* of the second *clause* is unexpected in view of the content of



the first”. Their alternative to counteract the effect of *but* is to replace it by *and yet*. This will help us to understand the second clause in positive terms.

O’Connor’s solution is similar: “<< *de-but* >> your talk. Replace ‘but’ with ‘and’” (O’Connor 2001:219, my emphasis):

e.g. *He says he wants to design the graphics for those advertisements and he puts off doing it.*

The neutrality of *and* “shows a co-operation between the two halves of the sentence rather than a conflict” (O’Connor 2001:219).

As a matter of fact, incongruence, as defined by Molden (2001:313) in his *Glossary*, is a “state of having reservations, not totally committed to an outcome. The internal conflict will be expressed in the person’s behaviour”.

As seen by Greenbaum and Quirk (1990: 226-227), the relation between the contents of the linked clauses “can generally be made explicit by the addition of an adverbial”. In our example, the first clause has a *concessive force*:

e.g. *He says he wants to design the graphics for those advertisements and (yet) he puts off doing it.* (= Although he says he wants ..., he puts off doing it)

Another solution would be to place the negative part in front position and then counteract it with a more positive way of expressing it, as in the example:

e.g. *He puts off designing the graphics for those advertisements, but he says he wants to do it.*

A comparison needs to be drawn between the sentence with the positive statement in front position and the sentence with the negative clause in front position:

e.g. *He says he wants to design the graphics for those advertisements, and yet he puts off doing it.*

*He puts off designing the graphics for those advertisements, but he says he wants to do it.*

Considering the syntax and rhetoric of the English sentence as well as usage and frequency, the former variant is preferred by native speakers.

### 3. Tracking presuppositions

We make presuppositions and have beliefs and expectations from our personal experience. We all presuppose all kinds of things in our everyday conversations. We take presuppositions for granted, and think and behave as if they were true.

In this respect, Givón's approach to the notion of presupposition in discourse analysis is that pragmatic presupposition is "defined in terms of assumptions the speaker makes about what the hearer is likely to accept without challenge" (Givón 1979:50, qtd. in Brown and Yule 1983:29). Stalnaker's (1978) view on presupposition is very similar to Givón's definition, in that both of them share the opinion that presupposition involves the notion of assumed 'common ground': "presuppositions are what is taken by the speaker to be the common ground of the participants in the conversation" (Stalnaker 1978:321, qtd. in Brown and Yule 1983:29).

In agreement with Givón and Stalnaker, the NLP theorist Harry Alder (2002) emphasized that presuppositions and assumptions are interconnected: "Think of presuppositions as the linguistic equivalent of assumptions" (Alder 2002:153).

Presuppositions relate to unconscious beliefs or assumptions embedded in the structure of an utterance, action or another belief. They are required for them to make sense. According to Webster's Dictionary, *to presuppose* means to "suppose beforehand" or "to require as an antecedent in logic or fact". The term "suppose" comes from Latin, and literally means "to put under" – from *sub* ("under") + *ponere* ("to put").

From an NLP perspective, "*linguistic presuppositions* occur when certain information or relationships must be accepted as true in order to make sense of a particular statement" (Dilts and DeLozier 2000:997, emphasis in the original). For example, to make sense of the statement,

*As soon as you stop imposing the embargo on fuel exports, our country will double its energy capacity.*

one must assume that the person(s) to whom the statement is directed has/have already been imposing an embargo on fuel exports. The statement also presupposes that there is some kind of effort being attempted, and that at least some negotiations have been started.

Linguistic presuppositions are typically explored or challenged in NLP by asking, "How, specifically, do you know that?"

A different perspective on presuppositions is offered by Dilts and DeLozier (2000:997), who state that "*True linguistic presuppositions should be contrasted with assumptions and inferences. A linguistic presupposition is something that is overtly expressed in the body of the statement itself, which must be 'supposed' or accepted in order for the sentence or utterance to make sense*" (my emphasis). In the question *Have you stopped changing suppliers frequently?*, the use of the verb *stop* implies that the listener has *already* been changing suppliers on a regular basis. On the contrary, the question *Do you change suppliers frequently?* has no such presupposition.

Conclusions such as "The speaker thinks that changing suppliers is important", or "The speaker is unfamiliar with the listener's habit of changing suppliers", are *not* presupposed by the questions. They are assumptions and

inferences we might make about the question, but are not presupposed by the question itself.

We could also consider the following two statements:

1. *The company's directors promised their employees a rise in pay because they **feared** a general strike.*
2. *The company's directors promised their employees a rise in pay because they had **called** a general strike.*

The two statements have the same structure, except the verbs *fear* and *call*. Depending on which word is used, we *assume* that the personal pronoun *they* refers to either the *company's directors* or the *employees*. We are more likely to think that it is the *company's directors* who *fear* a general strike, and the *employees* who *call* a general strike. This is not presupposed by the statement itself, but it is assumed by us, the listeners. Both sentences presuppose that there were employees who were asking for a pay rise, but that is all.

An *inference* related to the two statements above would be that *the employees and the company's directors were not the same group of people*. Inferences relate to logical conclusions which are made that are based upon the information provided by the statement. Presuppositions, assumptions and inferences all reflect beliefs and values.

In *Patterns of the Hypnotic Techniques of Milton H. Erickson M.D.* (1975), Bandler and Grinder describe how the hypnotherapist used linguistic presuppositions as means to help patients deal more effectively with their symptoms. Milton Erickson would frequently make statements or suggestions which presupposed certain behaviours or responses in his subjects. The hypnotherapist used *linguistic presuppositions* as a means to induce certain states and to help his subjects deal more effectively with their problems. Similarly, one can practice forming presuppositional statements for business situations using the following formulas, and filling in the blanks with some desired behaviour or response:

- |  |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>(1) Do you want to _____ now or a little later?</li><li>(2) There is no need to _____ too quickly.</li><li>(3) After you have finished _____, you will realize how easy it is to _____.</li><li>(4) Since you _____, you may as well (start / finish) _____.</li></ol> |
|--|

For example:

- (1) *Do you want to tell me what is nagging at you or would you rather wait until you compose yourself?*

It is already assumed that the listener *will* say what is nagging at him/her; the only question is *when*. This is a complex presupposition, in which the subordinate clause of time is identified by the cue conjunction “until”.

(2) *Don't rejoice at the news too quickly.*

Here it is presupposed that you are already rejoicing at the news. The question is how prone you are to do it or how nastily you are doing it.

(3) *After your fears of losing ground to your competitors have disappeared, you will realize how easy it is to determine the most effective solutions.*

It is presupposed that your fears are going to disappear. It is also presupposed that it is easy to determine the most effective solutions. The only question is realizing it.

(4) *Since you are going to be renowned as the leader in the industry, you can start taking steps to prepare for the future.*

It is presupposed that you will be famous as the leader in the industry and that you will be taking steps to prepare for the future. The question is when you will start doing it.

According to Sperber and Wilson (1986, qtd. in Frențiu 2000:46), a context is “a psychological construction, a subset of the listener’s presuppositions about the world”. As Frențiu (2000:46) mentions, “a mismatch between the speaker’s context and the listener’s context can lead to distortion in decoding the message” (my transl.). The example of the guest who is offered a coffee by the host is relevant:

*This coffee will keep me awake.* (the guest’s reply)

His/her answer is perceived as a refusal by the host, who thinks that the guest wants to sleep, whereas the guest’s intention is to keep himself awake, and, therefore, his answer should be perceived as an acceptance.

Similarly, in a business situation (buying a car, for example), the customer might say:

*The size of this car is small.*

The salesperson may believe that the client is not satisfied with the size of the car. On the contrary, the customer has no intention to refuse the offer of buying that car, and is content with its size.

Let us suppose a manager has someone in his/her office for a job interview. What is s/he presupposing? In this respect, McLaren’s (2000:68-69) example is

relevant: “The person in front of me wants a specific job. I have advertised the vacancy in some way. The person has applied for the job. Her qualifications and CV check out. It is worth my time interviewing this person.”

In her turn, the candidate might be presupposing that: “she knows all about the vacancy and the company. She wants the job. She is qualified for the job. She has a high enough chance of getting the job to make it worth coming to an interview.” (McLaren’s 2000:68-69).

Similarly, according to O’Connor and Seymour (2002:102), sentences containing the connectives *if*, *when*, *since* often involve a presupposition, as well as anything after the verbs *be aware*, *realize*, *notice*:

e.g. *Realize why the company trusts him.*

We consider that other examples of presuppositions may be:

e.g. *When you expand, you’ll conquer the market.* (So far you are not very powerful)

*Why don’t you pay them more?* (You don’t pay them enough.)

*You are as visionary as your leader.* (Your leader is a visionary.)

*I will work harder to carry out this task.* (This task is difficult.)

#### **4. Conclusion**

It is obvious that semantic and pragmatic aspects are very important in Neuro-Linguistic Programming applied to business communication. On the one hand, maintaining rapport is the ideal state for management communication in organizations to be described as congruent. In the context of business, both congruous behaviour and congruity in language support the outcome. On the other hand, presuppositions have psychological effects, triggering emotions, feelings, or sensations. A linguistic presupposition is something that is overtly expressed in the body of the statement itself. The structure of language provides a path from the words expressed by someone (the surface structure) to what is going on inside the person (their feelings, thoughts, beliefs and values – the deep structure).

Linguistic presuppositions reveal the internal universe of the speaker and assist the listener in gaining a different perspective on a problem. As the listener gains an understanding of the internal representations of the speaker, s/he can change words or use sentence structures differently to make the speaker consider alternative internal representations. Thus, for leading purposes, presuppositions help us sharpen our intuition in recognizing them and use our words to efficiently change the behaviour of the person we are having a conversation with. Therefore, not only does the information revealed through speech hold to be true in the speaker’s model of the world, but it also assists him/her in expanding and loosening his/her model of the world.

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# THEMATIC AND RHEMATIC PROGRESSION IN WRITTEN ADVERTISEMENTS

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**Abstract:** The present paper focuses on the interweaving of themes and rhemes at the discursal level. Daneš (1974) termed this kind of concatenation *thematic progression* and identified four basic classes; these will be supplemented with several others. The kinds of thematic and rhematic progression encountered in 84 written advertisements, classified according to their interpersonal function, will be then studied.

**Keywords:** *interpersonal function, rhematic progression, thematic progression, written advertisements.*

## 1. Introduction

Thematic and rhematic progression contributes to the overall coherence and cohesion of a discourse, so it is no wonder that linguists have become interested in them. The paper is based on the concept of thematic progression as it was understood by the Czech linguist, F. Daneš (1974), but his four basic classes of thematic progression are supplemented with several others. A new unitary terminology is therefore proposed. Taking into account this new, enlarged classification, the kinds of thematic and rhematic progression, I analyse 84 written advertisements, classified according to their interpersonal function.

F. Daneš (1974:113) brings insights into the issues of theme and rheme, approaching them from the point of view of the role they play within a sentence:

“[...] the rheme [...] represents the core of the utterance (the message proper) [...] from the point of view of text organization, it is the theme that plays an important constructional role. The rheme shows its significance as the conveyer of the ‘new’, actual information, while the theme, being informatively significant, will be employed as a relevant means of construction.”

He also proposes that theme and rheme should be studied not only at the sentence, but also at the discursal level and terms this global interweaving of themes and rhemes *thematic progression*:

“Our basic assumption is that text connexity is represented *inter alia*, by thematic progression (TP). By this term we mean the choice and ordering of utterance themes, their mutual concatenation and hierarchy, as well as their relationship to the hyperthemes of the superior text units (such as paragraph, chapter, ...) to the whole text, and to the situation. Thematic progression might be viewed as the skeleton of the plot.” (Daneš 1974:114)

Moreover, he identifies four patterns of thematic progression:

- *simple linear progression* (Daneš 1974:118), i.e. the whole rheme (Rh) or only part of it becomes the theme (Th) of the subsequent clause (Rh1→Th2; Rh2→Th3):

e.g. I (Th1) met your friend, Angie, at the wedding (Rh1). She (Th2) was wearing a fabulous red dress (Rh2). It (Th3) was a Versace (Rh3)!

- *constant progression* (Daneš 1974:119), i.e. the theme of the first clause is also the theme of the next clause (Th1→Th2 →Th3):

e.g. Your friend, Angie, (Th1) was at the wedding (Rh1). She (Th2) was wearing a fabulous red dress (Rh2). She (Th3) didn't seem very happy, though (Rh3)!

- *derived hyperthematic progression* (Daneš 1974:120), i.e. the themes in the subsequent clauses are derived from a hypertheme ([Hypertheme] →[Th1+Th2+Th3]):

e.g. The wedding was wonderful [hypertheme]! The restaurant (Th1) was decorated in white and green (Rh1). Balloons (Th2) were hanging from the ceiling (Rh2). Everybody (Th3) was having fun (Rh3).

- *split progression* (Daneš 1974:120), i.e. the rheme of the first clause is split into several items; each of these items becomes the theme of the subsequent clauses (Rh1→[Th2+Th3+Th4]):

e.g. I (Th1) met Mary, Pete and Paul at the wedding (Rh1). Mary (Th2) is still a teacher at that secondary school (Rh2). Pete (Th3) is still a student (Rh3). Paul (Th4) is now working as an engineer at Siemens (Th4).

These patterns of thematic progressions represent ideal situations, as Daneš himself points out, but, in real discourse, they may occur in a slightly modified or even incomplete form:

“TP's are often complicated by various insertions (supplements, explanatory notes) or asides. They may occur in an incomplete or somewhat modified form.” (Daneš 1974:121)

## 2. A new taxonomy of thematic and rhematic progression

Daneš' four types of thematic progression are a good starting point for the identification of further possible patterns of concatenation between themes and rhemes. I shall propose here a more detailed classification of possible thematic progressions and a new unitary terminology.



Daneš' first class, *simple linear progression*, refers only to the fact that a rheme may become the theme of the next clause, but says nothing about the fact that the theme, in its turn, may become the rheme of the next clause. From this perspective, a more accurate term for the description of Daneš' would be *simple linear rhematic progression* (SLRhP) (Rh1→Th2), while *simple linear thematic progression* (SLThP) would describe the second situation in which the theme turns into the rheme (Th1→Rh2):

e.g. Martha (Th1) was wearing a blue hat at the wedding (Rh1). I (Th2) only saw her in the distance (Rh2).

Daneš' second class, *constant progression*, refers only to thematic progression (ThP), and does not consider rhematic progression (RhP), viz. the rheme of the first clause may also be the rheme of the second clause. Therefore, the second class identified by Daneš would be better described as *constant thematic progression* (CThP) (Th1→Th2), and while for the latter situation I propose *constant rhematic progression* (CRhP) (Rh1→Rh2):

e.g. Martha (Th1) was wearing a blue hat at the wedding (Rh2). Surprisingly, Julia (Th2) was wearing the same blue hat at the wedding (Rh2).

The last class of thematic progression in Daneš (1974) actually refers only to the fact that a *rheme* may be split into several information units that may each be developed into themes of the following clauses, so I suggest that the term *simple split rhematic progression* (SSRhP) (Rh1 → [Th2 + Th3]) may describe it more accurately. There are, however, also 'compound' themes, whose elements become the rhemes of the next clauses. (The term *compound* has been placed between inverted commas as it does not necessarily refer to a compound grammatical subject or object, but to compound semantic units which are subsequently developed). This last type of thematic progression may be termed *simple split thematic progression* (SSThP) (Th1 → [Rh2 + Rh3]).

e.g. Fluoride and mint (Th1) are two elements contained by this toothpaste (Rh1). Teeth (Th2) are protected against dental decays by fluoride (Rh2). Fresh breath (Th3) is given by mint (Rh3).

Furthermore, the 'compound' rheme of a clause may be split into the rhemes of the next clauses, and the 'compound' theme of a clause may become the themes of the subsequent clauses. In these cases, I propose the introduction of the terms *constant split rhematic progression* (CSRhP) (Rh1 → [Rh2 + Rh3]) and *constant split thematic progression* (CSThP) (Th1 → [Th2 + Th3]). The class of **constant split rhematic progression** was also identified by Dejica and Superceanu (2004:49), but it was termed differently.

e.g. This toothpaste (Th1) contains fluoride and mint (Rh1). Teeth (Th2) need fluoride as a protection against dental decay (Rh2). But fresh breath (Th3) smells of mint (Rh3).

Here is an example of **constant split thematic progression**:

e.g. Fluoride and mint (Th1) are two elements contained by this toothpaste (Rh1). Fluoride (Th2) protects the teeth against dental decays (Rh2). Mint (Th3) gives us a fresh breath (Rh3).

Two other cases of split progression may occur, namely, what I have termed *compound split rhematic progression* (CoSRhP) (Rh1 → [Th2 + Rh3]; Rh1 → [Rh2 + Th3]) and *compound split thematic progression* (CoSThP) (Th1 → [Th2 + Rh3]; Th1 → [Rh2 + Th3]). In the first case, the ‘compound’ rheme of a clause becomes the theme of one of the two following clauses and the rheme of the other subsequent clause.

e.g. The toothpaste (Th1) contains fluoride and mint (Rh1). Teeth (Th2) need fluoride as a protection against dental decay (Rh2). But mint (Th3) gives us a fresh breath (Rh3).

In the second case, the ‘compound’ theme of a clause is split into the theme and rheme of the following two clauses:

e.g. Fluoride and mint (Th1) are two elements contained by this toothpaste (Rh1). Teeth (Th2) need fluoride as a protection against dental decay (Rh2). But mint (Th3) gives us a fresh breath (Rh3).

The last two classes of thematic progression that I propose refer to the fact that sometimes both the theme and the rheme may become either the rheme (*compound rhematic progression* (CoRhP) - [Th1 + Rh1] → Rh2) or the theme (*compound thematic progression* (CoThP) - [Th1 + Rh1] → Th2) of the following clause. In other words, in the first case, Rh2 combines Th1 and Rh1.

e.g. The research (Th1) was undertaken by Mary and John (Rh1). The committee (Th2) praised their research (Rh2).

In the second case, that of **compound thematic progression**, Th2 combines Th1 and Rh1:

e.g. I (Th1) worked together with Joe and Pete (Rh1). We (Th2) were a good team (Rh2).

Daneš’ class called the *derived hyperthematic progression* (DHP) ([Hypertheme] → [Th1+Th2+Th3]) cannot generate any other types of thematic or rhematic progression and remains as such.

### 3. Thematic and rhematic progression in written advertisements

In a previous paper (Şimon 2008:53-54), I took into account the interpersonal function of written advertisements and classified them into informative, appellative, commissive and contact advertisements.

*Informative advertisements* give information about the product/ service advertised. They may be *descriptive* (type 1.1) (those which name the products/ services, provide a list of their characteristics, etc.), *argumentative* (type 1.2) (those which make a claim or an appeal supported by the provided information) (Gieszinger 2001:213) and *narrative* advertisements (type 1.3) (those which resort to an endorser to support the advertiser and the claim (Tellis 1998:185)).

*Appellative advertisements* try to get the addressee to act in a certain way. These may be *questioning* advertisements (type 2.1) (they usually contain a question in the headline and the central topic of the question is the addressee) or *directive advertisements* (type 2.2) (containing a *direction*, especially in titles and slogans). They may refer to the consumption of the advertised product/ service or might prepare the consumption of the advertised product/ service (by offering further information, catalogues/ guides, coupons to be filled in and posted, by taking a closer look at/ trying the advertised product, mentioning the website address, etc.) (Gieszinger 2001:228, Kotler 1994:602).

*Commissive advertisements* commit the addressers to carrying out a specific action. They refer to the *offers* (type 3.1) (e.g. characteristics and advantages of the product/ service, preparation of consumption, etc.) and *promises* (type 3.2) (e.g. reference to the procedure, the high quality of the advertised goods, consumer's satisfaction, specific features of product/ service, etc.) made in an advertisement which have to be kept, otherwise legal actions may be taken (Gieszinger 2001:235, White1988:171).

Finally, *contact advertisements* express the addresser's wish to come into contact with the recipients and to set up or establish a social relationship with them. These advertisements may address the recipients directly (type 4.1) (e.g. contacts made in the headline/ quasi-headline, which refer only to a particular segment of population: women, men, children, house-owners, etc.) (Gieszinger 2001:244) or may illustrate the social relationship between the communication partners (e.g. reference to the recipients' desires/ wishes/ needs, which can be known only by close friends (type 4.2); the use of jokes or informal speech, just as between two old friends (type 4.3)) (Gieszinger 2001:249).

The corpus on which the present analysis is carried out consists of eighty-four written advertisements, nine for each sub-class with the exception of the sub-classes belonging to contact advertisements, which are represented by seven advertisements each. The only reason why the last class contains seven and not nine advertisements in each of its sub-classes is that, in the sources I have used that was all I could find, which might suggest that they are less frequently used than the other types of advertisements.

As for the still open issue concerning what counts as theme, I shall adopt Halliday's point of view (1994:54) that everything that precedes the topical theme

of the clause is part of the theme (Th), and the rest of the clause becomes the rheme (Rh). The topical theme refers to the participant expressed by the grammatical subject, the circumstance of place, manner and time or the verbal process, which is placed in the first position of an exclamatory clause. The hypotactically and paratactically related clauses are considered clause complexes, the first clause being the theme and the second one the rheme (Downing & Locke 1992:235). If the clause is elliptical, as it is often the case in written advertisements, the information will be recovered, placed between round brackets and taken into account, because, in the case of written advertisements, the semantic information is easily identifiable, even if it is not explicitly expressed. The last issue that needs clarification is that of hypertheme. In this respect, I shall consider that clauses making up the title and sometimes also the sub-title constitute a hypertheme, as they establish the semantic framework within which the information presented in the written advertisement will develop (Martin 1992:437).

I shall now illustrate the way in which my analysis has been conducted. The advertisement I have chosen for exemplification is a commissive advertisement making a firm offer and having an appellative function in the end, which prepares consumption:

- e.g. “You (Th1) can be debt free (Rh1).  
 There (Th2) is help waiting for you (Rh2).  
 Consolidated Credit Counselling Services, Inc. (Th 3/ Th4/ Th5/ Th6) can:
- ❖ Reduce (Th3) or eliminate interest charges (Rh3).
  - ❖ Consolidate credit card bills into one lower monthly payment (Rh4).
  - ❖ Pay off your debt in half the time (Rh5).
  - ❖ Save you thousands of dollars (Rh6).
- Call 1-800-SAVE-ME-2 (1-800-728-3632) for a FREE no-obligation consultation with a certified counsellor (Th7) and eliminate your debt worries now (Rh7)!  
 Consolidated Credit Counselling Services, Inc. (Th8): [www.debtfree.org](http://www.debtfree.org) (Rh8).”  
 (“Cosmopolitan”, June 2002)

The title and sub-title of the present advertisement make a firm offer by directly addressing the recipient and emphasising the benefits s/he gains by resorting to the advertised service, whose features are also introduced. The title ([Th1 + Rh1]) and sub-title ([Th2 + Rh2]) form a hypertheme ([Th1 + Rh1] + [Th2 + Rh2]) from which theme three (Th3) and seven (Th7) are derived. The third clause is made up of two paratactically related sentences; the first one is theme three (*Consolidated Credit Counselling Services, Inc. can reduce*) and the second one is rheme three (*or eliminate interest charges*). Part of theme three (*Consolidated Credit Counselling Services, Inc.*) becomes the theme of the following three clauses (Th4, Th5, Th6). Although this theme (*Consolidated Credit Counselling Services, Inc.*) is not repeated each time, it is easily recoverable from the linguistic context. The corresponding rhemes (Rh4, Rh5, Rh6) are considered independent rhemes and not information units which are part of rheme three for one reason, viz. the fullstop the advertisers use at their end. The modal verb *can* is ellipted in rhemes four, five and six, but it is easily recoverable from the



CoThP	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads
SSRhP	1 ad	1 ad	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads
SSThP	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads
CSRhP	1 ad	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	1 ad	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads
CSThP	0 ads	0 ads	2 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads
CoSRhP	1 ad	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	3 ads	1 ad	1 ad	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads
CoSThP	0 ads	1 ad	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads
DHP	9 ads	9 ads	7 ads	9 ads	9 ads	9 ads	9 ads	7 ads	7 ads	7 ads

The table above shows that all informative-descriptive and informative-argumentative advertisements contain a derived hyperthematic progression. Seven out of nine informative-narrative advertisements display a derived hyperthematic progression, which means that two advertisements do not have a title, but only the endorser's testimonial followed by the addresser's description of the product/service/ issue. Simple linear rhematic progression is favoured in informative-descriptive advertisements, while constant rhematic progression is moderately preferred in informative-narrative and informative-argumentative advertisements. All the informative advertisements tend to prefer constant thematic progressions.

The thematic progression that has been most frequently encountered in appellative advertisements is the derived hyperthematic progression (all advertisements) and the constant thematic progression. Questioning-appellative advertisements also resort to simple linear rhematic progression and constant rhematic progression. All the other types of themes, rhemes and thematic progression are scarcely, if ever, met in appellative advertisements.

All commissive advertisements contain a hyperthematic progression and moderately resort to constant thematic and rhematic progression. The commissive advertisements making an offer also use simple linear rhematic progression.

Finally, the most frequently used thematic progression in contact advertisements is the hyperthematic progression, as one can easily notice in the table above.

#### 4. Conclusion

While the first part of my study gives an outline of Daneš' view on the concept of thematic progression, the second part identifies all the possible types of thematic and rhematic progressions and F. Daneš' (1974) classification of thematic progressions is supplemented with nine more possible classes. The new taxonomy of thematic and rhematic progressions comprises thirteen classes: simple linear

rhetic progression, simple linear thematic progression, constant thematic progression, constant rhematic progression, simple split rhematic progression, simple split thematic progression, constant split rhematic progression, constant split thematic progression, compound split rhematic progression, compound split thematic progression, compound rhematic progression, compound thematic progression, derived hyperthematic progression.

Taking into account various views on what counts as theme, hypertheme or rheme, the method of analysis has been described. The 84 written advertisements making up the corpus have been classified from the perspective of the interpersonal function into informative advertisements (informative-descriptive, informative-argumentative, informative-narrative), appellative advertisements (interrogative-appellative, interrogative-directive), commissive advertisements (making a firm offer or promise) and contact advertisements (directly identifying the target group, referring to the recipient's desires/ wishes/ needs, using jokes/ informal speech). These advertisements have been analysed in terms of their use of thematic and rhematic progressions and the following conclusions have been drawn.

The global thematic structure of most advertisements consists of a derived hyperthematic progression, which presupposes the existence of a hyper-theme from which other themes are derived and most often enter some other thematic progression. Constant thematic progression is mainly used in informative and appellative advertisements. Constant rhematic progression is preferred in questioning-appellative advertisements, in informative-narrative advertisements, in commissive advertisements making a promise and sometimes also in commissive advertisements making an offer, in informative-argumentative advertisements and in contact advertisements directly identifying the target group. Simple linear rhematic progression is usually employed in informative-descriptive advertisements, in questioning appellative advertisements, in commissive advertisements making an offer. Simple linear thematic progression is moderately used in informative-argumentative and informative-narrative advertisements, in directive-appellative advertisements and in commissive advertisements making an offer.

Leaving apart the fact that sometimes a certain type of thematic progression is associated with a particular advertisement class, one can draw the conclusion that advertisers resort to a few types of thematic progression to persuade the prospective customers: derived hyperthematic progression, constant thematic progression, constant rhematic progression, simple linear rhematic progression and simple linear thematic progression. All the other types of thematic progression are rarely, if ever, encountered in written advertisements.

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