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EDITURA DIACRITIC
300127, ROMÂNIA, TIMIŞOARA
str. Lorena 2B, ap. 13
Tel.: +40 356 424 872; +40 273 298 330
E-mail: **edituradiacritic@gmail.com**

CONTENTS

ROMANTIC TRANSGRESSIONS AND VICTORIAN SUPERHEROES

SPLIT SELVES, GENDERED BOUNDARIES, TRAUMAS

WORDS IN CONTEXT

ROMANTIC TRANSGRESSIONS AND VICTORIAN SUPERHEROES

ROMANTICISM RECONSIDERED: THE CONCEPT OF HUMANITY IN ROMANTIC LITERATURE

ANTON POKRIVČÁK
"Constantine the Philosopher" University in Nitra

Abstract: *Literary theory and criticism of several recent decades have been dominated by cultural studies situating literary works within wider contexts of social, ideological and ethnic struggles. This approach naturally ignores more traditional focus on universal aspects of literary works. The article attempts to illustrate a shift from the universally human to the culturally relativistic in literary studies through a discussion of the critical evaluation of Romanticism offered by some traditional and non-traditional critical approaches to the study of literature, especially deconstruction. The paper's main objective is to argue, using the work of William Wordsworth, that literature is, first of all, a reflection of our common humanity, not of particular ideologies.*
Key words: *human, literature, Romanticism, Wordsworth, interpretation, theory, critical approaches, cultural studies*

1. Introduction

Of the major literary movements affecting a large part of the world, Romanticism is one of the most frequent examples quoted by literary scholars. Although not a self-conscious movement with stated principles and aesthetic criteria, it had a significant impact on the development of modern sensibility as well as on the formation of modern national literatures in Europe and the USA. The transition from the eighteenth century's relatively stable neoclassical principles and class-based values towards the nineteenth century's culture drawing its values from the areas of more fundamental human interests helped to create a world which, in its basic outlines, still exists, a world in which we are still living – and which is thus still being, in a way, "romantic".

The fact that the distance between what was going on in the nineteenth century and the present is not great can be documented by an intensive critical dialogue as regards a relatively sufficient theoretical and historical coverage of Romanticism. One should not be surprised about this, since, even though the term *romantic* was used well before the nineteenth century signifying many different things (Wellek 1963), as the name of both a period and a movement, it came to be referred to only at the end of that century (Hogle 2010:3). This terminological canonisation, however, does not mean that an unequivocal agreement upon its philosophical principles and artistic procedures has been established as well. On the contrary, it has to be stressed that major critical approaches have handled Romanticism differently, stressing different features in its creative principles. As Hogle points out (2010:3), "nearly all informed critics, past and present, base their labels and judgements not simply on 'general principles' but on theories – their own or those of others", and, as he further claims, this was also the case with Romanticism, whose different views "come from these more fundamental theoretical differences" (2010:3).

In what follows, I shall try to discuss some of these approaches, concentrating on those which view the romantic in terms of the human, since a

different, more basic view of humanity is what, in my opinion, makes this literary movement uniquely significant in the history of theoretical thinking about literature. I will start out from some of the critical approaches mentioned by Hogle (2010), who offers a relatively exhaustive, though often superficial, discussion of such theoretical (critical) approaches to Romanticism from the early twentieth century up to the present and, in the end, I will try to use some of their insights in discussing the work of William Wordsworth, especially one of his most famous poems – *Tintern Abbey*.

2. In search for the nature of humanity

The contradictory nature of Romanticism was first pointed out by Arthur O. Lovejoy (1960:9), who, in his essay *On the Discriminations of Romanticisms*, says that there are different movements labelled Romanticism in Germany, England, France; the fact that they were so called by different scholars "is no evidence, and scarcely even establishes a presumption, that they are identical in essentials". There is no unified movement called Romanticism, but rather individual "romanticisms" of different countries and artists.

A very different notion was emphasised by R. Wellek (1963:161) who, in his famous essay *The Concept of 'Romanticism' in Literary History* distinguishes certain common features which united individual artists and their works – "imagination for the view of poetry, nature for the view of the world, and symbol and myth for poetic style". While Lovejoy's conception was part of his theory of the *great chain of being*, Wellek, also very well versed in the European literary history, added a comparative dimension to his approach, tracing common features in the literary development of individual European countries.

It is a well-known fact that critical approaches falling under the heading of *formalism* did not hold a favourable view of Romanticism, especially because, in their understanding, a literary work is not supposed to be interpreted through the outside framework of reference, leading to its creator, the author, but rather as a linguistic object producing its meaning only as a result of the interplay among its structural parts. Moreover, the Romantics' locating poetry in nature and human imagination contradicted formalistic constructional principles. As Friedberg (2005:11) shows, the American New Critics, for example, almost ignored British Romantics at the expense of the Metaphysical Poets, considering their own approach to poetry as a reaction against them. In spite of this, it is possible to say that this reaction is also a hidden indebtedness, since, as some scholars claim, they follow the Romantics in their distinction between prose and poetry as regards their theory of poetry (for more see Friedberg 2005:11).

Some of the most characteristic critical readings of Romanticism come from the critics who stress the ontological aspect of poetic imagination and language. Thus, in several of his essays and books, Abrams emphasized the ability of Romantic art to synthesise the subject and object, mind and nature, and, based on Coleridge's (2001:676) theory of primary and secondary imagination - with primary being "a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM" and the secondary, the poetic imagination, partaking of the primary one - saw poetic creation almost as a part of divine creation. Using a metaphor of mirror and the lamp in the book of the same name, Abrams (1953) claimed that poetic language of the Romantics did not only reflect the world, but illuminated it with the imaginative power of subjective creativity. What Romantic writers did

was, Abrams argues, thus highly humane, since, by joining together the subject and object, Wordsworth and Coleridge managed to "revivify a dead nature, restore its concreteness, significance, and human values, and re-domiciliate man in a world which had become alien to him" (Abrams qtd. in Day 2012:96).

The same ontological vision of the Romantics can be found in the language of Paul de Man, one of the founders of deconstruction. Unlike Abrams, however, de Man employs all the skills of deconstructive philosophical equilibrium to show the inherent relativity and indeterminacy of the claims for transcendental abilities of Romantic poetic language, especially in his well-known essay *The Rhetoric of Temporality*, in which he attempted to invalidate Coleridge's criticism of what can now be understood as the values of Enlightenment discourse on art and thinking. In a famous and frequently quoted passage, Coleridge (Hill 1996) says that, among the miseries of his age is the mechanical understanding which does not recognise the medium between literal and metaphorical, confounding symbols with allegories, and claiming that "allegory is but a translation of abstract notions into a picture-language" and "Symbol (ho estin aei tautêgorikon) is characterized by a translucence of the Special in the Individual or of the General in the Especial or of the Universal in the General". What we, in fact, see here is a theoretical enunciation of Romantic principles rejecting the duality of perception (the allegorical vision of the world) and attempting a fusion between the subject, the artist, and the object of imaginative efforts - most frequently, the nature (the symbolic vision).

However, Coleridge's symbolic vision could not be left uncriticised by de Man (1983), who, true to the principles of deconstruction, tries to "unmask" the logocentric drive of Coleridge's language by showing the relativity and contradictory nature of his claims concerning the relegation of allegory to the sphere of the illustrative and the secondary, and the elevation of the symbol to the position of a fundamental poetic image partaking of both object and subject and bridging the abyss between the matter and the spirit. The main problem with Coleridge's analysis, according to de Man, lies in the word *translucence*. While allegory is characterised by Coleridge as a mere reflection of the material world, he (de Man) would expect Coleridge to characterize symbol by material substantiality. Instead of that, de Man (1983:192) argues, Coleridge gives it the quality of "translucence of the Special in the Individual or of the General in the Especial or of the Universal in the General". As he claims,

> [t]he material substantiality dissolves and becomes a mere reflection of a more original unity that does not exist in the material world. It is all the more surprising to see Coleridge, in the final part of the passage, characterize allegory negatively as being *merely* a reflection. In truth, the spiritualization of the symbol has been carried so far that the moment of material existence by which it was originally defined has now become altogether unimportant; symbol and allegory alike now have a common origin beyond the world of matter.

By drawing attention to Coleridge's definition of symbol through "translucence", Paul de Man seems to say that the difference between symbol and allegory is, in fact, not so important, since their relation to the world of matter is very thin (both figures have "the transcendental source") and thus they are not able to serve as initiators of a fusion between the mind and matter.

One more thing which is at stake in de Man's critique of Coleridge is the deconstruction's ultimate aversion to the organic concept of nature and art's ability

to capture the totality of the human being through figural language. However, in better examples of deconstructive discourse, some of de Man's and a few of Derrida's, but definitely not in the texts of an army of their followers, aversion can serve as an ultimate ontological force, highlighting the eternal loss within the human being, which both Coleridge and Wordsworth attempted to overcome in their best works.

De Man claims to disclose the impossibility of such an act in his perhaps most symptomatic text on the poetics of Romanticism, *Intentional Structure of the Romantic Image*. Analysing the ontological imagery of Hölderlin's famous phrase "Worte, wie Blumen, entstehn", he points out that his poetic language "seems to originate in the desire to draw closer and closer to the ontological status of the object" (de Man 1984:7). This is, however, impossible, since language does not share the ontological quality of a natural object - which does not *become*, but simply *is* (my emphasis). Poetic language, as de Man argues, can never achieve "the absolute identity with itself that exists in the natural object" and thus "can do nothing but originate anew over and over again" (1984:6). The same seems to be the case with the opposite strategy, i.e. the attempt on the side of the artist to totally get rid of sensual objects, to imaginatively achieve the state of consciousness which would "exist entirely by and for itself, independently of all relationship with the outside world, without being moved by an intent aimed at a part of this world" (1984:16). Although this kind of consciousness based on the loss of the object is not so elaborately refused by de Man, as in the case of the identification of poetic language with material objects, he believes that "it would be a mistake to assume that the ontological priority of the object is being challenged" (1984:8).

The interrelationship between mind and matter, or man and nature, is explored by de Man in other highly sophisticated analyses of Wordsworth's poems collected in the book *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*, all of them on a comparative principle. For him, the relative historical proximity of Romanticism, on one hand, puts increased demands for interpretation, since "we are not yet able to view it in the form of a clarified and purified memory, such as Greece presents itself to us" (1984:49), as well as, on the other hand, calls for a comparative treatment "not in order to demonstrate the secondary fact that certain poets have said more or less the same thing about this question; but rather because at this level of truth, the discourse (das Sprechen) of all the poets in that which constitutes their irreducibly personal character strives toward one and the same thing" (1984:50).

The comparative approach, though only in the context of European literatures, and the sophisticated phenomenological interpretation are perhaps what make the deconstructive criticism of Paul de Man one of the most humanistic approaches to the study of a work of art within the whole context of the twentieth century's theories. However, in its further development, deconstruction more or less abandoned the deep ontological treatment of literature and culture and concentrated on formalistic equilibria, aimed at demonstrating relativity and indeterminacy as principles informing all the so-called western metaphysical discourses.

The post-deconstruction, post-structural phase of literary studies marked a significant drift out of literary and aesthetic concerns, opening the boundaries of literary critical discourse and making it encompass all social phenomena. Literary criticism was seen as an agent of social change, championing the leftist, liberal, anti-establishment, and minority (of all kinds) values. Naturally, most of it was made possible by theoretical justification exercised through the deconstructive anti-

conceptual and relativistic linguistic terminology. One should thus never tire of stressing the birth of the most important recent trend, cultural studies, from the spirit (and language) of deconstruction, for example, in the person of Gayatri Spivak, once a translator of Derrida's *Of Gramatology* (1976). The shift towards the extra-literary affected all areas of literary research – historical, theoretical and critical.

In the context of the studies of Romanticism, this new mode of literary criticism, especially cultural studies, had to re-evaluate the universally humanistic concepts of imagination and mind-nature relationship, held by the Romantic poets, and show them as temporary, as ideological constructs "built on a base of deep social conflicts, national and international, that no ideology of transcendence can finally escape or entirely subsume" (Hogle 2010:29). For example, one of the areas where the traditionally proclaimed unity and organic self of Romantic writers is presented as facing contradictions and divisions is the issue of slavery: As Hogle (2010:27-28) noted,

> most of the scholarship in this cultural-studies revolution, though, stems from two overriding concerns thus far. One of them is how writing of the Romantic era responded to many elements of the slave trade and the issues of race linked to it […] The other is how criticism has dealt with the widespread use in Romantic writers of 'the East' as it was constructed by both proponents and critics of the British imperialism that had conquered India and would bring a quarter of the world under British control by 1820.

The focus of literary studies on ideology and larger (multi)cultural contexts has been taking place for several decades. There is no doubt that, during this time, literary criticism and theory have arrived at new insights concerning social and cultural aspects of literary works. However, they carelessly drifted to the other extremity and, as Mousley (2013:72) rightly affirms, until recently, "were in danger of becoming illiterate on the subject of human universals" and its mainstream still is in that danger. As he further argues, human universals are either not treated at all, or their treatment "has not been exactly nuanced" (2013:72), supposedly mistaking the natural for what is in reality cultural and the universal for the ideological (2013:72). But universals "are coming back into favour, across a number of disciplines" (2013:72).

Mousley's book *Literature and the Human: Criticism, Theory, Practice* is one of a very few examples which address the issue of humanity in a more systematic manner. Being aware of the complexity of struggle between the universalisers and the anti-essentialists in literary studies, he points to the necessity of a subtle approach in advancing the issue. Despite the call for subtlety, however, some of his statements are rightly "unsubtle", especially when he demonstrates what could be considered as great abuses of literary theory and criticism in recent decades, and, inherently, evokes the need to return "home" from the wild journeys into foreign fields of ideological criticism:

> when so many human beings are and have been denied such basics as food, water, shelter and affective support, it seems a decadently immoral luxury to make the argument of cultural relativism that 'of course' the human, including the human body, is always and everywhere a cultural and discursive construct. Give or take the odd sadomasochist, the duller truth is that we surely know human bodies well enough to be able to judge the physical, mental and emotional conditions under which they perish. The most relativist of cultural relativists probably knows this

> homespun truth to be true, but has been unable to say it because of the taboo surrounding human universals and because self-respecting intellectuals don't tend to do 'homespun' (2013:73).

Admittedly, the notion of body and embodiment is not enough to persuade this peculiar mix of culture and ethnicity obsessed theorists about the primary importance of the universal, since, after all, art is not determined only by the physical or material base (as Marxists would claim) of humanity. Mousley himself acknowledges that man "does not live by bread alone" and tries to justify the human in arts in terms of other concepts as well, including emotion, and beholding which will be made use of in the following brief discussion of Wordsworth's poetic principle.

3. William Wordsworth and the nature of the human

For the Romantics, cultural relativism was not an objective to pursue in either their poetic or their critical works. One need only read some of their crucial works to see that the human for them was not a cultural construct, but an existential condition. This becomes clear already in the first great product of Romantic consciousness – Coleridge and Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads* of 1798 – which was expected to contain, as Wordsworth put it in the "Advertisement" to the collection, "natural delineation of human passions, human characters, and human incidents" (Wordsworth, Coleridge 2011). A short look at the names of some of the poems included in the collection is enough to give one a clear idea of what is understood by the word "human": *The Foster Mother's Tale*, *The Female Vagrant*, *The Mad Mother*, *The Idiot Boy*, *The Complaint of a Forsaken Indian Woman*, *The Convict*. It is undeniable that the focus is on the common humanity, on low class people, mostly poor and in deep misery. For Wordsworth, humanity was located in the most basic feelings which he tried to address through a medium of poetic word. In the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* he is even more direct, claiming that "Poetry sheds no tears 'such as Angels weep,' but natural and human tears" (Wordsworth 2005). And, in one of the most famous phrases of literary criticism, he insists that it is "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (Wordsworth 2005).

The "natural and human tears" and "feelings" can be found in most of the poems of *Lyrical Ballads*. Together with nature, they constitute its main thematic elements. Although Wordsworth's times were by far not peaceful and dull, but, on the contrary, full of political and cultural clashes (e.g. the French Revolution and the wars with Napoleon), and the writer himself was not stuck in one place, but travelled both abroad and around his own country, his poems do not address the cultural or ethnic variety of the scenes, but people and nature, or rather, people in nature. The poet almost always goes to the very basics, to the existential "nakedness" of life, undisturbed by superficial layers of cultural or ethnicity "waste". Seen from this point of view, his work could be understood to represent one pole of Romantic literature, a common humanity, the other being the national emancipation struggle, which is, however, rather more frequent in Central and Eastern European literatures than in the work of English Romantics.

The nature – culture relationship could be demonstrated through a ballad, *The Complaint of a Forsaken Indian Woman* (Wordsworth, Coleridge 2011). As the title suggests, the poem is about an Indian, thus having a very clear cultural theme. However, what it expresses is the suffering of a woman (a person)

abandoned by her tribe and left to die. The suffering is strengthened by the loss of contact with her tribespeople and her exposure to the forces of nature associated with death (sky, wolf, snow). One does not find any gender, political or ethnic considerations here, but a deep human concern, an expression of ontological anxiety.

While this poem is an example of the writer's preoccupation with suffering and human anxiety as main ontological elements, the poem *Tintern Abbey* (Wordsworth, Coleridge 2011) surpasses the level of physicality and gets into what is beyond the materiality of things, the deeper layers where consciousness is able to perceive deeper meanings. Here Wordsworth makes a decisive step from human sympathy towards human spirituality, from the existential distress caused by material lack and injustices, towards the glimpses of the plenitude of meanings flashing through the sublimity of natural forms. And this will become his main objective, achieved with a varying degree of success, in his other works as well, most importantly in *Prelude* – a biographical poem aimed at the synthesis of individual, social and transcendental aspects of the writer's poetic destiny.

The poem *Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye During a Tour, July 13, 1798* was a result of Wordsworth's two visits of the place situated in the west of England. For the first time, he visited it in 1793 as part of the originally planned visit of the west of England and Wales, which he had intended to carry out with his former school-friend William Calvert. Because of an accident with a horse, Wordsworth finally made the journey alone. Before getting to the River Wye and Tintern Abbey, he spent some time wandering on Salisbury Plain, which was a source of inspiration for his other famous poem, *The Female Vagrant*. As Barker (2009) has it, the tour of the River Wye itself was not accidental, but the following of an artistic tradition of previous famous visits, and "laid the seeds for future poems. Incidents and images which then impressed themselves on his mind would be mulled over in future years and subtly infused with his own imaginative colouring". The second time he visited Tintern Abbey was in 1798, with his sister. As Barker (2009) says,

> the Wordsworths gave not the slightest hint that it was anything more than a simple tourist jaunt. Nothing could be further from the truth, for out of it would be born Tintern Abbey, the giant of *Lyrical Ballads*. As soon as William set foot on the banks of the Wye, it became an act of symbolic significance. He knew immediately that he was not just introducing his sister to a particularly lovely part of the country, but also revisiting his own past.

Two visits of the same place, at two different times, by two different people. The poet begins by expressing his happiness at seeing familiar places again, which "in lonely rooms, and mid the din / Of towns and cities" reminded him of the first visit, of "feelings too / Of unremembered pleasure". The natural beauties he had seen for the first time were not forgotten, but became part of his being, a source of pleasure, wisdom, and transcendental harmony and joy. The second coming is also a time to compare his previous self with the present one, his boyish days of direct excitement from nature, when "The sounding cataract / Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock, / The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood, / Their colours and their forms, were then to me / An appetite: a feeling and a love," with the present days when all this is lost, but something else is gained, nature as source of "The still, sad music of humanity". Now nature is far more, "A presence that disturbs me with the joy of elevated thoughts", a source of the sublime, morality and

spirituality, deeply "interfused" with human fate. Now the poet does not look at nature's outside form, but goes inside, to "behold" what he did not see for the first time.

Mousley (2013:139) associates beholding with the ability of literary works to offer their readers a special kind of seeing: "To behold something is to attend closely to that something. It is to dwell on it intensely enough and feelingly enough and deeply enough to reveal its actual or potential significance for human life". We do not see only through our eyes, but through our spirit, heart, mind, the whole personality, trying to penetrate to the sense of what we see, to make the thing in itself for the thing for ourselves, to become part of what we see. Wordsworth does exactly the same when he comes to Tintern Abbey for the second time – he 'beholds'. Nature is no longer "there" and he "here", but it is a "presence", "deeply interfused",

> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean, and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man,
> A motion and a spirit, that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
> And rolls through all things.

It is not only a holistic principle of being, but a "soul / of all my moral being", something the poet draws on during his later life, something that provides him with the fullness of sense, detachment and wisdom. He sees his own change through his sister, who accompanied him on his second visit: "May I behold in thee what I was once, / My dear, dear Sister!" But Dorothy was not just his sister, she was a lifelong friend, helping him with his work (proofreading) as well as with the household (taking care of his children and helping his wife). Here their "friendship" is at its beginning and the poet still sees his former self in her. Nature is to serve for Dorothy as a protector and a guardian, just like for him. It seems as if he had brought her there on purpose, to make her share his aesthetic pleasure.

The entire poem is an extraordinary expression of a most common, universal, human emotion and thus, in fact, a representative specimen of the new approach to arts. The emotion first experienced by the poet needs time to mature, through recollection and becoming meaningful. Natural forms need time to show their human meaning, which becomes full only if the human is transcended by the divine. Nature, man, God - these are the three interrelated parts of the Romantic image of the universe put into powerful interplay in *Tintern Abbey*.

4. Conclusion

Current (western) theory and criticism in its post-structural preference for ideological contexts and settings has moved far away from Romantic literary ideals. Instead of the concept of nature as *natura naturans*, we have *natura naturata*, nature which has been created, instead of transcendental aspirations, a world of individual cultural spaces and things feeding on particularities. God has lost his divine nature and has become either an ethnic curiosity or a cruel protector of particular truths.

But some of the excesses of current ideological discourses, however, do not justify literary scholars' ignoring wider contexts in which literary works are situated and returning, perhaps, to New Critical objectivity, for the times have

indeed changed. As Hagenbüchle claims in his 2001 essay, symptomatically entitled *Living Together as an Intercultural Task*, one of the greatest challenges for the new (21st) century is "[N]egotiating the coexistence of diverse cultures, ethnic groups, races, and religions" (2001:3). The several decades of cultural, ethnic, religious, political and ideological struggle within a global world has proved that "multicultural existence may not only be possible but, as will be the case in the future, necessary" (2001:4).

What has also been proved, however, is that the understanding of a literary work as a subjective expression must be put into a dialectical relationship with the universalising nature of its motifs and themes. Many masterpieces of world literature show that there is scarcely a culture which would be in total isolation from other cultures, that, as Zhenduo forcefully argued as early as in 1922, "people share many similarities, regardless of differences in cultural development" and that "all literary works, be they essays or poetry, are filled with common emotions, thoughts, ideals, sacred longings for happiness derived from spiritual freedom, disdain for suffering, hope for a better life, and the mysterious thing we call 'beauty'" (2014, Kindle edition). This common nature of our being is what we call humanity, and the task of literary scholars is not to ignore it, as well as not to ignore its opposite – an act of individual creation, when the artist is face to face with his/her muses, in the land of subjective imagination, since the dialectics of what is mine and what is shared is perhaps nowhere so strongly reflected as in literature. And the masterpieces of Romanticism are perhaps most forceful examples of its operation.

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IMAGES OF MASCULINITY IN LORD BYRON'S *TURKISH TALES*

GÖNÜL BAKAY
Bahçeşehir University

***Abstract**: Forms of knowledge regarding masculinity and femininity are socially constructed and discursively constituted. In this sense, cultural productions play an indispensible role in both representing and shaping masculinities. Making use of the insights provided by Deleuze and Guattari, this paper examines performatively constituted masculinities in Lord Byron's "Turkish Tales", with particular emphasis on the portrayal of male identity as fluid, metamorphic and capable of multiple possibilities. Representations of masculinity in Byron's "Turkish Tales" clearly illustrates that masculinity is not a fixed/universal concept, but one that would be better understood in light of Deleuze and Guattari's theory of becoming and may vary from one region to another.*
***Keywords**: Deleuze and Guattari, Lord Byron, masculinity, orientalism, Turkish Tales.*

> So long as there are battles to be fought, wars to be won, heights to be scaled, hard work to be done, some of us will have to "act like men". (Gilmore qtd. in Connell 2005:32)

> Masculinity does not exist except in contrast wih femininity. A culture which does not treat women and men as bearers of polarized character types, at least in principle, does not have a concept of masculinity in the sense of European/American culture. (Connell 2005:68)

1. Introduction

Representations of masculinity in Byron's *Turkish Tales* clearly illustrate that masculinity is not a fixed/universal concept, but one that may vary from one region to another, and would be better understood in light of Deleuze and Guattari's theory of becoming. Deleuze and Guattari's (2009) work has been highy important in helping to illuminate the complexities of identity as a "desiring production". As they suggest (2009: 12), "desire is not simply a discursively anchored need or lack, but a requirement to be in the social world to become an individual, male or female". For the purposes of this paper, I am particularly interested in their articulation of desire as the main dynamic informing the production of subjectivity. Drawing on the ideas explored in *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*, I try to show that their theorizing on subjectivity is instrumental in understanding and decoding performances of gender in literary works.

Quoting Nietzsche, Smith (2007:69-70) observes that "we all contain a vast confusion of contradictory drives. We have multiplicities not unities (...) There is another drive that is fitting these drives. So what we call thinking, willing and feeling are all merely a relation of these drives to each other". Quoting from Deleuse and Guattari, Smith (2007:71) also states that "drives are simply desiring machines themselves".

Forms of knowledge regarding masculinity and femininity are socially constructed and discursively constituted. In this sense, cultural productions play an

indispensible role in both representing and shaping masculinities. Utilising insights provided by Deleuze and Guattari, this paper examines performatively constituted masculinities in Lord Byron's *Turkish Tales*, with particular emphasis on the portrayal of male identity as fluid, metamorphic and capable of multiple possibilities. In the words of Deleuze and Guattari (2009:75), "we are not saying that Oedipus and castration do not amount to anything. We are Oedipalized, we are castrated; psychoanalysis didn't invent these operations, to which it merely lends the new resources and methods of its genius. But is this sufficient to silence the outcry of desiring-production: We are all schizos! We are all perverts! We are all libidos that are viscuous and fluid".

2. Byron's *Turkish Tales*

Lord Byron spent a lifetime following and realising his desires, writing books that were explicity devoted to the blurring and subversion of Eurocentric binarisms. Byron was at home with one sex/two gender relations he came across quite frequently in the East: "Byron's interest in Levantine homosexuality was not just the fraissor of the sexual tourist, but an integral part of his interest in encompassing Eastern and Western manners" (Leask 2004:112). Byron noted that homosexual relations did by no means hamper the image of vibrant masculinity. He further remarked that, although the Oriental male is proud, brave, a womanizer and an excellent soldier, he also occasionally shows preference for boys and has a sensitive side. In the nuanced portraits he presents, Byron seems to suggest that there is much more to the Turkish male than one finds in stereotypical orientalist depictions. In doing that, he successfully subverts essentialist paradigms and offers a historically grounded reading with regard to representations of masculinity in the East. Byron's portrayal of masculinities in *Turkish Tales* also foregrounds territorial, socio-economic and racial differences that inform gender performances and thus show that gender is a structure of social practice that may vary from one territory to another.

In "Child Harold Canto II" , the court is reflected as an ideal place for the gratification of pedophilic relations:

> For boyish minions of unhallowed love,
> the shameless torch of wild desire is let
> Caressed, preferred even to woman's self above.
> Whose forms for nature's gentler errors fit.
> All frailties mote excuse save that which they command. (Byron 1904:63)

According to Connel (2005:71),

> we should remember that masculinity like femininity is a far from simple matter. Not all boys and men experience masculinity in the same way. Masculinity to the extent the term can briefly defined at all,is simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experince, personality and culture.

Lord Byron started to employ Oriental themes with *Child Harold's Pilgrimage* and continued in *The Giaour*, *The Bride of Abydos*, *The Corsair*, *Lara* and *The Siege of Corinth.* "The Giaour" was the first of the Turkish tales to be published. Byron claimed that the tale was inspired by an actual event about which there were several different accounts. He also claimed that he had consorted with

this girl whom he thought to be Greek, although he later found out that she was Turkish. One day, he learned that she was to be executed – put in a sack and drowned, but he saved her. Byron takes the side of the Muslim hero in the tale, or at least makes the narrator do so. The second part of "The Giaour" can be divided into two sections. The first section tells the story, whereas the second section recounts the dialogue between the fisherman and the monk, who shares Giaour's story with the fisherman; then the Giaour confesses himself to the monk prior to his death.

Hassan is a Turk living in Greece; his wife Leila falls in love with the Giaour. Although he is deeply in love with his wife, he eventually drowns her in the sea, according to Turkish customs and laws. The Giaour, in turn, attacks Hassan and kills him in a pine grove beneath Mount Liakura:

> Hassan fell,
> A victim in that lonely dell,
> There sleeps as the true Osmanlie. (Byron 1904:214)

Hassan is depicted as a true Ottoman. He has the characterisitics of the Oriental hero. He is dark-haired, curls his beard, and embodies the image of a man deep in thought, according to Eastern customs. He is also superstitious, believing in the evil eye. He dies like a true Turkish hero, without remorse or regret. In his last moments, he prays to God, like a true Muslim.

> He called the prophet, but his power
> Was vain against the vengeful Giaour:
> He called on Allah- but the word
> Arose unheeded or unheard. (Byron 1904: 258)

It is interesting to note that the fisherman does not condemn Hassan's punishment of Leilah. He has been influenced by Muslim ethics. Instead, he condemns the Giaour for behaving in disregard of Muslim customs and traditions, according to which adultery is punishable by death.

In "The Bride of Abydos", Selim, the nephew of the ruler Giaffir does not conform to the ideal masculinity type of the East. He is gentle, sensitive to the feelings of women; just the opposite of Giaffir. "The Bride of Abydos" is the second Turkish tale and centers on the characters of Giaffir and his two children, Selim and Zuleika. Byron elaborates on the incestuous relationship between brother and sister. Later, the reader learns that Selim is not Zuleika's true brother, but her cousin. Zuleika reveals that her love for Selim cannot be deeper or less deep after she learns that they are not brother and sister. Selim becomes the leader of the pirates to avenge his father, who had been killed by Giaffir. He dies during this fight and Zuleika dies from grief. Was Byron reflecting in this tale his incesteous feelings for his half-sister Augusta Leigh and his friend's wife, Lady Francis Webster? Seniha Gülderen Karsnigi and Salih Okumuş (2002:11) remark that perhaps "being common for him, Byron sought tranquillity in the east and fleeing from his own reality; as well as in attempt to justify himself and his incestuous attraction, he once again uses Eastern setting and Eastern culture to mirror his own situation".

One must admit that the Byronic hero was largely influenced by the Muslim ideal of masculinity. As Sharafuddin (1991:251) states, "Byron is not especially

sympathetic to the morality of meekness. The virility of the Moslem masculine types attracted Byron".

Selim is depicted as a valiant soldier:

> A Thousand swords, with Selim's heart and hand,
> Waite-wave-defend-destroy-at thy command (Byron 1904:235)

Selim's talk with the Pasha reveals the differences in their characters. Selim says: "'Pasha, to hear is to obey. O more must slave to despot say…' 'Son of a slave' the Pasha answers, 'From unbelieving mother bred. Vain were a father's hope to see, Aught that beseems a man in thee'." (Byron 1904:265).

It is possible to suggest that the Pasha reflects the ideal of oriental masculinity. The following words reveal his bravery and strength which are ideal traits of masculinity:

> Thou with thine arm should bend the bow
> And heed the dart and cub the seed,
> Thou Greek in soul , if not in creed (Byron 1904:265)

> Go, let thy less than woman's hand
> Assume - the distaff - not the brand. (Byron 1904:265)

And he continues:

> I mark thee - and I know thee too,
> But there be deeds thou doess't not do break a lance.
> But if thy beard had had manless length.
> I'd joy to see thee break a lance.
> Albeit against my own perchance. (Byron 1904:265)

Selim is shown in the tale as an effeminate man in relation to the ideal of Eastern masculinity. Byron was fascinated with Ali Pasha. He stresses that Ali Pasha had a duality of character. In a letter, he depicts him with the following words:

> His highness is sixty years old, very fat, not tall but with a fine face, light blue eyes and a white beard, his manner is very kind, at the same time he posesses that dignity which I find universal among the Turks. He has the appearance of anything but his real character, for he is a remorseless tyrant, guilty of the most horrible cruelties, very brave, and so good a general, that they call him the Mohammedan general. (cf. Byron 1866:131)

> Ali reclined , a man of war and woes
> Yet in his linamets ye can not trace
> While gentleness her milder radiance throw
> Along that aged face,
> The deeds that lurk beneath. (Byron 1904:204, "Child Harold's Pilgrimage")

In "The Corsair", Byron portrays Seyd as a character who truly represents the masculine ideal of the East. Seyd is depicted with the words:

> High in his hall reclined Seyd
> Around the bearded chiefs he came to lead.
> Re'moved the banquet, and the last pilaf.
> Forbidden draughts, tis said, he dared to gruff,
> Though to the rest the sober berry's juice.

> The slaves bar around for rigid moslem's use. (Byron 1904: 286)

In "The Corsair", Byron also introduces a Western hero, Conrad, who is the leader of the pirates. Conrad attacks Seyd Pasha and rescues Pasha's beloved Gülnare. However, Gülnare feels attracted to Conrad who already has a lover, Medora, back home. Conrad is captured and is about to be punished by Seyd, who suspects Gülnare of adultery when she begs for Conrad's release. When Conrad refuses to kill Seyd Pasha before a fair fight, Gülnare kills Seyd to save her love. In this tale, Byron reverses conventional gender roles by giving masculine traits to Gülnare and by depicting the Western hero as polite and sensitive, but weak. Instead of the man rescuing the 'oppressed' damsel in distress of the East, a man is rescued by a woman. As reflected in this tale, Byron had a more fluid perception of gender roles.

As Keegan (2003:116) maintains,

> Sexual crossings over of gender boundaries in order to subvert sexual norms within this poem free Byron to speak of his sexual subjectivity and also force upon him the displacement or loss of homosexual inscription.

One should note that both the figure of Giaffir in "The Bride of Abydos" and Seyd in the "Corsair" were influenced by Byron's meeting with Ali Pasha. Byron's relationship with Ali Pasha should be examined within the context of his ideas on masculinity. Pride is perceived by Byron to be an important masculine trait**.** Sharafuddin (1991:250) notices that "in these figures of command, *honour* is not simply self -respect, but also *honours*- that is wealth, slaves and instant obedience". The masculine ideal in the East is agressive and dominating. Blackstone (1974) draws attention to the relationship of Ali Pasha of Tepelene (1740-1822) and Byron, pointing out that Ali Pasha is believed to be a member of the Bektashi order of Sufism, which represented a radical break with Islamic orthodoxy. "When writing a letter to his mother, Byron claimed that Ali had told him to consider him as a father" (Moore 1866:227). This father can be translated as "baba or spiritual guide". Thus, one can surmise the influence of sufism on Byron's Turkish tales (love, poetry, music, wine).

According to Deleuze and Guattari (2009:322-333),

> sexuality is everywhere: the way a bureaucrat fondles his records, a judge administers justice, a businessman causes money to circulate, the way the bourgeoisie fucks the proletariat and so on ... Flags, nations, armies, banks get a lot of people aroused.

Deleuze and Guattari rebel against the fixity of desire. They believe that desire does not have a fixed object. Capitalism and social repression lead individuals to behave sexually according to certain norms. Mass media has connected the entire world and helped create a global culture. Deleuze and Guatarri believe that deterritorialization and reterritorialization affect cultural experiences. They also affect cultural issues; in the 19th century especially, travel affected cultural events.

After the tale "Corsair", the main character Conrad disappears only to reappear in another tale entitled "Lara". Conrad adopts the name of Lara and returns to his country. Accompanying him is a page named Kaled, Gülnare in disguise. Now, she returns to the passive role of the female, idealized by Byron.

Keegan (2003:131) observes that Randolph Trumbach located the beginnings of modern homosexuality in the early eighteenth century,

> after the development of the molly houses, the name sodomite was ascribed to men married or not, who formed intimate relationships not only with boys, but also with other men. Significantly, sodomites began to be described as men exclusively interested in their own gender and inveterately effeminate and passive.

Keegan (2003:131) further suggests that

> In the poem "Lara", Byron conjoins his own homoerotic desires for Greek heroic love between men with the men with the the figure of the effeminate third sex of his own era.

In the last of the Turkish tales, "The Siege of Corinth", Byron introduces Alp as his own ideal of masculinity. Alp is a Christian turned Muslim, and yet he reflects the ideal characeristics of Muslim masculinity such as virility, pride and stoicism. Sharafuddin (1991:252) points out that

> the protagonist Alp combines both the Islamic ideal of virility and the romantic ideal of sensibility. He had won Francesca's love in defiance of her father's will. When he is accused of being a traitor and driven from his lover, country and Christianity, he becomes a zealous Muslim... this includes the commanding masculinity that Byron had recognized in the East.

Alp's dilemma is reflected in the poweful scene where he meets his lover Francesca, before the final assault. Should he save the Venetians, forgetting their unjust accusation of him, or take his revenge on Venice, using the powerful Turkish forces under his command? Some critics believe that Alp reflected some of Byron's cherished beliefs that "both Byron and Alp felt alienated and estranged from their own society" (Karsnigi, Okumuş 2002:211).

3. Conclusion

As Connel (2005:223) suggests,

> masculinity is shaped in relation to an overall structure of power (the subordination of women to men) and in relation to a general symbolism of difference (the oppposition of femininity and masculinity).

Byron was against all forms of imperialism. His questioning of the imperialism of the East had also led him to question the imperialism of the West. He was against Turkish inflexibility but, at the same time, against Greek frivolity and English complacency. His flexible attitude toward politics was also reflected in his attitude toward gender relations. Compared with England, he felt more drawn to the East which reflected for him more liberal views of gender relations and masculinity.

Applying Deleuze and Guattari's ideas to Byron's *Turkish Tales*, one could observe that performances of masculinity in the tales are imbued with an elasticity and energy that foreground the realm of masculinity as remarkably diverse and constantly shifting. Characters in the tales constantly defy the binary oppositions of masculine/feminine by taking on attributes of both sexes and thus becoming sites of incessant transformations. As a result, masculinities in *Turkish Tales* are

always in flux and thereby unstable. As a romantic orientalist who was able to attain a critical distance from the governing paradigms of his home culture, Byron simultaneously employs and subverts several Orientalist cliches and invites the reader to speculate on the multiple possibilities of identity.

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THE THEMES OF *REANIMATION* AND *IMMORTALITY* IN MARY SHELLEY'S SHORT STORIES

ELISABETTA MARINO
University of Rome "Tor Vergata"

Abstract: *Mary Shelley always showed a deep interest in the themes of reanimation and immortality, closely connected with her biographical experience and her political and social engagement. This paper aims at exploring this subject in her short stories, mainly focusing on "Valerius, the Reanimated Roman", "The Mortal Immortal", and "Roger Dodsworth: The Reanimated Englishman".*
Keywords: *Immortality, Mary Shelley, political and social engagement, reanimation, short stories*

1. Introduction: The themes of Reanimation and Immortality beyond "biographism"

Beginning with her debut novel, *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus* (1818), Mary Shelley often displayed a keen interest in the themes of reanimation and immortality, frequently featured even in her later output, including the three brief narratives this paper will focus on, namely *Valerius, the Reanimated Roman*, *Roger Dodsworth, the Reanimated Englishman*, and *The Mortal Immortal*. According to most critics, this clear predilection stemmed from the author's experience of loss and mourning, and from her parallel wish to defeat death and heal the pain of loneliness and despair through writing. Up until recently, therefore, a considerable number of scholars have actually opted for an essentially biographical interpretation of Mary Shelley's works, thus overlooking the social and political messages skilfully embedded in her plots. Just to mention a few of the most noteworthy examples, Richard Garnett (1891:vii), who first collected her short stories in 1891, noticed that the writer was so deeply affected by "the death of her infant son in 1819" that "she could never again command the energy which had carried her so vigorously through *Frankenstein*"; consequently, in his opinion, all the literary endeavours undertaken after her masterpiece were characterised by "that creeping languor which relaxed the nerve of her more ambitious productions" (Garnett 1891:xi). Even Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (1985:241-252), in their reading of *The Mortal Immortal*, viewed the tale as quintessentially autobiographical, since it was supposedly influenced by Mary Shelley's anguished feeling of being the only survivor among her family members and cherished friends, a subject she had already dealt with in her 1826 novel entitled *The Last Man*. To quote a fairly recent critical contribution, in her 2006 essay on *Roger Dodsworth, the Reanimated Englishman*, Elena Anastasaki (2006/07:27) contended that the author's striking fascination for the return from the dead developed from her "ardent desire to bring a loved one back to life, starting with her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, who died shortly after giving birth to her".

The powerful influence of the writer's eventful existence on her art is unquestionable; nonetheless, it cannot be regarded as the only parameter of analysis. Hence, in her seminal introduction to the 1996 Pickering & Chatto edition of Mary Shelley's novels, Betty Bennett (1996:xlix) contributed to undermining

the inextricable and exclusive connection between the writer's life and her output, by elucidating that "her major works [were] designed to address civil and domestic politics". Following in the steps of the late scholar, Graham Allen (2009/10:21) exposed the limits of what he calls "biographism", remarking that a certain "blindness to the political and, it must be said, philosophical dimensions of Mary Shelley's works often comes from an over-concentration on biographical readings". Moreover, as A. A. Markley (1997:98) emphasised, another meaningful aspect of her literary personality which has not been adequately acknowledged or investigated is her "wit and ability as a humorist", which clashes against the customary image of Mary Shelley as a doleful widow, and the pitiful mother of ill-fated children.

Given what has been argued so far, this paper sets out to explore the themes of reanimation and immortality in the three aforementioned short narratives, striving to overcome the restrictive boundaries of "biographism". As it will be shown, the author's serious social commitment, her profound political engagement, her strong belief in the educational power of history, as well as her ironic perspective on contemporary morals and manners are among the most significant and thought-provoking features of the stories.

2. *Valerius, the Reanimated Roman*

Written in 1819, during the Shelleys' first stay in Italy, this unfinished narrative chronicles the vicissitudes of Valerius, a Roman consul mysteriously revived in nineteenth-century Rome. Observing in amazement the decay and degradation of his native city, Valerius laments the miserable lot of "fallen Italy", besides expressing his utmost contempt for the "wretched Italians, who usurp the soil once trod by heroes" (Robinson 1976:333). After wandering through the ruins of what used to be the Empress of the world, he finds shelter in the Coliseum, "the only worthy asylum for an antient [*sic*] Roman" (Robinson 1976:336). His loneliness and dejection are only soothed by a young English lady, Isabell Harley, who often visits him together with her child. Following a strictly biographical interpretation, Mary Shelley and her little son Will-Mouse may be easily recognised in these two comforting figures; furthermore, as Miranda Seymour (2000:229) underlined, Isabel Baxter Booth, the writer's childhood friend, might have served as a model for her namesake character. As Seymour herself (2000:229) points out, however, the short story was composed immediately after the Austrian Emperor's brief sojourn in Rome during the Holy Week, an occasion which stirred emotions of contempt, disgust, and hatred in the author. In fact, in a letter to Maria Gisborne, on April 9th 1819, she described Emperor Frances II's arrogance, while he roamed the streets of the Eternal City, preceded by an officer, "who rudely pushe[d] the people back with a drawn sword"; in her words, "[my] English blood would, I am afraid boil over such insolence" (Feldman and Scott-Kilvert 1995:256n). The invention of the "reanimated Roman", therefore, turns into a political tool that enables Mary Shelley to shake the conscience of the enfeebled Italians. The resurrected consul seems to be entrusted with a vitalizing mission: by remembering the lost glories of Rome, by uncovering its dormant values, he pours forth his "last awakening call to Romans and to Liberty" (Robinson 1976:336). After all, as Rachel Woolley (2001:91) elucidated, "the presence of the past", in the writer's works, "is not commemorative but functional. […] The use of memory, for Shelley, makes the past active in the present". What is more, the author's own

words of encouragement and passionate love for her adoptive country are uttered by Isabell Harley, who still believes the enslaved Italians can draw new energy and strength from the holy relics of history, despite their humiliation at the hands of foreign tyrants:

> I worship the spirit of antient [*sic*] Rome and of those noble heroes, who delivered their country from barbarians […] Rome is fallen, but she is still venerated […] When a stranger resides within their bounds, he feels as if he inhabited a sacred temple – sacred although defiled. […] It seems to me that, if I were overtaken by the greatest misfortunes, I should be half consoled by the recollection of having dwelt in Rome. (Robinson Ed. 1976:340-42)

3. *Roger Dodsworth, the Reanimated Englishman*

This complex narrative, joining the characteristics of an essay to those of a short story, was probably composed in September-October 1826, following an ongoing debate on the peculiar personage of Roger Dodsworth, a Seventeenth century English gentleman. As it was publicly believed, he had remained buried under an avalanche for over 170 years, only to be resuscitated by a certain Dr. Hotham, who had noticed his perfectly preserved frozen body in a cave on Mount St. Gothard. This piece of news (obviously, a hoax) was first published in *Journal du Commerce de Lyon* on June 28th 1826, and it was immediately translated into English, and reprinted in prominent British newspapers, such as the London *New Times*, the *Morning Chronicle*, the *Manchester Guardian*, the *Sun*, the Edinburgh *Scotsman*, and the Tory weekly magazine *John Bull* (Robinson 1975:22). Even William Cobbett, a renowned journalist and pamphleteer, and the Irish poet Thomas Moore contributed to the hoax, by confirming the authenticity of the story, while adding new whimsical details to it. Cobbett declared that a similar reanimation of a frozen ice-skater had occurred in the county of Westmoreland, that winter (Robinson 1975:22). Moore (1833:700) wrote a poem, printed in the London *Times* on July 14th, in which Roger Dodsworth, "a good−obsolete man, / who has never of Locke or Voltaire been a reader", was portrayed as a staunch conservative. Moreover, some articles allegedly penned by Roger Dodsworth himself appeared in *John Bull* and the *New Monthly Magazine*, between September and November 1826.

Mary Shelley submitted her *Roger Dodsworth* to Cyrus Redding, the editor of the *New Monthly Magazine*, who nevertheless decided to discard it (the narrative would be first published in 1863, in his collection of reminiscences entitled *Yesterday and To-day*). The story summarises the events of which Dodsworth was the protagonist, followed by a hypothetical dialogue between the "youthful antique" (Robinson 1976:44) and his rescuer, and a short account of the probable second death of the reanimated gentleman (just 12 days after his recovery), a death caused by his inability to adjust to modern times. Even in this case, far from merely participating in the hoax, Mary Shelley wished to spread a message of social reform, thus effectively managing to *awaken* not just her character but, metaphorically, also her countrymen. The author fully embraced the ideas expressed by her father, William Godwin, in his 1797 essay *Of History and Romance*; like him, she also believed that the study of history, "among those pursuits which are most worthy to be chosen by a rational being", could help develop a "sagacity that can penetrate into the depths of futurity" (http://www.english.upenn.edu/~mgamer/Etexts/godwin.history.html). It is not

surprising, therefore, that a wide section of her story is devoted to metempsychosis, and to the benefits mankind could derive from the memory of past lives:

> Pythagoras, we are told, remembered many transmigrations of this sort, as having occurred to himself […] It would prove an instructive tool for kings and statesmen, and in fact for all human beings, called on as they are, to play their part on the stage of the world, could they remember what they had been. […] We may suppose that the humble would be exalted, and the noble and the proud would feel their stars and honours dwindle into baubles and child's play when they called to mind the lowly stations they had once occupied. (Robinson 1976:49)

Mary Shelley seems to foster a more sensible and committed search for a usable past, and she also employs irony as a strategy to achieve her purpose. As Rachel Woolley (2001:89) emphasised, through the ludicrous depiction of the antiquarian society, the writer aims at ridiculing the way history, devoid of its meaning and deprived of its mission, "has become spectacle, a pastime, an investment, and a commodity":

> The antiquarian society […] had already begun, in idea, to consider what prices it could afford to offer for Mr Dodsworth's old clothes, and to conjecture what treasure in the way of pamphlet, old song, or autographic letter his pockets might contain. (Robinson 1976:43)

Furthermore, the satiric device of introducing a naive observer belonging to another epoch allows the author to covertly criticise the Crown. Indeed, counting on Roger Dodsworth's ignorance of the rather difficult political situation during the reign of George IV, Dr. Hotham can artfully exalt and exhibit the (feigned) benevolence of the King and his associates, thus producing a humorous effect on the readers, who certainly know the truth: "The king, God bless him, spares immense sums from his privy purse for the relief of his subjects, and his example has been imitated by all the aristocracy and wealth of England" (Robinson 1976:46).

4. *The Mortal Immortal*

This tale, published in 1834, is narrated from the point of view of Winzy, Cornelius Agrippa's assistant, who decides to tell the story of his never-ending life on his 323rd birthday. Attempting to heal his pangs of love, he had drunk a magic concoction, which had turned out to be the elixir of immortality. Hence, the bliss of winning the lady of his heart, the beautiful Bertha, soon became a curse, as she rapidly aged and died, while he was doomed to look forever young and live in everlasting loneliness.

Both Diane Long Hoeveler and Marie Roberts have offered a biographical interpretation of the story: the former has highlighted the fact that the writer "experienced her life as a sort of curse to herself and the ones she loved" (Long Hoeveler 1997:160); the latter is prone "to identify Bertha with the ageing Mary Shelley, who was continually confronted by a spectre of Shelley as a timeless vision of perpetual youth and immortal genius" (Roberts 1992:62). Nevertheless, it is important to remember that the story was written specifically for *The Keepsake*, a successful and fashionable literary annual designed to adorn any lady's boudoir, a sort of "cultural fetish", as Sonia Hofkosh (1993:206) defined it, a precious commodity which was marketed "as [a] tasteful gif[t], [an] object[t] to be coveted

and admired" (Sussman 2003:165). The appearance of luxury and elegance of *The Keepsake* was so important that contributors were asked to create their stories to accompany pre-existing engravings and illustrations (O'Dea 1997:65-66). Mary Shelley was assigned the picture of "Bertha", a charming girl descending a staircase to meet an elderly woman (her benefactress, in the tale) attended by a page. Given the characteristics of the gift-book and its readership, it could be argued that the daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft actually wished to warn young ladies against the dangers of relying solely on their ephemeral bodily attractiveness. Accordingly, far from adhering to the editor's policy of cultivating beauty and physical perfection, the author adopted a confrontational stance against this hedonistic and self-indulgent attitude, perfectly embodied in the main female character of *The Mortal Immortal*. Bertha is, therefore, poked fun at and held as a negative model: "she was somewhat a coquette in manner" (Robinson 1976:221), vain and frivolous, but once her looks began to fade, she turned into a "mincing, simpering, jealous old woman" (Robinson 1976:228), who, in Winzy's words, "sought to decrease the apparent disparity of [their] ages by a thousand feminine arts-rouge, youthful dress, and assumed juvenility in manner" (Robinson 1976:228). She even bought a gray wig for him, but to no avail.

5. Conclusion

As I have tried to demonstrate, Mary Shelley's works deserve to be analyzed beyond any form of "biografism"; her assumed loneliness, her aspiration to reanimate her personal and collective past, as well as the beloved members of her family are just a few of the many strands that compose the rich texture of her writings.

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CHANGES OF PERCEPTION IN GOTHIC LITERATURE. AN INQUIRY INTO THE EFFECTS OF READING GOTHIC

PAUL MĂRGĂU
West University of Timişoara

Abstract: *Starting from the idea of perception as it applies to literature, and taking into account the effect that reading can have over someone, I discuss the way in which perception of Gothic texts and monsters changes from dread and fear in the 18th century Gothic literature to love in today's postmodern Gothic, as a consequence of the transformations that we have undergone, and that have resulted in radical shifts of mentality and an overt expression of everything that was once hidden, repressed and despairingly desirable, done through the use of words that leave no room for misinterpretation.*
Keywords: *dread, Gothic, monster, perception, reading*

1. Introduction

One of the major characteristics of Gothic literature is that it has a ripple effect, over time and space, on our concepts of Self and Society, due to its being a distinct type of literature, with a function of psychological release, mediating the conflicts and sociocultural anxieties of the writer and of the reader, a literature defined by Kelly Hurley (1996:4) as "an instrumental genre, re-emerging cyclically, at periods of cultural stress, to negotiate the anxieties that accompany social and epistemological transformations and crises". These anxieties are expressed through the use of tools for the subversion of humanity such as robots, monsters and supernatural elements, all of which are expressed euphemistically and created through a process of deconstruction and reassembly into new constructs, whether by the merging of flesh with machine or by positive contamination as a result of a bite, a transfer of fluids or an external influence. Thus, monsters, the representative figures of the Gothic, are "never created ex nihilo, but through a process of fragmentation and recombination in which elements are extracted from various forms and then assembled as the monster" (Cohen 1996:11) who claims an identity, which makes Gothic literature a premonitory device of what is to become future generations and their *becoming* something more.

2. An outline of Gothic's progress

There are three major stages of evolution through which Gothic literature goes; I chose to see one of them as a transition period that paved the way to contemporary variants through the death of the divine and the creation of the figure of the ghost. All three main stages, as well as the transitional period, require further detailing if we are to set up a favorable context for the inquiries this paper proposes about Gothic literature. The 18th century was the time during which the idea of a representative figure of the Gothic style was being shaped, as this style of writing was beginning to become known. The Gothic tries to distance itself from Romanticism, which had encapsulated it as its darker Other, while standing as a comeback to the immoral aristocracy and the disappearance of the nobility, and is characterized by a moralizing tone, passing on some form of judgment of situations and/or characters; its representative figure is vice and corruption and its hero is the

figure of the dispossessed, defined by Toni Wein as "models of manners and integrity", with "many conventional attributes of the romance hero […]" which have been "robbed of their birthrights"(2002:9).

Starting with the 19th century, Gothic literature begins its exploration of boundaries, as short periods of time are stretched over many pages, and years are compressed to a few lines, chronology is dislocated and textual structures are suspended and new defining terms appear. This is a time when Gothic literature changes to such an extent that it can be seen as an Other of its previous version, due to new motifs present and new defining terms, as it moves away from the margin more and more to the center, from settings such as churches, graveyards, monasteries or other isolated locations, to drawing rooms, and inside cities rather than at their outskirts; it begins to deal with themes pertaining to science, philosophy, historical philosophy, politics, theology, biography and autobiography. Such texts are "filled to repletion with violence, imprisonment, torture, murder, parricide, sex, rape, incest and cannibalism", which makes them be considered as nothing more than "a numerous class of caterers to the public, ready to minister to any appetite, however foul and depraved" (McEvoy 2007:22). So we see that, from initially being considered merely a form of dark Romanticism, the Gothic style now becomes a bad case of sensation fiction, its only function being that of "exposing the reader's nervous system to a series of shocks strung on a high-tension narrative thread" (Warwick 2007:31).

A modernist type of Gothic fiction is hard to define because of the period's instability, which makes it difficult to interpret. That is why, for all intents and purposes of this paper, modernism will be considered a period of transition for Gothic literature, being easily confounded with other types of literature or seen simply unfit for stable present day categorization, despite the fact that modernism was a period during which the focus was on the here and now, just as plots and settings of Gothic novels were very similar to those of the previous centuries, to the point of confusion of temporal placement. In its position as a bridge between previous and future forms of literary development, modernism has three points of interest which must be taken into account: the exploration of morality begins to reveal cracks and instances of failure, a phenomenon believed by Smith and Wallace to be due to the fact that texts in this period are "joined […] by their fascination with the potential erosion of moral value, and with the forms that amorality can take" (2001:3). This could mean that any modernist text is a Gothic text, although we know that this is not the case; the crisis of the Self finds grounds for development during this time, as the body, Smith and Wallace (2001:3) claim, becomes "ghosted by a sense of something potentially alien and strange. Anxieties about the physical health of the collective body – human species, race, nation-state, culture – become anxieties about the idea of the self"; and, finally, pre-modern texts reveal the focus on the present, which will evolve into the focus on the Self later on, the best example for this being none other than Stoker's *Dracula* whose "[…] use of diary extracts, newspaper cuttings and letters evidences an interest in the material here-and-now" (Smith and Wallace 2001:2).

The liaison that modernism offered to the different stages of development of the Gothic, mainly the possibility of uttering the unspeakable by breaking the boundaries imposed by cultural limitations and challenging the notion of sanctity and divinity, as well as introducing the ghost, created a space for a very diverse postmodern Gothic, a Gothic of embodiment, at times, a symbiotic genre that is dependent on other forms of fiction with which it coexists inside the same novel, at

times challenging in its availability for interpretation within the bounds of specifically Gothic tropes, defined by Theo D'haen (1995: 283) as

> a particular kind of fiction, primarily but not necessarily contemporary characterized by a common set of techniques, conventions and themes (self-reflexiveness, metafiction, eclecticism, redundancy, multiplicity, discontinuity, intertextuality, parody, pastiche, the dissolution of character and narrative instance, the use of minor or popular genres, the erasure of boundaries, and the de-stabilization of the reader).

His definition of postmodern Gothic literature as an unstable genre points out one effect of literature on the readers, destabilization, an effect only possible because of a pre-existing factor in the persona of the reader that allows for this to occur. Steven Bruhm's argument for the necessity of a contemporary Gothic genre provides us with that pre-existing factor. He posits that elements such as the advances in science and the development of weapons, feminism, gay liberation movements, the civil right movement of the 1960s for African-American people, the many attacks on Christianity or the proliferation of the cult of the vampire started by Stoker's novel "attest to the powerful threat (and attraction) posed by our culture's increasing secularity", making us able to "conceive of superhuman beings unable to be destroyed" (Bruhm 2002: 260-261).

Due to the fragmentation of Gothic literature as a relatively fixed construct, its representative figure also underwent a separation, provided by the freedom of thought and scientific progress specific to this secularity invoked by Bruhm, in the *Cyborg* and the *Other as Self*. As a hybrid of human and machine, the cyborg stands as the representative for the boundary of corporeality's being transcended. Katherine N. Hayles is one of the theorists of man's transformation into a machine, of the possibility of transferring one's consciousness to a computer; thus man becomes pure information, transcending limitations such as time, space and materiality. She says that "we all experience ourselves as embodied creatures, living in specific times and places and limited by the biological, cultural, and historical inheritances that define us", but "contemporary technology, especially informatics, has given us the sense that we can transcend these limitations and live a disembodied, free-floating existence" through the possibility of "transfer of information from one point on the globe to any other" (Hayles 1990:394); however, she also acknowledges the fact that by losing the body of flesh, we lose the link with emotions and sensory experience, because "if becoming information allows us to escape the hazards of embodiment, it also usurps the joy that comes with physical well-being; if it bestows control, it takes away connection with direct sensory experience" (Hayles 1990:395-396). The cyborg introduces the possibility of a new stage of evolution, posthumanism, and it is Hayles who offers a description of this evolutionary stage, seeing it as a stage that "[…] thinks of the body as the original prosthesis we all learn to manipulate" and "configures human being so that it can be seamlessly articulated with intelligent machines" because, in posthumanism, "there are no essential differences or absolute demarcations between bodily existence and computer simulations, cybernetic mechanism and biological organism, robot teleology and human goals" (Hayles 1999:2-3).

The second postmodern representative, the Other as Self, is the result of the fact that perception of the Self becomes unbound. Elements such as ethical inquiries, self knowledge or repressed emotions and desires are under heavy attack during postmodernism and, in literature, the expression of the hidden parts of the

Self through the use of the *unheimlich* makes the postmodern Gothic thrive. A conflict occurs between the Self as one knew it, and the Other, which begins to exert a stronger attraction, to the point of no return, when one begins to believe that s/he has lived as an Other whose Self has been hidden all along and is now brought out to light. Homosexuality or issues pertaining to the transgender stand as the best examples of such cases when the Self vs. Other becomes the Other vs. Self, at a time when "it may be difficult for postmodern readers to recuperate adultery, premarital sex, prostitution, cross-dressing, rape, and even celibacy as deviance, as threatening not only to social standing but also to identity itself" (O'Malley 2006:5). Such cases of role reversal are what, I posit, lead to the survival of Gothic literature and its adaptation to contemporary time and space, so as to accommodate any means of expression of anxiety. At the same time, this survival of the genre points at the reader of such literature and the writer, both of whom have a more rational approach to it, a more self-conscious standing and a radically altered perception of what is threatening and dreadful and what is desirable and soothing in terms of monstrosity.

3. Why read Gothic literature?

An act of reading entails a series of mental processes that form one's perception of the text and its characters, with a direct effect that is translated into the reader's reality and interactions with the world every time similarities between the fictional and the real world occur. Thus, reading entails processes such as comprehension, visualization, identification of familiar constructs, as well as constructs that step outside the boundary of the known and alter the individual from the point of view of his/her rationalization of events and situations, or of his/her perception of the world. Jèmeljan Hakemulder (2000:18) offers a great basis for the change that occurs in readers of fiction, seeing reading as "a thought-experiment" in which readers "try out certain roles and reflect on the consequences of these roles". The best way to convey this change is to think of both previously acquired sets of information and new ones, contained in the text being read, as dots that lead to the formation of an image. Each act of reading is a performative act, leading to the creation of microcosms one inside another, i.e. each series of connected dots forms an image that becomes a dot itself, leading to an endless creation of new images.

Oxford English Dictionary defines *perception* as "the ability to see, hear, or become aware of something through the senses, […] the neurophysiological processes, including memory, by which an organism becomes aware of and interprets external stimuli" or "the way in which something is regarded, understood, or interpreted". Applied to the act of reading, perception means an awareness of something triggered by stimuli, which is then interpreted through the mental process of connecting that which was read to that which one already knew, that which had been perceived before, a pre-existing quantity of information which reacts to exactly the same or similar stimuli as those the text contains. Neuropsychology has taught us that perception is a physical phenomenon occurring in the secondary cortex, which "produces perception and the integration of sensory and motor behaviour" (Beaumont 2008:41). According to Beaumont, the secondary cortex is the part of the brain that interprets what the primary cortex records in terms of stimuli, be they visual, audible or of any other type, while the temporal lobes play a role in "governing correct perception of the self-located

within an experiential framework" (2008:90); this would then complete Hakemulder's idea of the effect of role playing following the act of reading.

There are several elements of perception in the act of reading that should be further detailed in order to determine the factors that lead to the change this paper proposes: *comprehension* (mediated by sensation and attention); *cognizance* (brought on by visualization, reasoning – understood as judgment – and accessing former representations); *apprehension* (brought on by access to memory and pre-existing representations and seen as both an act of understanding, of grasping something, and as "anxiety or fear that something bad or unpleasant will happen", as defined by the *OED*); *interpretation* (which is achieved through role playing and role taking); *temporary defamiliarization* (and thus willing suspension of misinterpretation – also temporary – and identification with the character, the situation, etc.); and *change of self-concept* (as a result of judgment – understood as a conclusion and subjective – and reflection on what was read).

As mentioned before, more contemporary forms of Gothic fiction began to allow space for interpretation of the same novel through different sets of critical approaches. For example, a dystopian novel depicting a war between humans and clones/androids, in an after-Earth age, can be interpreted both as a science fiction novel, appealing to the innocent readers looking for sensation eliciting texts, and as Gothic fiction, in the case of more experienced readers seeking alternative translations of fears, anxieties and secret longings during contemporary times. In the same way, a homoerotic novel populated by vampires can be read as both erotic horror literature and as a type of literature which mediates or advocates against present day anxieties of the homosexual community fearing discrimination, which again fits the pattern of the Gothic.

We can thus claim that, for contemporary writers and readers of the Gothic, this type of literature acquires redeeming properties for the individual's psyche and opens doors to the Self. Gothic literature and its reception as well as the perception of its inner mechanism and representative figures has advanced to the point where we see that, whereas the first Gothic texts were sought for the temporary thrill that they gave through the image of a normal world invaded by monsters and supernatural elements – being a kind of fiction read in the shadows, a type of literature fit only for the lowest and most lacking in dignity, contemporary texts are sought for the escape from the normal world into an alternative reality, where the supernatural is the norm and the thrill is more permanent. The vampire, the werewolf and the witch become the day to day people of our lives and that is the main pattern one recognizes when reading the text. What remains is the average human being who feels left behind, having no supernatural traits; the subsequent reactions s/he has are the identification with the reality of the text, the feeling of being a prisoner bound by normality, and a conviction that s/he is a suitable candidate for a transformation into something else, something more, something to which s/he lays claim as his/her own Self to which s/he is entitled, having lived so far as an Other.

The most important part of the process of perception, without which it could not occur, is empathy; this plays a crucial role in the connection between reader, text,and what the text speaks about and is a primary component in determining the response, or lack thereof, to the text, the story inside it, the circumstances portrayed, etc. Hakemulder (2000:69) identifies three components of empathy, of which the third applies best to the act of reading, namely *the experiential component* [my emphasis]; this in turn contains three subcomponents: the

experience proper, in which the reader becomes aware of his/her connection to the character(s), the correction and redirection of the affective reactions according to appropriateness, and the generation of affective reactions, or role-taking, by recollecting past pleasant or unpleasant feelings, which s/he projects onto the character(s) as if responding to their situation.

Another element without which perception cannot occur is that of truth inside a work of fiction, because "words have no power to impress the mind without the exquisite horror of their reality'" (Poe 1938:108); this supports the claim that the success of fiction relies on the element of truth because, as Hakemulder (2000:10) explains, "the expectation that the truth content of literature goes beyond mere facts has given rise to certain opinions about the effects of reading, for instance that literary texts affect readers' ideas about probability". The importance of Gothic fiction is thus sustained by the effect it has on the perception of what is real, what is not, what can become real and what we wish was real.

For the Gothic fiction of the 18th and the 19th century, the emotional response of dread, of fear of the uncanny relied deeply on the subconscious fear that the horrible facts described in the story could really take place, whether in a nearby or distant future; nowadays, this has become a conscious longing, an expectation even, ultimately causing one to seek such texts for the rush of experiencing, in a fictional plane of existence, the reality of the uncanny described in the text. In reading fiction, we put ourselves in the shoes of the characters, or of the one character we identify ourselves most with, and we experience what would happen if a certain chain of events unfolded. But in doing so, we also connect to the writer who conducts an experiment as he writes, which reminds us of John Gardner's idea of a moral laboratory, further developed by Hakemulder who says: "A sequence of events presented in a story affects readers' beliefs about causality: 'action *a* leads to consequence *b*'" (2000:11).

We see thus that Gothic literature forces audiences not only to think of the context, the consequences and the motives of the protagonist in a text, but also of the deeper meaning behind it all, of the outer conditions of life, the internal struggles of humanity, causing people to open their eyes and either run in horror, or reconsider everything they thought they knew, inside a new, enriched view of the world, because reading "enhances the ability to make psychological inferences about the emotions, thoughts, and motives others have in certain situations" (Hakemulder 2000:13). What is more, Gothic literature alters perceptions, creates new ones, and filters our conscious and subconscious mind, and if "reading narratives enhances insight into human character, this would indirectly improve the quality of our ethical inquiries, at least on measures used in the social sciences" (Hakemulder 2000:14), then, also, our ability to express anxiety through the healthy, harmless, laboratory of writing or reading, would be developed. In its most general form, Gothic literature asks the questions 'Who am I?' and answers it with the answer to the question 'Who do I want to be?'

The change that occurs in the reader projects directly onto the way s/he interacts with the world, which provides him/her with a situation in which his/her norms are both shaped and challenged. Following an act of reading, the individuals' response to the text "is influenced by their self-concept and norms, and vice versa: their self-concept and norms are affected by their response to the text" (Hakemulder 2000:70), and this is due to the fact that reading "may produce a new understanding of oneself, a genuinely new conception of one's values and prejudices" because rather than "merely reliving old emotions from the past,

readers bring them forward in the present and apply them to new contexts" (Hakemulder 2000:86).

The effect on the reader of the Gothic was expressed in rather noteworthy terms by Angela Carter in her short story collection, when referring to Edgar Allan Poe's literary style. She says that his style of writing "deals entirely with the profane. Its great themes are incest and cannibalism. Character and events are exaggerated beyond reality, to become symbols, ideas, passions. […] It retains a singular moral function — that of provoking unease" (Carter 1997: Kindle Locations 9023-9027).

Poe's fiction was satiated with his madness (he was presumed to be suffering from some mental disease), and this literary madness is a crucial characteristic without which the works of writers like him would have been forgotten. However, this triggers a series of questions about both writer and reader of the Gothic. If this characteristic speaks volumes about the author of such a text, what does it say about the reader of such texts? What kind of localized madness must one possess to guide him/her in the direction of such reading? And, finally, what similarities are there between the expressed madness of the writer and the tormented one of the reader who finds solace only in the acquaintance of another's sorrow? As "access to the half-way region of phantasy is permitted by the universal assent of mankind, and everyone suffering from privation expects to derive alleviation and consolation from it" (Freud 1973:1954), we can establish a connection between writer and reader, as determined by Freud, who described the former as an introvert bordering on neurosis and turning to phantasy in order to satisfy some hidden desire. He removes from his phantasy elements that pertain to an identification of his self, making it thus universally available, and comes out on the other side, into reality, having acquired the necessary tools to achieve what he could only achieve in phantasy. The reader shares all the traits of the writer, except the ability to create a stable phantasy which could satisfy his/her desires; and s/he thus needs the writer to provide him/her with that in order to achieve the same satisfaction and acquire the same set of tools needed to make what was only possible in phantasy succeed in reality.

The writer becomes then an enabler, his conflict with the world being a pathway for himself and the reader through the use of Gothic fiction. But the relationship between the writer and the rest of the world leads one to determine several other types of relationships: between writer and the world (the person as Self, moulded and born in its most authentic individual shape, and the Other, resulting from the influences of society, family, entourage, background, stressing factors, personal as well as national history, etc., resulting in the Text); between text and reader (Other vs. Self, as the reader initially fears becoming monstrous, later feeling like an Other without a Self of its own. The effects of such an event are irreversible, as they awaken a sense of Self always incomplete); and between both writer and/or reader and himself (confronting the text, both will come to the realization of a shortcoming, and the way each perceives himself will be altered).

4. Conclusion

The moral laboratory of the Gothic can save lives and provide answers about the Self. Originally, the Gothic expressed the anxiety of society; its author, as described by Freud, was the representative of the people in expressing it. As time went by and the focus shifted more and more to the individual, with everyone

having an equal opportunity to express anxiety, the monster became connected with personal anxieties, frustrations and desires, making the Gothic much more complex in its intricacy and possibility for topics to demonize.

A radical shift occurred as people came to terms with their attraction towards the monster more and more, and thus ended up seeking it, and undergoing transition from dread to love. The reader remains dependent on the writer, just as Freud described it, but now he is not afraid to admit his/her desire for reading about his/her most intimate anxieties and repressed feelings in the book of another; he even demands that he is given such a book to read.

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WHAT *JANE EYRE* TAUGHT: THE "AUTOBIOGRAPHER" IN *JANE EYRE* AND WOMEN'S EDUCATION

VIOLETA CRAINA
Universitatea de Vest Timişoara

Abstract: *This article looks at Charlotte Brontë's novel "Jane Eyre" in search of the embedded mechanisms that make changes regarding women's role in society and their proper education emerge as logical necessities, even though, apparently, no character in this novel is a consequent supporter of change, not even Jane. Some characters advocate women's education in order to better cope with the vicissitudes on a Christian moral level, while revealing themselves as abusers. Young Jane gets to depend on such people several times, and barely survives. Critics notice the distance between young Jane's words, advocating the need for change, and mature Jane's apparent abandonment of the cause for an idyllic domestic life. But the "autobiographic" formula points at different conclusions and those conclusions surpass what the characters have to say.*
Keywords: *authorship, Bildungsroman, self-expression, Victorian, Vocation, women's education*

1. Introduction: The Ultimate Focal Point

Though explained in different ways, the improbable marriage between young Jane Eyre, governess, and Master Edward Fairfax Rochester (Godfrey 2005:853) is most often perceived as the focal point of the novel. Yet, the novel *Jane Eyre* is subtitled: *An Autobiography*. The novel's complete title is neither **Jane Eyre. The Story of an Improbable Marriage* - a substantial hint at sentimental/domestic entertainment, nor **Jane Eyre. The Story of a Governess* - a common solution of the time for writings ranging from didacticist to sentimental (Beaty 1996:17-20).

The distance between Jane Eyre's (improbable) marriage and the subtitle of the novel makes up the space of our inquiry: could this act of union have been imagined *so that something else, more important, would become possible, in its turn?* By "something more important" we don't mean an ultimate goal. The ultimate goal of Jane Eyre the character comes by default: we are not hinting at the salvation of the soul. We are rather looking after/beyond the improbable marriage, for one or more final steps of the earthly ladder, within Charlotte Brontë's novel. We search for evidence that, improbable or not, Jane's marriage is neither the last focal point in the novel, nor the most important. Mature Jane's relationship with the *status quo* consists of more than a successful marriage and motherhood. To the end of the book, Jane has become an authoress. We see this text as a text about self-empowerment, where Education plays an unconventional, yet important role.

Most critics and teachers agree that *Jane Eyre* is one of the first *Bildungsromans* in literature. Still, it is often treated like a sentimental novel, spiced up with some sophisticated stories. The sentimental plot takes up quite some space, and is fast to attract attention; but focusing on it excessively may have readers neglect facts unrelated or less related to the love plot directly.

2. The Rivers episode

Of all characters undermined by conventions (like the well-to-do ladies, the first set of cousins, and St. John Rivers) that the novel displays, the cameo apparition of Uncle Eyre, with his testament-letter, is probably the most frustrating. The letter's lack of credibility made some think it shouldn't even be there. At this point, we favor a reconstructive reading, giving credit to all the elements introduced by the author in the game of interpretations. We see the uncle as an underdeveloped character that has his assigned role in the overall structure of the novel, and not as text in excess. Partisans of the sentimental novel reluctantly admit of a reason for the uncle's presence, but they place this reason around their main concern – the improbable marriage: Jane would not have married her beloved Master Rochester as long as he was a very rich gentleman and she could not bring him a dowry at their union. In their opinion, *the letter is introduced in the text to save Jane's sense of independence so she can marry.* And this conjecture is usually propped up with Jane's theorized need for a sense of independence.

Let's fantasize a little around Master Rochester, refused by a poor Jane who loves him, but rejects him, fearing her independence. Improbable narrative solutions are well liked at that time. So, a rich and good-willed character could have found gentlemanly ways to bypass such a particular refusal. Repenting gentlemen, like Master Rochester, even more so. Charity was a moral requirement of the Victorian well-to-do, and there was always room for a new charity school, in a country where every third dweller was a child. If Jane's sense of independence was at stake, why not have it restored by her loved one, without Uncle Eyre's letter? We already know, from the St. John episode, that Jane has a soft spot for the greater good. The greater good was the excuse allowing Jane's (disciplinarian) mind to start dwelling once again on identitary stories that she would almost believe. The greater good almost had Jane marry St. John, who does not love her.

Jane's behavior doesn't cover independence-related expectancies of progressive critics, who notice that, in fact, Jane only needs "so small an independency", as she puts it in Chapter XXIV, i.e. enough money to provide for her family and to offer Rochester a noticeable pecuniary gift. We believe that independence, even if translated into a "small independency" is not at stake here, not because Jane is a cunning and complacent woman, but because Jane's attention is focusing on even more basic needs than love or independence. The most important gift that Uncle Eyre makes to Jane is not money; his letter provides her with a sense of identity.

Psychologists explain that orphans typically develop particular perceptions of their inner selves as being weak and hovering. The remission of this perception is uncertain. In many cases, this fundamental anxiety may coexist with the life of an achiever, and may last a lifetime. Charlotte Brontë's fictional character is no exception to this pattern, so we should not treat her being an orphan as a childhood-related situation only. John Sutherland (1997:67-9) explored the constant hints in the text to an abyss hidden underneath Rochester's surface, and the same scheme can be easily applied to the obsessive/sadistic behavior of St. John Rivers, as analyzed by Jerome Beaty (2007:143-156) and Marianne Thormälhen (2004:204-220). Another black swirling hole lurches beneath Jane's half-assertive and sometimes masochistic personality.

When she flees Thornfield Hall, Jane is reduced, for the second time in her life, to being almost no one. She is left only with her tried faith, her trauma and her

learned skills, governessing or teaching. Exercising these skills requires self-effacement. At the bottom of every situation where Jane is asked to practice self-denial, there is her particular situation of being an orphan. To Anne Brontë's heroine, *Agnes Grey*, (private) teaching is simply toxic and unjust. To Jane Eyre, it becomes worse than that. Jane cannot practice self-denial, because she has nothing to efface. All promoters of such commonplace Victorian demands turn into abusers around Jane (Glen 2007:169-70). Uncle John Eyre's letter helps Jane and her cousin St. John to avoid falling victims to a vicious circle that none of them really started. With Jane's undeniable identity comes her mental healing and with it comes the restoration of St. John's moral stand. A healing Jane brings him back onto the narrow path of charity, where he can help, he can warn, but he cannot expect anything personal in return.

The most questionable part of this novel is also the part where Jane is granted that missing part of herself which she can recognize as authentic and immutable. Before the letter, Jane was a victim in her struggle against a harsh world; after the letter, her output is constantly more than survival. From a survivor, Jane becomes a giver. Depriving the novel of its secondary plot means leaving the faithful believer Jane without her God's miraculous answer. We need not suspect this miracle entirely, because there is always a trace of miracle in a process of healing. We need not deny Jane her chance at acquiring a healthy, reliable sense of social identity, even if, in stark contrast, at the end of *Oliver Twist*, Dickens' sweet boy character has acquired none (Beaty 1996:23-26).

3. The Governess and her Master

With the sentimental perception of this novel, *Jane becomes a Governess, so that she may meet Rochester and the improbable marriage may take place.*

Jane had every chance to become involved with education even if her parents had been alive. But does Jane really need to be specifically a Governess in order to marry Master Rochester?

It is usually argued that, unlike the lower servants, who were hired by the housekeeper (an upper servant), the governess (like the nurse) was hired by the master of the house. She was supposed to report to him directly, and so were the nurse, the coachman, the first gardener, the first cook and all the upper servants. As Daniel Pool (1933:218-230) informs us, the governess was a senior servant, but was considered a working-class servant, nevertheless. While the master would arrange for most servants to be very inconspicuous and could avoid meeting most of them ever in his life, he had to see the governess every once in a while. And that is the argument that links Jane's transient job to her marriage.

If one wants to verify the strength of this link, here is the alternative: what if Jane had not been a governess, but one of the servants? Jean Fernandez' (2010: 147-178) presentation of autobiographic works written by servants almost invites the idea. Despite all arrangements related to status, emergencies of all kinds could make people noticeable to each other, as the fire scene in *Jane Eyre* reminds us.

Picture a girl servant who was instructed to avoid meeting the master, but who sings beautifully while doing any of her chores. Thornfield Hall keeps most servants out of sight completely, but sound can travel more freely and we have plenty of information on Rochester's particular sensibility for this talent. We can easily picture a girl who has Jane's moral qualities, a keen intuition of Rochester's

character, and a serious inclination for self-improvement. (The governess as a character was, in fact, preceded in novels by the female servant).

Were a servant's chances to catch the eye of Mr. Edward Fairfax Rochester significantly lower? Fantasy aside, relativity makes this line of thought unworthy of pursuing. Typically, Victorian gentlemen wouldn't marry governesses any sooner than they would marry maid servants. A governess or a servant can fulfill the woman's part in this sentimental recipe almost equally well. So the link between Jane's job and her marriage is feeble.

4. An abandoned social cause

Charlotte Brontë's novel is not a *Governess Novel*. It does not tell the story of a teacher, or a governess, but the story of a believer who seeks and then follows her Vocation. Even so, activist readers are disappointed with Brontë, when she excuses Jane, after years of ordeal, from overworking herself in a school room for a living. But this expectation is paradoxical.

Governesses were forced *by the status quo* to adopt what we most often would read today as a maniacal behavior, and few of them would have considered teaching a more sacred duty than marriage and motherhood. More important than that, Jane cannot go back to what (not who) she was before she started to experience her new sense of identity. Her personality is enlarged by her experiences of finding a family, of finding ways to overcome disrespect and indoctrination, of finding ways to recuperate her beloved Rochester. The two voices of Jane expressed two different personalities. Of them, Jane's mature voice is larger than one classroom or another. The mature Jane will take her experience with education to a next level when she finally becomes the autobiographer. We agree with Jerome Beaty's (1996:219) observations: there is primacy of young Jane over her mature voice. It used to displease even Charlotte Bronte, who spoke of "injudicious admirers" (*Letters* 4:52-53, cited in Beaty 1996: 219-220). Nevertheless, *Jane Eyre* is a type of text that also needs an amount of reading between the lines. What is being implied is sometimes more significant than what is being said. The mature Jane is much more powerful than the young Jane ever was. And, by choosing to hand her experience down, she continues her work as an educator.

Charlotte Brontë was a religious writer; yet Bronte did not see teaching in a classroom as the Station in Life that God *gaveth* Jane. Jane's God expects no one to waste away. Sometimes characters in the Bible are chosen by God as His vehicles and helped to live abundant and meaningful lives. The expectations of social activists are misplaced with mature Jane Eyre. They are not expecting too much, but too little from the person who Jane has become. The accent in *Jane Eyre* is not on disconnecting oneself from the idea of Stations in Life, but on growing connected to a broader, superior idea of social order, i.e. that of divine Vocation.

5. Portrait of the author as an ex-Governess

With her identity regained and financial problems settled, Jane does not turn against education, but against the longest situation of coercion that she had to endure. She will also turn in favor of everything that she loves. And Jane loves taking on responsibilities that she has a chance to choose. After leaving her job, Jane marries, tends to a blinded and maimed Rochester, adopts Adele, gives birth,

and rears her son to the age of ten, then decides to write, thus becoming the "autobiographer". The last of Jane's choices that we are informed about is the least debated of all. Why is it so natural for a traumatized orphan female child, who survives and marries well to become "the autobiographer"? And has someone who writes an autobiography abandoned the idea of Education? Certainly not.

We should be more aware that Jane parted with classroom work, but upgraded to a superior level of teaching, by producing a work of art. Could a still-teaching Governess Jane have turned a part-time autobiographer? Certainly: before Jane's book had already been done. But moral didactic novels imply "exempla"; novelty, originality need more concentration and implied a lot more time. Only day teachers had some margin of negotiation regarding their own time. (Concentration was considered a typical capacity of the masculine brain, anyway). Could a rich but unmarried Jane have written an autobiography? She probably could, but her authoress apparently thought very few things, apart from love and enjoyment of a God-given life (i.e. fulfillment of one's earthly potential), were worthy of Jane's art.

But let's go back to our girl-servant for one more second: were her chances to grow into the "autobiographer" significantly lower? Definitely: there is not enough time in the character's life to go past a certain level. Even when far from ideal, schools have this capacity of focusing on several kinds of education and thus compressing time. Charlotte Bronte does not send Jane to Lowood to become a Governess, and gradually learn how to learn, only so she can marry, but so she can write. We cannot know what level of scholarly knowledge is enough for catching the eye of a haunted master, but we can fathom out the kind of learning and time needed to produce a masterpiece like *Jane Eyre*. In this novel, Jane gets to buy time twice: first, she goes to Lowood, earning a compression of time; then, she marries Rochester, earning an expansion of her personal time.

6. At what point does a book end?

Enthusiasts of the sentimental novel think Charlotte Brontë should have stopped writing with the infamous marriage-announcing line: "Reader, I married him." The first line of the *Conclusions* (Chapter XXXVIII) should have ended the novel (*Exeunt: Fairfax Rochester and his young wife).*

Re-cutting the text at that point, for the sake of exercise, would bring up major issues. Eliminating the last part of the book diminishes the importance of St. John Rivers. St. John Rivers was analyzed as part of a larger narrative strategy by a Marxist - Terry Eagleton (2005:19-20, 95-96), by Cultural Studies focused analyst with regard to religion - Marianne Thormälhen (2004:204-220)) and by a Bachtinian structuralist - Jerome Beaty (2007:143-156). Their researches are enough proof that cutting up the character of St. John Rivers would twist the book entirely.

Also, the marriage is the event where the voices were originally disjoined, because it is the first time when Jane got to act according to her vocation. There is a "before", informing the voice of inexperienced Jane, and an "after", informing the "autobiographer", who becomes the only voice in the last paragraphs of the book (Beaty 1996:214-215); see also Glen (2007:173-174). Ignoring the story after the marriage means ignoring Jane "the autobiographer".

Other interpreters have another cut of choice, namely the last words in the letter of St. John Rivers: "Amen; even so come, Lord Jesus!" *(Exit: St. John*

Rivers). This variant takes St. John Rivers' probable death for granted and uses it in a symbolic construction: his (Christian) death is a necessary substitute for the death of an "autobiographer" unable to retell her own death. This interpretation sanctions two, equally potent paths to salvation, namely Jane's marriage/motherhood, and St. John's missionary death. Here the autobiographer exists (only) to emphasize the saint. Master Edward Fairfax Rochester, the repentant husband's salvation, is forgotten behind. In fact, even the humble characters like Bessie also trod the infinite number of paths that lead to Heaven in *Jane Eyre.* Each good-willed character has a path of his/her own.

In both these interpretations, the *Autobiography* is considered no more than a narrative convention of the time. Neither interpretation takes Jane "the autobiographer" into account.

Charlotte Brontë devised a gradual ending to her book. Her multiple endings are a formula for travelling through space, time and meanings, larger and larger with every new step. But any novel ends with the last written sign on its last page. St. John and the autobiographer Jane Eyre "die" at the instant when they can add no more to the story that Charlotte Brontë told. Neither dies physically; they just exit when the story ends. To St. John this happens on the brink of death, while to Jane this happens after writing her own story. At this point, the last two characters are using their lives to the fullest and fully enjoy their choices. Rochester makes his family happy by reopening his heart to God's goodness; St. John brings the good news to many foreigners, while forcing apotheosis with increasing joy, and the "autobiographer" finishes a work of art that has brought wisdom and joy to many. At this point, that which the writer needs us to see has become fully perceivable, and there's nothing more to write about.

7. The loop of Education: Vocation in *Jane Eyre*

Charlotte Brontë strips the obsolete allegorical style away from the original *Pilgrim*, and replaces it with a different method of treating allegory. Many improbable, but not entirely impossible events occur everywhere in this novel. These events are ambiguously treated by the writer, and ambiguously explained by the characters, so that readers need to decide for themselves upon the miraculous or more mundane character of an event. Quite some spectacular events in the novel guide the characters towards their particular ways of fulfilling God's will.

In between events, the space is filled by a Romanticism-influenced view of Nature as God's sacred temple. Nature surrounding human dwellings and nature in the hearts of people communicate in mysterious ways, and together they give testimony of God's goodness. In *Jane Eyre*, the Romantic soul's ascension, often imperiled by the faulty minds of people, is safeguarded by divine Nature around and within.

Vocation, God's calling in one's heart, manifests itself in all good-willed characters following their natural inclinations. Vocation becomes conspicuous when Duty and Enjoyment are separable no more, and Jane's progress suggests that mature souls are not restricted to one side of life. Jane's Vocation manifests with her marriage and with motherhood, but its manifestations don't end there, and writing will soon follow. Truthful seekers live meaningful earthly lives, and more than one Pilgrim is on the good way, at the point where this book ends: Bessy is a good mother, St. John is a good missionary, Rochester is a good husband (though some would say this is only temporary) and Jane is a good writer. The sign of a

found Vocation is not being spotless, but being in the world with love in one's heart. Following one's heart keeps sin at bay. Motherhood lets sharp-tongued Bessie's abundant goodness prevail. Renunciation repurposes St. John's ambition, and his willingness to make the ultimate sacrifice may override his pride. St. John's last letter confesses, finally, of his love for God. A repentant Rochester also becomes capable of loving, without destroying what he loves.

Jane is the most evolved character in the book. She needs neither repentance, nor renunciation: Jane's privileged practice is a method of prevention, i.e. balancing each of her inclinations against all the others to prevent her from sinning. Her superior method of faring in this world will let Jane have a little bit of everything she knows to be good and enjoyable on Earth.

8. A comprehensive *Bildungsroman*

Jane Eyre is often cited as the first female *Bildungsroman*; but Marianne Thormälhen (2007:4) is one researcher who questions that. In her opinion, a *Bildungsroman* is about (formal) *education* and/or *formation* (where informal, sentimental and moral education is included). In contrast, the core concept in Jane Eyre's transformation is *maturation*. As she puts it, Jane's decisions are never influenced by any of the people she meets. She never uses anyone else's eyes to assess a new situation, or a new twist of fate that she faces. Her specific method of balancing each new experience that she undergoes through other experiences of different types makes influences, and thus learning, useless.

The key organ involved in a person's education is their mind, whereas the key organ involved in Jane's maturation is her heart - a heart conceived in accord with the Evangelical creed, as the organ where God resides. At birth, the mind is an untouched tablet; the heart is born into this world bearing the germs of God's love. Maturation of the heart will simply let them develop, leading the soul out of this world and into the next (Thormälhen 2004:71-89).

We subscribe to Thormälhen's concept of maturation, but we also find the idea of an autonomous Jane far-fetched. In fact, Jane is subjected to several educational discourses throughout her story. She rejects the abusive ones, but she also allows herself to be changed by every experience that is agreeable and is inspired by love. Jane's moral dimension originates in her meeting with Helen Burns. Paradoxically, Terry Eagleton is a better analyst of the position this little benign creature holds within the novel (Eagleton 2005:15-16). The way in which Master Rochester attempts to undertake Jane's sentimental education through discourse has been exposed. Thormälhen emphasizes Jane's moral expectations, but Jane's healing process also involves making good use of what she learns about herself with Rochester. The contrasts between education/ formation and maturation, respectively between mind and heart, are not in a relationship of mutual exclusion within the book. A more comprehensive relationship between the two series of elements would describe Jane's evolution accurately. The Heart blooms out, learning to recognize and to express God's love within the existing world: here the Heart is put into worlds by the Mind, which is initially blank and then needs formation and education. In the end of the story, when Jane's soul attains maturity, education is not absent but, on the contrary omnipresent. Her every circumstance and action in this world has become one and the same powerful lesson in God's goodness.

9. Conclusion

John Sutherland (1997:67-9) emphasizes a quality that *Jane Eyre* shares with other great books, written by virtuosos: the text revisits a large number of literary sources. These sources vary significantly in style: children's tales, urban legends like that of *Barbe Bleue*, Biblical quotes, church discourse, newspaper debates, Bunyan, Milton, Walter Scott poems are all completely reinterpreted through Charlotte Brontë's personal artistic filter, and made to fit into an entirely new literary structure. Harold Bloom (2007:1-2), in his "Introduction" that emphasizes the influence of Byron on the text, also mentions more modern writers to whose works this book is kindred.

This new structure almost makes taxonomy explode: we must concede that *Jane Eyre* is a *Bildungsroman* within the framework of a moralist/didacticist novel and with accents of social satire, at times; a bit of a Governess's story, for a while; a sentimental/domestic novel, with Romanticism inspired, almost poematic scenery and thrilling Gothic sparkles ending in a suggestion of a fairy tale; a transposition of the Romantic creed in prose; one of the first discourses of female subjectivity; and the fictionalized autobiography of a woman writer.

But this fantastic textual organization works as an irrefutable argument in a major battle of its time: if a woman could produce a work like that, time for change was ripe.

The game of ambiguities (Sutherland 1997:73-75, 79-80), of substitutions (Godfrey 2005:854, 863, 868-869) and of power (Eagleton 2005:19-20, 95-6) in this comprehensive and entertaining writing converges towards the ultimate argument, the silent and irrefutable argument of the very book in our hands. With all the social limitations that she accepted within her text, out of conviction or fear, and with all the limitations that she wasn't even aware of, Charlotte made Jane, the disempowered Governess, leave a fictional school room and take over the real world.

In Chapter I, Volume II of her biography (Chapter XVI in the online version), Mrs. Gaskell explains Charlotte Brontë's decision of turning a plain heroine into a magnetic character as a writers' dispute between the sisters. The Bible describes David as a plain (i.e. insignificant) boy, yet he is the plain boy whom God Himself has chosen to speak His words. Jane becomes a writer, an artist and, as such, a Prophet of modern days – according to the Romantic creed. This is why, in the text of *Jane Eyre*, God fulfills Jane's wishes.

The escape into fairy tale (Gilbert 2000:351-352, 370) or into Dystopia (Wood 2009:94-110) is followed by another "escape", this time into dilated, Biblical coordinates. This is the deeper meaning of St. John's presence and words at the end of the novel. Also, this is where the allegoric power is restituted to Bunyan, the main source of inspiration for *Jane Eyre*. What to some is an escape, to others is an enlargement. The ultimate theme of *Jane Eyre* is the explanation of its every success: it is ultimately a text about plenitude and Vocation.

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NARRATIVE OVER-REACHING? ANACHRONY AND FOCALIZATION IN GEORGE ELIOT'S *THE LIFTED VEIL*

JACEK MYDLA
Institute of English Cultures and Literatures, University of Silesia

***Abstract**: Two basic categories of narrative theory are used to examine George Eliot's 1859 novella: anachrony (retrospection and anticipation, but chiefly the latter) and focalization (especially the so-called "internal focalization"). The paper shows how these two devices work together to render the complexities of human psyche. Special emphasis is placed on the story's meta-fictional dimension.*
***Keywords**: anachrony, anticipation, focalization, metafiction, retrospection, sympathy*

1. Introduction

In this essay, I examine the joint operation of two narrative devices, anachrony and focalization, in George Eliot's novella *The Lifted Veil* (1999). My purpose is to see what special effects George Eliot's experimentation produces; it is also to examine how these effects are related to what the story tells us at the metafictional level. Distinguished by a high level of self-awareness and a liberal handling of the preternatural, the novella can be read as a story about storytelling, for it encourages an interpreter to perceive its male protagonist as the female author's alter ego. In my opinion, George Eliot's violation of the rules of realism opens a possibility for making an interpretive connection between the story's psychology (chiefly its foregrounding of empathy) and its metafictionality.

From a historical and biographical point of view, *The Lifted Veil* can be seen as an account of authorial anxiety. At the same time, and for the same reason, it can be interpreted as an attempt to probe the limits of fiction in its renewed efforts to make sense of interpersonal relations. A historical approach links the novella with the "pseudo-science" of the Victorian era, instances of which play a significant role in the plot. At the same time, George Eliot's experimentation with narrative technique consists in turning anachrony and focalization – by embodying them in the preternaturally gifted male protagonist – into themes in their own right, rather than tools. This makes us ask what narrative theory can learn by examining the story.

My point is that, while theoretical concepts can and should be used as instruments with which to open a narrative text for critical examination, narrative theory should always remain prepared to learn from the *practice* of storytelling, especially in cases where an author has brought literary devices into the open to test them for their ability to study the interpersonal dimension of the human condition – as I believe George Eliot has done in her novella.

2. Anachrony and focalization as themes

In his *Dictionary of Narratology*, 2nd edition, Gerald Prince (2003:5) defines anachrony as "[a] discordance between the order in which events (are said to) occur and the order in which they are recounted". The opening of *The Lifted Veil* makes it clear that anachrony will play a major part in the story. The narrative

begins at the end, or almost there: the narrator and main protagonist, Latimer, looks ahead to his death. This is an exceptional example of flash-forward (or anticipation or prolepsis, in narratologist terminology). As the reader soon realises, however, almost the entire story is given to us in the form of a flash-back (or retrospection or analepsis).

It becomes clear at the same time that *The Lifted Veil* thematises what we can call mental time-travel. We learn that the narrator/protagonist is endowed with a special gift (called "foresight" on the first page of the story), or rather a curse, the ability to have visions of the future: "For I foresee when I shall die, and everything that will happen in my last moments" (Eliot 1999:3). The second passage is arguably one of the most peculiar instances of narrative anticipation:

> Just a month from this day, on the 20th of September 1850, I shall be sitting in this chair, in this study, at ten o'clock at night, longing to die, weary of incessant insight and foresight, without delusions and without hope. (Eliot 1999:3)

As I have already mentioned, *The Lifted Veil* makes use of another major feature of narrativity: focalization. Prince (2003:31) - after Gerard Genette (1993) - defines focalization as "[t]he perspective in terms of which the narrated situations and events are presented; the perceptual or conceptual position in terms of which they are rendered". As narratologists repeatedly remind us, *all* narrative texts are focalized in one way or another (even in cases where the events *are not* "filtered through" the mind of a person participating in them – the so-called 0-focalization). As in the case of anachrony, George Eliot makes into a theme what in the story is called "vision," i.e. the ability to "see into the minds of others" (the phrase repeatedly occurring in the text of the novella). Latimer also speaks about "[his] diseased participation in other people's consciousness […]" (Eliot 1999:17).

The Lifted Veil is recounted in a mode that is "subjective", i.e. the perspective is personal. Technically, George Eliot uses a typical first person narration with the result of limiting perception, as opposed to omniscience. Further, this limitation of perspective is responsible for creating a special kind of tension, as the author "plays" with the idea of knowledge of other people, i.e. insight and sympathy. When I speak of "play" here, I refer to the manner in which George Eliot first endows her protagonist with an "insight" that is (ironically and tragically) selective, for initially Latimer is not able to see into the mind of his beloved, Bertha, and when he is, the knowledge thus gained appals him.

Initially, Bertha's inner life is a mystery to him, and as such – as Latimer is very aware – adds to her appeal: "Bertha, the slim, fair-haired girl, whose present thoughts and emotions were an enigma to me amidst the fatiguing obviousness of the other minds around me, was as absorbing to me as a single unknown to-day […]" (Eliot 1999:29). The ominous metaphor of "shroud" is used more than once to describe both the predicament of deprivation and the change that later occurs. Thus, speaking of the period in their relationship immediately following their wedding, Latimer comments:

> Through all these crowded excited months, Bertha's inward self remained shrouded from me, and I still read her thoughts only through the language of her lips and demeanour: […] (Eliot 1999:31)

The unexpected change is described with a similar metaphor:

> On that evening the veil which had shrouded Bertha's soul from me – had made me find in her alone among my fellow-beings the blessed possibility of mystery, and doubt, and expectation – was first withdrawn. (Eliot 1999:31)

In this way, Latimer is presented to the reader as a victim of the special endowments which occur to him without his being able to exercise control over them or make sense of what is happening to him. For this reason, we can speak of experimentation, and understand it in a double sense: scientific and literary. As I have suggested at the outset, Latimer's plight may be regarded as a reflection of the expectations that George Eliot and her contemporaries invested in the science of the day (see the "Introduction" to the edition of the novella used here). Seen from this perspective, Latimer is a victim of attempts to expand the powers of the human mind, or, broadly, to probe the limitations and define the mandate of science. What for us is more important, however, is that the story is a record of how George Eliot – probably taking a cue from the above-described scientific pursuits – turns her protagonist into a victim of the narrative devices which we have – anachronistically – defined here as anachrony and focalization. In her story, much like the overreaching scientist, she puts to strange uses the "insight", the "foresight" and the accompanying ideas of ignorance and illumination as they function in the interpersonal realm: in their links with fellow-feeling or empathy.

The beginning of the novella, as we have seen, is placed at the end of the protagonist's (Latimer's) life, the flash-forward transporting him (and the readers) to the moment of his death. We can say that this is a moment of "perfect" knowledge, which is at once tragic. In human terms, the movement of the story proper is thus unnatural and counterintuitive in that we move from illumination "back" to ignorance. However, we still have here a variation on the "mystery" type of narrative movement. Namely, we move from the present (and knowledge) into the past (mystery); the exploration of the past will yield the much-desired illumination, for the opening of the story is – as we have seen – utterly perplexing. At the same time, illumination reached by Latimer *at the end of his life* (i.e. what the readers are told about at the outset) is a state of weariness coupled with the realisation of having fallen victim to his special mental gift (his "abnormal cognisance", as he also calls it). We read in the penultimate paragraph:

> And then the curse of insight – of my double consciousness, came again, and has never left me. I know all their narrow thoughts, their feeble regard, their half-wearied pity. (Eliot 1999:42-43)

3. A metafictional dimension of "insight" and "sympathy"

The idea of the knowledge of other people's minds is crucial for a metafictional interpretation of the novella. The idea that the protagonist sees into other people's minds (with the exception of one mind, the most significant mind in human or existential terms: the mind of his brother's fiancée, later on, his wife) is of course an instance of narrative experimentation, showing that the protagonist is at the mercy of the author, who has "pseudo-science" at her disposal, with its whims and caprices. But, as we could submit in our pursuit of the metafictional dimension to the novella, this is precisely what turns it into something like a chapter in narrative theory. For, when thus torturing her protagonist, George Eliot is conducting an examination of the limitations and prerogatives of narrative

fictionality - an ordeal that must have been as excruciating for her as author as the acute mental torments of her Latimer.

Before we return to the metafictional dimension of the story, let us look at the complexity of the kind of focalization that George Eliot uses in it. This will allow us to see more clearly that *The Lifted Veil* fully justifies the idea of literary experimentation.

We have said that, technically speaking, focalization in *The Lifted Veil* is internal: the recounted events are "filtered through" an individual mind, the consciousness of the protagonist and narrator. Narratologists speak of at least three dimensions of internal focalizations, not all of them necessarily present in a story, but all of them present in *The Lifted Veil*: perception, knowledge, emotion. Personal representations of things in a fictive world are not only (as some definitions misleadingly suggest) about how things are perceived (seeing), but also about how (well and clearly) they are known (understanding), and about how the narrator feels about and responds to them (emotion, sympathy). Although the above distinction is not new (see, for instance, Herman 2004:307-308) and does not seem to be problematic, narrative theory has not paid enough attention to the varieties and complexities of internal focalization (see, for instance, Bal 2007: 142-160; Jahn 2010:101).

These three types of "mental filtering" are phenomenally distinct, but they also differ in depth of insight. Moreover, what adds special complexity to *The Lifted Veil* is its focus on interpersonal communication, on what philosophy calls the knowledge of other minds. Of course, one might say that this is true of *every* narrative as long as it meets some basic conditions of narrativity. For – the argument goes – as long as a narrative contains an element of human interest, it must also contain an arena of interpersonal relations: it must reflect and address interactions. To use the above typology, a story must involve depictions of interpersonal perception (figures seeing one another), knowledge (figures understanding one another), and emotion (figures responding emotionally to one another). A close examination of *particular* stories would show differences, sometimes great ones, in how different authors handle these three varieties and components of focalization and, in particular, what significance they have given to them in the sense of privileging, as the case might be, perception over knowledge.

Let us explain and provide illustrations from the story. In the passage already quoted, in which Latimer describes Bertha as "an enigma", the focus is chiefly on Bertha as an object of perception; he attempts at understanding her on the basis of perceptual content (speech and facial expression). At the same time, we are informed of Latimer's emotional state ("deeply pained"), which is a result of his peculiar cognitive frustration, i.e. his inability to make sense of the perceptual content:

> Through all these crowded excited months, Bertha's inward self remained shrouded from me, and I still *read her thoughts only through the language of her lips and demeanour*: I had still the human interest of wondering whether what I did and said pleased her, of longing to hear a word of affection, of giving a delicious exaggeration of meaning to her smile. But I was conscious of a growing difference in her manner towards me; sometimes strong enough to be called haughty coldness, cutting and chilling me as the hail had done that came across the sunshine on our marriage morning; sometimes only perceptible in the dexterous avoidance of a tête-à-tête walk or dinner to which I had been looking forward. I had been deeply pained

> by this – had even felt a sort of crushing of the heart, from the sense that my brief day of happiness was near its setting; […]. (Eliot 1999:31, emphasis mine)

The moment of illumination comes when the "shroud" separating Latimer from Bertha is "lifted", i.e. when – to his horror – he is finally able to see into her soul. This is the central situation in the novella's plot, eponymous as it were: the lifting of the veil:

> The terrible moment of complete illumination had come to me, and I saw that the darkness had hidden no landscape from me, but only a blank prosaic wall: from that evening forth, through the sickening years which followed, I saw all round the narrow room of this woman's soul – saw petty artifice and mere negation where I had delighted to believe in coy sensibilities and in wit at war with latent feeling – saw the light floating vanities of the girl defining themselves into the systematic coquetry, the scheming selfishness, of the woman – saw repulsion and antipathy harden into cruel hatred, giving pain only for the sake of wreaking itself.
> […] But now that her soul was laid open to me, now that I was compelled to share the privacy of her motives, to follow all the petty devices that preceded her words and acts, she found herself powerless with me, except to produce in me the chill shudder of repulsion – powerless, because I could be acted on by no lever within her reach. I was dead to worldly ambitions, to social vanities, to all the incentives within the compass of her narrow imagination, and I lived under influences utterly invisible to her. (Eliot 1999:32)

In strictly technical – rather than existential – terms, we have here a situation that can be described as a shift in focalization. Latimer's seeing into Bertha's soul means a blending of two minds. As the phrase "the terrible moment of complete illumination" suggests, he is now fully capable of penetrating Bertha's mind, for this mind has ceased to be an enigma; there are no secrets left and all is dazzlingly plain. At the same time, this moment is – were we once more to use our typology – a moment of understanding that is oddly cut off from perception. In a typical situation of interpersonal communication, understanding is founded on perception (live speech and facial expression); here, however, no such basis for the "illumination" has been provided. Latimer has miraculously leapt into Bertha's mind, without having to infer its content from the external physical features that, in normal circumstances, convey that content.

The moment of illumination is of course one situation among the preternatural occurrences, in which the novella abounds, the chief of these being the "experiment" in revivification towards its end. The readers know already that the author will not observe the strictures of realistic fiction and are thus encouraged to think of an interpretation which will justify the intrusion of the preternatural. As we have suggested earlier, one possible interpretation is to see the preternatural – including Latimer's gifts of foresight and insight – as the author's prerogatives or "poetic licence". This line of interpretation is indeed an enticing one in that it opens a metafictional plane of the story. Latimer may be a fictional figure victimised by his creator (the author); yet the parallel between Latimer and the author implies that – precisely *because* he is George Eliot's alter ego – Latimer is an expression and an embodiment of authorial prerogatives and anxieties. The story's frequent allusions to Latimer's poetic nature and aspiration gives special emphasis to this analogy: if Latimer is like an author – i.e. preternaturally endowed – then perhaps an author (*every* author) is like Latimer, i.e. cursed and foredoomed.

There is then an ambiguity as to the sense and significance of "preternatural" content of the novella. A preternatural element, as a rule, admits of a "natural" explanation; for instance, a ghost or a paranormal occurrence may be eligible to a "psychological" explanation, even though the story itself does not explain these phenomena away. *The Lifted Veil* can be read as a story about a misfit, for instance, and a paranoia that works along the logic of compensation. Latimer has not been able to live up to his father's hopes or his wife's expectations. His special gifts and his sensibility have alienated him from others. Given the circumstances in which George Eliot wrote her story, a biographical line of interpretation, one in which much is made of the parallel between the protagonist and the author, must sound plausible. If little else, the *nom de plume* itself may be regarded as a hint.

Without disproving the validity of the historical and biographical lines of interpretation, I submit that a case can be made for a metafictional one; I submit further that these two interpretive strategies are not at odds with one another. *The Lifted Veil* may be a record of an author's anguished realisation that the gifts that make a good storyteller are socially alienating curses. At the very same time, it may be seen as a record of the author's heightened awareness of the possibilities that lie in the narrative devices she has at her disposal.

4. Conclusion

George Eliot, as some critics argue, may have wished faithfully to represent the current concerns with science, and the often absurd expectations her contemporaries invested in it. But it is abundantly clear that, in *The Lifted Veil*, she is in pursuit of another goal. This is to say that she uses these expectations and misconceptions to serve her own purposes, those of an author of fiction, not a scientist. The molecules that she is interested in are human beings captured in moments in which they collide with one another and attempt to make sense of these encounters. We have seen that her determination to lay bare the inner workings of the human soul has made her defy the restraints of realism and "tamper" with the preternatural. She may be an over-reacher for that reason, but this would not make her different from the next writer conscious of her licence. She seems to be saying to us that, if there is something preternatural about seeing into the minds of other people and about metal time travel, then there is something preternatural about writing fiction, no matter how realistic.

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RUTH: AN UNUSUAL PROSTITUTE. ELIZABETH GASKELL'S SPECULATIVE GAZE *VS.* VICTORIAN MASCULINE VISION OF WOMAN

CARLA FUSCO
University of Macerata

Abstract: *In a society based on prudery and repression of female sexuality, a prostitute reinforced the masculine dichotomised image of woman: Madonna/harlot. Prostitutes were liminal characters of subplots, until Gaskell's Ruth. The unlucky destiny of an unwed mother, compelled to work as a dressmaker in slavery condition, was supposed to be disturbing enough to shake Victorian hypocrisy.*
The aim of my study is to analyze the novel as a contrasting counterpart of Victorian social beliefs and show the hermeneutic complexity of the protagonist who reacts by creating her own position in society without becoming a rebel.
Key words: *action, fallen woman, labor, masculine judgement, prostitution, work*

1. Introduction: The Great Social Evil

Prostitution was a theme long debated by the Victorians. A controversial subject since, on the one hand, it was considered a sort of business in perfect accordance with the new ethics imposed by the Industrial Revolution, as Peter Brooks (1992:144) notes: "the body of the prostitute is clearly the meeting place of eros and commerce"; but, on the other hand, it was in discordance with the Victorian strict moral principles. Prostitutes were considered *fallen women* and that implied that they were responsible for and not victims of their state. Besides, being a prostitute also meant being involved in illegal activities, as indeed they were often beggars, pickpockets or thieves too. For this reason, their position got even worse and they were doomed and pointed out as sinners by society.

Actually, nobody would explain their loose lives as the result of factors like poverty. However, they were generally desperate women who had no other chance to survive, an unacceptable view to the Victorian mind, which could not tolerate any possible disharmonies in the ideal image of the world it intended to support. Therefore, if the existence of prostitution could not be denied, it was fundamental to drastically split wrong from right. This kind of classification divided women into two categories: madonnas and harlots. This binary opposition was supposed to give a presumably correct orientation to a society which was both obsessed with and terrified by sex. Women were supposed to be confined within the family walls and to deal only with domestic affairs. That was how the rising middle class, always busy with money making and social climbing, expected them to behave and any infringement was harshly blamed. Fallen women were seen as linked to criminality and disease, and were considered a biological danger that society had to fight. As a result, there was an investigation which ended with the publication of the first Contagious Diseases Act in 1864. The commission was made up only of male members, no women were allowed. As rightly remarked by Elsie B. Michie (1993:92):

> This kind of invisible masculine surveillance of female sexuality was characteristic of the way the Victorian social authority dealt generally with prostitution, though it tended more frequently to be discussed in terms of overseeing than of overhearing.

Prostitution stimulated the morbid imagination of a society which was constrained between two opposite tensions: voyeurism and prudery. Under the influence of Queen Victoria, in fact, the age turned excessively puritanical and sex became a taboo.

Artists and intellectuals showed much interest in this complicated subject because, unlike the Romantics, the Victorians did not want to be separated from the social context, but felt the urgency to contribute providing different opinions and stimulating new awareness in a society conscious of its own power. Prose writers, especially, were deeply involved in social, political and religious issues, so they became the spokesmen for their time. "Nineteenth-century writers were characteristically melodramtic and encapsulated the concept of a perpetual battle between good and evil, order and anarchy" (Weiner 1990:21).

Novelists showed a sympathetic attitude towards prostitution, which they used in their writings to sensitize their reading public. Charles Dickens, for example, who believed in the so called *change of heart*, thought that fallen women were capable of redemption if only they were offered the opportunity for useful repentance. For this purpose, prostitutes were taken to rescue homes, which were commonly bleak places, more similar to prisons than to houses where repentance was extorted. Dickens, who was always very active in social services and charities, was also truly engaged in the creation of a hostel located in the west side of London with his friend Angela Burdett-Couts. This hostel was Urania Cottage, *Home for homeless women*, but actually also for fallen women. Nevertheless, despite his sincere apprehension about this problem, his narrative embraced the rhetoric of contemporary social texts, based on the concept that women were divided into pure and impure and on the principle that dirt should be exorcised to be fully purified.

2. Gaskell's heroine: Ruth

A different approach was adopted by Elizabeth Gaskell. Her novels have generally been divided into two genres: domestic and social fictions.

Ruth, published in 1853, represents an interesting diversion on the theme of prostitution. Ruth Hilton, the protagonist of the novel, is a fallen woman, but not a stereotype. She is a round character, in which angelical aspects are mixed with carnal experiences. She is described as a very attractive young girl, but the narrator says that "Ruth was innocent and snowpure" (Gaskell 1853:182) and above all, that "she knew that she was beautiful; but that seemed abstract, and removed from herself. Her existence was in feeling, and thinking, and loving" (1853:307). She is even compared to a Madonna when her illegitimate son is born: "on the morning of Christ's nativity" (1853:530). The whole story aims to support the idea that one can become a fallen woman as a consequence of a series of misfortunes and not deliberately. The story is a paradigm of stigmatised situations which are, however, partly retold from a different perspective. Ruth is an orphan working together with other girls at Mrs. Benson's as a needlewoman; one day she accidentally meets Mr. Bellingham, an aristocrat who immediately feels attracted to her. They start to see each other secretly, but when Mrs. Benson finds out, she dismisses her. Alone in

the world, she accepts to go to London with Henry Bellingham, but during their journey, Bellingham gets ill and his mother is asked to come and attend her son, who eventually deserts Ruth. Being Bellingham's lover without being married to him transforms Ruth into a fallen woman, namely into someone to be repelled by society like a prostitute; Ruth's unlucky destiny is anticipated by her positive answer to Bellingham: "Ruth says yes: the yes, the fatal word of which she so little imagined the infinite consequences" (1853:240). Being a single mother parallels Ruth to a prostitute, with the aggravating circumstance that she succumbs to an upper-class seducer.

> Women who lost their virginity outside marriage were frowned upon as illegitimacy was sinful: as they showed desire they must be slaves to greed and lust. (Joyce 2008)

After being seduced and abandoned by her lover Bellingham, already fed up with her, Ruth begins a long path towards redemption, which ends with her death, as Joyce states: "it was acceptable for men to sin, but women, kept in the pure ideal, could not" (2008).

If a superficial reading of the story might classify it as a typical tearjerker novel, *Ruth* instead presents some novelties in the evolution of the concept of fallen woman. I have selected for my analysis two peculiar aspects of the novel: the representation of male and female gaze toward Ruth's misfortunes and the role of female work within society.

3. Male and female gaze compared

Male and female characters show a contrasting attitude, revealing that women support the stigmatisation of roles in society, by judging Ruth's bad, eventful life more harshly than men. Their strict and narrow minded behaviour is due to two factors: jealousy of Ruth's undisputed beauty and the importance of respectability as a fundamental, basic value of Victorian thought. The narrator focuses on this topic from the very beginning, when he describes Ruth's first employer:

> Mrs Mason was a very worthy woman, but like many other worthy women, she had her foibles; and one (very natural to her calling) was to pay an extreme regard to appearances. (Gaskell 1853:32)

When Mrs. Mason fires Ruth, she does it for the sake of appearances. The latter's supposed relationship with Mr. Bellingham is sufficient reason to fear people's gossip and the loss of customers:

> She said it was not faults of hers, for the girl was always a forward creature, boasting of her beauty, and saying how pretty she was, and stirring to get where her good looks could be seen and admired. (Gaskell 1853:443)

Ruth's power of seduction is as strong as it is unconscious, nevertheless it is perceived as a danger by the women surrounding her, which mirrors an archetypical female rivalry whose purpose is to gain men's favour and consideration. Yet, in this way, the female characters reinforce masculine power. For example, when Mrs. Bellingham goes to Mrs. Morgan's inn to take her spoilt son, Henry, to London - officially to help him recover his strength, but practically

to take him away from Ruth - she completely justifies Henry's behaviour toward Ruth, despite his uneasiness:

> … don't be too severe in your self reproaches while you are so feeble, dear Henry. It is right to repent, but I have no doubt in my own mind she led you wrong with her artifices. (Gaskell 1853:423)

Harder words are pronounced by Faith Benson, when she knows that the child Ruth is expecting is illegitimate: "it would be better for her to die at once" (1853:466). The imposition of respectability leads to hypocrisy, for instance, when Mrs. Morgan, the owner of the inn where Bellingham and Ruth spend a period together, advises Ruth to use the rear door, not to be seen by her other customers.

A different perception of Ruth's beauty is shared by the male characters, more sensuous and carnal according to Mr. Bellingham, more spiritual and religious according to Mr. Benson.

> Her beauty was all that Mr Bellingham cared for, and it was supreme, it was all he recognised of her and he was proud of it. (Gaskell 1853:307)

Rosemary Langridge (2011:52) notes:

> The masculine gaze is made very much apparent in descriptions of Bellingham's treatment of Ruth as he delights in watching her, decorating her and generally possessing her as a beautiful object.

Mr. Benson, who rescues Ruth after Mr. Bellingham's escape to London, unlike his sister who would send Ruth to "Fordham Penitentiary, the best place for such a character" (1853:447), rejoices over the child's advent. Fordham Penitentiary is supposed to be one of those Magdalene Asylums created with the mission to reinsert women into society, but as years progressed they became prison-like places, characterized by cruelty. Mr. Benson is a dissenting clergyman who embodies Unitarian thought. Gaskell was a Unitarian too and she rejected Original Sin, believing that the human mind and soul were not innate, but had immense potential for growth. In this respect, Mr. Benson comments:

> … the world has, indeed, made these children miserable, innocent, as they are; but I doubt if this be according to the will of God, unless it be his punishment for the parents' guilt; and even then the world's way of treatment is too apt to harden the mother's natural love into something like hatred. (Gaskell 1853:497)

Unitarians considered the environment as fundamentally responsible for shaping and determining an individual's character and fate. This religious viewpoint permeates Gaskell's response to the problem of the fallen woman, perceiving female sexuality not to be inherently corruptible or dangerous. The novelist challenges the institutionalised separatist response of penitentiary restoration by locating Ruth's redemptive process within the family home of the Bensons. Gaskell offers female solidarity and the role of motherhood as the ideal ameliorative solutions (Webster 2012:10).

The arrival of Jemima in the story has the function of criticizing the association between the fallen and a sinful nature. Jemima is the daughter of Mr. Bradshaw, in whose household Ruth finds employment as a governess. At the beginning, Jemima, like other female characters, looks at Ruth suspiciously and is jealous, since her suitor, Mr. Farquar, her father's business partner, seems to

admire Ruth very much. However, Jemima makes a turn in the development of the narration when she rebels against her father's hard doctrines, the perfect embodiment of Calvinistic values, in which he drew a "clear line of partition" between two groups of people, one to which he belonged and another composed of individuals in need of "lectures, admonitions and exhortations" (1953:623-624).

4. Vita Activa

Ruth does not simply represent an interesting and uncommon character in the way she is perceived and depicted throughout the narration, she is not a mere passive figure acted by others. She is instead an active actant in the way she endeavours to find her position in society by totally devoting herself to work. "

> As (seamstress), mother, governess and nurse, she becomes involved in occupations which rely on careful surveillance and the active, productive use of her potentially subversive femininity. (Landridge 2011:52-53)

From this perspective, Ruth can be definitely defined as the heroine of a *Bildungsroman*.

To describe Ruth's personal evolution and her new female awareness, I would borrow the three categories of *labor*, *work* and *action* analysed by Hanna Arendt in her essay *The Human Condition*, published in 1958. Arendt manages to attain a definition of the human condition by investigating the actual meaning of *human action* and seeking for an answer to the question: *who is man*? We could adapt this question and try to define *woman.* Arendt focuses her phenomenological analysis on the condition of human existence and on the activities closely connected with it. As anticipated above, Arendt's investigation is based on three fundamental models of action, because only action can rescue mankind from Nature and allows it to make a new start on something absolutely unexpected and unpredictable. The subject of this action is the citizen. In Ruth's existential path, these three categories coexist. Labor is the activity which allows man to survive and it also concerns the biological process, as it is rooted in natality. The human being working to this purpose is called by Arendt *animal laborans* (1958:58-96). Ruth struggles to survive, becoming a seamstress, which was considered by the Victorians a *natural* profession for a woman**.** She is also happy to become the mother of Leonard, despite the 1834 Poor Reform Law that had removed all legal and financial support for unwed mothers, causing the consequent feminization of poverty (Logan 1998).

Work, on the contrary, provides an artificial world of things; within its borders, each individual life is housed. Work and its products, the artefact made by *homo faber,* confer a measure of permanence and durability on the inutility of mortal life. The Industrial Revolution emphasized the importance of work; Adam Smith considered it the fundamental source of wealth and Marx identified manpower as the origin of productivity and therefore the pivot of human essence (Pansera 2008:63). Arendt (1958:22) instead states that the supremacy of work went into the harmful spiral of excessive productivity, without considering all other human potentialities which form the *vita activa*: "human life in so far as it is actively engaged in doing something, is always rooted in a world of men and of manmade things which it never leaves or altogether trascends". The dressmaker Ruth is treated like a slave with no rights. Gaskell, like other novelists of her age, points out the impossible political emancipation of workers - a condition which got

even worse when it was woman-related. Nevertheless, Ruth becomes the maker of her social redemption when she starts to work as a governess. This used to be the only decent job suitable for a woman and allowed by society. In this role, Ruth finally finds her dimension and the praise of her environment.

The last category considered by Arendt is action. Action is related to human existence and can never manifest through a predictable, deterministic series of consequences, since the subject, by acting, is placed within a complicated web of relationships with others, which cannot be predicted.

5. Conclusion

Action is irreversible, as it is based on *initium*, a new start, opposed to destruction and death, which is the doom of any human being. Yet, man has the faculty to interrupt this process when he allows the start of something new. This thrust is decidedly altruistic in contrast to the mere biological needs of survival determined by a clearly selfish imprint. Ruth's life intersects with other characters' lives, tracing a path often accidentally, but confined to the strict rules of a peculiar context. Yet, she is not a *New Woman* in the strictest sense, since she never behaves like a rebel. She accepts some compromises like telling the lie that she is a widow or using femininity convincingly, looking very modest and submissive. It is precisely within that context that she strives to find her way of living successfully, although the epilogue is disappointing. Ruth's death was a topic much questioned and discussed in Gaskell's time too. Even Charlotte Brontë was unhappy about the death of Gaskell's heroine (Webster 2012:25). Yet Gaskell thought that was the logical end for someone who was ill judged by society. More than being a compromise about what people expected to see, the epilogue wants to foster further reflections on the topic of fallen women in the reading public.

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BLUE-BLOODED OR WHITE-COLLARED? THE GRADUAL DEMOCRATIZATION OF THE CONCEPT OF GENTLEMANLINESS IN SELECTED EXAMPLES OF VICTORIAN FICTION

MARLENA MARCINIAK
Opole University, Poland

***Abstract**: Gentlemanliness may be regarded as a significant hallmark of Victorian culture and a key term in contemporary definitions of masculinity. One of the reasons why manliness came to be so closely associated with gentlemanliness is the substantial reconceptualisation of the latter notion in the nineteenth century: from an appellation designating, by and large, noble birth to a universal moral quality attainable by men, regardless of their family origin or material status. The gradual evolution of Victorian views on gentlemanliness can be traced in Victorian fiction, which actively participated in public debates on the meaning of the concept.*
***Key words**: gentlemanliness, masculinity, novel, Victorian age*

1. Introduction

An anonymous author of a nineteenth-century courtesy book entitled *The English Gentleman* (1849:2) commences his explication of the iconic figure with the arresting observation that "[t]here is, perhaps, no term in the language less understood, and more utterly misused, than the term of GENTLEMAN". Obviously, the writer felt the need to provide an adequate definition of the concept so deeply rooted in English culture, yet so evasive and difficult to pinpoint. His concern about the notorious misapplications of the word could also suggest a pressing demand of the ambitious Victorian bourgeoisie, mesmerized by the prestigious quality of the title, for clear-cut guidelines useful in their strife for power and prominence. Indeed, the rise of the English middle-class, who scored its first major triumph in 1832, when the First Reform Act was passed, meant reappraisal of many notions, including gentlemanliness. The ideal may be regarded as "the necessary link in any analysis of mid-Victorian ways of thinking and behaving" (Briggs 2014:357), for it comprised a number of issues of utmost importance for any Victorian man. National pride, class consciousness and gender identity were all encoded in this captivating term.

2. Victorian (re)definitions of the concept of gentleman

The "unmistakable appeal" of the gentleman, to use Geoffrey Best's words (1985:269), may be attributed to the unprecedented shift in meaning of the concept: from the original highborn, noble man, translated from an Old French phrase *gentil hom* (Castronovo 1987:5), to "the title of moral nobility superior to legal rank, to which Peers and Commoners must alike aspire", as *The Spectator* cogently expressed it in 1845 (1845:181). Although an increasing emphasis on the moral aspects of the gentlemanly ideal can be detected already at the beginning of the eighteenth century, when Richard Steele (1899:72) wrote in the *Tatler* (1710) that "[t]he appellation of gentleman is never to be affixed to a man's circumstances, but

to his behaviour in them", it was the Victorian age that witnessed the culmination of the redefining process. The insistence on the moral facet of the notion appeared attractive to contemporary middle-class men, as devaluation of lineage turned the gentleman into a potentially accessible status for a large group of nouveaux riches, professionals and even artisans. What is more, the so-called gentlemanly code of conduct, which demanded from aspirants moral excellence, strict etiquette and proper education, created an impression of distinction available only to the men capable of meeting the high expectations. It seems justifiable to state that the category of gentleman retained its previous elitist character; however, the criteria for membership were modified in such a way as to give priority to internal merits over external attributes of family origin and inheritance, though the latter were not totally erased. Robin Gilmour (1981:4) aptly notices that "[i]t was the subtle and shifting balance between social and moral attributes that gave gentlemanliness its fascination".

According to Philip Mason (1993:161), "being a gentleman had then, by the second half of the 19th century, become almost a religion". An intense debate about the meaning of the term and a vigorous campaign advertising the gentlemanly ideal took place in Victorian press, sage writing and literature. An illustrative example of the ongoing reinterpretation of the notion may be found in the eighth edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* published in 1856, which provided a modernised version of the entry 'gentleman' supplemented with the following statement: "By courtesy this title is generally accorded to all persons above the rank of common tradesman when their manners are indicative of a certain amount of refinement and intelligence" (qtd in Senelick 1978:493). Thus, the bourgeois pretension to the honourable rank was officially acknowledged. Since the evolution of the term was well underway in the mid-Victorian period, many contemporary thinkers, politicians and writers used the concept as a tool for keeping the middle-class under tacit control by inspiring them to pursue the lofty goal of self-improvement and encouraging their social mobility. In 1865, *Illustrated London News* quoted Lord Palmerstone's speech given to the visitors of the South London Industrial Exhibition, in which the Prime Minister promised a prize of social esteem and advancement for the representatives of the economic sector: "And so I say to you […] you will, by systematic industry, raise yourselves in the social system of your country – you will acquire honour and respect for yourselves and your families" (qtd in Best 1985:258). The evident change of approach towards the concept of gentlemanliness in public discourse evinces the direction of progressive reforms, by degrees introduced during the reign of Queen Victoria, aiming at democratic reorganisation of society. In 1862, in *the Cornhill Magazine*, Fitzjames Stephen anticipated the ultimate elimination of formal conditions precluding claims to the gentlemanly status:

> There is a constantly increasing disposition to insist more upon the moral and less upon the social element of the word, and it is not impossible that in the course of time its use may come to be altogether dissociated from any merely conventional distinction. (qtd in Gilmour 1981:5)

In other words, the Victorian revision of the concept ran parallel to contemporary policies heading towards egalitarian society.

The idea of the gentleman also stimulated nineteenth-century writers of courtesy literature, whose detailed descriptions of proper attributes, manners and

occupations were to help mould men's characters in accordance with the ideal of gentlemanliness. *Advice to a Young Gentleman on Entering Society* (1839), the aforementioned *The English Gentleman: His Principles, His Feelings, His Manners, His Pursuits* (1849), both anonymous, Archibald Edmonstone's *The Christian Gentleman's Daily Walk* (1840) or James Friswell's *The Gentle Life: Essays in Aid of the Formation of Character* (1864) are but a few contemporary conduct books outlining the proprieties as well as celebrating values worthy of true gentlemen. It is important to stress that the essential premise of those texts was the possibility of moral self-training and developing an adequate deportment required from gentlemen. As J. R. Vernon (1869: 578) points out in his instructive article for *The Contemporary Review*, 'The Grand Old Name of Gentleman', "[t]he Gentleman, […] is always a student, for this character is greatly a matter of learning". Apparently, there are no prerequisites of blue blood or landownership for admission to the school of gentlemanliness.

Naturally, such a weighty matter as the ideal of gentleman attracted the attention of Victorian sages. Contemporary moralists, like John Ruskin, Samuel Smiles or John Henry Newman, influenced the public opinion by their elucidations of gentlemanly qualities and strongly induced their compatriots to undertake the process of personal improvement, which I propose to call 'gentlemanization'. Although their definitions differ to some extent, their keen interest in the concept reflects the paramount importance that it gained in Victorian culture. Of the three authors, Smiles seems to be the most liberal and apprehensive of the current trends in conceptualisations of the term. In *Self-Help* (1859) he endorses a classless accessibility of the notion in the following manner:

> Riches and rank have no necessary connexion with genuine gentlemanly qualities. The poor man may be a true gentleman, — in spirit and in daily life. He may be honest, truthful, upright, polite, temperate, courageous, self-respecting, and self-helping, — that is, be a true gentleman. The poor man with a rich spirit is in all ways superior to the rich man with a poor spirit. (Smiles 1859:328)

Cardinal Newman's famous definition, in turn, stresses heavily the spiritual and intellectual imperatives of universal significance. He mentions moral principles (not material circumstances), which might be internalised by virtually any man:

> It is almost a definition of a gentleman to say he is one who never inflicts pain […] The true gentleman in like manner carefully avoids whatever may cause a jar or a jolt in the minds of those with whom he is cast […] his great concern being to make every one at their ease and at home. He has his eyes on all his company; he is tender towards the bashful, gentle towards the distant, and merciful towards the absurd […] He has too much good sense to be affronted at insults, he is too well employed to remember injuries, and too indolent to bear malice. He is patient, forbearing, and resigned, on philosophical principles; he submits to pain, because it is inevitable, to bereavement, because it is irreparable, and to death, because it is his destiny. (Newman 1999:198-190)

The manifestly high level of moral standards that he established in *The Idea of a University* (1852) did not mean that men of lower social standing were not able to achieve it. Ruskin seems to be one of the most conservative analysts of gentlemanliness, calling the gentleman "a man of pure race" (Ruskin 2005:251), evoking in this way traditional connotations of the word. Nevertheless, the author of *Modern Painters* (1860) also recognised the possibility of developing proper personal traits, if a man was not endowed with them by nature:

> Gentlemanliness, however, in ordinary parlance, must be taken to signify those qualities which are usually the evidence of high breeding, and which, so far as they can be acquired, it should be every man's effort to acquire; or, if he has them by nature, to preserve and exalt.

The texts of Victorian sages provide pertinent insights into contemporary understandings of the term as well as confirmation that dissemination of the ideal of gentleman was well going down the social scale.

3. Conceptualisations of the gentleman in Victorian novels

Similarly, the authors of Victorian fiction responded actively and contributed substantially to the democratic evolution of the category of gentlemanliness. Christine Berberich (2007:34) observes that "the nineteenth century saw the heyday of the gentlemanly ideal, both in real life and literature". Generally, most writers applauded alteration of the word's meaning from a man of noble birth to a man of noble character and hailed gentlemanliness as a commendable form of masculinity. According to Walter Allen (1976:139), in the first decades of the period, the novelists assumed unequivocally the function of spokesmen who tended to share their readers' values and beliefs; therefore, their tendency to look with favour on the characters who comply with the moral aspect of the ideal, despite humble origin or limited financial means, may evince public approval for this model of gentleman. Such novels as: Charles Dickens's *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838), Mrs. Craik's *John Halifax, Gentleman* (1856), Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1860), or George Meredith's *Evan Harrington* (1860) illuminate essential differences between men who usurp the title of gentleman by high birth or wealth and men who really deserve to win it by honourable conduct and moral integrity.

3.1. *Nicholas Nickleby* by Charles Dickens

Dickens's lifelong preoccupation with the idea of gentlemanliness (Gilmour 1981:146) may be already noticed in *Nicholas Nickleby*, written at the outset of the Victorian era. Even though the eponymous character is the son of a country gentleman, he is forced to earn his living as well as struggle for social esteem due the financial ruin caused by his deceased father's poor investment. The nineteen-year-old boy suddenly has to deal with destitution and humiliation; in addition, he is obliged to take care of his mother and sister, for whom he becomes the sole protector. The advantage of Nicholas's family background is clearly overshadowed by the reduced circumstances he lives in. Since the social criteria are downgraded in his case, the protagonist needs to resort to the moral component of the concept. Throughout the novel Nicholas undergoes a "heroic progress", to use Hilary Schor's expression (1999:328-329), from an unexperienced, impulsive youngster to a fully mature, responsible, honourable man whose gentlemanly character is acknowledged and duly rewarded. He passes the test of gentlemanliness because his acts certify his ability to live up to the gentlemanly code of conduct. Young Nickleby proves his independence for he is determined to work, shuddering at the thought of living at his greedy uncle's mercy. His benevolence and compassion are visible in friendship with invalid, disabled Smike; bravery and heroism are manifested when he rescues the infant of Mr. and Mrs. Kenwigs from fire, while his credibility and industry are praised by his employers, the Cheeryble brothers. Furthermore, Nicholas never fails in family affairs, being a caring son and

supportive brother and always aiming at domestic felicity. It is important to note that the protagonist does not suffer from an inferiority complex and is convinced that as far as the moral factors are concerned, he has performed no deed that could embarrass him. In one of the vital scenes in the plot, Nicholas boldly confronts Sir Mulberry Hawk, a fashionable, rich man about town, who has insulted and ill-used Kate Nickleby. The meeting of the two men is an illustrative example of the clash between the conventional understanding of the notion of gentleman, based on the supremacy of wealth and rank, and the innovative approach crystallising in the early-Victorian period which added more weight to universal moral attributes. When the baronet scorns his opponent calling him "an errand-boy" (Dickens 1983: 498), Nicholas answers with dignity: "I am the son of a country gentleman […] your equal in birth and education, and your superior I trust in everything besides" (1983:498). The incident conveys an impression that Sir Mulberry Hawk cowardly avoids responsibility for his shameful behaviour, whereas Nicholas emerges triumphant from the skirmish, having absolute right to defend his sister's reputation, thus proving that he is a man of honour. The conclusion seems inescapable that Dickens depicted the young hero in tune with the current attitudes to gentlemanliness. The novelist's traumatic experience of working in a blacking factory after his father's degrading imprisonment definitely contributed to his approval for the more democratic conceptualisation of the gentlemanly ideal, fully displayed in later texts, like *David Copperfield*, or *Great Expectations*.

3.2. *John Halifax, Gentleman* by Dinah Mulock Craik

John Halifax, Gentleman by Dinah Mulock Craik depicts a comparable case of a penniless orphaned boy who becomes both commercially and socially successful thanks to his own abilities and spiritual virtues. The novel was an instant and enduring hit both with readers and critics, enjoying a second place (just behind *Uncle Tom's Cabin*) on the list of the era's most popular books in 1863 (Mitchell 1983:51). Charles Kingsley (2004:114) praised its inspiring power in the following way:

> A book which did me good when first I read it; which ought to do any young man good who will read it, and then try to be, like John Halifax, a gentleman, whether in the shop, the counting-house, the bank, or the manufactory.

Modern critics likewise acknowledge its impact on the evolution of views about the essence of gentlemanliness, describing it as "a compendium of middle-class virtues" (Mitchell 1983:46) or "the culmination of […] the bourgeois redefinition of the gentleman (Young 1999:14). What is more, John Halifax could be regarded as a role model for the Victorian middle-class, since he begins so low and manages to rise so high, remaining invariably faithful to religious and economic values of hard work, self-discipline, honesty and generosity. Whether in the public sector of industry, politics and business, or in the private sphere with his wife, children and friends, the character never betrays gentlemanly ideals. The moral excellence of the self-made man is even more highlighted when juxtaposed with conspicuous corruption, extravagance and hypocrisy of aristocrats, like Lord Luxmore, whose honour is described as "a foul tattered rag" (Craik 1864:437). In John Halifax's moral code, there is no place for wrongdoing, indolence or selfishness, therefore he cannot give his consent to his daughter's marriage with Lord Ravenel, the son of a debased man and a representative of the leisure class, as Thorstein Veblen could classify him. He justifies his refusal by indicating the vast

disparity between his worldview and the upper-class lifestyle calling it: "the distance […] between personal things, which strike at the root of love, home-nay honour" (1864:436). His words imply a bourgeois sense of moral superiority to the avaricious, spoilt aristocracy. Obviously, hereditary titles and estates do not make any impression on the protagonist, for whom personal qualities are the only criteria of evaluating people's worthiness. The eponymous character of Craik's work epitomises the spirit of the changes that took place in the Victorian frame of mind in the middle decades of the nineteenth century and seals the victory of moral attributes over the advantages of money and pedigree in the concept of gentleman.

3.3. *The Woman in White* by Wilkie Collins

A similar desire for legitimacy of a middle-class man, who attests his gentlemanly character by noble conduct may be found in Wilkie Collins's pioneer sensation novel *The Woman in White*. What Nicholas Nickleby, John Halifax and Walter Hartright have in common is their initial underprivileged social and material position compensated by a firm moral backbone and a pure heart. Furthermore, all three have to make money to survive and are disdained by upper-class members. Being a drawing master, Mr Hartright is reduced to the level of worker in genteel country houses. Teaching the daughters of rich families makes him their subordinate, and lowers his status to that of a servant. The fact that at Limmeridge House, the Fairlies' estate, he is to be treated "on the footing of a gentleman" (Collins 1980:43), ironically means that he is not regarded as their equal (Ben-Yishai 2013:171). Although his social status appears questionable from his employers' point of view, his gentlemanly deportment raises no doubt. Marian Halcombe is one of the first who praises the protagonist's distinguished morals: "the self-control, the delicacy, and the compassion of a man who was naturally a gentleman" (Collins 1980:94). The family's solicitor, Mr. Gilmore, shares her high opinion: "he struck me as being a modest and gentlemanlike young man" (1980:151). It is worth emphasizing that by and large Hartright's conduct is respectable, his intentions sincere and his manners impeccable. Ayelet Ben-Yishai (2013:158) claims that his "constantly dependable behavior as a gentleman […] is the only constant element in the novel". In addition, his qualities seem augmented when contrasted with Sir Percival's treachery and ruthlessness. Thus reversal of the conventional images of a nobleman and a lower-class man is reinforced by Collins. Sir Percival Glyde makes an attempt to verify his origin and obtain a fortune by crime, deceit and violence, erroneously associating gentlemanly rank with material factors like a birth certificate or financial resources. He is just a mere impostor with a fraudulent identity (Hughes 2005:269), who perverts the Victorian idea of gentlemanliness, for which *nota bene* he is annihilated; whereas the humble drawing teacher emerges as the genuine gentleman, winning general respect, Laura's hand, and social advancement as the father of the heir of Limmeridge. In short, Hartright gets everything that Percival longed for, demonstrating that moral propriety was the only key to a fully sanctioned gentlemanly status.

3.4. *Evan Harrington* by George Meredith

George Meredith added his voice to the polemic against the stereotypical understanding of the gentleman as a blue-blooded inheritor of possessions in his comic novel *Evan Harrington*. The titular character, unlike Nickleby, Halifax or

Hartright, is closely connected with highborn, rich people and becomes a welcome guest in their houses. The young gallant, well-bred lad is strongly influenced by the lifestyle and ideas of his sister Louisa, married to a Portuguese nobleman, Count de Saldar, who tries to train and instruct her brother in the spirit of gentlemanliness, so that his perfect manners and excellent attire could lure a wealthy heiress, such as Rose Jocelyn, into marriage. However, her secret, fiendish plot is destroyed when the truth of their origin is disclosed. A great scandal erupts when Evan frankly admits to being a tailor's son, a bankrupt tailor's son to be more precise. His confession may be considered a turning point in his life for two reasons: firstly, it provides irrefutable evidence that the protagonist is a brave, honest man, seriously in love with Rose, who has been unwillingly manipulated into his sister's plan; secondly, since his initial gentlemanly status is ruined, his deeds must attest his righteousness if he wants to retrieve it. Hence, he undertakes a quest for legitimacy, analogously to the three aforementioned characters. Like Dickens, Craik and Collins, Meredith involves his character in circumstances which demand hard decisions or heroic actions, allowing him in this way to reveal gentlemanly qualities. In spite of his former friends' scorn and his sister's protests, Evan comes back to his hometown and takes up tailoring to pay back his deceased father's debts and protect the good name of his family. At first glance, it looks as if he lost a chance for a gentlemanly rank forever; the narrator provokingly states that in the eyes of local gentry he is a "degraded youth", a "wretched impostor" (Meredith 1860:439). Nevertheless, the protagonist gains something more valuable and permanent than public accolades, for he substantiates his manliness. It is interesting that the author uses a plural narrative voice exclaiming: "We are men from this day!" (1860:440), manifestly identifying with Evan and approving of his choice. Honour, dutifulness, responsibility and truthfulness shine through in his conduct, therefore readers may not be much amazed when the young man renounces the Jocelyns' ancestral estate, bestowed on him by the previous owner of Beckley Court, Juliana Bonner, returns it to the rightful heir, Harry, and correspondingly resolves to "continue a beggar" (1860:471). This selfless and magnanimous act inspires awe even in the proud Jocelyns, who no longer question Evan's gentlemanly character: "'Upon my honour, he must have the soul of a gentleman!' said the Baronet" (1860:478). The only person who is too narrow-minded, mercenary and haughty to recognise Evan's high-mindedness and "cavalier principles" (1860:212) is a lord's son, Ferdinand Laxley. His blind adherence to the rule of blood and money as well as the inability to overcome his prejudice against a tailor render him unfit for the new ideal of gentlemanliness. A review from *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* (1860-61) aptly encapsulates Meredith's point:

> The moral of the book is not that every tailor is as much a gentleman as every nobleman, but simply that gentlemanhood is determined by causes which can not be calculated, and may appear in a tailor's son and not appear in an earl's. (Alden 1861:123)

4. Conclusion

To conclude, the Victorian age brought a considerable number of democratic reforms, for instance: a gradual extension of franchise, the introduction of elementary education for all children or the liberalization of women's rights, which went hand in hand with reconceptualisations of traditional notions of class, gender,

family or sexuality in Victorian consciousness. The idea of gentleman, so well-established, yet so elusive and fluid, also underwent notable reconstruction in tune with the changing social structure, distribution of economic and political power as well as moral climate of the era. The unprecedented transition of the term's meaning from a title by and large reserved for the hermetic group of aristocracy and gentry to a broad category denoting "a man's ethics and behaviour, regardless of his class or profession" (Mitchell 1996:270), marks a significant phase in English sociocultural evolution. If Alexis De Tocqueville (2008:91) claims that the history of the word 'gentleman' is "the history of democracy itself", it may be observed that the process of democratisation visibly accelerated in mid-Victorian England.

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THE SIGN OF FALL
SHERLOCK HOLMES AND EPIDEMIOLOGICAL THREATS

JUSTYNA JAJSZCZOK
University of Silesia

Abstract: *According to the popular interpretations, Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Sign of Four" (2004) can be read either as a story of revenge and reverse colonisation or of an exotic contamination of the British Empire. This paper combines these two approaches in order to emphasise the medial aspect of tropical invasion and its consequences to national constitution embodied by Sherlock Holmes.*
Keywords: *drugs, invasion, nineteenth-century medicine, poison, reverse colonisation, Sherlock Holmes*

1. Introduction

Before he became a full-time writer, Arthur Conan Doyle worked as a physician and his learned profession never seemed to have left him, long after he abandoned his practice. It could be argued that most of his written work bears the mark of a doctor, but this is particularly accurate in the case of the Sherlock Holmes stories – not only narrated by a doctor, but also, apparently, inspired by a doctor (Cannon Harris 2003:448). Moreover, even the storylines themselves, allowing for variations on a theme, are constructed in such a way that they resemble the process of a doctor's treatment of a patient. First, there is a client/patient with a problem that the "consulting detective" must address, then follows the examination, the inquiry and the diagnosis. If the subsequent therapy proves effective, the solution is found and, as a result, the client's/patient's problem is alleviated. It is impossible to determine if this stylistic manner is unintentional or rather the conscious choice of the writer. It seems sensible to favour the latter; after all, drawing from personal experiences lends authenticity to the work of fiction. This may explain why Doyle appears to have partially modelled Watson's career on his own; both, for example, served as surgeons in the farther parts of the Empire, and both suffered from fevers as a result (Otis 2000:91; Doyle 2004:3).

In this respect, *The Sign of Four* (2004) is a case in point. The novel abounds in medical references, and expressions such as "ague" or "tetanus" appear on almost every other page. It opens with a syringe injection, invokes a mystery of *risus sardonicus*, mentions the nursing of a sick cannibal back to health, and refers to fever-stricken places. Even Holmes himself, having found a vital clue during the course of his investigation, comments it as follows: "It confirms my diagnosis, as you doctors express it" (Doyle 2004:150). There is, however, an even more suggestive medical theme pervading the narrative, and this involves an epidemiological threat from an exotic site.

Having been educated in the second half of the nineteenth century, Doyle had a chance to observe the great change in medical paradigm: the final abandonment of the miasmatic theory of disease (which associated infection with "bad air") and the rise of bacteriology. The so-called "golden age of microbiology" (Lehrer 2006:275), which took place between 1875 and 1910, was called so

because during these decades "almost all of the bacteria causing human disease were identified, along with many parasites, and the science of virology was begun" (Lehrer 2006:275). Moreover, the late nineteenth century also witnessed the rise of tropical medicine in close connection with bacteriology. As N. Joel Ehrenkranz (1987:22) explains,

> Scientific foundations of tropical medicine were laid by demonstrations of the bacterial origins of cholera and plague; the nematode cause of filariasis; the protozoan etiology of malaria; the waterborne transmission of cholera; and the arthropod spread of malaria, plague, and yellow fever.

These developments provided new ways of perceiving diseases and their modes of transmission and infection, a topic of particular significance to the British Empire. Doyle was not an impartial observer of this revolution; on the contrary, he was actively interested in Robert Koch's discoveries and even visited his laboratory in Berlin to investigate the German bacteriologist's cure for tuberculosis, which he later described in his report in *Review of Reviews* (Otis 2000:91-2). Indeed, even after having abandoned practice, Doyle tried to follow the recent developments in medicine (Ehrenkranz 1987:223). Thus, these newly discovered implications of bacteriology proved a powerful inspiration whose execution in *The Sign of Four* appears to reflect both Doyle's medical knowledge and his avid imperialism. This is the framework against which I intent to interpret the novel as a story of an uncontrollable force in a form of an exotic disease which is imported to London and wreaks havoc on the susceptible tissue of the imperial body.

2. Returns, revenge and reverse colonisation vs. infection

There are two main ways into which the reading of *The Sign of Four* usually diverges. The more worn one falls into the "reverse colonisation" category in which Sherlock Holmes is seen as the defender of the Empire against invasion in many forms: mass immigration, the return of the unwanted: "the loungers and idlers of the Empire" (Doyle 2004:4), criminals, Australian convicts, etc., as well as the danger of exotic influences. The other, less travelled road, focuses on the undesirable communication of people, ideas and substances (among them poisons and pathogens), which is presented as a threat to national health.

I do not wish to offer a third path where no foot has trodden yet; instead I propose to combine these two approaches along the lines of Susan Cannon Harris's interpretation (2003:449), in which "[t]he Holmes stories reflect a contemporary rhetorical trend that lumped drugs, organic toxins, and infectious agents together as foreign-born biocontaminants returning from the colonies to afflict the English". In this respect, I read *The Sign of Four* as the story of infection rather than invasion, and Holmes's strategy in dealing with it as one in accordance with nineteenth-century medicine.

The agent or vector of this infection is Tonga: "the ultimate terror, a foreign invader who penetrates Victorian society and poses the threat of 'reverse colonization'" (Raheja 2006:424), the cannibal of the Andaman Islands who is "imported" to England by the other villain of the story, Jonathan Small. In the first crime scene of *The Sign of Four*, we learn immediately the *modus operandi* and murder weapon used by the yet unknown killer. There, stuck in the head of the victim, is "a long, dark thorn" (Doyle 2004:137), which must be handled with

extreme care on account of it being poisoned (Doyle 2004:138). Closer inspection brings more details to light; it is certainly not an English thorn, but rather an exotic one adapted to its horrid purpose by a man's hand:

> It was long, sharp and black, with a glazed look near the point as though some gummy substance had dried upon it. The blunt end had been trimmed and rounded off with a knife. (Doyle 2004:142)

The description reveals that Tonga's thorns are in fact poisoned darts which he shoots from a blow-pipe. As the stiff and contorted body of Bartholomew Sholto proves, death from these jabs is as painful as it is quick.

When Holmes finds the rest of the darts which, as we learn later, had been dropped accidentally, he expresses his gladness in a surprising manner:

> 'They are hellish things,' said he. 'Look out that you don't prick yourself. I'm delighted to have them, for the chances are that they are all he has. There is the less fear of you or me finding one in our skin before long. I would sooner face a Martini bullet myself.' (Doyle 2004:150)

McLaughlin (2000:64) notes how very much out of character these words are:

> The coldly rational Holmes does not usually ascribe metaphysical explanations such as 'hellish' to the sensory data he encounters.

Note that this highly emotional reaction takes place in a relatively secure environment: the thorns are safe in his own hands and the killer is nowhere near the crime scene. Yet the apparent fear Holmes expresses may point to his realisation of the potency of the threat these darts symbolise. The manner of administration of the poison and its effectiveness bring to mind some tropical air-borne pathogen which ruthlessly exploits the lack of immunity of its victims. It is indeed "hellish" for, once let loose, it is unstoppable.

After picking up all the clues, Holmes and Watson begin the investigation which, after the initial rush of energy, does not seem to render any significant results. While Watson, customarily "befogged in mind" (Doyle 2004:154), does not appear particularly affected by the enforced inertia, it almost drives Holmes senseless, and he begins to develop some disquieting symptoms. These are first noticed by the landlady, Mrs. Hudson, who becomes "afraid for [Sherlock's] health" (Doyle 2004:165) and decides to share her apprehension with Watson:

> I can hear him walking away the same as ever. I hope he's not going to be ill, sir. I ventured to say something to him about cooling medicine, but he turned on me, sir, with such a look that I don't know however I got out of the room. (ibid.)

Quite soon, Watson himself, a trained physician after all, realises that something is amiss:

> At breakfast-time he looked worn and haggard, with a little fleck of feverish colour upon either cheek.
> 'You are knocking yourself up, old man,' I remarked. 'I heard you marching about in the night.'
> 'No, I could not sleep,' he answered. 'This infernal problem is consuming me'. (Doyle 2004:166)

The mystery consumes him quite literally. Evidently, Holmes is sick: feverish and restless to such an extent that he evokes the hellish imagery once again.

Finally, after days of this suffering, Holmes attempts to take his mind off the issue that is consuming him and resorts to his other interest, i.e. chemical analysis. This proves effective, for the next morning he looks and feels positively recovered:

> Well, I gave my mind a thorough rest by plunging into a chemical analysis. One of our greatest statesmen has said that a change of work is the best rest. So it is. When I had succeeded in dissolving the hydrocarbon which I was at work at, I came back to the problem of the Sholtos, and thought the whole matter out again. (Doyle 2004:174)

Symptomatically, Holmes uses chemistry to find a solution to his problem and indeed – through chemical analysis, "heating of retorts and distilling vapours" (Doyle 2004:166), he appears to have dissolved the mystery of the murderer. This apparent recovery may point to the ideological underpinnings of the novel in which "good" Western chemistry is employed to fight the "barbaric" vegetable alkaloids of exotic provenance in a way analogous to Koch's fight with microbes.

From this moment onward, the action gains momentum and soon the story reaches its climax in the form of the crazy chase after the killers on the waters of the Thames. There, from the board of a police-boat, Watson finally has the opportunity to lay his eyes on the islander and the view shakes him to the core (Doyle 2004:178). While his simultaneously fascinated and disgusted gaze lingers, Tonga has one final opportunity to showcase his "savage instincts" (Doyle 2004: 152), and so he blows the last of his poisoned darts at his pursuers, before he is shot and disappears underwater. After the chase is over, and Small apprehended, Holmes directs Watson's attention towards a certain detail:

> 'See here,' said Holmes, pointing to the wooden hatchway. 'We were hardly quick enough with our pistols'. There, sure enough, just behind where we had been standing, stuck one of those murderous darts which we knew so well. It must have whizzed between us at the instant we fired. Holmes smiled and shrugged his shoulders in his easy fashion, but I confess that it turned me sick to think of the horrible death which had passed so close to us that night. (Doyle 2004:179)

The difference in Holmes's reaction towards Tonga's weapon is great: what turned Watson sick, has virtually no impression on the detective. Apparently, during the course of the story, something significant must have happened that changed his perception of the thorn from "hellish" to worthy of a mere shoulder-shrug. Perhaps late-nineteenth century medicine may offer some kind of solution to this mystery.

3. Reflecting and infecting

Apart from employing extensive medical references, *The Sign of Four* also utilises another stylistic technique – that of mirroring. Many characters and events in the novel have their counterparts, sometimes reflected exactly, and sometimes ridiculously distorted. The story begins and ends with the same scene: Holmes injecting himself with cocaine. The much-quoted passage opening the first chapter goes:

> Sherlock Holmes took his bottle from the corner of the mantel-piece and his hypodermic syringe from its neat morocco case. With his long, white, nervous

> fingers he adjusted the delicate needle, and rolled back his left shirt-cuff. For some little time his eyes rested thoughtfully upon the sinewy forearm and wrist all dotted and scarred with innumerable puncture-marks. Finally he thrust the sharp point home, pressed down the tiny piston, and sank back into the velvet-lined arm-chair with a long sigh of satisfaction. (Doyle 2004:109)

The drug-taking is then shown again when Thaddeus Sholto is presented. As opposed to Holmes's meticulous seven per cent solution intake in a controlled environment (and in the presence of a personal doctor, no less), the young Sholto, with his bouncy head and nervous body seems forever "hooked on the hookah" (McLaughlin 2000:59). His twitching and jolting betray signs of serious drug abuse, especially when juxtaposed with robot-like Holmes.

However, as McLaughlin points out, the mirroring does not end here.

> The scene of the murder reenacts [*sic.*], once again, the drug scene at the novella's opening. Here, at the center of the novella, the foreign thorn serves as a deadly double for the needle used by Holmes in the opening paragraph, while the poison recalls the potential dangers of cocaine or the smoke inhaled in Thaddeus's oasis. (McLaughlin 2000:64).

There is, however, an additional point to be made regarding the mirroring technique: the mode of administration of the exotic substance may be the same in both Holmes's and Tonga's case, but the difference lies in the solution. While the latter's thorn is filled with maximally concentrated poison, the former's syringe consists of only a small percentage of the poisonous substance – just enough to invoke a certain organismic reaction, but not enough to do too much harm. In essence, Holmes takes a much less virulent version of Tonga's infection. Would it be too much of a stretch to assume that Doyle – fascinated by Koch's work – had Holmes vaccinated in this way? Indeed, such a hypothesis may seem rather far-fetched, but it offers a reasonably convenient explanation of Holmes's otherwise inexplicable change in attitude towards Tonga's darts. It could also account for his mild episode of disease, followed by the apparent acquired immunity – if only expressed figuratively. It seems to make sense in the greater picture: as Holmes is supposed to act as the Empire's defender or – in Laura Otis's words – "[a]s an imperial leukocyte" (Otis 2000:110), he must be prepared to face all kinds of threats. He assumes identities, mingles with the denizens of the Victorian underworld and visits opium dens – all in the name of finding and eliminating the enemies of the Empire. Inoculating himself seems the logical next step, and a sensible one as well, for Bartholomew Sholto is a great proof of what may happen to the immune-deficient.

I would argue therefore that within the realms of colonial metaphor, the threat of *one* cannibal invading the entire imperial body represented by London does not seem particularly serious. However, if the same individual is perceived from an epidemiological perspective, he becomes much more dangerous. The peril of the cannibal lies not in the number, but in his virulence, so to speak, and this, as we are informed, is potent. When Jonathan Small encounters the dying Tonga in the woods, he decides to help him, but from the beginning he is aware of the grave danger that accompanies the islander: "I took him in hand, though he was as venomous as a young snake, and after a couple of months I got him all right and able to walk" (Doyle 2004:201). Thus Tonga is not just dangerous because of his

poisoned darts; the poison is inside him, as if secreted through his skin, which makes even skin to skin contact with him perilous.

Following this lead seems justified as it echoes the apprehensions expressed by specialists of tropical medicine in the late nineteenth century. Before the discovery of the mode of infection of schistosomiasis, a tropical disease caused by blood flukes, many competitive theories appeared concerning its transmission. One of these was proposed by a German parasitologist working in Egypt, Arthur Looss, who came to the conclusion that the infection took place when human skin had contact with water contaminated by larvae of the worm (Farley 2003:59-61). This hypothesis opened a set of very worrying issues for the British troops stationed in Egypt. As Farley (2003:64) writes, "if the 'skin-contact theory' of Looss were true then every puddle in every army camp was a potential source of the disease. An artilleryman, returning home from Egypt, could be responsible for an epidemic of bilharzia in Woolwich Barracks! London could become another Cairo; the mind reeled". In such circumstances, it would indeed be conceivable that a single reservoir of exotic pathogens such as Tonga could easily start an epidemic, especially considering the fact that, because his body ended up in the Thames, his virulence might still prove dangerous. Should this be the case, there would be no end to re-infections.

4. Conclusion

Ultimately, therefore, *The Sign of Four* is the story of a disorder. On the one hand, this disorder equals a powerful tropical infection that is very difficult to prevent and the only available immunity-boosting strategy – as Holmes's forearm proves – is life-threatening in itself. More generally, however, it is the disorder that is created by the Other within the frame of the imperial order. Here, even more than personal health is at stake; this is the kind of disorder that has the potential to threaten the national constitution. And the most terrifying is the realisation that there is no analogous pro-immunity tactic that could be adopted by the Empire in order to prevent the infection. In this respect, Tonga of *The Sign of Four* can be read not so much as a harbinger of "reverse colonisation", but as the *sign* of the imperial *fall*.

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ACTING OUT GENDER: PERFORMATIVITY AND BECOMING LORD HENRY WOTTON IN OSCAR WILDE'S *THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY*

BURAK IRMAK
Istanbul Aydin University

Abstract: *The paper examines performativity in the Nineteenth Century Victorian Novel, especially the resistance to dictated male performativity and its results, illustrated in novels by male authors such as Oscar Wilde, in his "The Picture of Dorian Gray" and its character Lord Henry Wotton. Trapped by the male roles dictated by society, Lord Henry finds relief in talking to other people about his desires. In a platonic teacher-student relationship, he leads Dorian into his desires and finds escape from his stereotypical gender through him.*
Key words: *masculinity, Oscar Wilde, performativity, Queer Theory, Victorian literature*

1. Introduction

The topics of sexuality and gender in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* have been discussed for decades. However, little has been said on issues like what happens when gender norms are opposed by the characters in the novel and how the consequences of those actions were shaped by Oscar Wilde. When it comes to Queer Theory, most academics preferred dealing with sexuality in Dorian Gray rather than performativity and the Heterosexual Matrix of Victorian high society. Performativity is a term best explained by Judith Butler (1993, 2004) in her books on queer theory. According to her, gender and sexuality are an ongoing mode of becoming. The world is like a stage and we are the actors on this stage, where we perform our duties and roles. We are teachers, students, engineers, men, women, bisexuals, heterosexuals, gays, lesbians and so on. We play our roles as expected from us by society, and we usually perform unconsciously. Any problem in this world can be viewed within this theory of performativity; therefore, it is important to discuss Wilde's novel from this point of view. The paper will examine performativity in the Nineteenth Century Victorian Novel, especially the resistance to dictated male performativity and its results as reflected in Wilde's only novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*; special attention will be paid to the character named Lord Henry Wotton, who arguably shows characteristics of Wilde himself.

In *The History of Sexuality,* Foucault (1978:3) explains how gender was perceived in the 19th century: "A single locus of sexuality was acknowledged in social space as well as at the heart of every household, but it was a utilitarian and fertile one: the parents' bedroom". This means that any other form of sexuality was considered illegitimate. For people with illegitimate sexualities, Victorian Society created punishments and ways of othering them. Again Foucault says:

> The brothel and the mental hospital would be those places of tolerance: the prostitute, the client, and the pimp, together with the psychiatrist and his hysteric - those 'Other Victorians', as Steven Marcus would say - seem to have surreptitiously transferred the pleasures that are unspoken into the order of things that are counted. (Foucault 1978:4)

There were other ways of punishing those who deviated from normative sexuality. The Criminal Law Amendment Act, for instance, punished a person who committed a buggery act to penal servitude for life and for a term not less than ten years. Oscar Wilde, who suffered because of the Amendment Act, writes: "I must say to myself that I ruined myself" (Wilde 1997:1071), which makes it clear that he felt guilty for his sexual experiences. In addition, he states that: "I allowed pleasure to dominate me. I ended in horrible disgrace." (Wilde 1997:1071). His moral dilemma could be seen in his works and this peaked when he was put into prison.

Some writers, such as Jeff Nunokawa, defend the point of view which states that Oscar Wilde is similar to Lord Henry Wotton for their defiance of "the Love that dare not speak its name" (1997:157) and for "praising specific ones" (1997:158). According to him, while Oscar Wilde praises specific feelings and thoughts, Lord Henry "endorses every feeling, thought, dream, and impulse, rather than any particular" (Nunokawa 1997:158). However, what they had in common was their talking about desire, which should have been avoided in the Victorian Period. Nunokawa defines Lord Henry as an advocate for "sexual passion" (Nunokawa 1997:160). Another similarity between the author and his character is, as Duggan (63) puts it, that "Dorian lives according to what Lord Henry professes", which is very much like a pederastian view of Wilde: "the older man teaching the young boy the ways of life and warfare, how to become a man" and "…sex was a big part of this interaction between men and boys" (Duggan 64). But reading such relation was opposed by Sinfield when he said "*The Picture of Dorian Gray* invokes the queer image, to some readers at least, despite at no point representing it" (qtd. in Richler 1); Sinfield clearly opposes Nunokawa and Kosofsky Sedgwick by emphasizing that the latter's search for a "gay scenario" does not really work, since "Wilde was neither gay nor homosexual" (qtd. in Luckhurst 1995: 337). Barbara Charlesworth also discusses the similarities and differences between Lord Henry and Oscar Wilde; she points out that three male characters (Lord Henry, Dorian Gray and Basil Howard) have some of Oscar Wilde's characteristics. Wilde himself in a letter to a friend says that Dorian Gray "contains much of me in it. Basil Hallward is what I think I am: Lord Henry, what the world thinks me: Dorian what I would like to be." (qtd. in Caroll 2005:290).

In *The History of* Sexuality, when talking about the confinement of sex in the Victorian Period, Foucault (1978:3) says that "on the subject of sex silence became the rule." Articulating the word loudly was out of the question. That is why *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was shocking to the Victorian reader: Lord Henry Wotton talks about the strictly forbidden. He says "The only way to get rid of temptation … is to yield to it" (Wilde 1997:16). Stuck in the male role of husband, dictated to him by society, Lord Henry finds relief talking to other people about his desires, the things he wants to do and the things he could not do. In a platonic teacher-student relationship, he leads Dorian within his desires and, in this way, he finds an escape from his never-ending cycle of stereotypical gender. This teacher-student relationship is very clear in the novel, with the dominance of Lord Henry over Dorian Gray. Luljeta Muriqi (9) explains: "In regard to his pedagogic role, Lord Henry realizes this, quite early in the novel, at his very first meeting with Dorian". A fictional character, Lord Henry plays many roles in his life, which he performs mostly unconsciously. Butler says:

> If gender is a kind of a doing, an incessant activity performed, in part, without one's knowing and without one's willing, it is not for that reason automatic or mechanical.

> On the contrary, it is a practice of improvisation within a scene of constraint. (Butler 2004: 1)

In this "scene of constraint", Lord Henry finds relief in his new found pederastia teacher role. He embraces it and uses it as an escape from his other performative roles. His roles can be described as a teacher to Dorian, a frustrated husband and a high socialite.

I do not think that we can be entirely sure which role is more dominant in his life, since all of them are equally important to him. But we will analyze each of them, trying to establish their consequences and the connections between them.

Throughout the novel, most of Lord Henry's roles are heterosexual normative roles. Butler (1993:126) says that "heterosexual privilege operates in many ways, and two ways in which it operates include naturalizing itself and rendering itself as the original and the norm". His "natural" roles do not put him in danger. However, one of the roles he performs takes him to a place from where he cannot come back. As he is a teacher of desire, he turns Dorian into a personification of his own desires and the result of his escape from the normative gender. His teacher role, however, causes the collapse of his married life in the end. This is not just a punishment for Lord Henry Wotton, but also a warning to Oscar Wilde himself, who is gender resistant and ends in prison, carrying a sense of regret in his heart all the time. Lord Alfred Douglas, a young aristocrat, and Wilde's intimate friend, sees Wilde's days in prison from a different perspective however: he thinks that Oscar Wilde did not regret what he had done; "Bosie", as Wilde called him, comments on Wilde's *De Profundis*:

> I am convinced it was written in passionate sincerity at the time, and yet it represents a mere mood […] which does not even last through the 250 pages of the book. (Hyde 1963:208)

After a careful analysis of each performance with his interaction with other characters in the novel, we can see the results. Although he wants to resist the norms of the society, since he is still a part of it, he will not be able to escape the destiny written for him by society through Wilde's pen.

2. Lord Henry's role as Dorian's teacher

To understand Lord Henry as a teacher, we need to know the student-teacher relationship in Ancient Greece, since Oscar Wilde studied Ancient Greek in Dublin and Oxford and was very much interested in Greek culture and literature. Neil McKenna suggests that the novel's and character's first name is a reference to the Greek Dorians. He states:

> Oscar had taken John Gray's surname, changing his Christian name to the suggestive Dorian – a name replete with implicit paiderastia. The Dorians were a tribe of ancient Greece, inhabiting the major cities of Sparta, Argot, and Corith. The Dorians were generally held responsible for the spread of paiderastia throughout ancient Greece. (McKenna 2014:24)

As soon as he meets Dorian, he starts making suggestions that lead us into believing that he is gradually becoming a teacher for Dorian and that Dorian abides by it, and would do everything Lord Henry says. He is ready to have a teacher, and Lord Henry is there, ready to take up the role. At the beginning of the second

chapter of the novel, Dorian says: "I want to learn them. They are perfectly charming" (Wilde 1997:14). In the same chapter, right after the two meet, Lord Henry tells Dorian not to go in for philanthropy. Dorian instantly, like a student, asks: "I want you to tell me why I should not go in for philanthropy" (Wilde 1997:15). This is the beginning of their pederastian relationship. Of course this relationship will never be an active one; but one in which they will just talk – one teaching the other the ways of life as he would like to live it, not as he actually does.

3. A frustrated husband

As expected from a member of Victorian High Society, Lord Henry was a married man. Hence, he becomes the direct personification of the Victorian Man. We barely see Lady Wotton in the novel. This is very similar to Wilde's life, since we rarely see Oscar Wilde side by side with Constance Lloyd, his wife. It does not mean that he is completely free from the norms of the society he lives in; he only does not fit in, in many ways. Therefore he finds his escape in his writings. He states what he thinks through his characters. Lord Henry says that "one charm of marriage is that it makes a life of deception absolutely necessary for both parties" (Wilde 1997:7). What does he tell us here? It is the perfect definition of marriage for Oscar Wilde. You carry out your role as a husband as the society wishes but, it is only a deception. Marriage is a kind of game one lives in one's life, in which one does not have to talk with one's partner or even live with him/her. It is a "the-show-must-go-on" type of relationship, in which one attends parties and is present at social events in order to be seen together. Lord Henry declares: "I never know where my wife is, and my wife never knows what I am doing" (Wilde 1997:7). However, he does not do something different with his life. He does not want to live a normative life, but he does not change the way he lives either. He only talks about it. His conception of love is also out of the ordinary. He does not think that a relationship should be monogamous, though he is in one. He suggests that "those who are faithful only know the trivial side of love: it is the faithless who know love's tragedies" (Wilde 1997:12). These contradictions make him an interesting character for us: on the one hand, he does not agree with what society forces him to do, on the other, he does exactly what he is expected to do. His behavior and sometimes even his talk reveal this. When he is asked what he would like to change in England, instead of saying what he actually thinks, he states that his only wish for anything to change in England is its weather. But throughout the novel, he talks a lot about pleasure, desire, and their absence in a marriage.

Lord Henry is a man who is tired of life. He expresses his frustration especially with his life as a married man when he says "Men marry because they are tired; women, because they are curious: both are disappointed" (Wilde 1997:35). Belonging to a gender which you don't want is tiring. He may have thought that he would be relieved when he gets married, since he fulfills the wishes of the society. What happened was that his new role put more performative weight on his shoulders. As a single man, he had the role of brother, maybe, that of a young man who needs to get married; as a married man, he acquired more responsibilities. Family life is the focus of society. It is where our morality comes from. Any other form of gender performativity was seen as immoral in the 19th century, and it is still seen in the same way today by some people (e.g., by those who are against gay marriage; for them, family is sacred and a source of morality).

With this weight on his shoulders, Lord Henry gets disappointed, as he does not get what he wants from his life as a married man. So we often hear him complain about this marriage; however, he never intends to end it. Maybe this is because he thinks women as "decorative sex" (Wilde 1997:35). Lord Henry Wotton is so frustrated in his marriage, in which is associated with this "decorative sex", that he cannot fulfill his role entirely. Throughout the novel, there are no hints at his having a child, for example. Arguably, Lord and Lady Wotton do not have a child. This leads to the question whether they are the symbol of the Victorian couple which Foucault would describe as a reproductive one. The Wottons are the image of the hypocrisy of Victorian family life itself. He lives his role in front of the audience as a person of the high class. But his fantasies are different from what he experiences in his life.

Butler (2004:1) says: "One does not 'do' one's gender alone". One does gender for the others. We may say that Lord Henry puts in a two-gender performance: one when he is with Dorian, and the other in his life in general. While the former is characterized by talk rather than action, the latter is more about action without many words. His performance or action in the latter can be exemplified by his marriage. He talks about marriage in general as something terrible that should not be approached by anyone in his right mind. Even people around him see his frustration and hear constant grouching about marriage. In the middle of the novel, Dorian says to Lord Henry: "I know what you are going to say. Something dreadful about marriage. Don't say it." (Wilde 1997:69). It is not difficult therefore to realize that Henry's marriage is nothing but an act required by society. His role as a married man exhausts him and his escape from reality is represented by Dorian, who becomes his walking desire, his one and only young friend. Dorian is his escape route, a harbor that he can go to. Dorian makes a similar confession in the book when he says "…It never would have happened if I had not met you. You filled me with wild desire to know everything about life." (Wilde 1997:36). Filled with desires by Lord Henry, Dorian becomes more than what Lord Henry expects. At first, Dorian is a mere student, a personification of Lord Henry's fantasy. But after a while, Lord Henry's fantasy shatters, as Dorian does the unexpected for Lord Henry: he kills a man. Killing a man, though acceptable for the lower classes, is not for someone of the high class society: "Crime belongs exclusively to lower orders" Lord Henry tells Dorian (Wilde 1997:147).

4. Conclusion

Lord Henry is punished by Oscar Wilde in the end. When his wife runs away with another man, he seems to care, which proves that his social role is important to him. A break-up represents failure, especially if the reason behind it is passion and sexual desires. In short, his fantasy is crushed by reality. In the end, he says:

> Poor Victoria, I was very fond of her. The house is rather lonely without her. Of course, married life is only a habit. But then one regrets the loss even of one's worst habits. Perhaps one regrets them the most. They are such an essential part of one's personality. (Wilde 1997:147)

Gender transformation is not easy when society opposes it. Today society is still an obstacle for gender fluidity; though not as insurmountable as it was for Wilde or Lord Henry. We can live our lives more freely, at least without the threat of being

put into prison for our sexuality. Oscar Wilde's novel tackled a new topic for his time and created a wind of change, contributing to the gradual progress in the history of Gender and Sexuality.

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SPLIT SELVES, GENDERED BOUNDARIES,

TRAUMAS

SPEAKING ABOUT THE UNSPEAKABLE: TRAUMA AND REPRESENTATION

MIRELA LĂPUGEAN
University of the West, Timişoara

***Abstract**: The paper deals with the problematic relationship between trauma and representation by making use of such concepts as negative (re)presentation, void, absence and oblique representation. The "un(re)presentable" enters a cycle of perpetual remembrance in which trauma can neither be remembered nor forgotten.*
***Keywords**: absence, memory, representation, trauma*

1. Introduction

One of the great paradoxes when having to discuss the relationship between trauma and representation is that trauma, as understood and conceptualized by contemporary theorists, is defined by absence. The traumatic event that has generated the trauma is gone, is absent, it is something that happened at a certain moment in the past. The traumatic behaviour of the individual is the result of an accident or an incident from the past that was somehow "missed" by the individual's inner mechanisms of perception. It was a missed encounter; an encounter that failed to be understood or appropriated by the individual. Thus, it has become an absence, a void, a loss. Being an absence or something that the individual failed to perceive, to understand or to grasp, it is also something that is elusive to memory.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), memory is "the faculty by which the mind stores and remembers information". If the traumatic event brought about a collapse in understanding and in perceiving the outside incident that has intruded upon the inner world of the individual, then it must have also escaped being stored in the mind. The traumatic episode was not stored, was not turned into a memory; therefore, it cannot be *recalled*, it cannot be *revived*. Trauma is *relived* over and over again as if it were still happening in the present. The mind of the individual is caught in a present continuous, failing to understand the *past-ness* of trauma. Trauma is seen as a possession of an individual's mind structure, altering its mechanisms and patterns. Trauma is a pathological condition having a compulsive-obsessive nature which does not allow the possessed individual to exit its never-ending repetition. But, if trauma is characterized by absence and dissociation, by a failure in comprehension and an impossibility to transform it into a normal memory and thus incorporate it into one's past, what is the relation between trauma and representation and how, if at all, can trauma be represented?

2. Trauma and representation

The two cornerstones that lie at the foundation of this paper are suggestive of its structure: it offers a twofold perspective on trauma and representation, the perspective of narrative representation and the perspective of photographic or iconic representation. The former is a picture of the memorial for the victims of the ghetto in Krakow. The memorial, which was inaugurated in 2005, is located in

what is now called The Ghetto Heroes Square (Plac Bohaterów Getta) and it shocks through its simplicity and grim symbolism. It consists of 70 over-sized steel and cast iron chairs. The 33 chairs that are placed in the centre of the square are facing the gate through which the Jews who lived in the ghetto were taken to the death camps, following the final liquidation of the ghetto in March 1943. The square, being the ghetto's largest open space, was the place where the Jews were assembled before every deportation, the place where they were forced to leave behind all their possessions and the last place they would see before being taken to the death camps. The designers of the memorial, the local architects Piotr Lewicki and Kazimierz Latak, were inspired in designing the memorial by the historical fact which attested that, following deportations and the final liquidation of the ghetto, when the Jews had to abandon all their belongings, the square was strewn with furniture, clothes, and luggage. Through its simplicity and austerity, the memorial has become a powerful representation of absence and loss, a dark reminder of trauma inflicted upon an entire nation.

The latter is a quotation from Nicole Krauss' novel *The History of Love* (2005), talking about the melancholia of depicting a world that no longer exists. Leopold Gursky's world was completely destroyed, totally wiped-out; it no longer exists but in his memory. Memory and writing become a way to preserve and to represent that which no longer exists.

> Once upon a time, there was a boy. He lived in a village that no longer exists, in a house that no longer exists, on the edge of a field that no longer exists, where everything was discovered, and everything was possible. A stick could be a sword, a pebble could be a diamond, a tree, a castle. Once upon a time, there was a boy who lived in a house across the field, from a girl who no longer exists. (Krauss 2005:18)

The quotation talks about a world that no longer exists, exuding nostalgia and longing for the a-priori moment in time, for the "once upon a time" when the world made sense, when everything was possible. I have chosen this paragraph as representative for talking about trauma, because trauma too is a tale about an absence; it is a longing for a return to a prior moment in the development of the inner self, when the inner realm of the individual was linear and stable; it is a longing for a return to a moment preceding the traumatic incident that brought about a complete shift of paradigm in the internal mechanisms of the being. Both the quotation taken from Nicole Krauss, *The History of Love* and the photograph depicting the memorial for the victims of the ghetto in Krakow are symbolic narratives of an absence, of a loss, of a world devoid of the human element.

Trauma is an external event that breaks through and in a stable form of the psychic; it represents a disruption of time and history, a discontinuity of a well-established order. Beginning with the seminal work of Cathy Caruth, Geoffrey Hartman, Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub in the 1990s, the concept of trauma has gained prominence and has come to be regarded as "one of the key interpretative categories of contemporary politics and culture" (Kansteiner 2004:203).

Trauma is considered a very intense reaction of the mind to an uncontrollable and extremely powerful external event, having as a result an acute psychological damage. This emotional damage caused by the unexpectedness of the event and by the terror it had inflicted causes the mind to split or to dissociate itself from the distressful event. Thus, once the mechanisms of cognition and awareness are shattered, the mind is unable to register the wound it has suffered.

As a consequence, the victim is not capable of integrating the traumatic experience and becomes tormented and haunted by intrusive traumatic memories.

Cathy Caruth, one of the most important names in contemporary trauma theory, has redefined trauma according to the "*structure of its experience* or reception: the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it" (Caruth 1995:4) This belated assimilation takes the form of a repeated possession of the person who experienced the trauma. For Caruth (1995:4-5), "to be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event". This possession leads to a severe collapse of understanding. The traumatized carry an impossible history within them, impossible to understand, impossible to forget and impossible to voice. Articulating trauma and gaining linguistic control over it becomes the struggle of the traumatized.

Three different possible ways of coping with trauma have been identified by Dominick LaCapra (2001): hiding, avoiding or covering up the wound, thus denying that anything happened; giving in to the sorrow and the pain inflicted, "acting it out", trapped in a melancholia stage; mourning or "working through", learning to accept that we must now be different. This will eventually lead to establishing a posttraumatic identity.

In what follows, I will try to explain why the relation between trauma and representation is considered to be a problematic one and why we are talking about the paradox of trauma. On the one hand, trauma, as understood by Cathy Caruth, Dominic LaCapra and Geoffrey Hartman, following a well established Freudian tradition, is characterized by a belated assimilation and coming to terms with the traumatic event. Caruth (1996:6) describes it as a "missed encounter". The traumatized person suffers from compulsive, involuntary repetitions of the traumatic events, which "bear witness to a past that was never fully experienced as it occurred. Trauma does not simply serve as a record of the past but precisely registers the force of an experience that is not yet fully owned" (Caruth 1995:151). By not being able to distance himself/ herself from his/her traumatic past, the traumatized person cannot interpret, give meaning to, and thus understand his/her trauma.

This belatedness in understanding accounts for the impossibility of the traumatized to fully grasp, linguistically and cognitively, the dimension and the full scope of the trauma that had occurred to them. This linguistic and cognitive failure makes it impossible for the victims to represent trauma in a conscious way. There seems to be a very powerful link between representation and understanding. Without conscious and mental awareness of the traumatic incident there can be no representation, and, consequently, without representation there can be no healing, no conscious possession of the trauma. To be able to represent trauma is to integrate the traumatic event into one's past, to gain possession over it and to exit the never ending cycle of chronic, uncontrollable repetition. However, trauma representation is a negative representation, since it refers back to an absence, to a loss. In representing trauma, absence becomes a signifier.

3. Narrative representation

Representation is linked to gaining linguistic control over the traumatic event. Language has failed the traumatized not only on a private, personal level, but also on a public level. The linguistic crisis attached to the traumatic experience

has made it difficult for the victims to fully comprehend and verbalise what has happened to them, thus propelling the traumatised into a confusing whirlpool of repetition and constant *re-living* of the trauma and denying them the role and quality of witness to their own lives. On a personal level, this linguistic awareness is believed to be necessary in order for the traumatised to enter the healing process and to exit the web of sterile repetition. The individual comes to an understanding of his/her own story through language. Put in a narrative form, the trauma regains its chronology and the status of memory that can be stored and remembered through voluntary action.

On a public level, when having to bear witness to the traumatic events they have gone through, the traumatised feel again at a loss for words. The majority of the victims experience the lack of adequate linguistic means to express the full scale of what they have lived. Their experiences seem inexpressible and the majority of the Holocaust survivors began to feel that what they had to tell about the atrocities done to them or to their families in the camps would represent something almost unimaginable. Most of them began to fear that their experiences might be viewed as extraordinary to such an extent that they might not be believed. The traumatised are dissatisfied with language; they feel betrayed by a vocabulary that cannot render the intensity of their experience; they are in search of new words that could accurately describe the grimness of their traumas. Language is considered an inadequate tool that leaves out, that lacks accuracy. Consequently, narrative representation is mistrusted and believed to be incomplete or to diminish the trauma of the victim by making the horror of it *representable*. Nevertheless, however dissatisfying language might seem to survivors, the need that resides within them to tell their story is greater and overarching. Their stories are not merely stories about trauma and atrocity, but they are also stories about survival. Through linguistic representation, the stories of the traumatised become testimonies, public and historic testimonies that enhance the healing of a community. Through its linguistic possession of trauma, representation becomes a very important part in the process of *working through* and constitutes itself as a fundamental component of testimony and witness bearing.

But how can trauma which, as we have seen, is a highly irrational, fragmented, and broken linguistic and logical discourse, be represented in the art of fiction?

Trauma is characterized, at least in the first two stages of its development, by a severe linguistic and cognitive crisis, by an impossibility to fully grasp and remember the traumatic events, by compulsive repetition and flashbacks that take the victim over and over again to the site where the wound was inflicted. Torn between the impossibility to forget and the impossibility to remember, the victims of trauma fall pray to an obsessive and addictive act of past remembrance that comes to haunt their present. They are possessed by an event, by an image that needs to be put into language, that needs to be caught in a narrative. Thus, the fictional discourse becomes the perfect medium for trauma representation. The art of fiction and the narrative discourse embrace the fragmentariness and the irrational that characterize the trauma discourse, the compulsive repetitions, the recurrent images and obsessive flashbacks, the broken chronology to produce a discourse that comes to represent the struggle of the traumatized. Anne Whitehead (2004:3) writes in *Trauma Fiction* that:

> Novelists have frequently found that the impact of trauma can only adequately be represented by mimicking its forms and symptoms, so that temporality and chronology collapse, and narratives are characterized by repetition and indirection.

Trauma is also almost always depicted in the work of fiction as something that has already happened, that has already occurred to the characters. They are set on a quest to discover the origin of the traumatic event or to remember the trauma inflicted upon them.

In *Time's Arrow*, Martin Amis completely breaks the pattern of chronology and of linguistic discourse, creating an unsettling and irrational atmosphere. The reverse dialogues, narratives and explanations, together with the narrator's constant misinterpretations of events come to underline the arbitrariness of artificially constructed concepts, such as language and time. The novel recounts the life of a German Holocaust doctor in reverse chronological order and involves the reader and the narrator in a discovery journey towards the uncovering of the reason behind the trauma of the main character. The trauma we are about to discover in the novel is not the trauma of the victim, but the trauma of the perpetrator. The reader is trapped in this reverse journey towards Auschwitz, towards the nature of the offence together with the camera eye narrator. The narrator is a secondary consciousness that resides inside the protagonist, having access to his feelings, but not to his thoughts and having no control or insight over the events. The narrator, just like the reader, is innocent; he is caught in a perverse relationship, because, although he can guess the destination of his journey and the nature of the offence that is recurrent in Odilo Unverdorben's dreams (the choice of names is more that just ironical in this case because *unverdorben* means *pristine*, *unspoilt*), he cannot exit this relationship. In choosing the narrative technique of presenting the events in a completely broken and reversed chronology, and the tool of the innocent, unreliable, unaware narrator, Amis found a very powerful way of obliquely representing and talking about one of the most horrific and traumatic episodes in contemporary history.

What happens to representation and how is the memory of the event kept alive in the post-generation of trauma? In Foer's (2003) *Everything is Illuminated*, fiction becomes an imaginative realm, a medium that recuperates a past that can no longer be represented, because all the iconic figures that could testify about the past are dead. The hero of the book initiates a journey in search of a representation of the past. Everything is put in motion by a photograph of his grandfather, Safran, and of Augustine, the girl that saved him from the Nazis during the war. The search for Augustine, just like the search for the representation of the past proves to be a complete failure, but everything can be recuperated through fiction. Everything that was not found is imagined, is fictionalized. In *Everything is Illuminated*, the past cannot be recuperated, cannot be represented, because the *shtetl* (small town) where the hero's grandfather used to live was completely destroyed, wiped out. All that had survived are some material remnants of objects that had once belonged to the people who lived in the *shtetl*. They were gathered by Lista, the sole human survivor and stored in boxes, and they become the symbolic representation of the *shtetl*, of what it-used to be, of a world that no longer exists.

4. Photographic representation

For Marianne Hirsch (2001), representation, mainly photographic representation, is particularly important in the process of bearing witness to the

past and in the process of testimony for future generations, for what she particularly calls the post-generation trauma. Thus, iconic representation has a double function, that of being a witness to the past, an *aide-memoir*, something that will prevent us from forgetting, and that of being a testimony, a visual evidence of the trauma that has been produced.

Postmemory is a term she uses in order to talk about the connection the children of survivors establish with the experiences their parents went through as victims of cultural or collective trauma. The term is also meant to–draw a distinction between it and *survivor memory*, and to establish its "secondary or second-generation memory quality, its basis in displacement, its vicariousness and belatedness" (Hirsch 2001:9). Past experiences cannot be properly remembered as such, since they were not directly or fully endured by the post-generation. They cannot represent memories of a direct incident inflicted upon the offspring. However, these experiences that have come to be integrated in their lives and *remembered* as the narratives and images with which they grew up are, according to Hirsch (2001:9), "so powerful, so monumental, as to constitute memories in their own right". In her study, she establishes *postmemory* as a very powerful form of memory through which trauma can be transmitted to the second generation. What makes *postmemory* such a powerful form of memory is the fact that "its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through representation, projection, creation – often based on silence rather than speech, on the invisible rather than the visible" (Hirsch 2001:9). Through the work of *postmemory*, trauma becomes a family inheritance that can be transmitted to the second generation. Through narrative and photographic representation, it enters the legacy passed on by the survivors of the trauma.

We can only imagine the impact which the photographic representations of the atrocities in the death camps, depicting mounds of discarded personal possessions with the same ease and liberty and aloofness with which they were depicting mounds of corpses being harvested with huge bulldozers, might have had on the generation of survivors as well as on the generation of *postmemory*. For some, these surviving images lay at the core of what was later called photorealism. For Susan Sontag (1989:19), they represent "the photographic inventory of ultimate horror". Many commentators on the representation and memorialization of the Holocaust expressed serious concerns and warnings regarding this sort of photojournalism. They expressed the fear that the photographic representations might come to replace the actual event; that the visual evidence of the trauma might come to substitute the real trauma and numb human perception through its serialization and sterile repetition. Geoffrey Hartman (1996:152) asks: "Is our capacity for sympathy finite and soon exhausted?" Susan Sontag also talks about the danger of becoming too accustomed to the photographic representations of a traumatic event, to the extent that one fails to perceive it, fails to see it and grasp its meaning. There is the danger of becoming desensitized to such a degree that the visual will stop having an impact on the viewer.

> Photographs shock insofar as they show something novel. Once one has seen such images, one has started down the road of seeing more and more. Images transfix. Images anesthetize. At the time of the first photographs of the Nazi camps, there was nothing banal about these images. After thirty years, a saturation point may have been reached. (Sontag 1989:20)

For Marianne Hirsch, however, the danger of becoming immune to photographic representation of trauma simply does not exist. The repetition of such images does not have the effect of "desensitizing us to horror, or shielding us from shock" (Hirsch 2001: 8), thus increasing the amount and the intensity of disturbing imagery in an endless trial to stir emotion and empathy in the viewer; quite on the contrary, the photographic representation of trauma serves as a point of reference, as a connection between the second generation and the first. For her, the compulsive repetition of these traumatic images has the role of enhancing and enabling the process of working through trauma in an attempt to overcome it.

> Thus, I would suggest that while the reduction of the archive of images and their endless repetition might seem problematic in the abstract, the postmemorial generation – in displacing and recontextualizing these well-known images in their artistic work – has been able to make repetition not an instrument of fixity or paralysis or simple retraumatization (as it often is for survivors of trauma), but a mostly helpful vehicle of working through a traumatic past. (Hirsch 2001:9)

5. Conclusion

The relation between trauma and representation is a very problematic and paradoxical one, because most of the times the traumatised have difficulties in understanding and expressing the traumatic event they experienced. Trauma eludes representation, referring back to an absence, to an event that has failed to enter the mechanisms of cognition and comprehension of the victim. The traumatised are linguistically challenged. Finding a voice for their trauma becomes their struggle. Therefore linguistic representation becomes a first step towards a healing process. Photographic representation bears witness to the atrocities and the trauma of the past, being at the same time a testimony of trauma for the future; it is a sign that speaks against trauma connecting the past and the future, representing a very important part in the process of working-through.

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MASCULINITY, DOMINATION AND THE OTHER IN D.H. LAWRENCE'S *THE PRUSSIAN OFFICER*

ADRIAN RADU
"Babeş-Bolyai" University, Cluj-Napoca

Abstract: *"The Prussian Officer" is one of D.H. Lawrence's stories in which he develops his leadership ideas. The present article discusses such leadership ideas and associates them with the concept of masculinity, insisting on its facets and implications in a story of male bondage, perceived as a dramatic, tragic homoerotic game of opposing and annihilating poles. The story is ultimately generatedby the Lawrentian visions of dualism, life sustaining vigour and subsequent obsession with supremacy.*
Keywords: *dualism*, *dominance vs. submission*, *homoeroticism*, *Männerbund*, *masculinity*, *élan vital*.

1. Vitalism and dominance

The Prussian Officer (published in 1914) is the direct result of the trip that Lawrence and his wife, Frieda, made in 1912 to Germany, to visit her family. His first encounter with Germany was quite sentimental, since he considered the country "young and adorable" (as reported in Moore 1960:60-2). But it was a country getting ready for war, which did not seem to disturb young Lawrence at that time. He still believed in the country's future greatness and considered that death and mechanisation were replaced in Germany with "blood and wisdom" (ibid.). But soon he was to experience German militarism in a direct and painful way, when he was arrested for a short while on suspicion of being a British spy.

Additionally, D.H Lawrence's frame of mind was heavily influenced ideologically when he built up his theory of vitalism on the German contemporary movement in whose centre was the concept of *Volk*, soon associated with the *Wandervogel* youth movement. At this point, Lawrence was not far from the racist tendencies advocating the cult of the Aryan race (white-skinned, fair-haired, and blue-eyed), and that of the male body endowed with genuine beauty and the appending of Eros to the cult of the body. According to Fjågesund (1991:96), the result of the close relationship between men led inevitably to the display of homoerotic impulses, manifested not necessarily sexually, but in the form of surplus energy, a catalyst engendering creativity and conferring charismatic features to the few ones selected to act as leaders.

The society of men that was also known as *Männerbund* enabled the emergence of a charismatic élite of men, "the most attractive, spiritually, as well as physically", who were meant to "gravitate toward leadership positions" (Blüher, *Die deutsche Wandervogelbewegung als erotisches Phänomen*, qtd. in Fjågesund 1991:97)[1]. This dominant new male aristocracy is chiefly opposed to female heroines, "often the sharpest eyes and most courageous seekers in his fiction,

[1] Details about this formative episode of D.H. Lawrence's mind are discussed in my article "D. H. Lawrence and Männerbund", in *Studia Universitatis Babes-Bolyai. Philologia,* 4, 2004, pp. 3-12.

[who] are asked repeatedly to go to sleep, submitting their wills and desires to a male leader" (Hubbard Harris 1984:8.). But as I intend to prove further on, it was also opposed to other male heroes who, accordingly, were perceived in a powerless and submissive situation.

All these aspects point to a specific Lawrentian perception of masculinity associated with dominance and potential leadership overtones underlying identity uncertainty. According to Frosch (1994:92), in the case of male personalities, such uncertainties can be seen in their attempts to be different and adopt an aggressive behaviour. Such types of masculinity are the expression of the "desperate search for identity that has less and less holding on anything stable and secure" (1994:93). They are associated with manifestations of phallic power, often of dominant abuse, which can be deconstructed in heterosexual contexts as the "natural" dominance over the different other or, in homoerotic milieus, as gaining supremacy and authority over the same other. But, in either case, as Frosh (1994:94) argues, the perception is focused on the idea that "the domination so long associated with masculinity is linked with violence and abusiveness". This points to the phallic model of conduct, according to which:

> […] men achieve satisfaction through expression of their sexual drive, and it is the expression of this drive in the context of power and domination of the other that makes it satisfying. (Frosch 1994:100)

However, this is not the only type of behaviour that can be linked with the phallic model, since, as Segal mentions (in *Slow Motion: Changing Men*, qtd. in Frosch 1994:100), for certain men "it is precisely through experiencing themselves as powerless and submissive that they experience the greatest sexual pleasure".

Such attitudes of sexual dominance and submission of both heterosexual and homosexual orientations can be found in several of Lawrence's productions of this period of masculine vision, in tales like *The Fox*, *You Touched Me*, *The Border Line*, continued in *The Overtone* and *St Mawr*, and culminating with *The Escaped Cock* / *The Man Who Died*.

The Prussian Officer, though published earlier, in the 1914 edition of D. H. Lawrence's short-stories, can also be included in this group as its preamble. We consider it worth mentioning, because it is a peerless construction, on a theme in which writers did not frequently engage: cruelty as a form of perverted sex adopted to demonstrate phallic power to achieve dominance and submission in a covert homoerotic context. As previously shown, the story is of German extraction, combined with leadership ideas, but also the result of Lawrence's mind at grips with his own sexual orientation. He was of the opinion that enforced herding – such as the army – produced a form of sadistic homoeroticism:

> Cruelty is the form of perverted sex. I want to dogmatize. Priests in their celibacy get their sex lustful, then perverted, then insane, hence Inquisitions – all sexual in origin. And soldiers, being herded together, men without women, never being satisfied by a woman, as a man never is from a street affair, get their surplus sex and their frustration and disaffection into the blood, and *love* cruelty. (Lawrence, in a letter sent from Gargnano to Garnett, qtd in Moore 1960:195)

As suggested by many critics, the tale is built on the magnetism that both attracts and rejects, followed by psychological regression that arouses from the encounter of two types of male heroes, forced to cohabit in an exclusively virile world.

2. The double male character

The story opens – as usual with Lawrence, who lays strong emphasis on the outer aspect of his characters – with the detailed presentation of the two protagonists. First the captain, a representative of the northern type, "a man of about forty, grey at the temples", with "a handsome, finely knit figure", with reddish-brown, stiff hair, with a moustache "cut short and bristly over a full, brutal mouth", with a "rather rugged" face, bushy eyebrows over "blue eyes that were always flashing with cold fire". The conclusion to this description emanating vitality and unsurpressed will-power is provided by the author: "Perhaps the man was the more handsome for the deep lines in his face, the irritable tension of his brow, which gave him the look of a man who fights with life". (Lawrence 1989:175).

The orderly's portrait, an illustration of the southern, Mediterranean type, is another exercise in character description:

> The orderly was a youth of about twenty-two of medium height, and well built. He had strong heavy limbs, was swarthy, with a soft, black, young moustache. There was something altogether warm and young about him. He had firmly marked eyebrows over dark, expressionless eyes, that seemed never to have thought, only to have received life direct through the senses, and acted straight from instinct. (Lawrence 1989:175)

If we compare the two portraits we cannot avoid the feeling that the two characters are surprisingly similar, with traits borrowed from each other, in spite of their age and type difference and other carefully planned differentiations, which makes them all the more similar. It is obvious that the author also needed unlikeness between the two, in order to have *two* physical entities, completing each other:

	Captain	**Orderly**
hair	stiff, reddish-brown	
moustache	cut short, bristly	soft, black
mouth	brutal	
face	rugged, with deep lines	swarthy
cheeks	Thin	
eyebrows	Bushy	firmly marked
eyes	light blue eyes, flashing with cold fire	dark, expressionless
limbs		strong, heavy

The portrait chart above strikes us from the very beginning with the relative richness of relevant physical features in the case of the Captain and the relative scarcity of information in the case of the orderly. Where we have direct opposition is the eyes – *light* blue vs. dark, *expressionless*; all the other differentiations, as stated, though planned distinct, do not stand in opposition: they can be joined (where they exist) to form the complete portrait: *stiff, reddish brown hair*; *soft, black moustache, bristly and cut short*; *brutal mouth*; *swarthy, rugged face with deep lines*; *thin cheeks*; *bushy and firmly marked eyebrows*; *strong and heavy limbs* (the Captain was a very good rider, which also gives strength and heaviness of limbs).

The portrait I made above from the combination of the two does not show any contradiction. What I suggest here is to read the tale as the homoerotic and sadistic relationship of two males dissolving into each other, forced to live in a masculine world, far from female presences (as many Lawrence scholars recommended, since, in fact, the only female character – the orderly's sweetheart – is but hinted at). The result is the fusion of apparent opposites, two bodies functioning as duplicates of each other, as the two poles of a magnet, as a case of articulation, of blending of the two masculine types (mentioned in the previous chapter), as a double embodiment emerging from the same matrix.

The two characters constructed as principles do not even have a name – they are simply the Captain and the Orderly. They function as mere constituents of the same set, as halves of the same egg, fatally attracted to each other. As the story develops, they have to pass through an intensely sexualised geography – loaded with masculine (the mountains, the trees, the captain's emblem) and feminine (the valley) symbolism – and through different levels of passion and perception, growing aware of each other beyond consciousness, till the final and fatal discovery of a new inner and outer world.

3. Dualism, dependence and bondage

The Lawrentian dualism works here as well with the two characters acting as a unity of contraries by virtue of a never-ending inter-opposition. "Remove the opposition" says Lawrence (1988:6), "and there is collapse, a sudden crumbling into the universal darkness". Now attraction is automatically followed by rejection, once the two poles of the same magnet get too close together. The relationship between the two principles is similar to the relationship between the passive (*yin*) and the active (*yang*) principles of the Chinese philosophy, inseparable, interacting continually and finding themselves in never-ending adversity. The *yin* principle is negative and weak, as it stands for coldness and passivity, whereas the *yang* is positive and strong, representing warmth and activity. Worth mentioning is the fact that, in this short-story, neither of the two heroes is willing to assume the *yin* principle, both fight to attain the supremacy and activism of the *yang*.

The Lawrentian dualism, seen as a conflict with the two sides in active opposition, is an actual combat, in which neither can be successful, because this would mean the end of life. The conflict has to exist, it is a *raison d'être*, the tension between the two contending opposing forces must retain their separate existence.

Similarly, the Captain and the Orderly cannot exist without each other; they literally become obsessed with each other and "the terrifying possibility of non-existence" (Hubbard Harris 1984:96), because, according to the Lawrentian theory delineated above, each human being has to attain completion by magnetically seeking balance and unification with (and not conquest of) his opposite. The act itself is the critical act of embrace, in joy and terror (94), seen as a source of salvation, of renewal, to transform man and to raise him above the state of fallen creature.

The curious relationship in this story arises from the fact that here the two poles are two passionate men who also want to attain fullness and manifest their dominance by submission of the other; the final act, the union, as one of the alternatives, is unattainable because of the magnetic force of rejection interpolated between them, whereas the victory over the other, as the other alternative, is

against the rules. The fatalism of their predicament is that once they have rejected each other, they feel attracted again, due to the other prevailing magnetic force, that of attraction.

Neither of them would openly admit their reciprocal magnetism, hatred grows together with awareness and passion. Each one feels the presence of the other, rather than deliberately seeing it:

> Gradually the officer had become aware of his servant's young, vigorous, unconscious presence about him. He could not get away from this sense of the youth's person, while he was in attendance. It was like a flame upon the older man's tense, rigid body, that had become almost invalid, fixed. There was something so free and self-contained about him and something in the young fellow's movement, that made the officer aware of him. And this irritated the Prussian. He might easily have changed his man, but he did not. He now very rarely looked direct at his orderly, but kept his face averted, as it to avoid seeing him.
>
> […] Henceforward the orderly was afraid of really meeting his master. His subconsciousness remembered those steely blue eyes and the harsh brows, and did not intend to meet them again. So he always stared past his master, and avoided looking at him. (Lawrence 1989:176)

Tension grows to the extreme, heading invariably to the climax of their relationship and their togetherness: the only physical contact that takes place is a strange and tragic representation overloaded with the Lawrentian symbolism of a creature devouring the other in order to inhale his *élan vital* or the *mana* from the victim. In other words, one pole must annihilate the other and receive the latter's life giving force:

> The spur of the officer caught in a tree-root, he went down backwards with a crash, the middle of his back thudding sickeningly against a sharp-edged tree-base, the pot flying away. And in a second the orderly, with serious, earned young face, and underlip between his teeth, had got his knee in the officer's chest and was pressing the chin backward over the further edge of the tree-stump, pressing with all his heart behind in a passion of relief, the tension of his wrists exquisite with relief. And with the base of his palms he shoved at the chin with all his might. And it was pleasant, too. And it was pleasant, too, to have that chin, that hard jaw already slightly rough with beard, in his hands. He did not relax one hair's breadth, but, all the force of all his blood exulting in his thrust, he shoved back the head of the other man, till there was s a little 'click' and a crunching sensation. Then he felt as if his head went to vapour. Heavy convulsions shook the body of the officer, frightening and horrifying the young soldier. Yet it pleased him, too, to repress them. It pleased him to keep his hands pressing back the chin, to feel the chest of the other man yielding in expiration to the weight of his strong, young knees, to feel the hard twitchings of the prostrate body jerking his own frame, which was pressed down on it. (Lawrence 1989:187-188)

But the destruction of the officer – the orderly's first and intense and horrible contact with someone else – cannot bring the long-sought equilibrium, since, according the Lawrence's dualism, neither of them can exist without the other. Therefore, the orderly will have to die, not being able to survive the excruciating mental and physical disintegration to which he is submitted after the death of his superior, once he has become aware of his new condition as an independent being. What has been interpreted as a magnificent description of the orderly's delirium, in fact a storm at night functioning as an interior landscape (Finney 1982:15), is a

desperate descent to the realm of the shadows, to the world of permanent obscurity, the "[…] collapse, [the] sudden crumbling into the universal darkness", Lawrence spoke of in *The Crown*:

> When, to his dumb wonder, he opened his eyes on the world again, he no longer tried to remember what it was. There was thick, golden light behind golden-green glitterings, and tall grey purple shafts and darkness further off surrounding him, growing deeper. *He was conscious of a sense of arrival*. *He was amid the reality, on the real dark bottom*. (Lawrence 1988:191, my italics)

The Orderly would rather face non-existence than be left incomplete. His wish will come true and in death the two will be finally, cynically and tragically brought together:

> The two bodies of the two men lay together, side by side, in the mortuary, the one white and slender, but laid rigidly at rest, the other looking as if every moment it must rouse into life again, so young and unused, from a slumber. (Lawrence 1989:193)

Alternatively, a straightforward sample of Lawrentian representation of the unconsciousness is propounded, as the scene with an impressive beauty is centred around the forest of dark and cold pine trees, rising phallically in a landscape gendered masculine, a topos for the pristine unconsciousness. As Becket mentions (1997:36-38), for Lawrence, the forest represents the territory of the unknown, repeatedly lying beyond conscious margins, no less frequently associated with darkness and impenetrability.

4. Conclusion

My reading of D.H. Lawrence's short story *The Prussian Officer* sees it as a reconstruction of the *Männerbund* alliance, and places it within the context of the masculinity concept, developed to suit his dualism and blend it with leadership ideas so as to contribute to the creation of the typical Lawrentian male hero that he was to reuse and enrich in his later writings. The bond between the captain and his orderly displays a dramatic and tragic instance of sado-masochistic homoeroticism generated by the two protagonists' urge to seek fulfilment and wholeness in the other. The reason is that they need each other to gain access to vitalism, being obviously unable to live one without the other. They practically exhaust all of the other one's vital sap, so that, dried-out of existential *élan vital*, life is no longer possible. They are the victims of defiled existence brought about by German militarism, and for them, unlike for other Lawrence's character creations, restoration is no longer possible.

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FAITH AND HYSTERIA: THE DIAGNOSIS OF GEORGE MACDONALD'S *ADELA CATHCART*

ISTVÁN SZABADI
University of Debrecen

Abstract: *George MacDonald's "Adela Cathcart" narrates the process of curing an ill young woman through storytelling. The individual stories subtly criticize the medical discourses and practices, social and gender roles and the spiritual and religious life of the era; Adela's malady of "hysteria" is cured, eventually, by addressing and alleviating the sickness in the above fields. I compare and contrast diagnoses and cures of female maladies (both material and spiritual) prevalent in late Victorian medicine with those in the novel, demonstrating the extent to which MacDonald differed from his contemporaries and was, in fact, ahead of his time.*
Keywords: *hysteria, MacDonald, medicine, psychology, religion, storytelling*

1. Introduction

Adela Cathcart (2010), a novel by George MacDonald, a Scottish Victorian author, recounts the process of the healing of an ill, almost dying young woman. Since the treatment of the elderly local medical practitioner proves unsuccessful, a group, consisting of Adela's family and friends, starts curing her by telling stories – on the advice of the novel's narrator. The novel, by the way, acknowledges its link to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* with a motto from it at the beginning of the book. The storytelling party includes a curate, a clergyman, a doctor, a teacher, and the narrator, who is an elderly bachelor, a friend, an "uncle" to Adela, who bears similarities to the author of the book. MacDonald was a Christian minister, a lecturer in literature and a prolific author. For him, nothing was outside of the context of faith, of Christianity. *Adela Cathcart* speaks about the effect faith has on health, but it is also a thoughtful account of the mid-19th century from a gendered point of view. In the pages of *Adela Cathcart*, MacDonald sheds light on the problems of the era concerning medicine, gender roles and religion, and he finds the chance for Adela's restoration to health in solving, or at least revealing these problems. I claim that MacDonald conceptualized the bodily illness commonly referred to as "hysteria" as a sickness of the soul (similarities with the work of Freud will be pointed out), more so, a sickness of faith, which is caused by social-gender problems. I argue that MacDonald was revolutionary in this respect.

2. Adela's diagnosis

Adela's illness is quite mysterious at first. No actual "diagnosis" or "definition" is given throughout the book, which might seem problematic when trying to cure a person. However, what this points to is that the cure, the proper treatment, and also the illness itself, reach beyond the confines of the medical discourse.

> Her face was pale and thin, and her eyes were large, and yet sleepy [...] It was very sad to look at; but it was not so much sadness as utter and careless hopelessness that it expressed […] I turned again to Adela, who tried to smile - with precisely the

> effect of a momentary gleam of sunshine upon a cold, leafless, and wet landscape. 'Adela, my dear, what is the matter?' 'I don't know, uncle'. (MacDonald 2010:327-331, 334-342 – Kindle Location numbers given)

The narrator also points out that Adela's case is not unique:

> There are a good many of them amongst girls at her age. It is as if, without any disease, life were gradually withdrawn itself - ebbing back as it were to its source. Whether this has a physical or a psychological cause, it is impossible to tell. In her case, I think the latter, if indeed it has not a deeper cause. (MacDonald 2010:1184-1185)

Even though the narrator refrains from simply identifying her illness, as I have said, I would still like to draw parallels between her situation and hysteria.

In *Ventriloquized Bodies*, Janet Beizer writes that this exclusively female malady was present already in Egyptian antiquity: the sickness of the womb, originating in the lack of sexual activity and menstruation. This appeared in the form of seizures, suffocation, vomiting, spasms, fainting and speech impediments (Beizer 1994:3-4). The theory of the wandering womb is rooted with the thinking of Plato, according to which the womb moves around the female body like an animal of its own accord, causing problems with the organs it moves and almost suffocates. These pronouncedly physical reasons were later replaced by more spiritual ones. During the Middle Ages, due to moral or religious reasons, the malady was explained not with the lack of sexuality but, on the contrary, with excessive sexuality, thus hysteria could indicate lust, fornication, but could reveal witchcraft or demonic possession – however, always exclusively in the case of women. Already in the 13th century, it was proposed that the uterus does not wander, yet it is its malfunctions that cause further problems in different body parts. However, in the 19th century, people would still believe in the theory of the wandering womb, as Dr. Wade, the local doctor shows in *Adela Cathcart*:

> She lifted her finger to her forehead.
> 'Ah?' said Dr. Wade.
> 'Yes', said Mrs. Cathcart.
> 'Wandering?'
> 'Dreadfully'.
> After some more whispering, the doctor sat down to write a prescription.
> (MacDonald 2010:7433-7438)

The woman in the conversation is Mrs Cathcart, Adela's aunt, and in a quite subtle, yet clear manner the novel presents Dr. Wade's medical views on female illness, that is, hysteria.

However, by the 19th century, hysteria had become more than physical symptoms explained away with a questionable theory. It ceased to equal seizures and paralysis, it turned into something Jane Ussher, in her *The Madness of Women*, describes as such:

> Every known human ill was attributed to hysteria, meaning that the diagnosis ceased to mean anything at all. Women diagnosed with hysteria could exhibit symptoms of depression, rage, nervousness, the tendency to tears and chronic tiredness, eating disorders, speech disturbances, paralysis, palsies and limps, or complain of disabling pain. (Ussher 2011:9-10)

According to Ussher (2011:9), every woman was perceived as "difficult, narcissistic, impressionable, suggestible, egocentric and labile", that is, hysterical – hysteria was considered "a woman's natural state'" (Thomas Laycock, neurophysiologist from 1840, qtd. in Ussher 2011:9). The hysteric was "an idle, self-indulgent and deceitful woman, 'craving for sympathy' who had an 'unnatural' desire for privacy and independence" (Ussher 2011:9). Every woman who was somehow eccentric, or too lively and strong-willed, was deemed hysterical, but it was considered hysteria as well when they reacted physically or mentally to social, interpersonal difficulties as women.

Winfried Schleiner points out in her paper on green sickness and hysteria that it was a female love sickness, melancholy, treated by getting the young woman married (Schleiner 2009:661, 670), an idea also expressed in *Adela Cathcart*, with recurring allusions to Adela's marriageable age. Before turning to the ways hysteria was treated, I would like to draw attention to a book, written by Dr. Weir Mitchell, a medical practitioner. His book, *Fat and Blood: An Essay on the Treatment of Certain Forms of Neurasthenia and Hysteria,* was published and reprinted in eight consecutive editions between 1877 and 1911, meaning that is was popular and accepted even at the beginning of the 20th century, and it can be considered characteristic of the era that is the subject of this article. As Mitchell (1911:7) writes, "For some years I have been using with success, in private and in hospital practice, certain methods of renewing the vitality of feeble people". The book, or essay, declares that women are culpable for their own ailments, they like being sick, because they try to avoid doing any work – that is why they deserve the treatment. It seems clear to Dr. Mitchell that his treatment is in no sense a reward but more like a punishment.

3. Treatments for Adela

The treatment Dr. Mitchell prescribes in his work can be summed up as follows: "a combination of entire rest and of excessive feeding, made possible by passive exercise obtained through the steady use of massage and electricity" (Mitchell 1911:7). This meant that women were separated from their families, they were not allowed to be visited, they were forcefully fed to put on huge amounts of weight, and "entire rest" really did mean no movement, up to the point of not getting out of bed. This was "balanced" with massage and electricity, which were supposed to work the muscles without the woman actually using them. Electricity was no less than what it suggests: giving electric shocks to their bodies. This was combined with total mental passivity as well, which meant no reading or any sensible conversation. Charlotte Perkins Gilman's story entitled *The Yellow Wallpaper* depicts such a situation very well; the female protagonist eventually loses her mind over being confined, bereft of any intellectual input or of any company, and over being repeatedly treated like a sick child.

As I have pointed out, Dr. Wade is removed from his duty as Adela's physician at an early stage fortunately (so her story does not follow the one in *The Yellow Wallpaper*), but from what has been said about Dr. Wade's views on the wandering womb, or from the fact that she prescribes "steel-wine, and quinine, and all that sort of thing" (MacDonald 2010:396), it is more than probable that her treatment would follow the ideas of Dr. Mitchell and of his contemporaries – like surgeon William Coulson, who also used "steel-wine, quinine and other tonics" [Coulson 1841:145], which is exactly what it says: wine with pieces of steel in it.

Instead of such a doctor and such a treatment, Adela is visited by the young Dr. Henry Armstrong, who, alongside with the uncle-narrator, hold wholly different views not just on the treatment, but on the illness itself, and, connected to this, on the situation of women from gender-related, social, intellectual and spiritual perspectives.

First, to Adela's new healers, it is obvious that her health is connected to her mind, her soul. When discussing her illness with them, Adela concentrates on this, revealing a rather psychological edge:

> I woke suddenly one morning […] with an overpowering sense of blackness and misery. Everything I thought of seemed to have a core of wretchedness in it […] And everything became grey and dismal about me […] It was as if I had waked in the middle of some chaos over which God had never said: 'Let there be light.' […] I began to see the bad in everything - wrong motives - and self-love - and pretence, and everything mean and low […] I am crowded with wretched, if not wicked thoughts, all day. Nothing seems worth anything. I don't care for anything. (MacDonald 2010:638-644)

Her very clearly depressed psyche is explained by the narrator-Uncle at first as: "she was dying of *ennui*" (MacDonald 2010:7595), of boredom, which can be basically defined as the effects of her enforced gender roles (suppressing activity and creativity), culminating in treatments of hysteria. The cure to this cannot be found in the body but in the mind, and the method is the following: "My conviction is that the best thing that can be done for her is, to interest her in something, if possible - no matter what it is. Does she take pleasure in anything?" (MacDonald 2010:1189-1190). Finally, she is advised by Dr. Armstrong to listen to stories that may stir her mental activity, her interest and care for people. The need for this kind of activisation is explained by Dr. Armstrong:

> She has evidently a strong mental constitution; and this strong frame, so to speak, has been fed upon slops; and an atrophy is the consequence. My hope in your plan is, partly, that it may furnish a better mental table for her, for the time, and set her foraging in new direction for the future. (MacDonald 2010:1238-1240).

However, the most intriguing aspect of MacDonald's thinking is that her atrophy is not "mental" (in a common psychological sense) but spiritual. The novel clearly states that pushing women to the intellectual background, or even their total exclusion from that sphere, is first and foremost a violation of their spiritual life, an attack on their faith, which directly damages an individual's relationship with God:

> I believe that many of them go into a consumption just from discontent - the righteous discontent of a soul which is meant to sit at the Father's table, and so cannot content itself with the husks which the swine eat. The theological nourishment which is offered them is generally no better than husks. They cannot live upon it, and so die and go home to their Father. And without good spiritual food to keep the spiritual senses healthy and true, they cannot see the things about them as they really are. They cannot find interest in them, because they cannot find their *own* place amongst them. (MacDonald 2010:1244-1248)

(I would like to point out, in brackets, how well this "finding their *own* place amongst them" resonates with Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*.) This presupposes a direct connection between theological, spiritual nourishment and the

sheer interest and desire to live. Adela needs the same kind (and amount) of nourishment that men are entitled to, so that she could step out of the dream-like state she is in: "She was dreaming a child's dreams, instead of seeing a woman's realities - realities that awake the swift play of feature, as the wind of God arouses the expression of a still landscape" (MacDonald 2010:6313-6314). This summons the words of the Apostle Paul when he writes: "When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child. But when I grew up, I put away childish things" (1 Cor 13:11). This is clearly something that should happen to us, human beings, regarding things physical and spiritual, but regardless of gender – so argues MacDonald as well. However, Adela's life and soul, stuck in a child-like state, does not develop but deteriorates, which has negative consequences, first and foremost, on her faith: she is starting to lose it, and, as a consequence, her health is damaged. Its source, the damaged human-divine relationship originates in a faulty social system which treats women as inferior in various senses, and it results in bodily symptoms. This connection between the two spheres is symbolized by the Armstrong brothers, one of whom is the doctor, the other is the curate, the clergyman.

4. Curative narratives

Now I would like to turn to the stories, because they bear plural importance to my current study. They are varied in style: they include classically written fairy-tales (many of them are famous MacDonald fairy-tales in their own right), sentimental realistic stories, and also autobiographical accounts from a few speakers. First, they advance her well-being by stirring her imagination, making her livelier than before and interested in the plot and the characters, and she starts to show physical signs of bodily health and strength. Secondly, through the stories, the novel expresses thoughts, opinions that rethink, reformulate or subvert traditional gender norms, or they give voice to the characters on the margin gender-wise. Let us see a few examples. In *The Light Princess*, a princess is cursed with weightlessness, with the defiance of gravity, thus making her able to fly and surpass physical, but also mental and social barriers. The story is richly humorous and witty, brave when directly discussing gender issues:

> One day [the prince] lost sight of his retinue in a great forest. These forests are very useful in delivering princes from their courtiers, like a sieve that keeps back the bran. Then the princes get away to follow their fortunes. In this they have the advantage of the princesses, who are forced to marry before they have had a bit of fun. I wish our princesses got lost in a forest sometimes. (MacDonald 2010:1812-1815).

In a different story, we meet a girl like Adela, although even more strange and lonely, who befriends a mentally handicapped person, and the two outsiders give strength to each other, and the girl is helped back to her lost faith through him. Their peculiarity, their marginal situation is always discussed rather in terms of being "more", being almost prophetic, than being "less" than normal people. She finally finds her strength, so much so that she rescues him in a physical way.

One of the stories presents a protagonist who is effeminate and child-like (both in a positive light!), and remains so during all his life (the story is basically about him not changing). This character goes against the ideas of manliness, so strongly emphasized, not only during the Victorian era, by the way. Similarly,

when curate Armstrong recounts his life, a very sensitive and paradoxical issue concerning the church is brought up and voiced: while only males can hold a position, they are forced to accommodate to the congregations consisting mostly of women, elderly women, the clergymen slowly becoming more like them. Parallel to this, another superficially male-dominated and masculine sphere is discussed, that of the military: it must have been very unsettling to read about a weak and understandably cowardly soldier – and the story sympathizes with him. And also, there are further stories, where women display an "unexpectedly" high amount of valour, of strength, of wit, more than men in the stories: in *The Giant's Heart*, another world favourite of MacDonald's, the girl takes the lead, saves her brother and kills a giant.

The novel thus claims the changeability of gender limitations and restrictions, but the third core value of the stories is that they also alleviate the trauma and the repression caused by those limitations. The novel offers a solution to Adela's problems through voicing, expressing social problems, through solving them. This is how Sigmund Freud treated hysteria – interestingly, it happened later than the time when *Adela Cathcart* was written. Freud thought that physical symptoms of hysteria can be ended when the psychological source of the repression, the restraint is found and expressed. In the famous case of Elisabeth von R. (a pseudonym, that of a Hungarian woman, Ilona Weiss), her pain and paralysis disappeared when her mental problems were alleviated: when she could admit her love for her brother-in-law. This is what happens in *Adela Cathcart*, on a social, thus a bit symbolic or metaphysical, level: through admitting and voicing the pains and repressions of society, Adela, embodying society, is cured.

5. Conclusion: "Healths" restored

Here, the "curing of social wrongs" brings about a healthy mental state, which is expressed as the rebirth of faith; and its effect is the return of Adela's bodily health. She becomes stronger and more self-confident, active and interested. She can stand up for herself, against her father and her aunt, and by the end of the book (actually, the third volume; it is quite a long novel), she is able to look after her father when he falls ill upon hearing of their loss of fortune. This is when she says:

> 'You would not wonder that I take the prospect of poverty with absolute indifference - yes, if you will believe me, with something of a strange excitement. There will be something to battle with and beat.' And she stretched out a strong, beautiful white arm - from which the loose open sleeve fell back, as if with that weapon of might she would strike poverty to the earth. (MacDonald 2010:9238-9242)

Her improving physical and mental health, as well as her newly found personal-social strength and freedom are explained by her restored faith:

> And somehow life seems a much more possible thing than it looked a week or two ago. And the whole world appears more like the work of God [...] The whole earth black and frozen to the heart, with no God in it, and nothing worth living for […] but it's all gone now! (MacDonald 2010: 4557-4558, 9237-9238)

To conclude, in *Adela Cathcart*, George MacDonald offers an "alternative treatment" to one of the most widespread "diseases" of the era. MacDonald's

concept of hysteria as a bodily illness is, in fact, an illness of the soul, an illness of one's faith. The causes of such a malady are social ones, which, when changed, first bring about health in faith and then health in the body. I argue that MacDonald was revolutionary in this respect, since he showed similarities with later psychological discoveries and treatments, while also, in quite a reformative way, he showed that it is simply wrong, or even sinful to cause a loss of faith in a person through social inequality. He turned against popular religion, knowledge and medical practice, and he projected or foreshadowed later and more efficient treatments and standpoints – while actually going back to a much older one, expressed by Jesus Christ: "Daughter, be encouraged! Your faith has made you well" (Matthew 9:22).

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NARRATING NATIONHOOD: CONSTRUCTED IDENTITIES IN ANDREA LEVY'S *SMALL ISLAND*

VALERIA POLOPOLI
University of Catania

Abstract: *The aim of this paper is to examine how the British author of Jamaican origin Andrea Levy deconstructs racially exclusivist configurations of Britishness in her novel "Small Island" (2004). Looking back at the Windrush era and the Second World War, with the benefit of temporal distance, she reconceptualises the British nation as a plural and inclusive site of multicultural convergence, thus exposing the constructedness of cultural and national identities.*
Keywords: *counter-discourse, cultural hybridity, nationhood, transculturalism, transnational approach*

1. Introduction: Narrating nationhood

From the late 1970s onwards, postcolonial theory has offered new critical insights into the nature of the identity of the postcolonial subject, along with critical revisions of modern European identity. The colonial discourse theory has dismantled the whole project of modernity as a Eurocentric construction based on the totalizing and hegemonic principles of the Enlightenment, whose teleology is bound up with imperialism and leads "inexorably to an episteme associated with the West" (Carey, Festa 2009:8). At the same time, poststructuralist views of anti-essential subjectivity have contributed to displacing the Enlightenment subject from its status as "the central category of Modernity" (Burger 1992:12). Inevitably, this criticism has been extended to the institution through which modern individual subjectivity achieved a sense of identity, namely, the nation-state as the modern construction *par excellence.*

In philosophical terms, the unified and stable self of the Cartesian or Enlightenment subject is founded on the political and cultural unity of the nation to which it belongs, so that the rhetoric of nationhood emerges as a rhetoric of wholeness and uniformity. Conceived as an organic whole which excludes cultural differences and denies nationhood to the racial/ethnic Other, the nation results then inseparable from the imperial project. As Paul Gilroy (2000) argued, the fatal implication of the complex interaction between race and nation is that the national frontiers come to coincide with the limits of race and culture.

Starting with the end of the 1980s, one of the strategic interventions of the project of Black British Cultural Studies has been precisely to deconstruct the naturalization of the link between race, ethnicity and nation (read: white race, ethnic identity of Englishness and the British nation), which has been responsible for the hegemonic articulation of national identity and national culture in exclusionary terms (Baker, Best, Linderborg 1996:1-15). The nexus between ethnic identity and the national character is shown to be merely a cultural construction conveyed in discourse and, as such, liable to be deconstructed, and it is this that lies at the core of Black British critique. Stuart Hall (1992:292), for instance, has described nations as "system[s] of cultural representations" by which national

identities are discursively constructed and continually re-produced through the narrative of nationhood:

> A national culture is a *discourse* – a way of constructing meanings which influences and organizes both our actions and our conception of ourselves [...] National culture constructs identities by producing meaning about 'the nation' with which we can *identify*; these are contained in stories which are told about it, memories which connect its present with its past and images which are constructed of it. (Hall 1992:293)

In his discussion of narrative and the nation, Homi Bhabha also posed the question of nationhood as a cultural construction and articulated the nation itself as "a narrative strategy" (1990a: 292). Yet, the grand narrative of the nation turns out to be inherently ambiguous and "incomplete in its signification" (1990b:1). Indeed, the untenability of the seemingly authoritative and homogeneous narrative of the nation and the culturally constructed boundaries of the national "imagined communities" (Anderson 1991) are made clear in the following statement:

> Counter-narratives of the nation that continually evoke and erase its totalising boundaries – both actual and conceptual – [and that] disturb those ideological manoeuvres through which 'imagined communities' are given essentialist identities. (Bhabha 1990:300)

In line with these theoretical developments, and also in line with a tendency that seems to have emerged in British literature over the last two decades of the twentieth century and that Suzanne Keen (2006:167) aptly defined as "the historical turn in contemporary British fiction", contemporary black British writers have engaged with history and historically grounded fiction in order to write their counter-discourses of the nation. Among these novelists, who were born mostly in Britain of black or mixed parents, are the Anglo-Nigerian Bernardine Evaristo, the Anglo-Caribbean Caryl Phillips and the two Anglo-Guyanese David Dabydeen and Fred D'Aguiar, to name but a few. In their historical novels, they expose the crimes of the past and re-narrate the stories of the African diaspora from the alternative perspective of the black slaves and the unrecorded so that theirs are "[counter] stories about the past that point to multiple truths or the overturning of an old received Truth" (Keen 2006:171).

In this context, the London-born writer of Jamaican origin Andrea Levy deserves special mention, for she looks back at the Windrush era with a transnational approach, so developing her critique against racially exclusivist configurations of Britishness. In her book *Small Island* (2004), Levy cleverly returns to 1948 not to bring to the fore Black British history, but to depict how inextricably linked it is to the development of the British nation and how it is an integral part of the British national identity. She thus dismantles the constructed correspondence between whiteness and the British nation and British identity and, in so doing, participates in the re-delineation of present-day British national discourse about belonging and citizenship on a transnational, if not global, scale.

2. The Windrush era: The black invasion of the Albion fortress

Small Island is a story of multiple, inextricable connections and affiliations, which goes beyond the logic of polarities. Levy's declared aim is, in fact, to show

that "England has never been an exclusive club, but rather a hybrid nation [...] plural and inclusive" (Levy 2000).

In a productive relationship between history, memory and the imagination, the novel connects Britain, the centre of the empire, to its periphery, the Caribbean, thus bringing the readers into "the heart of a story [and a long past] that Jamaica and Britain share" and that has reshaped black and white subjectivities alike and, ultimately, Britain's sense of self (Levy 2000). At the core of the novel lies the encounter with the racial Other that has generated that irreversible process of cultural hybridization which has transformed Great Britain into a multicultural and hybrid society, a powerful process that has led the British nation "to recognize, albeit with considerable hesitation and setbacks, that the other is a necessary component of its identity" (Balibar 2003:325).

Symbolically seen as the moment that marks the rise of multicultural and multiracial Britain, (although black people had been in Britain for centuries), the arrival in 1948 of the Caribbean immigrants on board the *SS Empire Windrush* ship represents a crucial event in British post-war history. Nevertheless, Levy's attitude towards the Windrush era and her decision to go back to1948 are not to be seen as a mere recovery of the past, but rather as a successful attempt to re-inscribe that historical moment and its complexity in a transnational, even global, context which transcends both racial and national constraints. By offering a critical re-reading of a monumental chapter in Britain's memory, that of the second World War − from which the arrival of the *SS Empire Windrush* is inseparable − Levy challenges the centrality accorded to that global event as a mythic moment immediately before the country lost its homogeneity, and a defining moment of national identity. To put it differently, Levy offers a counter-history which contributes to undermining the validity of the selective memory that has produced what Gilroy terms as Britain's melancholic national consciousness and its

> ... error of imagining that [migrant] people are only unwanted alien intruders without any substantive historical, political or cultural connection to the collective life of their fellow subjects. (Gilroy 2004:98)

Regarded in this light, *Small Island* portrays the nation as an open space connected to the rest of the world, on which international and global affairs converge, thereby influencing the lives of its people and challenging processes of identity (re)formation.

The novel has a complex structure. The narrative perspective oscillates between 1924 and 1948 and, at the same time, moves across multiple geographic locations: London, rural England, Jamaica, India and the United States. With the first-person narratives of its four protagonists overlapping, *Small Island* follows the inextricably interwoven experiences of Gilbert Joseph, a black Jamaican who joins the RAF during the Second World War and eventually in 1948 arrives in London as an immigrant aboard the *Windrush*, Hortense Roberts, Gilbert's Jamaican wife, Queenie Bligh, their white landlady, and Bernard, Queenie's racist husband who also joined the RAF and is still missing three years after the war.

In a microcosm which prefigures multiracial Britain, they act out the complex dynamics that underlie interracial encounters ranging from hostility to hospitality and cooperation. Indeed, Levy's counter-narrative aims at calling into question monolithic representations of national identity and rejecting Eurocentric descriptions of British imperialism. Significantly, the novel opens with a Prologue

in which Levy inverts the hegemonic order of imperialism, and shows up a new map of the Empire that no longer has Great Britain at its centre. Described in the Prologue through the eyes of Queenie as a child, the 1924 British Empire Exhibition – a would-be celebration of imperial dominance − becomes in fact a powerful metaphor for the black invasion of the Albion fortress, that is for the re-location of the periphery within the colonial centre. Paradoxically, in this inverted and unfamiliar world it is the Western colonizer who is out of place; it is Queenie who feels uncomfortable and loses her sense of direction:

> I went to Africa when it came to Wembley. [While visiting with my family the various pavilions ..] we got lost in Africa. [...] we found ourselves in an African village [...] We were in the jungle. (1-5).

Moreover, constructed by Levy as the space which allows the colonial encounter with the Other, the imperial exhibition reveals itself to be an ambivalent "Third Space" of cultural interpenetration (Bhabha 1994:37-38). The pavilions of the Wembley exhibition, which created an African landscape in the heart of London, lack authenticity and turn out to be but a partial imitation of the African jungle. Mirroring neither Great Britain nor Africa but the intermingling of the two, the African pavilion emerges as a contradictory space of representation which fails to perfectly reproduce the original, thus undermining colonial authority. But it is in Queenie's encounter with the African man that the ambivalence which underlies the logic of imperial discourse is epitomized. By depicting the African simultaneously and incongruously as a subject both familiar and alien, human and animal, domestic and foreign and, above all, African and English, Queenie's description proves to be a stereotypical representation of black otherness, in Bhabha's sense (1994:57-93):

> A black man. [...] A monkey man sweating a smell of mothballs. Blacker than when you smudge your face with a sooty cork. [...] His lips were brown, not pink like they should be, [...] His nose, squashed flat had two nostrils big as train tunnels. And he looking down at me. [...] I could feel the blood rising in my face, turning me crimson, as he smiled a perfect set of pure blinding white teeth. [...] His face was coming closer and closer to mine. He could have swallowed me up, this big nigger man. But instead he said in clear English: 'Perhaps we could shake hands instead? (Levy 2004:6)

Thus, from the very beginning, Levy frames the novel within an intrinsically hybrid national context which reveals "the internality of blacks to the West" (Gilroy 1993:5) and transcends both cultural difference and national borders. Nevertheless, Levy's major challenge to exclusionary representations of British national identity in favour of transnational modes of belonging comes with the climax at the end of the novel, when, in 1948, Queenie gives birth to a mixed-race child conceived with Michael Roberts, a Jamaican member of the RAF, with whom she has had a brief affair. The figure of the mixed-race child is aptly deployed by the author to embody the convergence of transracial histories in a national context and, consequently, to call into question its cultural homogeneity. So, the baby symbolizes Levy's hope for a new generation marked by new transcultural forms of subjectivity and belonging. Yet, in order to dismantle racial configurations of national identity, cooperation between the races is required: this seems to be Levy's message. Indeed, the fact that Queenie's small-minded husband, Bernard, is unwilling to raise the child (who eventually will be given up for adoption to Joseph

and Hortense) metaphorically suggests that Levy's aim is, in John McLeod's words,

> [to make us] understand 1948 as a moment of missed opportunity for the emergence of a very different vision of Britain, one which could be retrospectively [...] restated as a way of reinventing the UK's present and future in progressive, democratising ways. (McLeod 2010:47)

3. A new rhetoric of belonging

In giving her transnational account of (imperial) British history, Levy reformulates the concepts of nation and identity in transcultural terms. The nation is seen as an open space, a "contact zone" (Pratt 1991), where cultures can meet and merge and multiple identities are being incessantly formed and reformed, thus blurring the dichotomy of insider/outsider. By demonstrating the hybrid character of British history and the porous nature of the boundaries of Britain, *Small Island* destabilizes the sovereignty of national identity, as Bernard, the most explicitly racist character in the novel, claims: "all these coloured [are] swamping the place. Hardly like our own country any more" (2004:436).

Indeed, the nation becomes a space which is highly disputed over by both the Windrush migrants, who claim their British citizenship, and the British host population, which sees itself in danger of being displaced and pushed out. What emerges is a new rhetoric of belonging, which forces all individuals, whether black or white, to re-consider and re-negotiate both their sense of identity and the space they occupy. The global event of the war, and the subsequent experience of migration, in fact, have impacted upon the lives of all the characters in the novel and, more importantly, have shaken their certainties and convictions once and for all.

On their return from the war, for example, Gilbert and Bernard question their vision of their respective homelands. Paradoxically enough, both of them feel like strangers on their islands:

> With alarm I [Gilbert] became aware that the island of Jamaica was no universe. [...] I was shocked by the awful realisation that, man, we Jamaicans are small islanders too. (2004:196)

In a parallel fashion, Bernard has to admit that his beloved

> England had shrunk. It was smaller than the place I left. [...] I had to stare out at the sea just to catch a breath. (2004:424)

and, incredulous and alienated when he faces London's decay and his almost ruined home, he can but say:

> Hard to believe this had been my home for most of my life. Nothing was familiar. Had it always looked so exhausted? So friable? Buildings decaying and run down. Rotting sashes. Cracked plaster. [...] Got closer and closer. But still approaching as a stranger. (2004:427-428)

Throughout the novel, all the characters undergo an incessant process of identity (re)formation, which for all its plurality and fluidity, underlies the positional, provisional and negotiated nature of cultural identities (Hall 1992).

Hortense, for instance, arrives in England convinced that thanks to her complexion which is

> the colour of warm honey [and not] the bitter chocolate hue of [many other Jamaicans], with such a countenance there was a chance of golden life for [me in England]. (2004:38)

Yet, the image of the Mother Country as a place of opportunity where she is entitled to reside fades when, once there, she becomes aware that England is a land of exclusion; a land where although she is a qualified teacher in Jamaica and a British citizen, she is told: "You can't teach in this country. You're not qualified to teach here in England" (2004:454). As examples of diasporic identities, both Hortense and Gilbert's shifting perceptions of themselves and the reality around them are reshaped by the experience of migrancy. They are both forced to renegotiate their idea of the Mother Country which, in their colonial imaginary, was waiting for all the sons of the empire: "'I never dreamed England would be like this. So cheerless', Hortense admits" (2004:225). Instead, they find themselves being socially constructed as the Other. Thus, echoes of disillusionment and disappointment reverberate in Gilbert's words:

> She [the Mother Country] offers you no comfort after your journey. No smile. No welcome. Yet she looks down at you through lordly eyes and says, 'Who the bloody hell are you?' (2004:139).

Indeed, once in London, Gilbert has to face the racist hostility of British society towards black immigrants and the consequent difficulty in finding lodgings:

> So how many gates I swing open? How many houses I knock on? Let me count the doors that opened and shut quick without even me breath managing to get inside. Man, these English landlords and ladies could come up with excuses. (2004:215)

Yet, Queenie and Gilbert's position appears no less problematic. They, too, are forced to make adjustments and redefine their national identity and sense of belonging to the place they live in. So, Bernard's feeling of displacement in the social space he inhabits, by implicitly contesting essentialist notions of identity, obliges him to dismantle his whole system of nationalist beliefs according to which

> Everyone ha[s] a place. England for the English and the West Indies for these coloured people. [...] I've nothing against them in their place. But their place isn't here. [...] It would be a kindness to return them to the backward place they come from. (2004:469).

Queenie, for her part, has to go through the war on her own, forced to find a way to survive the hard times and the new social order the war brought with it. Thus, against any nationalist credo, and despite her neighbours' protests, she decides to rent rooms to the unwelcome black immigrants. In this sense, Queenie's house on Nevern Street, as a space shared between blacks and whites, a place of convergence of multiple, interrelated, international stories and, ultimately, the place of the conception and birth of the mixed-race baby, can be interpreted as a metaphor for Levy's re-conceptualization of the British nation as a whole and of what it means to be British.

By putting emphasis on the diasporic and transnational connections intrinsic to British national history and identity, Levy does not want to deny British identity

but, rather, seeks to demonstrate the original hybrid character of both that history and that identity. The polyphonic structure of the text, with its overlapping narratives, also contributes to a sense of British identity as being heterogeneous and diverse. Indeed, each character is British in his/her own way with a personal heritage and story and the characters all go to make up the British nation. Moreover, by exposing the cultural and national identities of the characters as socially constructed, dynamic and open to change (Hall 1992), Levy shows the fictive character of nationhood and how the British "ethnoscape" can no longer be conceived "as tightly territorialised, spatially bounded, historically unselfconscious, or culturally homogeneous" (Appadurai 2008:48).

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, in her polyphonic novel *Small Island*, Andrea Levy questions a homogeneous view of British history and British identity. In so doing, she looks back at two crucial, interrelated moments of British history, the Second World War and the Windrush era, the latter traditionally recognized as the moment that marks the rise of multicultural Britain. Levy re-writes those fundamental chapters of British history in transnational, even global, terms thus exposing Black British history as integral to the history of the British nation. In her transnational and transcultural approach, she depicts the nation as the hub of global interconnectedness where the encounter with the racial Other takes place. As a result, the novel deconstructs the correspondence between whiteness and the British nation and questions the hegemonic articulation of national identity. Far from being eternally fixed, the cultural and national identities of all four protagonists undergo constant transformation: they meet and merge and are incessantly created and recreated. It is precisely this constructed nature of their cultural and national identities which challenges the rhetoric of nationhood itself as one based on visions of ethnic homogeneity or racial purity.

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FAMILY CARNAGE
TRACY LETTS' *AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY*

GABRIELA GLĂVAN
University of Timişoara

***Abstract**: One of the most widely known contemporary plays of today's American theater, Tracy Letts' "August: Osage County"(2007), is a literary and dramatic nexus that reunites a significant Western cultural heritage coming from authors such as Eugene O'Neill, Arthur Miller or Federico García Lorca. The paper follows the connections between Tracy Letts' play and other remarkable dramas of Western theater, while also exploring its thematic structures and characters from a comparative perspective.*
***Keywords**: addiction, crisis, contemporary American theater, death, family reunion, intergenerational conflict*

1. Introduction: A recipe for disaster

Revolving around the family events triggered by the disappearance and death of a patriarchal figure, Tracy Letts' *August: Osage County* (2007) has been acknowledged by the vast majority of its critics as an exemplary play of family crisis and disintegration. The play premiered at the Steppenwolf Theatre in Chicago in 2007, and was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 2008. Five years later, in 2013, John Wells directed a cinematographic version of the play, receiving a significantly less enthusiastic critical response.

My paper will carry out a close inspection of the major thematic structures in Letts' play, trying to reveal some clear similarities with other important plays that explore the same dramatic spectrum. As Edward Sobel, Steppenwolf Theater's director of play development, points out, Tracy Letts seems to be engaged in dialogue with the pantheon of American playwrights, from Eugene O'Neill to Edward Albee, as "their handprints are very much deliberately present in *August*" (Sobel qtd. in Nance 2007:45). Very much aware of these inevitable connections and contaminations, Letts (qtd. in Nance 2007:45) declares that "some of it's conscious, some of it's unconscious" but there definitely are "reference points". My aim would also be to mirror Letts' *August* against O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night* (2002), and, rather collaterally, against Federico García Lorca's *The House of Bernarda Alba* (1955). I shall also make references to the film adaptation of the play (2013), written by Tracy Letts and directed by John Wells, as I believe Letts' involvement in the project encourages a closer inspection of the dialogue and the mirroring process between theater and cinema in the specific case of *August: Osage County.*

The opening scene of Letts' play immerses the spectator in the grim universe of the family patriarch's tired final days. A professor of literature and a poet, Beverly Weston, the alcoholic father of the family, makes one final effort to bring some order into the chaos of the life he shares with his wife: he hires Johnna, a Cheyenne Native American woman to cook and clean for them. Their dialogue is more of a monologue, yet Beverly does not fail in setting the tone of the play by quoting from T.S. Eliot's *The Hollow Men*: "Life is very long" (Letts 2007:10). In

Michael Schulman's (2014) view, "he's the embodiment of weary apocalypse", an essential character that exits the stage shortly after offering a glimpse into his social and emotional collapse. Yet, before they are informed by the sheriff that Beverly had committed suicide, his close family reunites around Violet and their three daughters, Ivy, Barbara and Karen. The *full house* days at the Weston residence are the perfect ground for unleashing decades-long frustrations, voicing unspeakable truths and demolishing the very foundation of a traditional nuclear family. Beverly's death is an efficient catalyst when it comes to exposing the true nature of Violet's relationships with her daughters, their spouses and children, and with her sister Mattie Fae Aiken and her husband and son. Indeed, the stage is very crowded in *August*, and this density of characters is clearly reflected in the intensity of mutual evisceration. This type of violent destructive behavior becomes the norm of the matriarch's relationship with her daughters (O'Reilly 2009:22). Nobody manages to fly below Violet's unforgiving radar, and, at the same time, nobody misses the chance to express his/her saturation and disappointment with the cruel bindings imposed by family traditions. Letts' play investigates emotional disaster from multiple perspectives, including age, gender or even demographics – ironically, Karen, the youngest Weston daughter is from Florida, hence her tonus seems to be permanently at its best. Nobody manages to escape Violet's deadly verbal grip: suffering from a literal-turned-metaphorical mouth cancer, Violet is a predator on the loose, mercilessly exposing the weaknesses and failures of her closest family circle. In Schulman's terms, the troubles of the Westons "seemed to pile up ad infinitum: pill addiction, alcoholism, suicide, infidelity, incest, and, above all, a talent for cruelty" (Schulman 2014).

The apparently never-ending string of issues plaguing the family, brought to life even in the least inflammatory circumstances, is deeply rooted in each character's past. Violet's addiction to pills is a possible consequence of her inability to accept the failure of her marriage to Beverly, but, at the same time, it might be nourished by an older pain, one that is both uncontrollable and undeserved – her troubled relationship to her own mother. In her own words, "My momma was a nasty, mean old lady. I suppose that's where I get it from" (Letts, 134). It's not surprising that, after a moment of awkward silence, the only daughter who dares to reply is Karen, who seems particularly out of touch with reality: "You're not nasty-mean. You're our mother and we love you" (Letts 2007:134).

The high voltage tensions inside this family reach unfathomable levels due to an element that works properly only on stage – the claustrophobic space of the house. In the theater version of the play, the Weston family home resembles a "universe in miniature, at once confining and encyclopedic" (Schulman 2014). It is an enclave, a place that sequesters and torments the characters to act according to the worst in their nature. The cinematographic adaptation fails to render the invisible pressure this "dollhouse-like set" exerts on its inhabitants, as on the film set spatiality works differently than it does in theater. Even if a scene is filmed inside, the camera can only capture parts of the set, thus failing to render the utter feeling of suffocating enclosedness the theater set might induce.

Violet seems to have perfected her predatory senses through repeated practice, since she knows best when to attack for maximum damage. Her discreet, unglamorous daughter Ivy falls prey to a cascade of blunt, unflattering remarks:

> Your shoulders are slumped and your hair's all straight and you don't wear makeup. You look like a lesbian. You're a pretty enough girl, you could get a decent man if you spruced up. A bit, that's all I'm saying. (Letts 2007:33)

Karen is directly accused of disrespect to her dead father for having brought a date to his funeral, although Steve Heidebrecht, is, in fact, her fiancé. Barbara, her mother's favorite, seems to have inherited a certain toughness when it comes to family matters, although her own family is falling apart. Her husband, Bill, at one point undecided about their separation, clearly favors his younger lover by the end of the play, leaving Barbara behind. Despite his neurotic dissatisfaction with the whole family affair, Bill eagerly complies when Violet orders him to curse: "Say horseshit, Bill" (Letts 2007:51). Not even Jean, Bill and Barbara's teenage daughter, is safe from her grandmother's foul mouth. Moreover, as the young girl declares her preference for vegetarian food over the funeral dinner, saying that she refuses to ingest the butchered animal's fear, the whole family takes great pleasure in laughing at her, while uncle Charles, Mattie Fae's husband, pretends to fall sick at the table due to animal fear ingestion during dinner. This scene resonates with the one in which Violet remembers a childhood memory of great emotional importance, when her mother gifted her with a dirty old pair of boots one Christmas, knowing that her young daughter was desperately hoping for a pair of shiny new ones. Once again, the monstrous coalition of adults against children proves the alienating force of repressed suffering, a vicious circle in which the former victim takes on the role of the aggressor, unable to escape the terrible destiny of the abused who, in their turn, become abusers. It has been argued, in this direction, that "Letts's real subject […] is that the ties that bind are also those that rip people apart" (Brown 2008:18).

2. The anatomy of a dinner from hell

The family dinner scene is a classic choice in both film and literature when the author intends to bring dark secrets to light or reveal uncomfortable truths about characters. It is, first of all, the easiest strategy to employ when it comes to mirroring characters against each other or trying to elicit a defining response from them. Letts turns this scene into the core moment of his play: the funeral dinner that was meant to celebrate Beverly's life and heritage turns into a brutal war of words that leaves everybody wounded. It is only now that the spectator understands Beverly's remark in the Prologue, when asked by Johnna what kind of cancer Violet was suffering from: "I didn't say? My God, I nearly neglected the punch line: *mouth* cancer" (Letts 2007:18).

Barbara is the first victim to denounce her mother's vicious attack on "each and every member of this family" (Letts 2007:118), after a scene when she does not shy away from being cruel herself. As Violet offers her daughters a discount on the family silverware instead of selling it in an auction, Barbara flatly dismisses the proposal with an icy reply: "Or you might never get around to the auction and then we can just have it for free after you die" (Letts 2007:117). A few more minutes into the scene, she loses her temper and physically attacks Violet. Later, as she is woken up by the scandal stirred up by her young daughter's midnight encounter with Karen's fiancé, Steve, she does not hesitate to slap the young girl in the face. The process of Barbara's tragic following into her mother's footsteps is visible

from the moment she returns to her parents' home, from the first exchange of words she'd had with the matriarch.

Violet appears before everybody in a drugged haze, as if the pills were her armour in the face of cruel reality. Moreover, her addiction seems to have "given her tongue an extra-sharp razor's edge" (Peithman 2008:41). If the Prologue presents her dizzy, slurring her words and cursing without any filters, later, in Act Two, at the family dinner, she seems strangely functional when she orders the men in the family to put back on their suit jackets, as the dinner was "not a cockfight" that could be attended "stripped down to [their] shirt fronts" (Letts 2007:106).

The dinner scene is symbolic from more than one perspective, that of reuniting all the characters for the purpose of mirroring and exposing their nature, relationships and troubles. It is, in a literal sense, a scrutiny of the underlying mechanisms of violence that makes the reunion an impossibly entertaining spectacle. As the youngest and most vulnerable participant, Jean is the most entitled to speak of animal fear. The dinner table scene is a mine field one must step on very carefully, with all senses sharpened to the maximum, for the best chance to survive. In this context, Steve's experience in slaughterhouse sanitation becomes relevant as well. There's a certain literalization of symbolic and metaphoric structures in *August*, even beyond Violet's mouth cancer as a signifier of her bad mouth. The dinner scene is, at the height of its cruelty and sheer brutality, reminiscent of a slaughterhouse. "There's a lot of fear flying around that place", Steve says [Letts 2007:110], referring to the slaughterhouse, but his words could have been used to describe the funeral dinner as well.

Tensions build up to the point of explosion when Barbara openly calls her mother a drug addict. Violet's anger bursts out:

> 'That is the truth! That's what I'm getting at! I, everybody listen…I am a drug addict. I am addicted to drugs, pills, 'specially downers. *(Pulls a bottle of pills from her pocket, holds them up)* Y'see these little blue babies? These are my best fucking friends and they never let me down. Try to get'em away from me and I'll eat you alive.' (Letts 2007:121).

Mother and daughter engage in a taunting game, with Barbara trying to take Violet's pillbox. The "pandemonium" that follows is described alertly, and the film adaptation turns it into a memorable scene of family madness:

> *Violet wins, wrests the pills away from Barbara. Bill pulls Barbara back into her seat. Violet shakes the pill bottle, taunting Barbara. Barbara snaps, screams, lunges again, grabs Violet by the hair, pulls her up, toppling chairs. They crash through the house, pursued by the family.* (Letts 2007:122)

It is moments like these that support the argument that, in *August*, "farce mixes with melodrama, effectively complicating the surrounding tragedy" (Fifer 2013:189). However, since Beverly is the only entirely tragic character of the play, his presence, although very limited, is not contaminated by farcical excess.

There are truths that need better timing for maximum impact. Little Charles, Mattie Fae's son, a grown man permanently infantilized and, subsequently, castrated by his unfortunate name sharing with his father, enters the stage and immediately causes a minor accident: he breaks the casserole his mother had brought for dinner. Later on, he stands up to tell the truth about his relationship with his first cousin, Ivy, but loses heart just before uttering it. His truth is not

complete, though, so the delay maximizes the earth-shattering force of its real nature: Ivy and Charles are not cousins, but brother and sister, as Charles is the result of an affair Mattie Fae had with her brother-in-law Beverly. It is in one of the play's final scenes that Ivy hears this from none other but Violet herself. If *August* had a tragic vibration, however weak, it got diluted and lost into this less fortunate similitude with a cheap soap opera scenario. Indeed, it has been noted that this family "seems to embrace every malady ever discussed on confessional television" (Bryer and Hartig 2010:309), and it seems that incest could not be excluded.

3. The demon of addiction: The O'Neill connection

"How does a copy relate to its original?" Elizabeth Fifer (2013:183) asks in her seminal comparative study on the connections between Tracy Letts' *August: Osage County* and Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*. The structural and thematic similarities between the two plays are indeed striking, and Fifer (2013:183) speaks of

> the shiver of recognition: a family reunited, the exposing of hidden secrets and truths about characters, contrasts between the aspirations of one generation and the failure to realize them in the next, a doomed matriarch, a tragic patriarch.

However obvious Letts' borrowings from O'Neill may be, the great bridge that connects the two plays is the themes of addiction and that of the "fall of the house of" Tyrone and Weston, respectively. The marital collapse of the nuclear couple reverberates like a powerful earthquake, dismantling all other existing and potential relationships inside the two families. Mary Tyrone is a morphine addict, Violet Weston is addicted to its modern derivates and (far and near) equivalents. Beverly gives Johnna a complete list of them when he hires her:

> Valium. Vicodin. Darvon, Darvocet. Percodan, Percocet. Xanax for fun. OxyContin in a pinch. Some Black Mollies once, just to make sure I was still paying attention. And of course Dilaudid. I shouldn't forget Dilaudid. (Letts 2007:18)

While the matriarchs of the two families are addicted to narcotics, the fathers and other members give in to various degrees of passion for alcohol. In Mary's words, each of these substances is a trusted friend, "because there is no other that can stop the pain – all the pain" (O'Neill 2002:106).

The roots of addiction go deep, transcending the limits of pain and disease management. Mary was prescribed morphine after the birth of her third son, Edward, and Violet gets her supply of drugs from various doctors trying to alleviate the symptoms of her mouth cancer. Yet their addiction is directly linked to a powerful self-destructive dimension these women nourish, and Mary's tragic aura is amplified by it. Violet's aggressiveness places her in a different register, though – that of tragicomedy, the paradigm that determines the entire evolution of Letts' play. The dark humor of *August* can only find a weak equivalent in the dark melancholy of O'Neill's play. Barbara even has a definition of the mood engulfing Letts' micro-universe, the Oklahoma family house and the particular American spirit that animates it: "This is the Plains: a state of mind, right, some spiritual affliction, like the Blues" (Letts 2007:38).

The focus on the two matriarchal figures generates, in both dramatic universes, a specific frame of mind that defines the dynamics of family relationships. As Fifer (2013:188) clearly states in her study,

> Violet screams where Mary grieves, and her anger is always directed outward, making her more selfish, bitter, insensitive, and openly hostile to her family.

Therefore she is "hurting others because her mouth hurts". The tragic dimension of *August* is constantly undermined by melodrama and dark humor, despite the characters' inability to escape their own past. There's a permanent denial that sabotages their relationships to others, and the powerful elements of betrayal and obsession define their behavior. Both mothers excel in being irrational – "surprisingly gentle one moment, demonic the next" (Foundas 2013) and this kind of oscillating attitude generates irreversible fractures inside both families.

Alcohol addiction plays a significant role in O'Neill's play and, less obviously, persists on more than one level in *August* as well. Here, Beverly "was a world-class alcoholic, more'n fifty years" (Letts 2007:112), as Violet insists to underline at the funeral dinner. In both households, the fathers actively "support the culture of alcohol" (Fifer 2013:190); Tyrone and his sons go on drinking sprees together, following Baudelaire's counsel: "Be always drunken. Nothing else matters" (O'Neill 2002:135), while Beverly's family, reunited at his wake, quarrel, as Fifer promptly observes, over the appropriateness of drinking beer or scotch at this "fraught time" (Letts 2007:112). Even the very young Jean seeks relief from the tension of her parents' marriage troubles and smokes marijuana. Acting as an agent that lowers social inhibition, alcohol fuels the bluntness of dialogue in the Weston house. Fifer's conclusion sums things up remarkably: "Painful honesty destroys the unity among family members that this death might otherwise have forged" (Fifer 2013:192).

Addiction is a complex condition, one that affects, in various degrees, both the sick and their families. O'Neill and Letts treat the phenomenon rather differently, and this is one of the defining elements that turned *Long Day's Journey* into a tragedy and *August: Osage County* into a melodrama. O'Neill's characters bear the mark of an essential failure - they could not fulfill their potential and follow their calling, or fell victim to their own success. Beverly, too, couldn't write anything relevant after his successful volume of poetry, *Meadowlark*, and Bill, who is a college professor, understands his situation quite well:

> Christ…I can't imagine the kind of pressure he must've felt after this came out. Probably every word he wrote after this, he had to be thinking, 'What are they going to say about this? Are they going to compare it to *Meadowlark*?' (Letts 2007:60)

Yet Beverly exits the stage too soon to leave a strong tragic mark on the entire play. O'Neill's Tyrone, a fine actor in his day, gave in to temptation and favored money and success to a hard earned career as a Shakespearean actor. His disappointment in himself followed him for the rest of his life, eroding frustrations that could only be drowned in alcohol.

The psychological foundation of addiction is always complex, and both O'Neill and Letts suggest that there's an entire continent of the irrational dominating the interior lives of their characters. And, more essentially, although both plays are structurally constructed on a dark, somber ground, Letts' play "uses a sudden suicide as its engine", while "O'Neill's tragedy uses slow death as its structure" (Fifer 2013:196).

4. Conclusion: The fall of the House of Tyrone and Weston

From among the authors and plays that come to mind when anchoring Letts' drama in the tradition of Western theater (William Shakespeare, Tennessee Williams, Edward Albee, Yasmina Reza), Federico García Lorca is particularly relevant, especially on the thematic level of the collapse of the house as a mental and real edifice sheltering a family. O'Neill and Letts rely on the literal sense of the house collapsing along with people's lives. The house of the Westons is decaying, dark shades permanently cover the windows, there is suffocating, infernal heat both inside and outside it. Violet is aware of its frail constitution:

> You know this house is falling apart, something about the basement or the sump pump or the foundation. I don't know anything about it. (Letts 2007:32)

Mary Tyrone is ashamed to invite anyone over as "everything was done in the cheapest way" (O'Neill 2002:45).

García Lorca's *House of Bernarda Alba* is dismantled by the oppressive power of a monstrous matriarch whose five daughters struggle to come to terms with the death of their father. Like Violet, she cannot refrain from hurting and discrediting her offspring, although Bernarda has strict tradition as an ally on her side. As Federico Bonaddio (2007:59-60) noted,

> Bernarda becomes a power-crazed individual who, once freed from the shackles of her husband, enjoys flexing her power and inflicts hardship, without reason, on her daughters.

Letts' play and Lorca's share the common ground of feminine chaos triggered by the death of the father – Violet is at war with her three daughters while Bernarda struggles to dominate her five daughters. In both plays, strained family relationships define the aftermath of the patriarch's death, and, in a metaphorical sense, both houses are haunted by the past, a tragic state that generates boiling tensions in the present. Once again, Letts' preference for tragicomedy and melodrama is visible in a cardinal moment of the play, that of the final confrontation between mother and daughter. While this violent final battle proves liberating for Barbara, it turns out fatal for Adela, Bernarda's revolted daughter.

There is a genderized auctorial preference, as O'Neill works with paternal/masculine issues, while Letts and Lorca favor the feminine. The destructive effect is the same in all three plays, but it is indeed relevant to investigate a potential comparative analysis of Letts and Lorca from the strict perspective of mother/daughters relationships after the disappearance of patriarchal authority. The excessively transparent and explicit nature of metaphors and conflicts, together with a preference for cliché characters places Letts in separate dimension from the classicized universe of Lorca's austere, yet heavily symbolic realism. As one critic noted, the recurrence of classical tropes in this contemporary American drama results in "an extravagant mixture, hard to swallow" (De Jongh 2008:12). What remains solid and undoubtedly valid is, among other obvious aesthetic merits, Letts' integration of the theme of family as the nexus of crisis, violence and death in an universal framework.

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NON-CONFOMIST HISTORY OR NON-HISTORIC CONFORMISM? RODDY DOYLE'S *THE LAST ROUNDUP* TRILOGY

PÉTER DOLMÁNYOS
Eszterházy Károly College, Eger

Abstract: *Roddy Doyle's trilogy entitled The Last Roundup is the writer's tentative experiment with historical fiction. Doyle does not follow the pattern of traditional historical novels but does not conform to the concept of historiographic metafiction either. His ingenious approach to the story of Henry Smart reconsiders notions of historical fiction and prompts questions regarding linearity, chronology, the selection of the narrated events and their duration in the respective novels of the trilogy.*
Key words: *contemporary Irish literature, historical novel, historiographic metafiction*

1. Introduction

Prior to 1999, Roddy Doyle's position in contemporary Irish fiction was that of chronicler of the present. The conversational novels of the Barrytown-trilogy focus on the subculture of the North of Dublin housing estates, and his other novels published to that date (*Paddy Clarke Ha-Ha-Ha* and *The Woman Who Walked Into Doors*) are also concerned with the working class world of Dublin. These render Doyle a non-conformist both in terms of subject matter and technique: revivalist agendas underlying Irish novels tend to neglect the working class and his own narrative technique challenges a number of traditional as well as postmodernist practices.

In 1999 Doyle's novel entitled *A Star Called Henry* was heralded as the writer's departure into a new world, that of the historical novel. The perspective is wider and bolder than in the earlier novels, as his protagonist is a man born in 1901 and his life thus unfolds in a period of decisive events from the point of view of modern Ireland. Writing the story of Henry Smart is then at once writing and rewriting the story of Ireland as well, insisting on the inseparability of personal and communal histories in the Irish context. As Doyle completes the trilogy, however, he playfully reconsiders and subverts notions of the historical novel, and its postmodern version, historiographic metafiction, and reverts to more subjective ways of storytelling, which echo modernist as well as traditional Irish techniques, thus challenging established postmodernist practices.

2. History and historical fiction

One of the basic features of postmodernism is its sceptical approach toward grand narratives. This "incredulity toward metanarratives" (Lyotard 1984:xxiv) is observable in the revision of the notion of history: history becomes a language game, a discourse in the absence of universally accepted criteria of validation and legitimation. The result is a narrative whose verifiable relation with the real has been severed, yet what is still considered as a representation of the real, and it is

still this representation which is regarded as the past itself. This creates the impression that the representation takes the place of the real and is substituted for it, just as Jean Baudrillard (cf. 1994:1-42) claims in his theory of simulation and simulacra, undermining the concept of the reality of reality itself.

If history becomes a discourse without a credible metanarrative that functions as an ultimate point of reference, the result is a vast field of subjective versions with no possibility of establishing a generally verifiable account of the real. This notion leads to various degrees of questioning history itself: the most extreme case is that of British historiographer Keith Jenkins, since he dismisses history altogether, considering the past to be impossible to retrieve (Berlatsky 2011: 9). Cultural theorist Elizabeth Deeds Ermath does not categorically deny the possibility of such retrieval, but concludes that there is no objective recovery of the past, only subjective versions are possible (Berlatsky 2011:9-10), which is in concord with Michel Foucault's conviction that history is not an account of the past itself, but interpretation (cf. Berlatsky 2011:11). This leaves historical inquiry in a rather precarious situation, especially because of the form it employs: history unfolds as narrative, which has an impact on the way it is understood. According to Hayden White, this is the most acute danger of conventional history, as it shifts the position of the inquiry itself: "we do not look at the past *through* the historian's language, but *from* the vantage point suggested by it" (White qtd. In Berlatsky 2011:13). The result is a false perspective because "in conventional historical inquiry, the facts established about a specific event are taken to *be* the meaning of that event. … But the facts are the function of the meaning assigned to events, not some primitive data that determine what meanings an event can have." (Berlatsky 2011:13).

History as a narrative presents further points of concern. Narrative creates the impression of coherence by the organisation of the narrated material. In historical narratives chronological presentation and causality suggest that the narrated events are related, forming a plot-like structure, a pattern, which in turn implies some form of meaning. Yet it is the act of narrativisation itself that forges the pattern out of the vast array of "historical detritus" (Berlatsky 2011:15) – without this act the 'past' would remain a formless, uncontrollable and unrepresentable mass. The act of turning history into narrative thus also involves an ethical dimension, the "ethical necessity of finding the real" (Berlatsky, 2011:8), which endows the author not only with specific powers but with responsibility as well, including the responsibility of acknowledging the fact that his version of history is only one possible version.

These concerns lead to the reconsideration of historical fiction as well: the construction of the story/narrative is foregrounded during the creative process. The result is different from traditional historical novels, as the self-conscious presence of the writer becomes an important element of the work itself: there is an insistence on the idea that the attempted historical accuracy is the conscious and deliberate work of the author of the work rather than a simple mechanical act of collecting and recording data. Linda Hutcheon terms this type of writing historiographic metafiction (cf. Hutcheon 1988:5), to indicate this self-conscious process in the postmodernist version of historical fiction. Though narration is done in the 3rd person, giving the illusion of the possibility of omniscience, there is at the same time the authorial presence, which constantly reminds the reader of the act of writing fiction and the construction of a subjective version of the past as a result.

3. The Last Roundup

In a non-conformist manner, Doyle chooses a first-person narrator for his trilogy rather than accepting the position of the writer of historiographic metafiction. This apparently removes the authorial presence and at the same time acknowledges the limitations of this type of narration as well – there is only one point of view with no possibility of a wider perspective, although there are occasional reminders of the narrator's ignorance of the larger context, as the author allows him the benefits of hindsight by letting him reflect on his earlier experience from a later perspective. Paradoxically the subjectivity of the first-person narrator still comes with a degree of credibility due exactly to the immediacy of his experience, though it indeed depends on the personal appeal of the narrator, on his ability to sustain the impression of his belief in his command over the events of his life. The chosen technique will eventually develop its own questions: as the story unfolds through the recollections of the main character questions of linearity, chronology, the selection of the narrated events and their duration become relevant issues from the point of view of narration.

Doyle's construction of his narrator is reminiscent of the earlier position of the omnipotent author, but he also flirts with magic realism. The narrator of the three novels is Henry Smart, an iconic figure of Irish independence and its aftermath. He could be best defined as "underclass", as he is born in the slums of Dublin to a juvenile mother and a one-legged brothel bouncer, but he is endowed with unusual health and strength, in addition to an ability to divine. Doyle apparently stretches the borders of credibility with such elements, but the device of the first-person narrator is capable of redeeming such instances due to its subjectivity.

The timespan of the trilogy encompasses the whole 20th century, with corresponding shifts in the perspective as time passes. The narrator is symbolically born in the first proper year of the new century and, despite his youth, he becomes an important figure in the struggles for independence. The Easter Rising and the War of Independence form an important part of the plot; the subsequent Civil War, however, receives less attention and there is already an indication of the imperfections and compromises of the new world, as the narrator grows in understanding. Emblematically, the Second World War is missing from the plot and, when the Northern Troubles are involved in the plot, the overtones of violent events become explicitly negative. This is especially tangible when Henry gets caught in a UVF bombing, even if this is the moment which resurrects him as a legend of the independent state. The perspective on violence apparently shifts as the context alters with the passing of time, both on the scale of the personal story of Henry and of the communal history of Ireland, and what appeared to be justified and proper in the earlier fight for independence is now repulsive and atrocious after decades of peace.

One basic question concerning the narrator is the time of his storytelling. At the end of the trilogy the narrator is 108 years old, yet the first novel goes all the way back to the birth of the main character in 1901 (actually even before that, to the meeting of his parents). At the beginning of the story, there are occasional items of the child's perspective, and intrusions of the more mature adult are also observable. In the second part (*Oh Play That Thing*), there are significant omissions in terms of time; and in the last novel (*The Dead Republic*), disappearances and lapses of memory become frequent. The overall impression is

that of a narrator who ages together with the events he is narrating and who most of the time manages to avoid the impression of hindsight.

A closely related issue in narration is that of chronology and linearity: though chronology on the whole is retained, Doyle frequently employs the modernist technique of flashbacks. The opening scene of the first novel is that of the narrator and his mother sitting on the stairs and watching the sky, spotting the dead children there as stars. The story then moves back in time to recite the meeting of the parents. The childhood scenes are abruptly abandoned when Victor (a younger brother of Henry's) dies and the next event recounted is the Easter Rising, yet after that chronology remains consistent with no significant omissions or manipulations of the timescale. Henry's American life is introduced in a similar manner, with the early account dispensing with linearity and the later parts of the story returning to a more traditional observation of chronological order, though in that case omissions are more frequent. The most sophisticated path is followed in the last novel, as it begins with Henry's return to Ireland; yet the way leading up to that moment is still untold. The events are recounted in flashbacks which do not follow each other in a chronological order, but the story is eventually constructed. The second part of the novel also includes shifts in the chronology (the most notable instance is the UVF bombing attack in Dublin in 1974), but there is eventually a return to linear storytelling. At the end, Henry is still narrating his story and even projects his own death, which is to happen according to his plan and schedule, but this leaves the story with an open end and implies the eventual presence of the author.

The third novel of the trilogy contains something of a self-reflexive commentary on the technique itself, as the relation of the narrator with the film director John Ford develops. Ford's intention is to turn Henry's life story into a film, yet the duration of a film is an obvious limitation on the construction of the story concerning both the 'what' and the 'how' of storytelling (cf. Doyle 2010:45). This can also be seen as an attempt to legitimate the narrative technique employed in the novels themselves, which is eventually illustrated by the first part of the third novel. This section becomes a rewriting of the earlier stories, especially that of the first one, as the narrator has to simultaneously recollect and reconsider the events of his life, and he is also going through something of a recovery after his unexplained decision to wander out into a Utah desert to die (where he is accidentally found by Ford's crew during an intermission).

The questions concerning the long timespan of the story, together with those of chronology and linearity give rise to another problem, that of the reliability of the narrator. The chronological shifts of the story often indicate omissions, the deliberateness of which will logically prompt the question of their motivation. As the story progresses, the narrator appears to have some real lapses of memory, in which case there is a credible context of involuntariness. The omitted elements of the story, however, give an undertone of unreliability, even if there are apparently redemptive measures taken: the storytelling always returns to a proper chronology and there are occasions of more objective hindsight for the narrator. These manoeuvres reflect the need for honesty perhaps, a technique on the part of Doyle to counter the possibility of his narrator losing credibility with the readers.

The notion of credibility prompts the examination of the relation between the novel and history. *A Star Called Henry* is the closest approximant to the notion of historical novel, as the story unfolds in the context of some of the major events of 20th century Irish history and the construction of the plot is fairly consistent. The

second novel seems to dispense with the need for such contextual basis and there is a corresponding appearance of an increasing number of highly incidental turns in the plot – in *Oh Play That Thing* the rise to fame of Louis Armstrong is the backdrop, yet it is closer to traditional oral history than a methodical recounting of the past. Similarly, in the first part of *The Dead Republic*, John Ford's making of his film *The Quiet Man* is the principal benchmark of the historical context, but in the second part of the last novel there is a return to major historical events, as the conflict of the Northern Troubles overspills into the republic and the narrator becomes entangled in the various attempts to resolve that conflict.

There is a tangible revisionist perspective observable in Doyle's treatment of Irish history. The Easter Rising of 1916 is displayed not as the glorious self-sacrifice of men with a vision of independent Ireland, but it is mainly characterised by boredom while waiting for the British to take notice and occasions for looting as fighting breaks out randomly in the streets. Henry's first act during the Rising is to take revenge on a shop window full of goods he could never afford, and his most notable memory is that of making love to Miss O'Shea, his former teacher, in the basement of the building on a bed of stamps no longer in circulation. There is a more potent episode during the Rising, when he aims his rifle at Padraic Pearse to express his dissatisfaction with the Volunteers' reaction to the looting outside, but he only briefly reflects on the potential of that moment of changing the course of Irish history to come. The historic moment of the execution of the arrested leaders of the Rising is likewise quickly balanced by Henry's own problem: his britches cannot be removed from him, partly due to the sheet of stamps that is still attached to his backside.

The War of Independence (1919-1921) is also revised in its turn. The merciless guerrilla tactics are vividly introduced as Henry gives accounts of his acts of killing people for the purpose of liberating Ireland. The ideologies sharply contrast with the brutal reality of the war and this contrast is maintained by the narrative pattern as well: there are brief summaries of events on a larger political scale mentioned in between the detailed acts of violence constituting the essence of the war. The sobering conclusion providing enlightenment for the narrator is the conversation between him and a local strong man, he himself formerly trained: the expulsion of the British from Ireland is only the cover story for the local repartitioning of business interests. Doyle's reflection on the war through the other character is an adequate expression of his disillusionment with the official version of history and a proper illustration of contesting subjectivities as far as 'facts' of the past are concerned. Doyle does not explicitly set up any form of hierarchy between the two versions, but the overall power relations will eventually force Henry into exile.

Doyle evades commentary on Ireland's participation in the Second World War by not allowing Henry to return to Ireland until 1951, but he does not refrain from assessing the modern state. The affluent Protestant neighbourhood where Henry settles is seemingly very different from his earlier experience of Ireland, but he comes to realise the power relations of the new world. Underground politics is replaced by official religion, as this time it is the local priest who is the principal organiser of life in the area. In spite of all the changes, Henry's new position becomes similar to his earlier ones: he does odd services for others until the priest settles him in a school as a caretaker, and gradually Henry is back to his old self when he becomes the secret keeper of order in the school, in defence of the boys against the established practices of the general system. The new experience

prompts his reflections on his own role in the making of this world and, in his final analysis, he appreciates the predictability and peacefulness of the modern state, in spite of the monotony that comes with this kind of life:

> I began to wonder if my fight had really been a total waste. The city centre – I'd begun to think of Dublin as *town* – was still the kip I'd climbed out of. But here, twenty minutes away, the children had parents and coats. There were bedrooms and electricity, the certainty of dinner. Women stopped and chatted to each other, and none of them stood at wet corners, waiting desperately for business. Men came home from work at the same time every day. It was boring, but maybe freedom was supposed to be boring. (Doyle 2010:133)

The 1974 UVF bombing in Dublin is another significant historical moment which is reflected on. Henry is injured in the bombing and ends up in hospital. The situation, however, is markedly ambivalent, as the bombing causes widespread outrage, but Henry remains considerably calm even in the middle of the events: violence is familiar to him from his past, but it is a new experience for the citizens of the modern state. The bombing is also the occasion for Henry to become the iconic veteran of the Easter Rising and the War of Independence: when he leaves the hospital he is already famous due to an article about his contributions to Irish independence. This maintains the ambivalence as the present form of violence is condemned, but the past events are glorified, which is at once a comment on the difference between lived and recounted experience.

The discovery of Henry as a hero and legend also functions as a new departure, as he becomes involved in the Northern conflict as well. He is initially drawn in by the Northern side as their hero, but he is later also "commissioned" by the police in the Republic to report on the Northern developments. Similarly to the earlier struggles, the Northern conflict has several layers and the most influential decisions are made by a narrow circle: while there are public actions of violence, negotiations get underway in secret. Henry eventually learns that the war is already won by the Irish and that every single step was planned in advance, including Ford's movie and its contribution to recent Irish history. In spite of his experience, Henry is still surprised by this version of reality, but, as always, he settles into this new situation. There is, however, a final twist inserted into the story, marking Doyle's ironic stance on the matter: the realisation of the 32-County Ireland is scheduled for 2016, but at the end of the story it is 2010 and Henry decides to die, so he would not be there on the podium for the proposed celebrations. This could be understood as his final act of resistance, but Henry is a changed man and his motivation is the saving of his daughter rather than any final act of revenge on the state.

4. Conclusion

The period which imprints heavily on the life of the central character (and which is significantly shaped by the character, at least in his own estimate) is that of major struggles – first for independence, later for supremacy in the newly established Irish Free State, and finally for the realisation of the old vision of Republicanism of a 32-County Ireland. The personal history of Henry Smart is entangled with the communal history of Ireland and the narrator is firm in his belief that the former has a bearing on the latter, yet time after time he is forced to readjust his understanding of both, as other versions of reality are presented by

other characters. In addition to these times of conflict, the life of the modern state is also assessed. Doyle does not chronicle the transition from the Irish Free State to the Republic of Ireland: he reflects only on the violent birth of the state and on modern Ireland in the latter half of the 20th century, omitting the first few decades in the life of the independent state. There is a tangible sense of the paradox of peace and freedom born out of violence and there is a sharp contrast between the heroic struggle and the slow-paced and uneventful life of the present. The obvious benefits of predictability and safety offered by the modern state are made clear, but Doyle does not fail to mention that these are not immune to change either, as his narrator easily observes the changes of the 1980s over the previous decades.

Pivotal points of the story include those moments of disillusionment when Henry has to face other versions of reality than his own. His menacing encounter in the dark with Ivan in *A Star Called Henry* is one such moment and the other is his long conversation at the end, with the man from the North in *The Dead Republic*. Both occasions reveal the possibility of contesting versions of reality, and, later, of the past, so these scenes support the postmodern conviction about the representation of reality as a multitude of subjectivities. These are also the instances when Doyle most clearly demonstrates his distance from historiografic metafiction, as he does not explicitly enter the story to impose authorial hierarchy on the relation of these different perspectives.

Despite Doyle's own hesitant comments, *The Last Roundup* trilogy follows a carefully constructed pattern (cf. Dave 2006). It starts out as a historical novel, then apparently suspends this attempt in the second volume and finally returns to it and its theoretical questions in the final novel. Doyle decides to reject what historiographic metafiction offers him as a postmodern framework: he refuses the idea of a distant perspective with hindsight which aims for objectivity, yet simultaneously realises its impossibility and employs a first person narrator, openly admitting a subjective account. The implications of this choice are somewhat reminiscent of the realism-modernism antagonism from the early 20th century as far as the proper representation of reality is concerned, yet Doyle does not make claims for an absolute and totalising position. What is hinted at instead is the Joycean notion of the "nightmare of history", as Doyle's act of deconstructing the state-founding myths leads to a less elaborate version of history – it is not a history of the glorious deeds of legendary figures, but a history in which peace is forged out of violence, with nameless and unheroic people whose motivation is often dubious.

As Doyle reconsiders and revises the possible variants of the historical novel, he produces his own version, an essentially non-conformist history. He uses unquestioned facts for points of reference for his story, but he does not take over these facts with their established and canonised interpretations. His revisionist position can be seen in the courage and willingness to examine some of the deep-seated traumas of the Irish psyche through such motifs as dysfunctional family, bodily mutilation and the hatreds and anxieties that mark the relationships of characters. As a result, the traditional pieties of Irish nationalism are called into question, yet Doyle creates a balanced picture in which ignorance, bigotry and opportunism are as much part of the overall picture as benevolence, dedication, belief and comradeship, and the narrator Henry Smart embodies all these in the course of different phases of his life.

Though Henry Smart likes to present himself as a person who will have his own way, he is essentially a character who can settle quickly into any situation. He

proves to be the example of non-historic conformism: in spite of his rebellious nature, he always fits exactly into the context in which he operates. He is the proper child of the slum, the archetypal freedom fighter, the entrepreneur in the land of opportunities, the useful and law-abiding citizen and, finally, the emblematic hero of independence – and even though in all these situations he takes time to find his place, he finally fits in. The question arises whether it is he who shapes the context, as his narration suggests, or it is the context that shapes him, yet Doyle does not enter the story to settle this issue in an explicit way. In this way, the first-person narrator can maintain his right to believe in his freedom, and it is Henry who has the final word in all three novels by asserting his identity. This, however, also has its own ambiguity: at the end of the first two novels, this assertion is made in the form "I was Henry Smart" (Doyle 1999: 270; Doyle 2004: 374), whereas at the end of the third one, it is "I'm Henry Smart" (Doyle 2010: 329), so the usual association of past and present tenses is at once reversed and still maintained, to allow the narrator a dip into what can be seen as non-conformist history.

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'ATTACHMENT WITH DETACHMENT': A POST-SECULAR READING OF JM COETZEE'S RECENT FICTION

ILEANA ŞORA DIMITRIU
UKZN Durban, South Africa

Abstract: This article takes issue with postmodern allegorical quests as theorized by, for example, Schiralli (1999), Caputo (1997) and Petrolle (2008). While alert to the deconstructive project, these critics wish to reconstruct (as opposed to deconstruct) the value of truth claims in the midst of ontological doubts. The aim is to rehabilitate truth/value claims, while utilising postmodernist deconstruction serving a reconstructive, even spiritual purpose. I shall illustrate this dynamic based on JM Coetzee's most recent fiction.
Key-words: J.M. Coetzee, recent fiction, post-secular, 'attachment with detachment'

1. Introduction

JM Coetzee's critics have come to expect from this novelist multiple challenges in their reading journey, challenges linked to his ludic variety of skepticism of master narratives. The Nobel Laureate's latest novel, *The Childhood of Jesus* (2013), is no different, yet his intriguing use of the name of "Jesus" in the title warrants a fresh look at a 'religious' dimension that has hitherto been absent from his *oeuvre*. Even as we realise that there is no character in the novel called Jesus, it is unlikely that Coetzee has involved us simply in an elaborate deception. Despite an undoubted element of 'play', *The Childhood of Jesus* instills into its story-line an urgency of attachment to its religious parallel.

2. A search for a new identity beyond the contingent

The story gravitates around Simon, a migrant in an unnamed Spanish-speaking country, a man on a quest for a meaningful life. Trapped in the alienation of his own uprootedness and endlessly beset by doubts, he still aspires to an ideal state-of-mind beyond the contingent. Such a paradox, in which deconstructive suspicion is embodied in reconstructive intent, is signalled at different levels of the action. While parallels to Christ's trajectory receive parodic treatment, the textual undercurrent emanates from a profound, though non-conventional, religious sensibility: a painful longing for something invisible, a yearning for a state of being that has not yet emerged. While *Childhood* represents the material life without transcendence or consolation, it – at the same time – presents its characters as longing for an element beyond themselves: a longing for a radical alterity (or god?). The question I want to raise is this: how does Coetzee hold in difficult equilibrium a resistance to and an engagement with the possibility of religious illumination?

A five-year old child accompanies Simon on his journey-cum-quest. David is a child of unusual perception and intelligence, with "a spark" (2013:66) that has him beat adults at chess games, and, in the final pages, lead them towards the North Star ("Estrelitta del Norte") of their destiny. David has been lost to his mother, and the reader is faced with Simon's conviction that a certain woman in

this new place – Ines, also a refugee – must adopt David. Incredibly, Ines accepts her destiny as the 'mother' of this special child, a situation that echoes the New Testament story of the Virgin Mary's acceptance of the 'good news' brought to her by the Archangel Gabriel: that she will become the mother of Jesus. Simon continues as a presence in David's life, a paternal presence. (We thus have a strangely secular 'Holy Family': Jesus, Mary and Joseph – alias David, Ines and Simon.) Once David begins school, he proves to be a rebellious child, whom the authorities want to send to a remedial institution. The child escapes from the institution, and the 'Holy Family' flees its current place/ country of relocation.

As is the case with many migrants across the globe, Simon is a refugee who cannot foresake his past identity as he wishes to embrace "a new life, a new name" (2013:18). He is on a quest for answers: What, for him, is 'true and real'? It is this question that becomes prominent during Simon's interactions with his fellow refugees in the Relocation Centre. This is a Centre ruled by devitalised functionaries (who keep losing keys), a place that reminds us of Kafka's *Castle,* an allegorical embodiment of estrangement from self, whether linked to the dislocation of exile or, more generally, to the condition of modern life. Most of the inhabitants – this is a recurrent motif – have "washed clean" their minds of past memories and desires. In consequence, not even their excessive goodwill is able to invoke our admiration, but rather points to an almost surreal split between reason and alienated emotion. Simon becomes increasingly aware of the high 'human' cost of such a choice. It involves stilling the 'hunger' (another insistent motif) for *joie de vivre*. As Simon puts it, "Everyone I meet is so decent, so kindly, so well-intentioned. … But I don't want to starve the dog of hunger! I want to feed it!" (2013:29-30). He is, furthermore, perturbed by the fact that "things do not have their due weight here …Our very words lack weight, these Spanish words that do not come from the heart" (2013:64-5) (an allusion here to Milan Kundera's novel, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being.)*

Simon has difficulty in discerning what – in a world of postmodern simulacra – is solidly 'there', as he doggedly pursues his quest to understand the purpose of exhausting work as a refugee: "'How does it fit into a larger picture? I don't see any larger picture, any loftier design'" (2013:108). Such comments, according to Petrolle, point to "the perennial concerns of religious allegory. […] How can I align myself with what is real/ true, and in so doing, save myself …from spiritual dissipation?" (2008:27). As it is increasingly evident, the religious undercurrent in this novel is not sourced from belief in divine entities or articles of faith. Rather, the traces of religious sensibility are reflected in Simon's insistent 'hunger', or what Coetzee himself has elsewhere referred to as "truth-directedness" (1992a:261) that helps make sense of everyday life in a "search for meaning that is itself a form of transcendence" (Foley 2012:83). Simon's 'hunger' manifests itself as an affective experience: a heightened state of attention to the extraordinary in the habitual; an undefinable longing for wholeness and wonderment.

Simon's hunger for meaning prompts this Joseph-figure to take under his wing the abandoned child, David, who embodies the freshness of what one might refer to as a 'beginner's mind' (a hint here at the novel's title), a mind as yet unadulterated by memories or set ways of thinking. The child, David – the "Jesus" of the novel's title – is an alterity that will teach Simon how to regain confidence in the contingent. Or, as Petrolle puts it, it is a child's confidence that "expresses itself as an expanded capacity for wonder, pleasure, and peace" (2008:65). Having found the 'Child', Simon becomes aware that "a child needs his childhood" (2013:83); in

other words, that imagination and faith, all that the child stands for, must be anchored in the world by being "'born to a mother, so to speak'" (2013:79). Thus, the allusions to the New Testament story of the Incarnation, the birth of Jesus by the Virgin, become increasingly apparent. In the absence of any evidence, not only is there no doubt in his mind that this is the right mother for David, but he imposes on Ines the expectation of unconditional receptivity when he tells her: "'My name is Simon. You don't know me, I am of no importance. I come on behalf of someone else, bearing a proposal'" (2013:73). The allusion here is to the Archangel Gabriel, who had brought the 'Good News' of the 'Immaculate Conception' to the Virgin Mary. Simon's approaching Ines, a total stranger and fellow-refugee, with such an overbearing proposal, although eccentric, is treated by Coetzee with entire seriousness: Simon is shown to pursue a journey of faith, faith in his belief that David – despite, or because of, his unusual potential – needs a normal childhood with a mother in his life. The title of the novel begins to cohere. To borrow from the well-entrenched, postmodern vocabulary on Coetzee, Simon and Ines are capable of 'unconditional hospitality' towards 'the other' (Marais 2009). For each, this child from nowhere will become a 'saviour' and a life-giver. Simon's faith, however, is not dogmatic or doctrinaire. Rather, it encompasses the indefinable quest: a faith that has the capacity to tolerate doubts. As Caputo puts it, this is "a faith without faith […] a certain *faith* in *the* impossible" (1997:63).

Simon's 'hunger', his urgency in pursuing what is impossible to fully comprehend – amounts, therefore, to a religious quest or aspiration. Simon brings his faith to David's 'unknowing knowingness'. He is convinced that the child must be given a chance to grow in the world, so as to experience the reality of its imperfections, especially as his adopted mother is portrayed as insecure, over-protective, a "stolid, humourless woman" (2013:257). To plot a clear correspondence between David's adoption by Ines and the New Testament story of the Incarnation would be a risky enterprise. Throughout the novel, Coetzee parodies the "virginal type" and "the aura of the virginal" (2013:103), as, in many instances, he deconstructs the received 'message' of an Immaculate Conception. It might be puzzling that Coetzee's sympathy does not lie with Ines, who is presented as a caricature of the Biblical myth of the Virgin Mary: an imperfect 'vessel' of faith. Simon is aware of her imperfections and is also concerned that Ines, like most fellow-refugees, "do not see any doubleness in the world, any difference between the way things seem and the way things are" (2103:64).

3. Theoretical perspectives and considerations

In order to do justice to the complexities of this novel, it is important to engage with some of the relevant theoretical perspectives that inform my article. Mainstream Coetzee criticism (e.g., Attridge 2005, Marais 2009, Clarkson 2009) tends to focus on reality as mediated by language, a position according to which 'meaning' is unavoidably fragile, unstable and usually contradictory. (The linguistic principle is that there is no 'natural' connection between signifier and signified.) Such a reading strategy, however, cannot easily allow literature to reconnect with its "ancient cultural function of providing meaning in a human world that is often frighteningly chaotic and violent" (Petrolle 2008:2). As the issue of belief in *Childhood* recurrently links the physical to the metaphysical, we may qualify the linguistic turn with a 'spiritual turn'. We may choose, as I have been doing, to 'read religiously'. To read religiously is not necessarily to subscribe to

an article of faith. Rather, as Petrolle (2008:165) says, it is to submit to "a possibility of transcending ordinary operations, a reverence for partially glimpsed fragments of knowing". To read religiously is what Caputo (1997:xxviii), taking his cue from Derrida, refers to as "religion without religion": a sensibility that equates religion with processes of mindfully experienced life. Paradoxically, it is a "transcendence [that] is always rooted deep in ordinary life" (Foley 2012:83). Writers like Joyce, Proust, Rilke, Kafka, Dostoevsky – and, as I argue, Coetzee – while "reject[ing] the idea of a transcendent divinity, retained a transcendent sense" of the real (Foley 2012:75). For them, the sacred is glimpsed as an affective experience perceived in moments of involved, epiphanic attention.

In practical terms, the question arises as to how to apply a religious reading to the current novel. If interpreted through the lenses of a theistic or dogmatic perspective, the title, *The Childhood of Jesus*, will prove to be unsatisfactory in its implied promise, as it does not offer an easy correspondence with the Christian master narrative of salvation. This notwithstanding, the reader is left with a deep sense of wonder in the face of something still 'invisible', something yet to manifest itself. It is this understanding of religion as an aspiration for transcendence (in the most unlikely of places, a refugee camp) that provides my basis of introspection. Further questions arise: How does one endorse such a reading without either naivety, or resignation? In his book, tellingly subtitled *Toward a Constructive Postmodern Epistemology*, Frederick Ferré (1998) suggests the need to allow for shades of trust in people's textual hunger for the affective, for meaning and relevance, and also for the co-existence of scepticism and quests of wholeness. Such fusions, in their own way, are manifestations of the religious: of post-secular attempts at creating meaning while, paradoxically, problematising the very nature of meaning.

The next step in our enquiry would be to reflect on how the postmodernist ontology of indeterminacy articulates with a contemporary religious sensibility. As several critics have suggested (Madsen 1996; Smith 1982; Detweiler 1989), it is the ancient category of the allegorical, re-imagined within a contemporary sensibility, that may be utilised as vehicle of post-secular concerns in postmodern contexts. The age-old preoccupation of allegory with the nature of the real is rooted in value claims that have their origins in the religious domain – quests for personal illumination, dream visions, battles between good and evil, personifications of mental virtues/vices. In addition to traditional allegories, postmodern allegories, at the same time, have absorbed the ontological and aesthetic insights of poststructuralism: its crisis of reference, its disorientations and alienations. Dubbed by Petrolle (2008:14) as "allegories of unfaith", contemporary allegories seek *new* forms of faith, in the process "*practising religion without religion*, using ancient rhetorical forms to search for viable forms of postmodern faith" (2008:19; my emphasis).

It is possible therefore (via allegories which have been re-shaped for postmodern times) to invoke a core of wonderment without entire subscription to religious affirmations of faith. While invoking postmodern aesthetic forms and fractured identities, the allegory continues to search for meaning within doubt, as it registers a sense of urgency in its quest for relevance and authenticity. In 'reading religiously', I do not wish to suggest that Coetzee is, or has become, a religious writer: a claim that he would certainly deny (Coetzee 1992a:261-62). Yet to ask whether Coetzee is a secular or a religious writer, conventionally speaking, would be to simplify the issue. It would be assuming that an either/or response to his work

is possible. Rather, I argue, it is important to embrace a definition of religion that is uncluttered by institutional precept. What I have attempted to do so far in my discussion of the novel is to invoke Benjamin's "ragpicker" (1973:79): that is, the propensity to respond to glimpses of the religious sensibility even as gleaned within a sceptical reading condition. To reiterate, *The Childhood of Jesus* plays deconstructively on allegorical form as it reconstructs a tenuous hold on idealism, or differently put, on belief.

4. A spiritual journey of "attachment with detachment"

While the first part of the novel witnessed Simon's individual pursuit of a meaning that is constantly undermined by his own doubts, the second part foregrounds his growing attachment to the spiritual quest. Simon's hunger for "transfiguration" (2013:143) becomes insistent. It is what Coetzee, to reiterate, has elsewhere referred to as "truth-directedness" and "illumination" (1992a:261). In a place that can only offer him a devitalised existence, Simon desires to have a "'*feel of residence in a body with a past, a body soaked in its past'*" (143; my emphasis). Simon also feels that the 'dis-embodied' life of exile has failed to give him profoundly new insights: "'[W]hat is the good of a new life, if we are not transformed by it, transfigured, as I certainly am not?'" (2013:143). Ironically, the solution comes from Elena, his hyper-rationalist companion, somebody who, unlike Simon, has been 'washed clean of memories': "'*Instead of waiting to be transfigured, why not try to be like a child again?*'" (143; my emphasis), she advises. This is a major turning point in the novel. From this moment on, Simon will invest his energy in David's life. He is now ready to 'follow' David, ready to appreciate life with the freshness of a child: to live in the direct experience of the present moment (one recalls Wordsworth's famous aphorism: "The child is father of the man."). Child David is Simon's 'radical other'; somebody who inhabits the domain of the irrational, the invisible – the domain of "something that has not yet emerged, that lies somewhere at the end of the road" (Coetzee 1992b:246). This makes Simon feel an irresistible responsibility to make the invisible visible/comprehensible and will, therefore, immerse himself in the freshness of David's responsiveness to the immediacy of life. From being David's 'host', Simon will become David's 'follower'. As in the New Testament parallel, there is a shift from Simon, the benevolent parent, the intermediary messenger – a St Joseph or Archangel Gabriel – to Simon as David's disciple, or a St Peter. However – as was the case of Ines/Virgin Mary – these are not unqualified correspondences; rather, we encounter iconoclastic refractions of New Testament figures and archetypes.

Simon continues to believe in (and 'follow') David, while at the same time helping the child understand the value of anchoring the self in the world. Such anchoring is presented in activities of reading, writing and arithmetic. As a gifted child, David has developed a unique way of reading and doing sums. By memorising entire words and figures as singularities, he skips the steps of logical deduction in the alphabet, in books and tables, and leaps to the ideal journey: a journey, however, in which impediments seek to block the ultimate illumination. If Christ's journey intrudes upon our consciousness, then Coetzee thwarts our eagerness to attach our interpretation to the Biblical parallel. Instead, he shifts the register to the secular analogy of Don Quixote. David's way of relating to the world, his singularity, is an untenable, albeit heroic/Quixotic form of faith which, if

unopposed by rationality, leads to destruction and death, to a crisis of reference. By refusing to make use of the alphabet in reading the story of Don Quixote, David reinforces the perception of Cervantes's famous character as single-mindedly heroic, a knight who fights a towering giant, not a plain windmill (2013:152). David's apparently child-like response to Cervantes's tale – his unwavering commitment to the hero's idealism – is at odds with Simon's adult willingness to accede to Sancho Panza's necessary check of pragmatism. It is a pragmatic element that is elided from the Biblical Jesus story, as told by his disciples. As in the 'reality' of Jesus' life, unalloyed idealism led to his death, which, while an exemplary death for society or humankind, was to his mother, Mary, the terrible death of a son. Here, we do not enter the language or imagery of Calvary; rather, Coetzee introduces the devil/evil in the lighter, albeit serious, conventions of story-telling in that the devil (here, referred to as Daga – a playful hint at 'dagga'/ marijuana) emerges as the Trickster tempter.

This Trickster leads the innocent David "into temptation" (2013:188) – television with Mickey Mouse and ice-cream instead of bread (2013:245). Simon's realism is nugatory when applied to a world of child-wonder. What we the readers perceive, however, is that the singular idealism of Don Quixote (or Jesus), when interpreted naively, can easily confuse salvation with illusion. David soon finds out that Quixote "is the hero *and* he is the magician" (2013:163), and that this Spanish knight too can lead one into illusion (magic): while tilting at windmills, he is creating the illusion of salvation. Neither Don Quixote nor Daga is a real saviour. Each is an embodiment of good-in-evil, or vice versa. As figures presented in the story-telling mode, their function is to encourage the young David to learn how to live with ambiguity and how to overcome the obstacles in his path, while not turning from his quest of finding meaning within inchoate experience. For, without idealism, there can be no transfiguration of the muddle of the world, whether evil or simply mundane. In the story of Simon and David, Simon's urgency of the real transfers itself to the son, David, whose child-like freshness of insight ("the child is father of the man") inspires the doubting Thomases of the world to persevere in pursuing the elusive path towards the truth of how to live. To pursue the spiritual path is to overcome one's initial, child-like consolations of easy salvation, and create bridges between the opposites of reason and faith, fact and fiction, and good and evil (as in the respective figures of Don Quixote and Daga). What matters is not a heroic attainment of 'Truth'. Rather, what matters is a sense of "attentiveness and responsiveness to an inner impulse that Tolstoy calls an impulse toward God [in other words, toward] *truth-directedness*" (Coetzee 1992a:261; my emphasis). And toward "illumination from the outside" (1992a:292), which could also be construed as living with grace. As I have suggested, however, salvation in *The Childhood of Jesus* remains elusive, and is even parodied as its attainment is deferred.

Like Simon, David also is on a spiritual path, a path of his own. His wish to become a 'saviour', has, we realise, been insistent. He had wanted to breathe life into Marciano (2013:156-159), a stevedore who lost his life when the ship's hold was flooded; he had attempted to do the same with the dead body of a horse, El Rey (tr. 'The King'), hoping that the horse would be well again in three days (2013:198) (an allusion, again in the deflationary mode, is to Jesus' resurrection after three days). Nevertheless, in spite of the many child-like interpretations of salvation, the urge to find another realm of experience (for both David and Simon) remains intact. It is in this very determination to pursue the inexpressible amidst

the shards of the real that the novel's religious power can be located. To take a particular illustration, David's peculiar and – it must be admitted – precocious genius at school is incomprehensible to the soulless mediocrity of the school regime. Despite Simon's attempt to defend the boy by invoking his "philosophical difficulties" (2013:229) with conventions, the tribunal condemns David to a place behind barbed wire. The intention is to crush him mentally and spiritually. By this stage in the novel, we the readers have attuned ourselves to the serious play on the New Testament story. Like Jesus – but within the parodic-seriousness of the novel's spirit – David is being prepared to be crucified. In the closing scenes of the novel, therefore, David's journey to salvation is reminiscent of Jesus' capture and persecution, while moving beyond suffering and death to the resurrection of hope. David escapes from the reformatory: "'I walked through the barbed wire […] I can escape from anywhere'" (2013:240; also 253-4), he proudly announces to his surrogate parents – the barbed wire alluding to the crown of thorns that was pressed on Jesus' head after his trial. To David's accusation – "'You didn't watch over me. You let them take me to Punto Arenas'" (2013:242), the place of barbed wire – Simon retorts: "'I was a bad godfather. *I slept while I should have watched*'" (2013:242; my emphasis). We recall that Peter slept, instead of watching over Jesus prior to his capture on the hill of Gethsemane.

While in hospital after an accident on the docks, Simon undergoes a profound change of heart that invokes in him a sense of awe that is other-worldly and in which he contemplates a dream vision that he has just had. It is a vision of David in a chariot "hovering in the air", the child's one hand held "aloft in a regal gesture" (2013:237-8). It is a vision that shakes him to his core (2013:238) and makes him fully aware that: "The life I have is not enough for me. I wish someone, some saviour would […] say, *Behold, read this book and all your questions will be answered*. Or, *Behold, here is an entirely new life for you*" (2013:239; emphasis in the original). It is a vision that suggests to Simon that the child, David, might have the power to 'save' him from himself. Accordingly, he reassures David: "'I have learned my lesson. I'll take better care of you in the future. […] I'll say *Try to steal my boy and you will have Don Simon to deal with*'" (2013:242; emphasis in the original). As this 'Holy Family' flees the tribunal, Simon holds to his anchor of the real (his 'Sancho Panza' anchor): David, he believes, "'is going to have to make his peace with society'" (2013:263). At the same time, Simon (in his 'Don Quixote' moment) reassures Ines that he is willing to "'follow [her and David] to the ends of the earth'" (2013:263).

By leaving the, by-now familiar, Relocation Centre – in pursuit of another attempt at a better deal, a better life – the 'holy' family (Simon, Ines, David) have become homeless once again. Thus, the discipleship takes the form of homelessness (2013:257-62), which is, however, marred by an accident (2013:265-267) provoked by Daga, the Trickster/devil figure in the novel. It is an accident that leaves David with "the sort of blindness you get from looking into the sun" (2013:269). In this impairment of his sight, David gains a new form of 'seeing': "'If I close my eyes, I can fly. I can see the whole world'" (2013:269), he says as he travels towards "the new life" (2013:269). In spite of his injuries, David's faith in the 'new life' is now more determined than ever: "he stares into the sun, *fully risen now* above the line of blue mountains in the distance" (2013:270; my emphasis). The allusion to Jesus' Resurrection is discernible in this passage: David has risen above his physical pain, his accident now perceived as a redemptive act of self-sacrifice. In these passages, and throughout the novel, the realisation is that

aspirations to real 'seeing' and 'awakening' "are only intelligible in the context of chaos, confusion and violence" (Batchelor 2004:28-33).Yet, again, the language of idealism is undercut by a more sober register. The journey from one place/ country to another ends not in paradise, but in another place where, in an allusion to the New Testament version of Jesus' birth in a stable, Simon suggests in his words of arrival at the next location: "*'Good morning, we are new arrivals, and we are looking for somewhere to stay. [...] Looking for somewhere to stay, to start our new life'"* (2013:277; emphasis in the original).

5. Conclusion

Having begun his story in a relocation centre, Coetzee ends it with flight and relocation once again: a unifying thematic background, which draws on motifs of global contemporary significance, while retaining its 'New Testament' resonance. The phrase "nowhere to lay your head" is repeated several times in the novel (e.g., 2013:187; 231), suggesting an ancient cyclical condition of human existence: "homelessness strikes us each time we see through the diabolic illusion of the world as a home that provides security and well-being" (Batchelor 2004:78). It is precisely in this state of homelessness – in the undecidability between rationality and imagination – that the novel 'feels' its religious impulse. Neither Simon's sterile doubts, nor David's blind faith can offer ultimate answers to what is true and what is real. Neither can the novelist of *The Childhood of Jesus* offer ultimate answers. Rather, we the readers are offered 'religion without religion', wonder in the mud of the quotidian, the sacred imagined as earthed, embodied, ordinary and sublime – or, what Mihai Şora (1995:97) refers to as "attachment with detachment". The religious impulse lies in the negation of opposites, in a faith based not on dogma or doctrine, but on a search for the inchoate, unimaginable and 'invisible' alternatives to polarities. It is a search for David's and Simon's "passion for the impossible [...] a passion for something to come" (Caputo 1997: 228). This is an allegory – we recall – qualified by its own postmodern language games. If the 'message' of this elusive story can be summarised in the oxymoron 'secular spirituality', then that, aptly, would be the value of *The Childhood of Jesus* in our uncertain times.

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POST-POSTMODERNIST SENSIBILITY IN THOMAS PYNCHON'S *BLEEDING EDGE*

DIANA BENEA
University of Bucharest

Abstract: *The paper examines Thomas Pynchon's latest novel, "Bleeding Edge", through the lens of points of convergence with and divergence from the writer's earlier aesthetic practice and thematic scope, arguing that it represents the most direct expression of the post-postmodernist sensibility that has increasingly permeated his later fiction. More specifically, the essay discusses the ways in which the novel reflects the tension between a stylistic, residual postmodernism, and the emotional seriousness inherent in its treatment of such thematic concerns as the importance of communal bonds and the question of trust as an essential foundation for any form of commonality.*
Key words: *9/11, community, postmodernism, post-postmodernism, trust*

1. Introduction: From high Postmodernism to Post-postmodernism

Canonized in the 1980s as a major postmodernist writer after the publication of his first three novels - *V.* (1963), *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966), and *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973) -, Thomas Pynchon has remained a central figure of the postmodernist canon, so integral to postmodernism that, as Brian McHale (2012:97) jokingly argues, "without Pynchon's fiction, there might never have been such a pressing need to develop a theory of postmodernism in the first place". Pynchon was canonized not only as a prime practitioner of literary postmodernism, but also as the proponent of a unique novelistic vision, dominated by two concepts that have come to encapsulate the mood of his fictional worlds (and his own thematization of the postmodern cultural condition): entropy, figured in *V.* as "the progression towards inanimateness" (Pynchon 1963:442), and paranoia, famously defined in *Gravity's Rainbow* as the realization that "everything is connected, everything in the Creation" (Pynchon 1973:733). Early readers of Pynchon were intrigued by the coherent fictional universe produced by these three novels, which dramatize the clash between apparently totalizing regimes of power and knowledge (conglomerates of unfathomable historical, political, and technological forces bearing the names of V., Tristero, They respectively), and various protagonists engaged in similar epistemological quests – for "the century's master Cabal" (Pynchon 1963:240), for the "truth" behind the Tristero mystery (Pynchon 1966:170-171), or for a disentanglement of the plot behind a particular instance of biological conditioning (Slothrop in *Gravity's Rainbow*).

However, starting with *Vineland* (1990), Pynchon's more recent body of work has registered a shift from the high postmodernism of his first three novels, dominated by an overwhelming atmosphere of estrangement, decentering any notion of a coherent, autonomous self, towards a toned-down vision marked by a reconceptualization of the status of the subject and its moral and political agency. Clusters of themes and tropes that are either absent or marginal in the previous novels, such as a newfound concern for the family and the community in *Vineland*, an increasing visibility of spaces of alterity and the politics informing our

relationship with the Other in *Mason & Dixon* (1997), an incipient ethics of responsibility in *Against the Day* (2006), or a marked interest in questions of social justice and moral duty in *Inherent Vice* (2009), gain new prominence in the Pynchon canon, foregrounding the "rehumanization" of the subject and the possibility of reconstructing spaces of the common. Interestingly, this shift of vision might be easily obscured by the fact that Pynchon still employs his signature tropes, as well as his prevalent aesthetic strategies (most importantly, genre pastiche) in these novels**.** The few critics that have actually sensed these subtle modulations in Pynchon's fiction have variously qualified the novels of this later stage as examples of an "attenuated postmodernism" revealing a "penchant for political didacticism" (Cowart 1994:4, in an early essay on *Vineland*), as "other-than-postmodern" (Palmeri 2001, with reference to *Vineland* and *Mason & Dixon)*, or as representative of a "ludic late postmodernism" departing from the ethos of classic postmodernism (Kohn 2009:211, in an analysis of *Against the Day*). Drawing on Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker's (qtd. in Eve 2012: 8) concept of "meta-modernism", Martin Paul Eve's recent reading discusses the same 2006 novel in terms of a perpetual oscillation between postmodern skepticism and modern utopianism (Eve 2012:10).

Going in the same direction as the aforementioned studies, my article examines Pynchon's *Bleeding Edge* through the lens of recent theorizations of post-postmodernism as a hybrid phenomenon caught between "a new form of postmodern self-awareness" (Amian 2008:11), on the one hand, and the imperative of "going beyond" the postmodern paradigm and rethinking the foundations of "a new, pragmatic and planetary civility" (Hassan 2003:307), built upon "an aesthetics of trust … that redefines the relation between subject and object, self and other, in terms of profound trust" (Hassan 2003:311), on the other hand. While there have been many attempts at theorizing the afterlives of postmodernism, most analyses discuss the new cultural pathology through the lens of a particular reconfiguration of a structure of affect, transcending the experience of radical disconnectedness and social atomization generally associated with postmodernism, and revealing instead "a drive towards inter-subjective connection and communication, and also a sense of 'presence' and 'sameness' … perform[ing] a complicit and complicated critique on certain aspects of postmodern subjectivity", to use the terms employed by Nicoline Timmer (2010:13) in her recent study on post-postmodernist fictional practices. Building upon these theoretical insights, the following two sections will aim to remove the misleading layers of Pynchon's self-pastichizing style so as to excavate the specific sites where a post-postmodernist sensibility can be located.

2. Departures/Deep Archers. Vintage Pynchon and beyond

In many ways, *Bleeding Edge* emerges as a pastiche of a Pynchon novel, not only incorporating the writer's trademark topoi, but also mixing and developing earlier concerns. Thus, from genre (the pastichized detective story formerly employed in *The Crying of Lot 49, Inherent Vice*, and parts of *Against the Day*), to character construction (Maxine Tarnow as a mix of Pynchon's previous female protagonists, *The Crying of Lot 49*'s Oedipa Maas and *Vineland*'s Frenesi Gates, albeit one endowed with more agency than her predecessors), and from major tropes to minor details circulating from one novel to the next, adding variations and nuances to a corpus that David Cowart (2011:66) regards as an "ideational *roman*

fleuve", the novel revisits the Pynchon canon with a nod to the connoisseur. The arsenal of Pynchonesque tricks, including outlandish character names, pop culture references, idiosyncratic jokes and puns, and the intriguing mix of the lyrical and the evocative with the trivial and the grotesque, to mention only the signature features of Pynchon's texts, is very much alive in his latest piece, testifying to the endurance of an aesthetic practice first employed in *V.*, more than fifty years ago.

Early in the novel, an intriguing *mise-en-abyme* suggests that we are indeed dealing with a reinterpreted vintage Pynchon novel, commenting upon and implicitly reassessing its strategies and tools from the perspective of a sensibility that has partially outgrown them. The scene narrates filmmaker Reg Despard's beginnings back in the nineties as a movie pirate specializing in camcorder tapings of first-run features where the story on the screen was often obscured by the meta-story depicting the process of recording it on camera:

> […] nosy filmgoers bringing their lunch in loud paper bags or getting up in the middle of the movie to block the view often for minutes of running time. Reg's grip on the camcorder not always being that steady, the screen would also wander around in the frame, sometimes slow and dreamy though other times with stunning abruptness. When Reg discovered the zoom feature on the camcorder, there was a lot of zooming in and out. (Pynchon 2013:8)

This excerpt captures the experience of reading the novel, as the pastiche is filtered through a new degree of self-awareness about its methods and limits, and narrative interest is refocused, especially in the final third of the novel, on elements that do not necessarily belong to Pynchon's arsenal of thematic concerns.

The novel begins on the first day of spring in 2001, after "the dotcom disaster last year" (Pynchon 2013:4), and follows decertified fraud investigator Maxine Tarnow's inquiries into the shady financial operations of *hashlingrz,* a computer security firm which has mysteriously managed to survive the burst of the dotcom bubble. The single mother of two teenage sons, Maxine functions as the private eye of the novel, embarking in a typically Pynchonesque quest which uncovers an ever-multiplying network of individuals and organizations, including a dizzying assortment of venture capitalists, Russian mobsters, Islamist terrorists, sixties radicals, Internet hackers and other most bizarre elements. This investigation takes place not only in "meatspace", i.e., in the real world, but also in cyberspace, as the main plot is complemented by a related narrative strand revolving around Deep Archer (pun intended), an open-source virtual reality program. Hidden in the unindexed Deep Web and thus unavailable to standard search engines, Deep Archer functions as a meeting point for various cyber-anarchists, providing "a sanctuary to escape to from the many varieties of real-world discomfort, [a] grand-scale motel for the afflicted, a destination reachable by virtual midnight express from anyplace with a keyboard" (74). In an interesting parallel with the physical space of New York, yuppified by the forces of real estate development, "the still unmessed-with country" (241) of the Deep Web will also be coopted, by the end of the novel, by the commercializing forces of web developers, thus ending up as most of the utopian communities in Pynchon's fiction.

From a cyberpunk-inflected perspective, Pynchon reformulates his grand trope of the gradual "narrowing of options" (191) confronting America and its original promise of diversity and democracy, investigating the new ways in which the category of the possibility-driven "subjunctive" is subtly subsumed within the framework of the probability-driven "indicative" - the categories famously

employed in *Mason & Dixon*, a novel which explores the transformation of the "subjunctive" space of American wilderness into the "dreamless indicative" of organized space, through the surveying of the Mason-Dixon line (Pynchon 1997:345). As always with Pynchon's domestic novels, the narrative dramatizes a new version of the battle for the soul of America, capturing that elusive moment when salvation and damnation, idealism and materialism, hope and resignation are poised in perfect equilibrium. More specifically, *Bleeding Edge* depicts the clash between two radically different visions on technology and their broader implications for the social realm: one emphasizing the potential for greater social connectivity in a de-hierarchized network structure, the other calling attention to the use of technology as an insidious tool for social control. The classic Pynchonesque dichotomy between the socially and politically empowered *Elect*, on the one hand, and the *Preterite*, on the other hand, subsuming various forms of categories excluded from power, is here rewritten as dotcom capitalists hoping for a monopoly on "a total Web of surveillance, inescapable" (Pynchon 2013:420) versus Internet hackers operating under the assumption that "information has to be free" (116).

However, what distinguishes the novel from earlier works is an unmistakable sense of urgency pervading the representation of contemporary American life and politics. In a striking manner, the invisible antagonists and the indirect political commentary typical of his earlier works have been replaced in this novel with direct reference to such figures as "Giuliani and his developer friends" (87), held responsible for the destruction of the urban fabric of New York, or "Bush and his gang, Cheney, and Rove and Rumsfeld and Feith" and "the fascist majority on the Supreme Court" (322), accused of undermining the sacred light of American democracy. Scattered throughout the narrative and the dialogue-driven sections of the work are comments concerning a possible Gulf War Two triggered by America's "addiction to oil" (165), or various references to the "history of Republican sin" (191).

Pynchon's previous 9/11 novel, *Against the Day*, already suggested an increased concern about articulating a more transparent and coherent political vision, moving away from the polyphonic discourses of the earlier works. As Kathryn Hume (2011:168) perceptively notes, the "multitudinous voices present[ing] their views" in the earlier novels have been replaced in *Against the Day* with "bits of the same overall stance [so] that something relatively coherent emerges". A similar convergence of views operates in the latest novel as well, as versions of the same unambiguous arguments are articulated too frequently throughout the novel to vanish into the usual tangle of plots and sub-plots. As I will argue in the following section, the sense of urgency and the newfound clarity with which the novel treats crucial political concerns are inextricable from the actual historical moment represented in the work: 9/11 and its aftermath.

3. "The Day Everything Changed". Representing 9/11 in *Bleeding Edge*

In a more oblique manner, Pynchon had previously explored the significance of 9/11 in *Against the Day* (2006), a novel dealing with the rise of anarchism in the late 1890s and early 1900s. The earlier novel's treatment of the event proceeded on two different levels: in an allusive-allegorical way, by proposing a rewriting of the scene of the terrorist attacks (in the Vormance expedition episode, followed by the destruction of the unnamed metropolis), and in a philosophical way, through a

nuanced discussion of some of the controversial topics surrounding 9/11, such as terrorism and religious fundamentalism, temporally relocated to the early 20th century and thus placed in a broader historical context. The previous novel's representations of terrorism-qua-anarchism revolved around the untenability of the ethico-religious legitimation of such practices, foregrounding the short-circuited relationship with alterity underlying them (the us/them polarization reducing the Other to an ethnic/religious/class antagonist). As a counterpoint, the representations of ad-hoc communities emerging in the wake of the destructive fire, and the evolution of the Chums of Chance community on board the *Inconvenience*, highlighted the imperative of reappropriating a notion of hospitality allowing us to acknowledge and respect the Other, thus creating the conditions for living together across difference.

Informed by a similar concern with notions of alterity and commonality, Pynchon's investigation of 9/11 is resumed in *Bleeding Edge*, in straightforward terms departing from the allegorical treatment of the event in the previous novel. Foreshadowed in various ways for more than three hundred pages, the representation of 9/11 and its social and political aftermath dominates the final section of the novel, determining significant changes at the level of the narration itself, as the self-conscious vintage Pynchon of the first part morphs into a slower-paced mode, less plot-driven, and more focused on questions of character development and character dynamics – as if representing the event described in the novel as "The End of the World as We Know It" (Pynchon 2013:295) or "The Day Everything Changed" (2013:377) would actually require a different type of narration and narrative focus. As the narrator comments in another self-referential aside, irony itself has become a "collateral casualty" of 9/11 (2013:334), a cognitive mode "keeping the country insufficiently serious – weakening its grip on 'reality'" (2013:334), which now has to be abandoned in favor of a return to literalness. Interestingly, this pronouncement is reflected in the tone of the final section, as the novel strives to negotiate the tension between the typically postmodern sense of irony dominating most of the first half of the novel, and the emotional seriousness required by the post-ironical age of 9/11.

The significance the novel attaches to 9/11 emerges as a counterpoint to the multiple appropriations of the event by various actors of the public sphere, especially the media and political discourse. A piece of uncharacteristically long and intrusive narrative commentary brilliantly captures the clash of forces aiming to seize control of the narrative, the cacophony of competing discourses ranging from reaffirmations of the myth of American exceptionalism ("the nation, united in sorrow and shock, has risen to the challenge of global jihadism, joining a righteous crusade," (2013:327)), to intimations of guilt and complicity creeping up in a dark recess of the national soul ("it was us who created Bush and his gang", (2013:312)), to skepticism about the very 'reality' of an event that might have very well been staged as a pretext to impose "some endless Orwellian 'war'" (2013:323) legitimizing greater governmental powers, and thus diminishing civil rights. As a side note, it is worth mentioning that references to a post-9/11 America waging an official "War on Terror" complemented by an unofficial war against the civil liberties of its citizens, ideologically legitimized by the state of exception imposed by the former, emerge for the first time in Pynchon's introduction to the Centennial Edition of George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, published in 2003.

Certainly, the proliferation of narratives and counter-narratives makes the task of disentangling the significance of the event even more challenging. That the

narrator wishes to depart from these discourses is suggested by the fact that he avoids using the designation "9/11", that obsessive refrain, repeated over and over as if to enforce a sense of conformity, rendering the date instead as 11 September. Moreover, the narrator argues, the phrase "Ground Zero", a Cold War term describing scenarios of nuclear strike, is similarly employed "without shame or concern for etymology", with the sole purpose of getting people "cranked up, scared and helpless" (2013:327). Shifting away from the mediated responses to 9/11, the actual narrative progress of the work implicitly locates the significance of the event at a different level, unmediated and personal, gesturing towards what Judith Butler (2004:20) calls a reimagining of "the possibility of community on the basis of vulnerability and loss".

While acknowledging that exposure to violence and loss are commonly perceived as "privatizing" or "depoliticizing" experiences, Butler (2004:22) nonetheless emphasizes the fact that such contexts can actually construct "political communities of a higher order", based on a heightened sense of ethically-inflected modes of relationality and responsibility. While all conceptions of community are based on notions of relationality, in such a context-specific reimagining of community, relationality transcends its status as a "*descriptive* or historical fact of our formation", paving the way for an "ongoing *normative* dimension of our social and political lives, one in which we are compelled to take stock of our interdependence" (Butler 2004:27; my emphasis).

While the search for conspiracies pervades the media discourse, demonstrating indeed that "paranoia's the garlic in life's kitchen, right, you can never have too much" (Pynchon 2013:196), Pynchon refuses to tread a territory that is perhaps his home turf – paranoid conspiracies -, turning instead towards a consideration of the emotional stakes of the event, especially with reference to Maxine and her family. Thus, the narrative developments of the final third of the novel, from the accounts of people finding refuge in friends' houses in the days following the atrocity to the emphasis on social rituals, reflect the urgency of reconfiguring our relation to the Other as a foundation for the reconstruction of the post-9/11 world. Especially poignant is the focus on holidays and other social events as opportunities for emotional bonding in the wake of the tragedy, as illustrated by the episodes set on such occasions as Halloween ("New Yorkers stand up to terror by celebrating Halloween as usual" (2013:365)), the NYC Marathon ("seven weeks into post-atrocity, the fearful day still reverberating … thousands of runners out in memory of 11 September and its victims" (2013:376)), Thanksgiving ("not so horrible after all, [p]robably 11 September has something to do with it" (2013:383)), and Christmas, which is no longer "Maxine's holiday but it is Horst's and the kids', and this year it seems less of an effort for her to be a sport" (2013:401).

Most prominent among these narrative developments is, however, the subtle refocusing of narrative interest on Maxine's relationship with her teenager sons Ziggy and Otis and the reconciliation with her estranged husband Horst. The epistemological quest undertaken by Maxine in the first half of the novel to disentangle the mysterious operations of *hashlingrz* subtly modulates in this final part into an emotional quest for safety, guided by the only questions worth considering in her view: "Where will Ziggy and Otis be protected from harm? Who of all those in her network really is trustworthy anymore?" (2013:412). In the wake of an event that has brutally exposed the vulnerability of human beings, safety has become "a fool's assumption she can't make anymore" (2013:412), as Maxine

herself argues; consequently, in the given context, one's cognitive and social frames of reference must be radically readjusted, with a special emphasis on building and maintaining networks of trust. Tellingly, the novel's emphatic concern with trust can be read in conjunction with Hassan's discussion of the concept as a process requiring "dispassion, empathy, attention to the others and to the created world, to something not in ourselves" (Hassan 2003:309), thus providing the foundation for the new stance on Reality surfacing beyond the scepticism and nihilism of postmodernism.

The issue of parenting takes center stage in the final section and is given the most extensive treatment since the exploration of Prairie and Zoyd Wheeler's father-daughter relationship in *Vineland*, a novel dramatizing a similar emotional quest - for the mother, Frenesi Gates, and for the recovery of the connectivity inherent in the family principle. Interestingly, the dilemma confronting Maxine as the mother of two young boys is captured in the following conversation with her father:

> 'The boys ask me the same things now [why is there evil in the world?], I don't want to see them turning into their classmates, cynical smart-mouthed little bastards – but what happens if Ziggy and Otis start caring too much, Pop, this world, it could destroy them, so easily.'
> 'No alternative, you trust them, trust yourself, and the same for Horst, who seems to be back in the picture now…'
> 'For a while now, actually. Maybe never out of it.' (Pynchon 2013:422)

In other words, how can the children "keep cool and care" at the same time, to employ the famous dictum in *V.*? A possible answer lies in the comparative analysis of the first and final scenes of the novel, which construct a symmetrical frame tracing the symbolical journey undertaken by Maxine in the relationship with her children. In the opening scene, Maxine is walking her sons to school, even though "maybe they're past the age where they need an escort" (Pynchon 2013:1). As a counterpoint, the novel concludes with a spontaneous declaration of independence on the part of the children and with Maxine accepting it, in an ultimately hopeful gesture investing them with trust. Running late for an appointment, Maxine realizes that she will not have time to walk the boys to school, and it is Zig who dispels her anxiety, reassuring her that they will be fine:

> 'Give me a second, I'll be right with you.'
> 'It's all right, Mom. We're good.'
> 'I know you are, Zig, that's the trouble.' But she waits in the doorway as they go on down the hall. Neither looks back. She can watch them into the elevator at least. (Pynchon 2013:476)

Significantly, the fact that all of Pynchon's post-*Gravity's Rainbow* novels conclude with utopian visions of the community/family – the Traverse-Becker community in *Vineland*, a novel that ends with the word "home"; Mason's sons' imagining of a mythical America in *Mason & Dixon*; the Chums of Chance flying towards "grace" in their ship-turned-into-an-ever-expanding-community-of-hospitality in *Against the Day*; the temporary commune of drivers formed on the highway, helping each other home through the dense fog in *Inherent Vice* – testifies, once again, to the common vocabulary and the similar vision of Pynchon's later works, gesturing towards a post-postmodernist sensibility.

4. Conclusion

By choosing to represent the aftermath of 9/11 through the lens of episodes foregrounding the value of relationality in the face of a collective experience of violence and vulnerability, Pynchon is gesturing towards a reconfiguration of politics premised precisely upon notions of interdependence and responsibility. As the scenes discussed in the previous section clearly demonstrate, Pynchon reinvests the radically destabilizing experience of 9/11, "the dislocation of First World safety" (Butler 2004:30), as a resource for political insight into modes of commonality, or, as one of the characters puts it, as "a privileged little window" (Pynchon 2013:432) revealing a more compassionate understanding of how we should relate to one another.

In the Introduction to *Slow Learner* (1984), his collection of early short-stories, Pynchon called for a type of fiction "grounded in human reality" (Pynchon 1984:14), one "which has been made luminous, undeniably authentic by having been found and taken up … from deeper, more shared levels of the life we really live" (Pynchon 1984:17) – a quote that encapsulates the subtle shift of vision defining the second stage of his literary career, departing from the "apocalyptic showdown" (Pynchon 1984:15) of the first three novels. Going beyond the elements that initially qualified *Bleeding Edge* as another pastiche of the detective story reveling in paranoid conspiracies, this essay aimed to uncover precisely the "deeper, more shared levels" forming the core of the novel – the focus on the family and the community, on questions of trust and ethical responsibility towards the Other - thus highlighting the features that make the work the latest and most direct expression of the post-postmodernist sensibility of Pynchon's recent fiction.

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WEBERIAN 'CHARISMATIC LEADERSHIP' in *STUFF HAPPENS*

KAĞAN KAYA
Cumhuriyet University, Sivas

Abstract: *With his political plays, Sir David Hare is one of the greatest names of the international drama. His most popular play of the Middle East is "Stuff Happens", a theatrical reaction after 9/11. It turns around the ideas of some western political figures to explain the political scene initially in the U.S.A. before the invasion of Iraq. This work comes up with a new idea that the former US President, George W. Bush who is one of the significant characters of the play is a 'charismatic leader'. The work tries to support that idea through some sociological views of Max Weber.*
Key words: *charismatic leadership, David Hare, George W. Bush, Iraq war, Max Weber*

1. Introduction

David Hare's thirteenth play for the National in September 2004, *Stuff Happens*, dramatically responds in twenty-four scenes to all the political questions about the invasion of Iraq. It illustrates the events from the diplomatic manoeuvres of US Secretary of State, Colin Powell, after 9/11 terrorist attacks, up to the declaration of war against Iraq by the George W. Bush administration in March, 2003. *Stuff Happens* particularly investigates incorrect Iraq politics of the U.S.A. and Britain. Hare validates that "Iraq was the biggest mistake in foreign policy since Suez" (Kampfner 2006:13) in British history. He also attempts to focus on the political mistakes of the US war cabinet about the counterattack strategies against international terrorism. After a four-month work, *Stuff Happens* becomes a post-modern history play, with its popular theme in the hands of the playwright during the Iraq war.

However, it is impossible to catch on any right answers to the war without examining the personalities and aims of the American and the British political leaders of the play. *Stuff Happens* makes "visible the irresponsible, self-serving, and irrational qualities of current political leaders" (Wu 1995:178-182) chiefly in the US war cabinet - Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of State Colin Powell, Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld and National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice. Theatre-goers certainly foresee the end of the play. However, "we know the end of Lear too, and that's the part of fascination as we watch the onset of the by no means inevitable" (Bassett 2004). The play causes some arguments and provocations to ascertain international certainties for mankind.

David Hare's debates around modern history through his three-hour epic play have been analysed under numerous headings by many academicians and critics so far. It is even assumed in several works that the play "is short of a hero" (Riddell 2004), except for Colin Powell, who is always appreciated for being against Hare's Bush, because of his political stance. But, this work focuses on President George W. Bush, pretentiously considering him the foremost political leader of the play unlike most of the former works. Giving specific details about Weberian 'charismatic leadership', it academically constructs a link between Max Weber's 'charismatic leadership' and Hare's dramatic vision. Thus, it draws the

lines of the leadership that Hare has built through George W. Bush in this semi-verbatim play. It tries to shape the idea tha, unlike the real US ex-president, Hare's George W. Bush is dramatically exceptional, even charismatic.

2. Weberian charismatic leadership

In overall usage, 'charisma' is simply the property of being attractive and telegenic. The word 'charisma' derives from the Greek *charis* – 'grace' and *charizesthai* – 'to show favour', connoting a talent or grace granted by the divine. In Merriam-Webster, 'charisma' is defined as "a spiritual gift or talent regarded as divinely granted to a person as a token of grace and favor and exemplified in early Christianity by the power of healing, gift of tongues, or prophesying". Originally a religious concept, 'charisma' was borrowed into literature in the 1950's. In the 1960's, "it found its way into political science. Then in the 1980's, it was imported into organizational leadership theories" (Nur 1998:19).

In fact, the term came into scholarly usage primarily through the works of German sociologist Max Weber, the founder of modern sociology and the first to critically examine bureaucracies pioneered in Germany during the nineteenth century. In *Max Weber on Law in Economy and Society* (Rheinstein 1954), Weber postulated that charismatic authority was a form of authority distinct from those of tradition and law. The process whereby charismatic authority becomes transformed, or changed, to any of the other forms of authority is referred to by Weber as the 'routinization of charisma'. In the original sense of the word, only such phenomenal personages as Jesus or Napoleon would deserve the description 'charismatic', but in modern usage, the term is applied more broadly to popular political leaders and cult organizers.

In Weber's social scientific reformulation, 'charisma' is secularized as an objectively historical concept useful for understanding power attributed to exceptionally rare individuals. Weber borrowed the term from Rudolph Sohm (1958), whose *Kirchenrecht* had in turn copied the notion of charisma from St. Paul to explain how the early church legitimated itself as a durable institution in antiquity. It is frankly defined that "the nature or essence of charisma is Dionysian" (Dow Jnr 1978:84). Nevertheless, the gifted leadership of charisma is expanded "to include all leaders, both religious and nonreligious, who attracted devoted followers through their extraordinary powers" (Hackman and Johnson 1991:181).

As Kim points out, in Weber's *Economy and Society* (1978), 'charisma' is

> applied to a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. (Kim 2004:85)

That is why a charismatic leader differs from a conventional man. It is said that:

> [A charismatic leader] pulls people to himself like a magnet and makes them follow him with his look, stance and speech; he is open to development, identifies realistic goals and tries to reach them; is not prone to the norms, would like to live on the edge, tries the impossible and takes risk. He lives with a focus on not the duration but the result. It is more important what he will say instead of what he has said. He comes up with new strategies in each occasion. He usually acts like an indispensable to make the crowds believe that things will go wrong if he is not there. He does not leave room for a second person to secure their indispensable position. He is more about showing off; stays on top with his charisma mostly tries

> to get people's appreciation with popularity. He alienates him from the blood pressure of the society. (Ozsoy 2013:90)

Charismatic leadership "is a controversial phenomenon which should always be felt ambivalent. Paradoxical by its very nature, it has been associated with both the most inspiring and the most terrible episodes in human history" (Hurst 1995:112). In some cases, charismatic leaders are arrogant, superior, unfair, and damaging. There are also some examples of those who are modest, democratic, facilitative, and imaginative. For charismatic people illustrate, to a great degree, the human potential for the creation of both good and evil. As such, there is a need for this paradoxical, inconsistent concept to capture something of the enigmatic, contradictory nature: the phenomenon is all too factual.

3. Beyond *Stuff Happens*

The world does not repeatedly come across great names or charismatic leaders who rule the world. The reason is that there must be some conditions that bring out a charismatic leader in any parts of the world. Charismatic leadership is perceived as emerging under conditions of real or artificial crisis:

> The conditions of crisis, chaos and uncertainty that make change an obligation or the current situation hard to live. The great number of people who have the emotions of incapability, fear, resentment, guiltiness and enmity. The overwhelming feeling of insufficiency of the present conditions. An artificial creation of a problem which actually does not exist. The compatibility of the identity and values of the audience with those of the leaders. The presence of a mission that secures commitment. (Ozsoy 2013:92)

There is no doubt that there is an atmosphere of "international crises of war, religion, government, truth and information" (Martin 2006:14) at the very beginning of this century. We are not mistaken if we call this period uncertain and gloomy. Sierz (2011:71) states that "the world of the 2000s was a world of fear." It is a fact that this chaotic atmosphere has completely altered and re-defined the whole world.

The US administration has encountered the worst tragic atmosphere in the US history at the beginning of the new millennium. The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington killed nearly 3,000 people. This must be considered tragic and chaotic not only for the U.S.A., but also for the whole world. President Bush mentions the terrorist attack in his daily diary, saying that "The Pearl Harbour of the 21st century took place today" (Wright 2011).

It is not by chance that political theatre has emerged again in such a muddled political atmosphere, to mirror what is happening in the world. The new theatre frequently tries to mix verbatim materials with imagined dialogues. David Hare has always aimed at enriching and informing his audience about current historical, sociological and political events through his plays. It is known that he "has turned his face to the Middle East for fifteen years" (Kaya 2013:25). His *Stuff Happens* also gives every detail of one of the major international crises that the world faces in the Middle East. On March 20, 2003, military forces of the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia invaded Iraq. Hare's semi-verbatim

> unfolds by putting the public statements of the Bush administration following the attacks of 11 September 2001 and during the run-up to the War in Iraq (the

> epistemologically 'known') alongside imagined backroom scenes (the alternative paradigm of what's 'known') in order to challenge the accepted history. (Westgate 2009:403)

Stuff Happens reflects how the fate of Iraq has been drawn after 9/11 terrorist attacks by some western leaders. Today, the issue keeps its popularity because the political figures in the world have changed, but the Middle East is still in chaos. The chaotic atmosphere of the post-9/11 era has still its black shadow over the whole Middle East. Hare really "[anatomizes] a uniquely Anglo-American realpolitik" (Wolf 2004:6). This is why he intentionally makes his audience focus on it, believing that the Iraq crisis could only be solved by a charismatic leader.

4. A charismatic leader: George W. Bush

In a messy atmosphere, the world needs a gutsy ruler. As "the history of the World is but the biography of great men" (Carlyle 1840), David Hare attempts to motivate his audience, by stating that there may be one powerful and courageous leader that all humanity needs on his stage. He suggests that this leader is George W. Bush. Bush declares that "I could not be governor if I did not believe in a divine plan which supersedes all human plans" (Hare 2005:9). The President believes that he has been chosen by God to rule his country:

> My faith frees me. Frees me to put the problem of the moment in proper perspective. Frees me to make decisions which others might not like. Frees me to enjoy life and not worry about what comes next. You know I had a drinking problem. Right now I should be in a bar in Texas, not in the Oval Office. There is only one reason I am in the Oval Office and not a bar. I found God. I am here because of the power of prayer. (Hare 2005:9)

Hare draws attention to the idea that Bush is chosen by God; he is not a conventional leader. Innes (2007:443) calls Bush's reaching to the top a "divine dispensation". It is well known that fate is always present on Hare's stage. That's why Bush behaves "like an Old Testament prophet" (Hornby 2005:649) throughout the play. Bush declares in his mass demagogies that God will help him to topple his enemies over. Seeing himself as an indispensable leader, he noticeably announces that all his political ideas are inspired by God:

> I feel like God wants me to run for President. I can't explain it, but I sense my country is going to need me. Something is going to happen and at that time my country is going to need me. I know it won't be easy, on me or on my family, but God wants me to do it. (Hare 2005:10)

Hare intentionally points out that Bush is not only a White House President, but also a keen terrorist hunter. He is described as "a man who is shrewd, distant… totally lacking in self-doubt," (Hornby 2005:648) and skilful while chasing his enemies. As a charismatic leader, Bush seems that he does not have to clarify anything to the world about what he does:

> I'm the commander – see, I don't need to explain. I don't need to explain why I say things. That's the interesting thing about being the President. Maybe somebody needs to explain to me why they say something. But I don't feel like I owe anybody an explanation. (Hare 2005:10)

Bush begins to behave like an authoritarian leader as long as he does not manage to reduce the anger of his people. According to Hare, the contemporary world faces the danger of decayed intellectuality. Although it is considered that democracy is the best and most common way to govern, the world is controlled by some unskilled political leaders, their administrations, and spin doctors. Hare states that "sometimes I think all the trouble in the World is caused by intellectuals who have an 'idea'" (Hare 2005:50). He has the notion that the world is in danger because of the ideas and ideals of political leaders who are not good at governing.

Yet, Hare does not wish to make fun of Bush on the stage. He avoids revealing his weak side, like the media do, before the audience. Instead, the playwright consciously portrays Bush in a blurry manner, as the president's mind is blurry. In an interview, Hare declares that:

> [Bush is] dyslexic, but that doesn't mean he's stupid. And to confuse an inability to handle language with a lack of intention, when his intentions may be the most significant that any politician has had in the past 50 years . . . It's worth doing him the credit of trying to analyse what he is trying to do, even if he can't articulate it himself. (Kampfner 2006: 12)

It is clear that Hare equips Bush with many inauthentic capabilities, though this does not mean that his President manages the crisis well during the play. It is a fact that a charismatic leader has always a chance to rule badly. Like Shakespeare, David Hare appreciates Alexander Pope's taunting reference to "The RIGHT DIVINE of Kings to govern wrong" (1963 (1742) iv:188) in his *Stuff Happens.*

However, Hare's Bush is not the most unsuccessful charismatic leader in British literary history. He could even be described as the brightest leader of the play. Hare intentionally canalises the perceptions of his audience to the US war leader. It is not enough "to offer the American president as a God-fearing moron" (Toynbee 2004); in fact, "far from demonising George W. Bush, David Hare presents him as an all-too plausible character" (Riddell 2004).

Although Hare's Bush is a charismatic leader, he is never aware of his political fiasco. Bush thinks that he pays attention to the seriousness of the crisis his country has faced, but he has some intellectual weaknesses, just like Shakespearean heroes. He takes the wrong decisions. He is not alert that he takes a lot of risks in the Middle East and Afghanistan. As a commander, he shows his deep anger directly against his enemies. Thus, Bush can also be described as a politician who lacks political intelligence. Having wrong strategies and being politically short-sighted, Bush seems very eager to use US political and military power:

> Well, maybe that's what's needed. Maybe that's the best way to get things back in balance. You know, sometimes, in my experience, a real show of strength by just one side can clarify things. It can make things really clear. Now let's move on. Iraq. (Hare 2005:12)

His words reveal that he is a leader obsessed with power. Hare's play must be considered a kind of drama of power. Weber points out that:

> All political structures use force, but they differ in the manner in which and the extent to which they use or threaten to use it against other political organizations. These differences play a specific role in determining the form and destiny of political communities. (Gerth and Mills 1946:159)

That is why Bush has a kind of hawk-like behaviour, letting all the politics and his politicians clash around him. He seems determined not to listen to the voices against his political stance. He closes his ears to the other politicians around him. Hare suggests that the US administration is led by a totalitarian president who can break international laws whenever he wishes, like most charismatic leaders:

> All nations should know: America will do what is necessary to ensure our nation's security. I will not wait on events, while dangers gather. I will not stand by as peril draws closer and closer. History has called America and our allies to action. Steadfast in our purpose, we now press on. We have known freedom's price. We have shown freedom's power. And this great conflict, my fellow Americans, we will see freedom's victory. (Hare 2005:33)

Bush can also be considered one of the most adventurous US presidents, with his unrealistic plans in the US history. A charismatic leader must think of the results of any political decisions both at a negotiating table and on a battle field. However, Bush, like most charismatic leaders, does not obey bureaucratic traditions. Powell tries to demonstrate that their country cannot be a new Roman Empire, and the President must not behave like a "Roman emperor" (Hare 2005:50-51). But, Bush is really fond of war, unlike Powell. Though there are no concrete evidences showing that there are weapons of mass destruction in the hands of Iraqi leaders, he commands his administration officers to invade Iraq.

However, Bush cannot be regarded as a leader who cares about fame like several other political heroes in history. He does not remind the audience of an Odysseus, who mastered his own pride, always needed *'kleos' – fame* after each victory on battle-fields throughout his life. It is a Weberian fact that no charismatic leader pursues political fame and money at all. In the play, Bush states that "I've said before: this isn't a popularity contest… It isn't about being popular" (Hare 2005:53).

It is a surprise to welcome an unusual Bush moulded by Hare's hands. Unlike his TV portrait, Bush arises as a leader who "constantly achieves his desired ends" (Billington 2004). Hare figures George W. Bush as a leader who is really quiet, patient and spiritual. The playwright little by little allows a change in the sense of describing Bush as someone who has a catchy appeal with "his divine self-assurance and passive belligerence" (De Jongh 2004), and undermines his dangerous tranquillity. The play mostly turns around the other cabinet members, who are under the control of the President. After listening to every word of his cabinet members, Bush always manages to ensure the ideological balance of the meetings. He even manages to persuade the tragic figure of Colin Powell to accept his own ideas. He reaps the harvest in his leadership:

> Bush: Colin, I think we've reached a fork in the road. We're at that fork. I don't think there's a way round this. These inspections are a distraction. They weaken us. They weaken our purpose.
> Powell: In what way?
> Bush: We've got ourselves into a situation where we're insisting he's guilty until he proves he's innocent. That's not good. That's not good for us. He's making a monkey of us. (Hare 2005:91)

David Hare seems to remind everybody that leadership entails a lot more in *Stuff Happens*. He is aware that "Charismatic leaders in Weber's formulation could include political as well as religious figures." (Giddens 2009:690). As the head of

his country, Bush seems a much more dominant leader than the other leaders of the play. Thus, he is equipped with some of the charismatic leadership features as well as non-charismatic ones, so as not to be straightforwardly erased from the minds. Today, leaders are thought to be a combination of physical look, image, rhetoric, approach, experience, education and family, and they are evaluated according to these potentials on the political market. The playwright makes his audience ~~to~~ feel that every leader can do wrong. That is why Bush is partly an unsuccessful charismatic leader on Hare's stage.

5. Conclusion

No other single sociologist has been more influential in the contemporary understanding of leadership and charisma than Max Weber. Weber considers that "most societies in the past were characterized by traditional authority structure, which were periodically punctuated by bursts of charisma" (Giddens 2009:990) in a disordered atmosphere.

Political drama has always reflected what happens chaotically in the real world. According to Fielding (2009:372), "there is considerable evidence that in certain instances fiction can encourage audiences to think in particular ways about real politicians"; so, "by far the most high-profile account of the war in Iraq was David Hare's *Stuff Happens*" (Sierz 2011:73). The play is based on both verbatim techniques and fictional narratives. Hare describes his own style when he says that "when the doors close on the world's leaders and on their entourages, then I have used my imagination" (Hare 2004:vi).

In this imaginative world, *Stuff Happens* neither caricaturizes nor marginalizes George W. Bush, the forty-third President of the US. Hornby (2005:647) points out that "George W. Bush may be the most satirized president since Abraham Lincoln". The media ridiculed him during both the process of searching for Osama Bin Laden behind every bush in Afghanistan, and of the invasion of Iraq. Hare does not obey rules of the media:

> In the west a journalistic culture… has… led to a curious deformation in society. As citizens, we consider our family, our friends and, most of all, our children as likeable and virtuous. But we are encouraged to consider everyone we don't know – and most especially those we know only through newspapers – as ridiculous or vicious. To this tendency, this desire to bundle people and thereby to dismiss them, art and death are the most powerful antidotes. (Hare 2010)

David Hare does not attempt to mask the political failures, carelessness and callousness of George W. Bush either. Sotto-Morettini (2005:316) asserts that "Hare's great men are flawed but they act in good faith". Among these leaders, Bush is the most outstandingly charismatic one. The playwright "acknowledges a structural debt to Shakespeare's history plays" (Rooney 2006:25), but he pictures his Bush neither like Shakespeare's Henry VI, who has no leadership qualities, nor like Richard III, who is more intelligent than Bush. Therefore, "Verbatim, Aristotelian, Brechtian, Shakespearian, Hare's *Stuff Happens* is all these things. What holds it together is its reach for verisimilitude through the use of verbatim text and its determination to explore how power works" (Fyffe 2010:55) via George W. Bush, the only charismatic leader among forty western black-suited politicians.

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WORDS IN CONTEXT

"BECKY SAID" – "CRIED AMELIA" A METAPHONOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF SPEECHES IN *VANITY FAIR*

ELISA BOLCHI
Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan

***Abstract**: The paper analyses the representation of women from a relatively unexplored point of view: that of metaphonology, namely how direct speech is introduced or described by the narrator, as it is actually interesting to see how women's speech was rendered in an era when their silence was most cherished. Thackeray's "Vanity Fair" offers good material to work on, as it presents two different kinds of woman: the submissive 'womanly woman', Amelia, and the outgoing 'new woman', Rebecca. I aim to discuss how female characters' speech acts help to elucidate their role in the novel and their attitude towards society.*
***Keywords**: Metaphonological language, reported speech, Thackeray, Vanity Fair*

1. Introduction

Vanity Fair is, according to its title, *A Novel without a Hero*. Several characters indeed act in the show staged by W.M. Thackeray, whose intent was not telling the story of a single man or woman, as it was common in the Victorian age, when "by far the larger number of novels dealt with the constantly increasing mass of individuals who made up, or aspired to make up, the middle class" (Dennis 2000:7). On the contrary, "the artistic motive-force of *Vanity Fair* is Thackeray's vision of bourgeois society and of personal relationships engendered by that society" (Dennis 2000:97). Thackeray declaredly acts like a puppeteer, opening his novel with a chapter titled *Before the Curtain*, and closing it with an invitation to "shut up the box and the puppets, for our play is played out" (Thackeray 2003:809). Throughout the novel, he talks to his reader in order to present his characters similarly to a storyteller, aware that he is not speaking to children, but rather to the same society that he is describing – a society that lived in "an age in which 'realism' in art was valued above everything else" (Dennis 2000:57).

The question whether the Victorian novel might be considered a realist novel or not has been widely discussed and this is not the place for such a debate.

According to an article that appeared in the *Quarterly Review* in 1865, Thackeray was recognised, like Trollope, as the "very embodiment of the realistic school:

> 'Mr. Thackeray looks at life under its ordinary aspects, and copies it with a fidelity and artistic skill which is surprising. Men, women, and children talk, act, and think in his pages exactly as they are talking acting, and thinking at every hour of the day'. (Dennis 2000:59)

Consequently, I aim to analyse the two principal female characters of the novel through their dialogues, and more precisely, through the ways in which Thackeray introduces their speech.

2. Metaphonological language in discourse analysis

In her *Framing in Discourse*, Deborah Tannen (1993:4) points out that "in the mid-80s […] the field of linguistics was experiencing a rise of interest in discourse analysis". More precisely,

> … from the 1970s to the 1990s, there was also a small amount of work on the language of Victorian fiction more generally […]. Emphasis was placed on the representation of speech which, in the 1990s, overlapped with the interest of language historians in pronunciation and class. (O'Gorman 2002:196).

In the wake of these interests, Sergio Cigada began to research what he defines as *metaphonological language*, the "language referring to the phonological component of language" (Cigada 1989:26). This interest in the metaphonological component of reported speech is not accidental. Until the second half of the twentieth century, "no one had ever thought of combining the notion of intonation with that of discourse" (Couper-Kuhlen 2001:14). This was because the Saussurian school privileged the study of *langue,* seen as a language system, over the study of *parole*, seen as language performance, which relegated discourse to the borders of linguistic analysis. In 1975, however, Jenny Simonin-Grumbach (1979) was already stressing how, thanks to the work of Benveniste (1966), who showed the necessity to make the description of discursive practices a part of lamguage studies, the need for a new approach was felt. Her vision was that of a *linguistics of discourse*, which could go beyond Saussurian structural linguistics. Even M.M. Bakhtin (1981:279), in his essay *Discourse in the Novel*, stressed how dialogue was studied "merely as a compositional form in the structuring of speech" where "the internal dialogism of the word […], the dialogism that penetrates its entire structure, all its semantic and expressive layers, is almost entirely ignored", although it was precisely this internal dialogism to have "such enormous power to shape style". By the 1980s, "it was beginning to be apparent to some linguists that there might be a discourse function of intonation which would merit investigation" (Couper-Kuhlen 2001:14). Cigada was among those linguists and, as Coupler-Kuhlen (2001:14) states that "few if any linguists today would wish to deny the fact that intonation impacts with language", I decided to start from Cigada's work and focus my research on those metaphonological aspects of speech in literature, since "speech event analysis has played an important role in calling attention both to the importance of context in talk and to discourse as the principal site for language and culture studies" (Gumperz 2001:215). As Bakhtin writes:

> the words of the author that represent and frame another's speech create a perspective for it; they separate light from shadow, create the situation and conditions necessary for it to sound; finally, they penetrate into the interior of the other's speech, carrying into it their own accents and their own expressions, creating for it a dialogizing background. (Bakhtin 1981:358)

This is exactly what metaphonological studies focus on, as they examine the "descriptive component of the intonation of characters' locutionary acts" (Cigada 1989:25), i.e. they analyse how direct speech is introduced, or described, by the narrator. According to Jakobson, "forms for reporting speech such as verbs of speaking ('say', 'tell'…) and quotatives are among the most important metalinguistic forms used to describe or report individual utterances" (Lucy 1993: 94). Cigada (1989) divides these introductory forms into four categories: the *zero*

degree, when the dialogues are presented without any introduction, like in a theatre pièce; the *unmarked reporting verbs*, such as *say*, *answer*, *affirm*, *continue*, that do not introduce descriptive variants. Among these speech verbs, *say* is, of course, the most neutral or "semantically unmarked" (Lucy 1993:96), characterizing the reported utterance the least and not asserting anything specific about the communication. The *marked reporting verbs* are, on the contrary, those verbs implying the semantic trait of *say* and adding a description of how things are said, with a reference to intonation, such as *murmur*, *shout*, *exclaim*. Eventually, Cigada describes the *metaphonological forms*: periphrastic descriptions of the suprasegmental traits that usually rest on an unmarked speaking verb. Examples are forms like "she said with a voice broken by tears" or "she said laughing".

3. Speech in the Victorian novel

This metaphonological aspect of speech is much more interesting in the so-called realistic novels, meaning those novels aiming at a mimesis of the experienced world, at a representation as faithful as possible of reality. As a result of that aim, writers could not reduce their characters' locutionary acts to mere pronunciation characteristics; they had to pay attention also to the suprasegmental component of speech, namely to intonation, by resorting to a semantic description of the tone. This doubling of the locutionary act (segmental and suprasegmental; the latter representing the description of intonation as further semantic communication), is what *metaphonological language* designates (Cigada 1989).

Although Cigada thinks that a metaphonological analysis is much more interesting in the realist novel of the nineteenth century, because authors were not aware of the phenomenon and therefore it is represented without filters of critical reflection, in a sort of spontaneous writing (Cigada 1989:26), Levine (1981:7) affirms that

> …the great novelists of the nineteenth century were never so naïve about narrative conventions or the problems of representation as later realists or modern critics have suggested.

As a matter of fact,

> No major Victorian novelists were deluded into believing that they were in fact offering an unmediated reality; but all of them struggled to make contact with the world out there, and, even with their knowledge of their own subjectivity, to break from the threatening limits of solipsism, of convention, and of language. (Levine 1981:8).

That may be why I believe Victorian novelists' use of narrative conventions is worth exploring, specifically those conventions which serve to report speech in a novel like *Vanity Fair*, aimed at portraying society as a whole and therefore laying a particular emphasis on some characters emblematic of the Victorian values on which that society was based: the Womanly Woman - Amelia and the Self-made New Woman - Rebecca.

4. How characters speak in *Vanity Fair*

The novel opens at Miss Pinkerton's academy, where young Rebecca Sharp has worked as a French teacher for some years and young Amelia Sedley has just

completed her education. The time to leave the college has come for the two girls who are about to enter the world, the Society, the Vanity Fair. The first character to speak is Miss Jemima, Miss Pinkerton's sister and assistant, who is preparing for Amelia a copy of Johnson's Dictionary – which Miss Pinkerton "invariably presented to her scholars on their departure from the Mall" (2003:9). After a short dialogue between the two women, the first periphrastic metaphonological expression appears: Miss Pinkerton asks Miss Jemima, "with awful coldness" (2003:9), for whom the extra copy of the Dictionary she is holding in her hand is. Miss Jemima answers it is for Becky Sharp, thus pronouncing Rebecca's name for the first time in the novel, and she does it "trembling very much and blushing over her withered face and neck" (2003:9). When she hears Miss Sharp's name, Miss Pinkerton is startled: "'MISS JEMIMA!' exclaimed Miss Pinkerton in the largest capitals" (2003:9). This is the first marked quotative to appear in the novel, showing an alteration of self-control in Miss Pinkerton, who had been introduced as cold, severe and restrained, and stressing her amazement at the idea to give a copy of the Dictionary to Miss Sharp. The metaphonologically marked quotative *exclaimed* is also followed by the metafictional reference "in the largest capitals", the first of Thackeray's many winks at his reader with whom he dialogues along the novel about the narrative tools he uses to tell his story.

Although she has already been introduced to the reader, Rebecca first speaks a few pages after the beginning of the novel, replying to Miss Jemima's request to go and say goodbye to Miss Pinkerton: "'I suppose I must', said Miss Sharp calmly" (2003:12). The first sentence Rebecca pronounces shows that, for her, duty is something to be interpreted by her own judgement. Thackeray uses an unmarked quotative, and by adding the metaphonological adverb *calmly*, he introduces Becky to the reader by the social image she will keep during the whole novel: calm, controlled, never showing her true emotions. Rebecca's next words are introduced by a periphrastic mataphonological expression:

> Miss Sharp advanced in a very unconcerned manner, and said in French, and with a perfect accent, 'Mademoiselle, je viens vous faire mes adieux.' (2003:13)

Rebecca's perfect French accent is one of her distinguishing features in the novel and Thackeray introduces her in this way so that the readers may figure it out that Becky was a competent and refined woman. Miss Pinkerton, on the contrary,

> did not understand French; she only directed those who did; but biting her lips and throwing up her venerable and Roman-nosed head (on top of which figured a large solemn turban), she said, 'Miss Sharp, I wish you a good-morning'. As the Hammersmith Semiramis spoke she waved one hand, both by way of adieu, and to give Miss Sharp an opportunity of shaking one of the fingers of the hand which was left out for that purpose. (2003:13)

Thackeray prefers to use periphrastic description instead of marked quotatives, thus portraying very clearly not only the way in which his characters speak but also their psychological traits. Miss Pinkerton shows her austerity "by biting her lips and throwing up her venerable and Roman-nosed head" before speaking, but it is only an affected authority, as she actually does not understand those she directs.

The first chapter closes with Miss Jemima *crying* "Stop!" to the two leaving girls, to give Becky a copy of the Dictionary as she thought "poor Becky will be

miserable if she don't get one" (2003:9). But as soon as the coach drives off, Becky throws the book back into the college garden, and Miss Jemima is unable to finish her comment:

> 'Well, I never' – said she – 'what an audacious' – Emotion prevented her from completing either sentence. (2003:14)

From the beginning of the novel, then, Thackeray presents Becky as a character causing extreme reactions in others. She has not entered the scene yet and other characters are already *trembling* and *blushing* because of her, or they are so overwhelmed by emotions caused by her as to become unable to utter a complete sentence, like in the last example. This pattern will persist throughout the novel, where Thackeray mainly uses unmarked quotatives, such as *said*, *answered*, *replied,* to introduce Rebecca's controlled speech, while marked quotatives are reserved for the uncontrolled utterances of her interlocutors.

To better understand how reporting verbs are used for the two heroines of this "novel without a hero", let us start by considering the most used unmarked quotative: *say*. The verb is used around a thousand times in the novel, 25 per cent of which for Rebecca and Amelia. Rebecca's speech is introduced (or followed) by the quotative *say* almost twice as often as Amelia's. This same trend is followed by other verbs: the unmarked *reply*, *answer*, *continue*, but also marked declarative verbs, which are the main interest of this investigation, such as *whisper*, *exclaim* or *gasp*.

The marked declarative verb *cry* plays a completely different role. It occurs 121 times and, following the general trend of the unmarked quotative *say*, one quarter of the times it is used to introduce Rebecca's and Amelia's speech. However, its frequency is higher when introducing Amelia's speech: it occurs 20 times for Amelia and only 13 times for Rebecca, therefore we have here a complete inversion of the trend that sees Rebecca speaking twice as much as Amelia.

Cry is also a special verb, as it has more than one meaning. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, when used to introduce direct speech, "to cry" means "to say something loudly in an excited or anguished tone of voice". Consequently, it is worth analyzing how and when the quotative *cry* occurs for Amelia and Becky, when it is used to refer to an *excited tone* and when to that of *anguished tone*, and trying to understand how it helps to delineate the character of the two heroines. An analysis of the metaphonologically marked reporting verb *cry* will clearly reveal how self-confident and manipulative Rebecca Sharp is.

Let us start by examining how *cry* is used after the two girls leave Miss Pinkerton's college and are in the carriage heading for Amelia's house. Amelia is the first to *cry out* in the novel, but she does it as a reaction to Rebecca's outburst of rage:

> 'I hate the whole house', continued Miss Sharp in a fury. 'I hope I may never set eyes on it again. I wish it were in the bottom of the Thames, I do; and if Miss Pinkerton were there, I wouldn't pick her out, that I wouldn't. O, how I should like to see her floating in the water yonder, turban and all, with her train streaming after her, and her nose like the beak of a wherry.'
> 'Hush!' cried Miss Sedley.
> 'Why, will the black footman tell tales?' cried Miss Rebecca, laughing. (2003:16)

Rebecca responds to Amelia by 'crying' in return, but with a completely different attitude. She is not crying "in an anguished tone", denoting worry, like Amelia, but "in an excited tone", because she is laughing at Amelia's reaction.

The same happens a few moments later, when Becky Sharp, with great enthusiasm, shouts: "Vive la France! Vive l'Empereur! Vive Bonaparte!" and once again Amelia cries in order to stop her friend: "'O Rebecca, Rebecca, for shame!' cried Miss Sedley" (2003:16).

The quotative *cry* used for Amelia Sedley is almost always intended to refer to an anguished tone, and of its twenty occurrences, it is only twice accompanied by a metaphonological periphrasis, both times in order to underline her anguish:

> 'Ghent! Brussels!' cried out Amelia *with a sudden shock and start*. (2003:281)
> 'Never speak of that day again', Emmy cried out, so *contrite and humble*, that William turned off the conversation. (2003:805).

In other cases when *cry* is used, the proper name *Amelia* is modified by the adjective *poor*, as in "cried *poor* Amelia in reply" (2003:542), stressing the idea of the "weak-girl", victim of events. In the case of Rebecca, on the other hand, the verb *cry* is inserted in a metaphonological periphrasis four times out of the thirteen total occurrences, two of which to emphasize Becky's excited and gay tone, as in "cried Rebecca *laughing*" (2003:16) and "cried little Rebecca *in an ecstasy*" (2003:323).

There are many examples throughout the novel, and it is impossible to analyse them all here, but the use of *cry* for the two characters is more or less the same in the entire novel: Amelia mostly cries with complete sincerity and transport, while Becky typically cries to show excitement or to draw attention to herself; Becky always proves to be in complete control of herself.

Becky being such a controlled woman, it might be interesting to see what happens when she is taken by surprise. This first happens in chapter 3, where Joseph Sedley is introduced. Amelia's brother is a rich man and that is why Rebecca plans to seduce him and make him marry her, despite the fact that he is a "very stout, puffy man" (2003:25). Her plans are evident from her reaction on first seeing him: "'He's very handsome', *whispered* Rebecca to Amelia, *rather loud*" (2003:25).

Becky *whispers*, but her purpose is to be heard, and by using this metaphonological description, Thackeray tells the reader that her seduction stratagem has started. Rebecca carries on her seduction plans at dinner as well, when she tries some curry and, asked by Mr. Sedley if she finds it as good as everything else from India, she tries to control herself and answers "Oh excellent!" even though, Thackeray adds, she was "suffering tortures with the cayenne pepper" (2003:31). Jos then offers her a chili:

> 'A chili', *said* Rebecca, *gasping*. 'Oh yes!' She thought a chili was something cool. (2003:31)

But once she tastes it, self-control becomes impossible, as "flesh and blood could bear it no longer", so she lays down her fork and:

> 'Water, for Heaven's sake, water!' she *cried*. (2003:31).

In this scene, Thackeray first uses an unmarked quotative followed by a description of Rebecca's inner state, then an unmarked verb followed by a marked one; notice that he did not write "*gasped* Rebecca", but "*said* Rebecca *gasping*", to

emphasize the fact that, although suffocating, she tries to keep her temper and is still able to speak. But when the chili makes her lose control, she eventually *cries* out for water. She however "swallows" her mortification and "as soon as she could speak, said, with a comical, good-humoured air – 'I ought to have remembered the pepper which the Princess of Persia puts in the cream-tarts in the *Arabian Nights*'" (2003:31), gaining the admiration of Mr. Sedley, who laughs and thinks Becky is a good-humoured girl. Rebecca is then back in command of herself and able to carry on her seduction plans.

Another scene in the novel that puts Rebecca's self-control to the test is the *coup de théâtre* in chapter 14, when Sir Pitt Crawley proposes to her. When she understands that Sir Pitt's request to come back to his house is, as a matter of fact, a proposal, she is astonished: "'Come – as what, sir?' Rebecca *gasped out*" (2003:164). If, in the chili scene, Thackeray used an unmarked verb followed by *gasped* to describe Rebecca's speech, here he uses the marked quotative *gasped out* to emphasize her surprise. Nevertheless, she soon takes control of herself again and her answer is presented with an unmarked quotative: "'O Sir Pitt!' Rebecca *said*, *very much moved*" (2003:164). Her demeanour on this occasion is described with the help of adjectives and periphrasis and not of marked reporting verbs. It is Sir Pitt who *cries out* when Rebecca tells him she is already married: "'Married; you're joking,' the Baronet *cried*" (2003:165), while she answers:

> 'Married! Married!' Rebecca *said*, in *an agony* of tears – her voice *choking with emotion*, her handkerchief up to her ready eyes, fainting against the mantelpiece – *a figure of woe fit to melt the most obdurate heart*. (2003:165)

It is interesting to note how the unmarked *said* contrasts with the description of her reaction: the "agony of tears", the "voice choking with emotion", a "figure of woe fit to melt the most obdurate heart". Everything is planned to cause pity, and Rebecca even asks Sir Pitt to consider her as his daughter, as she cannot be his wife, "Saying which, Rebecca went down on her knees in a most tragical way" (2003:166). Once again the quotative is the unmarked *say* although the scene is a most dramatic one.

While Rebecca is still on her knees, other characters enter the room and the first to speak is Miss Crawley, whose speech Thackeray renders with the help of the unmarked verb *say*, followed by a metaphonological periphrasis showing her rebuke:

> 'It is the lady on the ground, and not the gentleman,' Miss Crawley *said*, *with a look and voice of great scorn*. (2003:166)

Rebecca explains the situation "with a sad, tearful voice", but it will be Miss Crawley, and not Rebecca, who needs a marked reporting verb to show her surprise: "'Who's have thought what?' *cries* Miss Crawley, stamping with her foot" (2003:167). Miss Crawley alters her pitch and behavior, stamping her feet like a spoiled child, while Becky, as usual, manages the situation very well.

5. Conclusion

In *Vanity Fair*, Thackeray presents scenes and characters like in a theatrical play, what emerges from a general analysis of metaphonological language is an extreme essentiality. The expressions are very simple and inserted in plain declarative contexts to make the dialogues more direct and immediate. One of the

reasons for this, as noticed by Mario Praz (1967), is that Thackeray prefers a psychological description to the mere description of emotions, hence stressing the gestures that accompany the speech act and the character's feelings while producing it, the tone of voice.

What I hope to have shown here is how the reporting verbs used by Thackeray help to better outline the characters' nature and behaviour. By analysing the use of the metaphonologically marked and unmarked reporting verbs, a second puppeteer comes to light: Rebecca Sharp. Her utterances are controlled and are nearly always the result of her own plot to manipulate others. In this way, the other characters alter their utterances, using higher pitches and showing distress mainly because of her, or because of her actions, or simply when talking about her. By stylistically describing his characters' speeches, Thackeray creates a rhetorical strategy which better allows the reader to figure Rebecca out not only as the female version of the typical Victorian self-made man, but also as a plotter who, in order to climb the social ladder, manipulates those around her by altering their balance and control.

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S *SONNET 130*: A CONCEPTUAL INTEGRATION ANALYSIS OF PARODY

ANNA KĘDRA-KARDELA
Maria Curie-Sklodowska University, Lublin

Abstract: *The paper develops a Cognitive Poetics analysis of William Shakespeare's "Sonnet 130", which is a clear parody of the Elizabethan sonnet. Based on the insights of Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner's (2002) conceptual blending theory, combined with Ronald Langacker's (2008) theory of the Current Discourse Space, an attempt is made to account for the mechanism underlying the parody and its inversion in the sonnet.*
Key words: *Shakespeare's "Sonnet 130", parody, Cognitive Poetics, Current Discourse Space, Conceptual Integration Theory*

1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to develop a cognitive analysis of William Shakespeare's Sonnet 130 (see *Appendix*), believed to be a parody, by using the *Conceptual Integration Theory* (CIT) as proposed by Fauconnier and Turner (2002), combined with Langacker's (2008) theory of the *Current Discourse Space* (CDS). The parody developed in the sonnet's quatrains is inverted in the sonnet's final couplet, which, unexpectedly, offers a conventional ending, in agreement with the Elizabethan sonnet convention.

2. Fauconnier and Turner's Conceptual Integration Theory—CIT

CIT is based on the idea of *mental spaces*, defined by Fauconnier and Turner (2003:40; henceforth F&T) as

> small conceptual packets constructed as we think and talk, for purposes of local understanding and action. […] Mental spaces are connected to long-term schematic knowledge called "frames," […] and to long-term specific knowledge […]. Mental spaces are very partial. They contain elements and are typically structured by frames. They are interconnected, and can be modified as thought and discourse unfold. Mental spaces can be used generally to model dynamic mappings in thought and language.

According to F&T, conceptual blending involves the construction of two or more *input spaces*, a *generic space*, which contains elements the input spaces have in common, and the *blend*. The blend includes selected elements from the input spaces which, when combined, ultimately create a new conceptual structure.

It is important to note that not all elements of the input spaces are projected onto the blend, which, being an emergent structure, recruits only some elements of the input spaces.

One of the most important cognitive processes involved in conceptual integration is *elaboration*, also known as *running the blend*, a process which creates a parody effect. Figure 1 shows a conceptual integration network for the

expression *smog* (the box in the blend contains new information, absent in either of the input spaces):

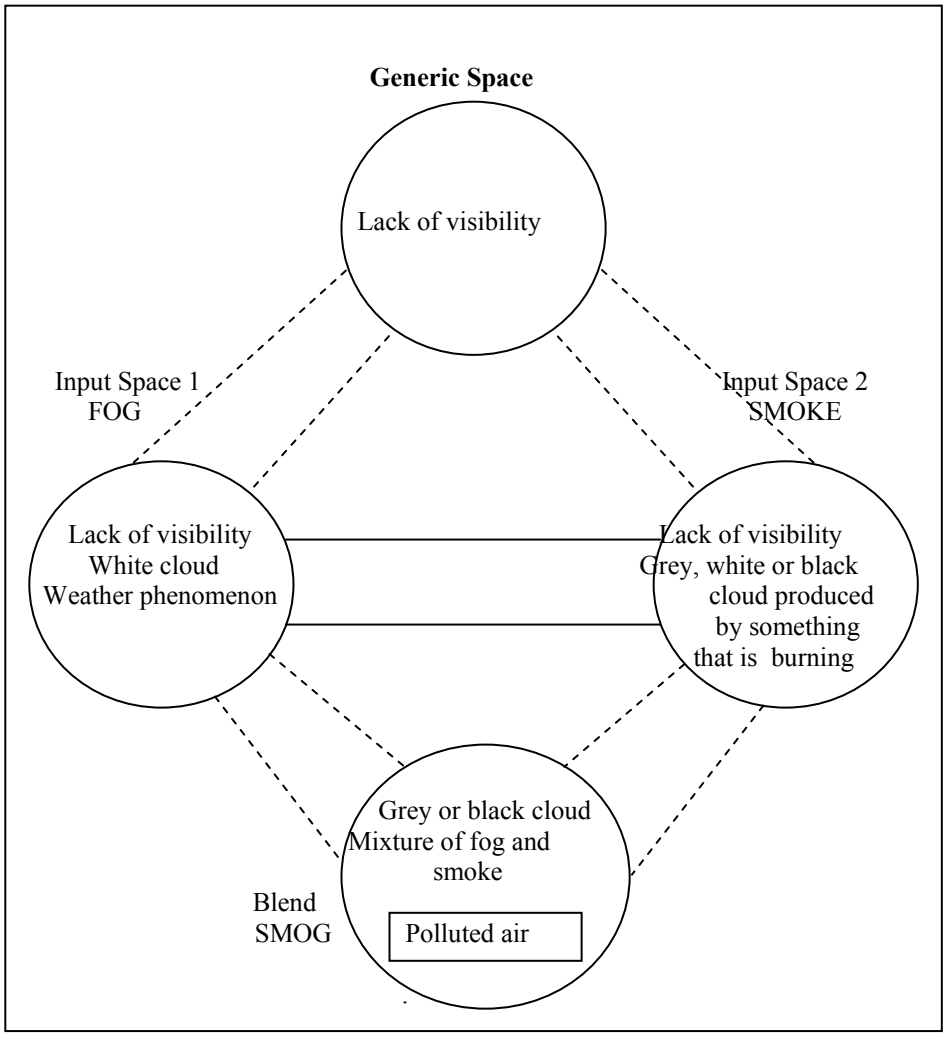

Figure 1. Conceptual Integration Network

The capacity of the blend to be "run" accounts for the dynamicity of categorization: the blend can be modified, or elaborated, after it has been created. As we shall presently see, the running of the blend process applies to Sonnet 130 and can be viewed as a principal mechanism accounting for interpretation processes, in the case at hand - for a parody effect.

Sonnet 130 is no doubt a parody and it is precisely this 'sense of parody' that, I claim, appears as the emergent structure of the blend and is recognized as such by the sonnet's reader. Although the reader's recognition of parody is legitimate here – the sonnet's three quatrains appear to support the reader's conjecture – the lines "And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare / As any she

belied with false compare" appear to "undo" the parody effect. The question is: how to account for this "interpretational inversion"? In my attempt to do this, I will make use of the Current Discourse Space, combining it with the Conceptual Integration Network.

3. Current Discourse Space

The term CDS is used by Langacker to refer to all facets of a situation which are "shared by the speaker and hearer as the basis for communication at a given moment" (cf. Langacker 2008: 466; also see Langacker 2008:59, 281). CDS comprises a wide body of background knowledge and when the discourse unfolds, the successive utterances are interpreted, continually updating CDS (Langacker 2008:281). The CDS, can be presented diagrammatically as follows (Langacker 2008:466):

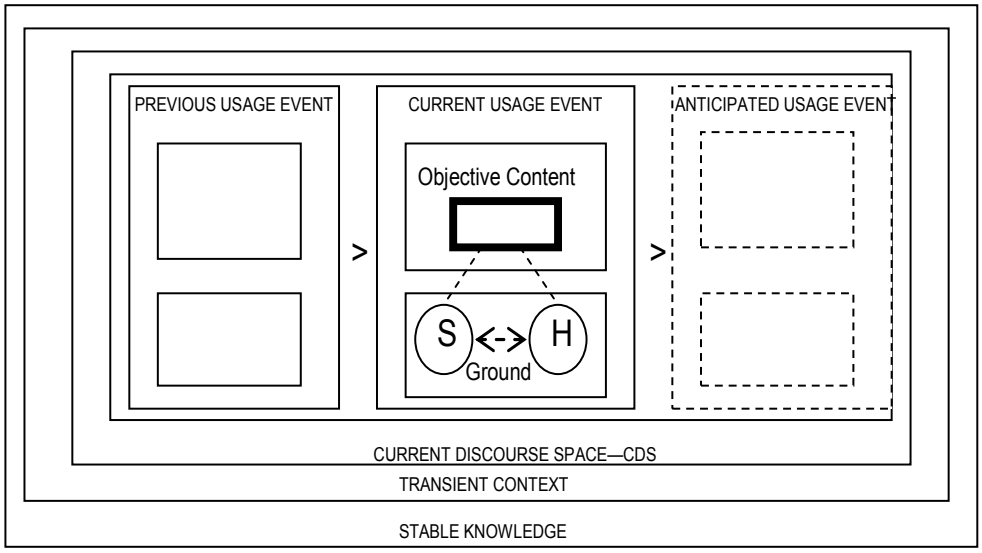

Figure 2. Current Discourse Space

As the discourse develops, its interlocutors, the speaker (S), and the hearer (H), negotiate the content of the discourse frames, each of which is the actualization of the preceding frame. For example, in Sonnet 130, each new aspect of the lady's appearance evokes a new frame. The information accumulates, ultimately yielding a "complete" portrait of the woman. (See Section 5; for a discussion of the CDS, see Langacker (2008:466; cf. Kędra-Kardela 2013.)

The CDS contains a series of so-called *usage events*, i.e. instances of language use which embrace the expression's understanding determined by the context. Generally, the CDS includes the *Current Usage Event* (CUE), the *Previous Usage Event* (UE), and the *Anticipated Usage Event* (AUE). Although a usage event is never the same for the speaker and the hearer, a considerable overlap between them guarantees "successful communication" (Langacker 2008:457-458; 465-466).

In Langacker's theory, the CUE is what the conceptualizer most immediately relates to. The so-called *objective content* represents the central facet of CUE; it is an entity, a thing or a situation which the conceptualizer recognizes or identifies (Langacker 2008:462; cf. Kędra-Kardela 2013:344). The objective content is, to a great extent, shared by the speaker and hearer. For example, in the case of Shakespeare's sonnet, the objective content includes features of the lady's appearance. Appropriate language units encode the objective content, playing the role of "instructions" for the conceptualizer/reader to construct a given conceptualization. Transient context, Langacker (2008:464) posits, "comprises […] the immediate transient circumstances in which a usage event occurs. Understood in a broader sense, it further includes more stable arrangements and shared knowledge in terms of which we apprehend the immediate circumstances." Shared knowledge may involve social, cultural and linguistic aspects (Langacker 2008: 465).

A literary text can thus also be treated as a series of usage events, whose interpretation is going to depend on the convention, on the context, on what is said openly and on what is merely suggested. Viewed in this light, a literary text – just like all linguistic structures – plays a similar role: it provides instruction for the reader as to *how* a literary text is to be read and interpreted. In the case of the parody in Sonnet 130, the reader has to rely not only on what Shakespeare's sonnet tells us, but, to a great extent, also on what the sonnet *does not* say explicitly but only suggests, thus referring the reader to the information derived from the transient context and from the stable knowledge s/he possesses.

In order to perform the readerly "reconstruction" of the "world" represented in the sonnet, we first have to briefly address the problem of the literary convention which the conceptualizer has to identify in order to be able to recognize elements of parody in the poem. Otherwise the interpretation of Shakespeare's sonnet in parody terms would not be possible: after all, what the text tells us is that the speaker of the sonnet loves a woman who is not beautiful. Naturally, there is nothing strange in loving somebody whose appearance does not match the ideal of beauty, but it is not this kind of love that the genre of the sonnet extols. In order to read the sonnet as a parody, the conceptualizer (speaker/hearer) has to make use of the frames of knowledge which constitute the background knowledge on which CDS is based. As is generally claimed, in literary communication such signals as those which indicate the convention employed have an impact on the way a text is going to be read, i.e. interpreted.

Now, what I wish to claim is that the CDS determines the creation of mental spaces which combine to yield the so-called blend, where the meaning of the poem is held to reside.

4. The sonnet as a source of background information

As Tom Furniss and Michael Bath (1996:280; henceforth F&B) write:

> The sonnet […] is […] [an] example of a fixed or 'closed' form because its defining characteristics are largely formal.

In conclusion, they observe that

> Arguably, it is possible to make sense of many poems without consciously identifying their genres, but to read a sonnet without recognizing that it is a sonnet is likely to frustrate any competent understanding. (ibid.)

Indeed, it is even more important to be able to identify the genre in the case of parody, where the understanding of the poem's message hinges on the recognition of the genre and on the comparison of the actual poem with the model. As the detailed discussion of the sonnet as a literary genre in the Elizabethan tradition is beyond the scope of this study, I limit the description of the sonnet to its most important features.

The sonnet was traditionally addressed to a woman (though a vast part of Shakespeare's sonnets is addressed to a "fair youth"). The celebrated objects of platonic love were beautiful women or ideas of perfection and beauty (e.g. Drayton's *Ideas Mirrour*). Women were idealized and shown as spiritual beings (F&B 1996:288). The voice of the speaker is "strongly gendered," the addressee – the woman – is unresponsive or passive, the man can therefore have at his disposal a "limited number of possible reactions" which are employed in the sonnet: he can either praise or plead, he can blame his object of love for his suffering, he can deliberate on the inability *not* to love, he can meditate on the impact the woman has on him and he can ponder on the impact (or lack of impact) his verses have on the addressee (F&B 1996:289). The poetic speaker's confession in most sonnets develops the "discourse of complaint, compliment and reflective self-communing" (F&B 1996:286).

The rhyming pattern introduced in the English sonnet (alternately rhyming quatrains, each stanza employing a separate pair of rhymes *abab cdcd efef gg*) was subject to variation. The rhyming couplet provides a conclusion, a recommendation, a "maxim of conduct;" it "offers the quintessence of a thought" (Calvo and Weber 2005:9), giving the poem an epigrammatic quality (Fuller 1972:15). In Shakespeare's sonnet 130, this couplet plays a crucial role in the poem's interpretation: it "undoes" the parody effect consistently developed over the three quatrains.

5. Analysis of *Sonnet 130*

"Learning to recognize and analyze [the] interplay of form and meaning is the fundamental skill required of any competent reader of sonnets," F&B (285) note and they add: "[a]s with any genre convention, it is a matter of programming your expectations as a reader". This statement is essential for the discussion of Shakespeare's sonnet in the light of the cognitive theory adopted in this study.

Shakespeare's sonnet enumerates female features of appearance that were commonly referred to in love poetry by means of carefully selected metaphors, a poetic convention known as a "blason" (F&B 1996:283). This convention was widely parodied then; this is also the case in Shakespeare's *Sonnet 130*, which, Cuddon (1982:86) says, "turned the *blazon* upside down." The typical similes like "my mistress's eyes are like the sun" are turned by Shakespeare into their opposites: "my mistresses eyes are nothing like the sun." Her lips are not coral ("Coral is far more red than her lips' red;"), her skin is dark rather than fair ("If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;"), her hair is dark and resembles black wires ("If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head."). The woman's cheeks are not pink like rose petals ("I have seen roses damask'd, red and white, /

But no such roses see I in her cheeks;"). Her voice is not pleasant to listen to ("music hath a far more pleasing sound;"), her movements show no grace, and, in addition to that, she does not give off a pleasant smell ("And in some perfumes is there more delight / Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.") In other words, the woman in Shakespeare's sonnet 130 is by no means a paragon of beauty. Yet, nowhere does he say that she is not pretty: for the speaker in the poem she is exceptional and he loves her. Thus, contrary to the courtly love convention evoked throughout the poem, which admired beautiful, idealized women, in Shakespeare's sonnet the woman falls short of perfection in every commonly recognized aspect, nevertheless, the speaker's love is real – unlike that of other sonneteers who were attracted by the unattainable (cf. F&B 1996:283).

The speaker does not complain, nor does he suffer. On the contrary, he seems to be happy to be in love with such an "exceptional" woman. The model of the love sonnet is subverted and the effect of parody is created. Commenting on the sonnet, Calvo and Weber (2005:18) observe that

> the poet never says his mistress is ugly or devoid of beauty: the entire poem becomes a parody of Petrarchan conventions when we reach the final couplet. The poet makes clear that he thinks Petrarchan rhetorical conventions are false, so he will not use *hyperbolic* comparisons to praise his mistress's beauty. […] So, immediately after turning upside-down the conventional comparisons used by Petrarchan poets, Shakespeare turns out to be thoroughly Petrarchan in the sonnet's final defiant statement of his mistress's beauty.

The parody is thus inverted in the final couplet, and the sonnet ends with a conventional declaration of love. The CDS theory coupled with the CIT seems to be an ideal methodological tool to describe the dynamicity of the interpretation process being at work here.

The combined CIT and CDS account for the process of interpretation involved in Sonnet 130 as follows. The reader selects relevant information from sonnet 130 (the features of the woman's appearance – Input Space II), relating it to the reader's knowledge of the convention ("beautiful, idealized woman, perhaps platonically loved by the man" – Input Space I). On this basis, the Generic Space is established. In the process of conceptual integration, the blend is created with the final message – not included in either of the Input Spaces – as that of parody related surprise. The effect of parody has to be built through the reference to the frames of knowledge gradually evoked as the sonnet is being read line by line. The blend, however, is "run" – the effect of parody developed in the first twelve lines of the sonnet is "subverted" by the message included in the final couplet: "And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare / As any she belied with false compare." The end result of the blending process is clear: the parody, in fact, appears to be not a parody at all. The mechanism underlying the process of reading of Sonnet 130 can be diagrammatically presented as follows:

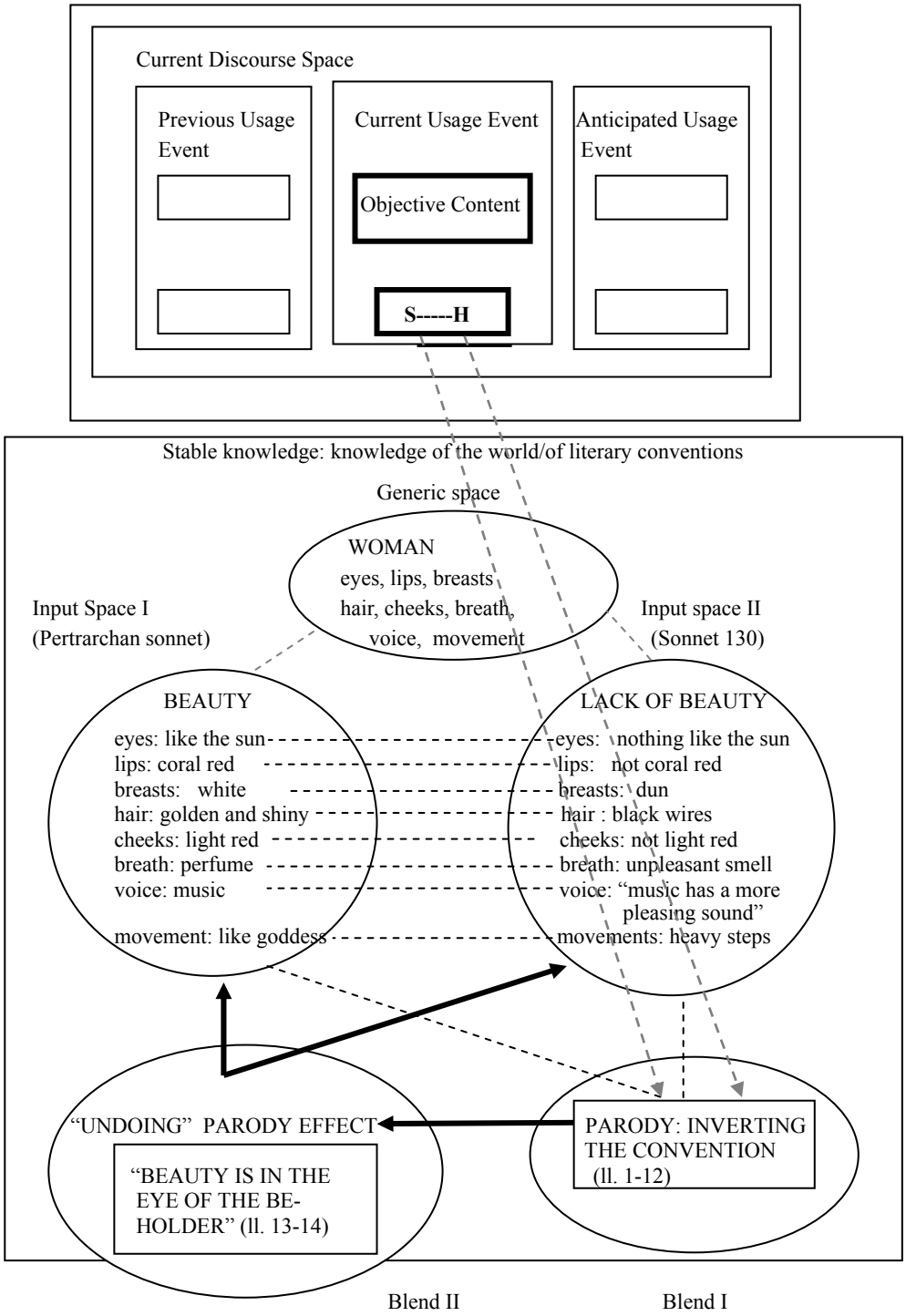

Figure 3. The CDS and CIT in the reading process of Sonnet 130

Figure 3 presents the mechanism of creating parody in the sonnet: first the convention of the Elizabethan sonnet is inverted and the effect of parody develops in Blend I. Then the parody is inverted again in the final couplet: Blend I is elaborated (heavy solid arrows in he diagram), leading to the creation of Blend II. This "double inversion" draws on Input Space I and Input Space II. Crucially, underlying the inversion process is the negotiation between the speaker (S) of the sonnet and the reader (hearer - H in Fig. 3) as to what the meaning of the sonnet is likely to be (broken arrows in the diagram). During the meaning negotiation process, which takes place in the CDS, the frames of knowledge, including the knowledge of the literary convention, are evoked. It is precisely the clash between the addressee's knowledge of the literary convention and the speaker's description of the woman that produces the parody effect. This effect is inverted once again in the final couplet: the speaker's love *is* unconditional. Yet, because the speaker's love does not meet the standard offered by the convention, the reader is likely to interpret the double inversion as "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder".

6. Conclusion

I have shown how the meaning negotiation process between the speaker and the addressee leads to the interpretation of Shakespeare's sonnet 130. The sonnet is known for its perverse treatment of the literary convention by the author: the three quatrains of the sonnet appear to be a parody of the literary convention, while the couplet marks the "return" to the original convention. It is clear that the inversion of the sonnet's parody must be accounted for by a theory which can cope with a changing, dynamic nature of discourse, literary discourse included. A serious candidate for such a theory appears to be Ronald Langacker's Current Discourse Space combined with Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner's theory of Conceptual Integration.

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Appendix

Sonnet 130, William Shakespeare

My mistress’ eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral is far more red than her lips' red;
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
I have seen roses damask'd, red and white,
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
And in some perfumes is there more delight
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
That music hath a far more pleasing sound;
I grant I never saw a goddess go;
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground:
And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
As any she belied with false compare.

KNOCK-KNOCK JOKES, PROPER NAMES, AND REFERENTIALITY

ALINA BUGHEŞIU
Technical University of Cluj-Napoca,
North University Centre of Baia Mare

Abstract: *This paper proposes a pragmatic and semantic study of the English knock-knock jokes, paying particular attention to the dimension of reference, in general, and the use of proper names, in particular, which are described from the viewpoint of discourse analysis and psycholinguistics. The article aims at underlining the twofold discursive function (i.e., identifying and diverging) that names fulfil in this variety of humorous texts. In the end, the study also tries to show how this pattern of English jokes has recently been adapted to Romanian.*
Keywords: *ambiguity, discourse, humour, proper names, reference*

1. Introduction

The present study discusses humorous discourse from the perspective of referentiality. To be more specific, the article is aimed at highlighting what is peculiar about the use of proper names in knock-knock jokes, a variety of jocular texts that display a standard, stereotyped discursive construction. The approach is qualitative rather than quantitative, as the research is meant to delineate the characteristics of proper-name usage in these jokes, rather than to draw any statistical conclusions (for instance, regarding the frequency of first names vs family names, female first names vs. male, English first names vs foreign names, common first names vs culturally-loaded ones, as well as motivations underlying these choices). Unless otherwise stated, the jokes quoted are taken from four websites (for English examples: *Funology* and *The Best Knock-Knock Jokes*; for Romanian examples: *Bancuri noi* and *Mioritice*).

Methodologically, the paper is grounded in discourse analysis, pragmatics and semantics. I start by presenting the discursive pattern and linguistic features of knock-knock jokes, pointing out what steps and parties are involved in the fulfilment of these humorous speech acts. My analysis focuses on the point where referring expressions (proper names, in particular) appear in such texts, what triggers their occurrence and what follows after it. With respect to the theory of reference, the meaning of the proper names is brought into question. However, as the semantic content of the proper names can be linked to the intentions of the interlocutors participating in telling the joke, properhood and referentiality are also considered from the viewpoint of psycholinguistics.

2. Knock-knock jokes: general features

Crystal (2002:107) highlights that in humour there is a "departure from norms of usage found elsewhere in language": rules are broken intentionally, in view of creating a "special effect" that Crystal (2002:107) likens to what happens in literature. Moreover, in general, humour language is associated with informal speech (Crystal 1994:62). As a variety of humorous texts widely attributed to the

sphere of children's language games, knock-knock jokes display a well-established pattern. Their construction consists of the fixed sequence of turns taken by two interlocutors, as Burbee (n.d.) shows ("S" stands for "speaker" and "H" for "hearer"):

Line 1 (S): Knock Knock!	[the intro]
Line 2 (H): Who's there?	[the scripted reply]
Line 3 (S): {name or other word}	[the setup]
Line 4 (H): <Line 3> who?	[the response]
Line 5 (S):	[the punch line]

This joke frame "is crafted to mimic a real-life scenario, in which a visitor is knocking at a door" (Burbee n.d.). In my view, there is something missing from Burbee's configuration: a sixth line, attributed to the hearer (but to which the speaker may also contribute), comprising his/her confirmation of the understanding of the punch line and, therefore, of the speaker's humorous intention.

It becomes salient from the framework presented above that knock-knock jokes are based on a "one-to-one setting" (Bailey 2011), in which the communication between the two participants is achieved in two steps: initiation and response. As Taylor & Taylor (1990:36) stated, "an initiation predicts a response, and a response is obligatory besides being constrained by the initiation, both in type of act and propositional content". The turns speakers take in this type of jocular discourse are constructed as adjacency pairs (Yule 2008:77). The strict, stereotyped syntactic (and, to some extent, also lexical) structure of knock-knock jokes is acquired by speakers as a result of significant "language exposure" (Bergen and Binsted, forthcoming); thus, interlocutors learn how to take part in this speech act and are aware of the presence of the punch line at the exact place where it is sure to occur. Therefore, being familiar with the formulaic construction of knock-knock jokes is crucial, as otherwise the recipient of this humorous discourse would not know what the punster's intention truly was (Crystal 1994:62).

Cooperative discursive behaviour as regards knock-knock jokes implies the existence of a tacit agreement (Maingueneau 2007:31) between the punster and joke recipient, both of whom must adhere to the rules of the language game; this aspect is of utter importance, due to the aforementioned rigidity of the discursive pattern. Nevertheless, the said agreement – which is co-substantial to the speech act (Maingueneau 2007:31) – cannot be made in want of some shared knowledge between the two verbal actors. In addition, they also need to possess certain competences (Maingueneau 2007:45-46), which have to be in tune at the moment of humorous interaction:

(1) *Genre competence*: both punster and joke recipient must recognise the type of discourse in which they are involved and follow its entrenched rules;

(2) *Linguistic competence*: the language code in which the joke is performed should normally be shared by the parties; deficient language skills leads to the poor coinage of the punch line, on the side of the punster, and the misapprehension or lack of apprehension of the punch line, on the side of the recipient;

(3) *Encyclopaedic competence*: this dimension refers to one's general knowledge about the world (Maingueneau 2007:46). According to Grice (2004:44), one's grasp of the world need not be extensive for communication between two interlocutors to happen: "Given a knowledge of the English language, but no knowledge of the circumstances of the utterance, one would know something about

what the speaker has said, on the assumption that he was speaking standard English, and speaking literally". With respect to knock-knock jokes, "literally" could be replaced by "cooperatively"; therefore, of all the "circumstances of the utterance", the success of this kind of speech act depends upon the speakers' awareness of the type of communication that they develop and their observance of its rules. Consequently, one can claim that the *encyclopaedic competence* is interdependent particularly upon *genre competence*, as it determines the latter's existence (as a matter of fact, *genre competence* may be understood as a specialised form of *encyclopaedic competence*).

3. Referentiality in knock-knock jokes

In the economy of the speech act that corresponds to a knock-knock joke, a key role is played by the third utterance, which comprises a referential expression by means of which the punster designates the persona s/he interprets. Nonetheless, whereas in a real-life situation, Line 3 would comprise a visitor's actual first name or another identifying expression (such as a first-person pronoun or kinship term) that is in agreement with the real context, in the joke setting the line includes a name (1) or an appellative (2) that functions like a trigger for the punch line:

(1) – Knock, Knock!
– Who's there?
– *Amos.*
– Amos who?
– Amosquito bit me! [= A mosquito bit me]

(2) – Knock, Knock!
– Who's there?
– *Cousin.*
– Cousin who?
– Cousin stead of opening the door, you're making me stand here! [= 'Cause instead of opening the door, you're making me stand here.]

In non-humorous contexts, through the utterance in the fourth line, the joke recipient asks "for further identification" (Burbee n.d.). Put differently, the hearer tries to narrow down the range of semantic possibilities of construal of the referential expression that s/he was provided in reply to his/her previous inquiry (Line 2, "Who's there?"). Thus, in non-fictional situations of this kind, the fifth utterance – which offers the answer to the hearer's request for clarification (i.e., "<Line 3> who?") – contains a simple (proprial/non-proprial) or complex (phrasal/sentential) descriptor. However, in knock-knock jokes, Line 5 has always got a complex structure, as it comprises phrases or various types of utterances (such as assertions, exclamatory or interrogative statements).

As regards knock-knock jokes, it is worth noting that both proper names and non-proprial constructions offered as answers to the question in Line 2 function in a similar manner. Interestingly enough, while this behaviour is habitual with respect to appellatives, for instance, it does not pertain to the standard, official, conventional use of proper names. Starting from Burbee's pattern (quoted in the previous section), the following discursive interpretation to knock-knock jokes may be offered from the point of view of referential semantics:

– *Line 1 (S): Knock Knock!*

An onomatopoeic phrase is used to render in a written or spoken text what in a real-life setting is an aural signal, triggering conversation: a visitor's knocking on someone's door.

– *Line 2 (H): Who's there?*

The reply to the precedent trigger is formulated as a question that demands the disclosure of the speaker's identity.

– *Line 3 (S): {name* or *another word}*

The apparent elucidation of the speaker's identity is put forward by the speaker him/herself. The self-designating expression employed at this stage is characterised by vagueness: even when it is a proper name, it displays no inherent definiteness (as it would normally be the case), since the hearer (as the ensuing line proves) finds it impossible to link the referring expression to the person who advances it. One could almost claim that, in these situations, proper names develop a genericised function: they are interpreted as designating classes or smaller groups of individuals instead of a specific person.

From the viewpoint of pragmatics, the referring expression used at this moment is chosen based on what the speaker already knows and what the hearer expects (Yule 2008:17). Thus, the reference is realised in relation to the interlocutors' goals (ibid.), i.e., to obtain laughter.

– *Line 4 (H): <Line 3> who?*

The hearer asks for further clarification from the speaker about his/her identity, which appears ambiguous. The self-referential expression offered by the speaker is confirmed as indefinite: the hearer seems to know several individuals or no particular person bearing this name (but still recognises the element as a personal proper name – even in example 4 below – or as a personal referring expression):

(3) – Knock, Knock!
– Who's there?
– Mary.
– Mary who?
– Mary Christmas! [= Merry Christmas!]

(4) – Knock, Knock!
– Who's there?
– Venice.
– Venice who?
– Venice this door gonna open? [= When is this door going to open?]

It could be said that, in the instances when the language item contained in Line 3 does not, by definition, denote a human individual, it is construed as a nickname based on its association with the human voice that provides it as an answer to the hearer's question and with its reiteration in the fourth line, alongside the interrogative determiner *who*:

(5) – Knock, Knock!
– Who's there?
– Lettuce.
– Lettuce who?
– Lettuce in! [= Let us in!]

In this example, the word *lettuce*, which generally denotes a non-human object, is exceptionally used as a personal designation; it acquires this quality due to the context and co-text. These two circumstantial features enable one to consider *lettuce* a personal – albeit unconventional – name (a nickname or pseudonym), whereas, in general, this classification could not occur (Garnham1994:119). Therefore, *lettuce* is interpreted from the perspective of the principle of *pragmatic plausibility* (Prćić 2005:78): "the meaning of a word represents the reading, from among all the available meanings, with the highest degree of probability in the given universe of discourse, which is collaboratively created and assumed by speaker/ writer(s) and hearer/reader(s) in a given context". This shows that proper names are an open-ended class of words and that properhood is not a property of words themselves, but of their use in various circumstances. *Lettuce* would, therefore, simply be a less prototypical name, the result of a kind of *performative nomination* (Felecan 2013:222) carried out by the name bearer him/herself.

– Line 5 (S): {the punch line}

The same principle of *pragmatic plausibility* that is followed in the utterance of Line 4 also holds for Line 5. Moreover, however, in this case *pragmatic enrichment* also occurs, "a context bound process of interpretation, during which all the missing information is filled in" (Prćić 2005: 78).

Depending on the type of answer put forward in the fifth line, Burbee (n.d.) identifies two classes of knock-knock jokes:

(a) *Class I*, in which "the punch line includes a repeat of the setup from Line 3 as the first part of a larger sentence or phrase". Jokes in this group are the closest ones to real-life situations, in which the identifying expression is repeated alongside some specifying piece of information:

(6) – Knock, Knock!
– Who's there?
– Abby.
– Abby who?
– Abby birthday to you! [= Happy birthday to you!]

(b) *Class II*, in which the punch line is designed as a reaction to Line 4. With jokes from this category, Line 3 is not cited in the punch line:

(7) – Knock, Knock!
– Who's there?
– Cash.
– Cash who? [= Cashew nut]
– I didn't realize you were some kind of a nut!

In some instances, the punch line fails to occur in the right place, where the hearer is used to coming across it:

(8)

– Knock, knock!	– Knock, knock!
– Who's there?	– Who's there?
– Banana.	– Orange.
– Banana who?	– Orange who?
	– Orange you glad I didn't say banana? [= Aren't you glad I didn't say banana?]

Pragmatically, the punch line "relies on breaking the linguistic expectations of the listener" (Crystal 1994:62), on using language creatively (Bergen and Binsted, forthcoming). In relation to the referring expression in Lines 3 and 4, the fifth line contains a negation of the semantic content conveyed in the previous utterances, similar to what happens in the case of scalar implicatures (Yule 2008:41). Thus, instead of a specification of the referring expression, the answer conveyed by the punch line makes the hearer aware that the alleged designating structure was never meant to perform designation or identification to begin with. Its purpose was to establish a phonetically-, lexically- and/or semantically-relevant basis on which the speaker could build a punch line that would eventually result in laughter, the core aim of any humorous discourse. Therefore, from a semantic viewpoint, Line 5 gives way to an entirely different appreciation of Lines 3 and 4. In reply to the hearer's request for identification, the speaker provides "{name or another word}", which in this particular jocular context is well known to be used unconventionally. The hearer's subsequent turn actually asks for the unlimited spectrum of unconventional readings of that construction to be reduced to one. Thus, for instance, in examples 6 and 7, Line 5 could be translated as "Which reading of *Abby/Cash* do you *mean* for me to bear in mind?"

– Line 6 (H) or (H + S): laughter

Given that all the conditions of the informal speech event (Yule 2008: 57) were met by hearer and speaker alike and assuming that the two participants were cooperative in their verbal exchange, laughter is the prototypical aural sign that marks the hearer's correct understanding of the punch line. It signals the fulfilment of the humorous speech act.

4. When knock-knock jokes cross the Ocean

Knock-knock jokes were first recorded with the pattern presented in the previous sections in the USA in the second half of the 1930s. *The Gridley Herald* (1936) and *The Milwaukee Journal* (see Davis 1936) successively mention knock-knock jokes as America's newest favourite parlour game (to the journalists' dismay, as they concur in their opinion on just how dry this game is). The jocular role play was borrowed from children's playtime activities and, apparently, its first record dates back to none other than William Shakespeare (this definitely puts the reading of the adjacency pair "Knock-Knock" – "Who goest there?" in *Macbeth* in a completely different light) (Burbee n.d.).

In addition to the USA, knock-knock jokes are also famous in France, Canada, Australia, Ireland, the UK and South Africa (Paluchowski 2009). In Romania, jokes containing the phrase "knock-knock" ("cioc-cioc") are fairly frequent, but those that are calques on the English discursive pattern are scarce.

Few relevant instances were found for the present research, with respect to the function fulfilled by the referring expression in Line 3 of the jokes. Thus, in one of the jokes, there is no semantic connection between the meaning of the proper name and its interpretation in the punch line (as it is most often the case with English examples):

(9)	– Cioc, cioc!	Knock, knock!
	– Cine-i acolo?	Who's there?
	– Polo!	Polo!

– Polo cine?	Polo who?
– Polo… nicu!	Polo… nicu! [= *Polonicu(l)* 'the ladle']

However, in another Romanian joke, the punch line is semantically significant in relation to the individual designated by the proper name provided in Line 3:

(10)	– Cioc, cioc!	Knock, knock!
	– Cine este?	Who is it?
	– Marean.	Marean.
	– Care "Marean"?	Which "Marean"?
	– Care este!	Which is!

In this example, the phrase comprised in the punch line is a verbal tic of the Romanian politician Marean Vanghelie, who is ridiculed by the mass media (and not only) for his poor grammar skills. A variant of this joke substitutes the politician's first name with his last name, *Vanghelie*. Such a semantic correspondence was not found in the English jokes investigated, although it would probably be interesting to analyse why in them there is a marked preference for biblical names:

(11) – Knock, knock!
– Who's there?
– Isaiah!
– Isaiah who?
– Isaiah nothing until you open this door! [= I say nothing until you open this door!]

5. Conclusion

According to Lew (1996), humorous communication is a "non-bona-fide" type of verbal interaction, much of which is based on the promotion of linguistic ambiguity as the quality of a text that allows speakers to arrive at "two or more significantly different semantic interpretations" (ibid.). This discursive effect is achieved by means of ambiguators, intentional devices "aimed at enhancing the probability of the alternative (marked) reading relative to the original (unmarked) reading" of a text. Proper names are often used as ambiguators in jocular discourse. When employed successfully (i.e., when the joke recipient can establish the connection between the ambiguator and the punch line), laughter is obtained and this is, in fact, the very point of any joke.

The vagueness that surrounds proper names in knock-knock jokes is related to their not actually designating anyone in the world delineated by the humorous speech act. As in the case of non-proprial referring expressions, the unconventional use of proper names in knock-knock jokes allows for a different interpretation of their semantic content than that commonly elicited through their use. They are merely a medium that grants the speaker the opportunity to devise a punch line that would generate laughter. As in the case of fictional discourse, in this type of communication the recipient of the joke is invited by the punster to make-believe that the situation enacted is true in some fictional, humour-governed world (Oltean 2013:380). Similarly, according to Searle (1993:65), "[…] to pretend to do or be something is to engage in a performance which is *as if* one were doing or being the thing and is without any intent to deceive"; the joke recipient and joke teller are careful to observe the rules of communication that are specific to this humorous

context. By adopting an attitude that is, broadly speaking, akin to the suspension of disbelief (Searle 1993:61), participants in knock-knock jokes prove to be cooperative in the role play.

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YOU WANT TO HEAR THE MAGIC WORD? *INSHALLAH*

MIHĂIŢĂ HOREZEANU
University of Timişoara and King Khalid University in Abha

Abstract: *The present paper focuses on how the Arabic expression 'inshallah' (i.e. "God willing") is used in English by Arab speakers and how it is (mis)understood by non-Arab/non-Muslim speakers of English. I start from some general considerations pertaining to intercultural communication, and then proceed to examine how cultural differences can account for communication barriers and failures. The last part of my paper looks at the various communicative functions of 'inshallah' from a speech-act theoretic perspective.*
Keywords: *inshallah, intercultural communication, situation-bound utterances, speech acts*

1. Introduction

That teaching English as a foreign language is full of challenges and rewards may well sound like a trite observation, but I believe that it deserves both special mention and careful consideration when it involves interacting with people from a widely different culture, especially when the socio-cultural setting is not your own.

Such a working environment is bound to lend new significances to theoretical constructs, and familiar concepts like pragmatic failures or cultural breakdowns are constantly reinventing themselves. The somewhat contemplative nature of cross-cultural pragmatic findings now gives way to an intercultural-pragmatic approach, where language is used in actual social encounters and cooperation acquires new dimensions, with participants striving to create common ground and mutual understanding.

According to Kecskes (2014:13), "[i]ntercultural communication represents a transactional model of communication […] that moves beyond merely understanding or 'respecting' cultural differences toward creating a 'third culture' that combines elements of each of the participants' original cultures in novel ways". Such third cultures or intercultures are the result of altering and blending pre-existing cultural patterns with situationally conditioned new elements. "This process is very similar to linguistic creativity" (Kecskes 2014:87).

During my three-year ongoing experience of working with Saudi students, I have been confronted with a wide range of phenomena, some of which have immediate relevance to the applied linguist concerned with the structural aspects of teaching EFL, while others pose problems (or raise issues) of a *pragmalinguistic* and/or *sociopragmatic* sort.

The distinction between these two terms is due to Kasper (1992) and describes the two ways in which pragmatic transfer manifests itself. The pragmalinguistic type of transfer is more closely related to language, i.e. to the linguistic means by which speech acts and politeness are expressed, whereas the sociopragmatic type reflects the cultural component of communication, i.e. linguistic behaviour which is appropriate from a socio-cultural perspective. As Bou Franch (1998:7-8) remarks, "[t]he teacher will have no problem in correcting pragmalinguistic failure but will have to be cautious and not correct but just point

out and discuss cases of sociopragmatic failure that reflect the students' system of values and beliefs about the world". In other words, some things can be taught, corrected or prescribed, while others must not be imposed. It rests with the teaching practitioner to discern the fine line between the two and proceed accordingly.

The present paper focuses on one particular expression from Arabic, *inshallah* (i.e. "if God wills it"), as used in English sentences and utterances by Arab speakers, including Saudi students as well as Saudi and non-Saudi Arab colleagues at King Khalid University (KKU) in Abha, Saudi Arabia. Moreover – and more interestingly, perhaps – I will look at how this formulaic expression is (mis)understood by non-Arab/non-Muslim speakers of English.

2. Situation-bound utterances

In order for the reader to understand the relevance of my chosen linguistic item in the light of my general reflections on the intercultural matters above, I should point out that this expression, which is by no means the only one worth looking at, though probably one of the most intriguing, belongs to the class of *situation-bound utterances* (henceforth SBU). The term was coined by Kecskes to cover something already under socio-pragmatic scrutiny since the late 1960s (e.g. Goffman 1967). According to Kecskes (2010:3), "SBUs are highly conventionalized, prefabricated pragmatic units whose occurrences are tied to standardized communicative situations". A thorough description of SBUs is given in Kecskes (2014), where we also read that "situation-bound utterances are especially important because they are reflections of socio-cultural patterns, cultural models and behavioral expectations in a speech community" (2014:72).

2.1. SBUs and culture specificity

When making judgements about the culture-specific nature of SBUs, what we have to take into account is not only the existence or non-existence of an SBU in a particular culture, but also what Kecskes (2014:73) calls "situational obligatoriness". In other words, there are certain occasions when the use of an SBU is appropriate, required or even obligatory in some cultures, while in other cultures this is not the case. One can immediately see how easily pragmatic transfer can occur when all this is ignored. For quick illustration purposes, I will mention the eagerly awaited – if not promptly uttered – *mashallah* (i.e. "God willed it"), which is an obligatory accompaniment to any compliment in English when addressing an Arab interlocutor. The compliment can be said in appreciation of someone's personal qualities, achievements, possessions and, very frequently, children. Not uttering this expression renders the speaker's compliment insincere, gives away his/her feelings of envy and is a very bad omen, since it is primarily said in order to ward off the evil eye – a widespread superstition in the Saudi society. This last aspect appears to be so important that if you are not quick enough in saying *mashallah*, your Arab partner is sure to say it on your behalf, whereas one of my Romanian colleagues, who also teaches at this university, whenever I grace him with a compliment, would never volunteer to say it, but insist that I say it myself.

Me: *Ce frumos ţi-au spălat maşina!* ("Nice car wash!")
Him: *Michael, Michael, te rog spune mashallah.* ("Michael, please say *mashallah*).

I was not at all surprised, therefore, to hear the following brief exchange between one of our students (S) and an American (non-Muslim) teacher (T) in the corridor the other day:

> S: *They called me for an interview at Almarai.* (a well-known Saudi business company)
> T: *Mashallah!*

Other examples of how situational obligatoriness varies across cultures might include:

- *Să-ţi fie de bine* (Romanian, roughly, "May this be for your health", said after someone has finished eating a meal, especially when you provided the food and in response to your guest thanking you);
- *Să-l porţi sănătos* (Romanian, roughly, "May you wear it in good health", said when someone has bought or received an article of clothing);
- *Welcome aboard!* (said to someone joining a team, etc.)
- *(I'll) talk to you later* (i.e. "Good-bye")

Note here that this expression counts as an SBU only when uttered as a leave-taking formula and not as a freely generated utterance:

> *Can I see you for a minute?*
> *Sorry, I must be off now, but I'll talk to you later.*

In other languages, this difference in meaning, function and speaker's intention is made obvious by different structures; compare, in Romanian, *Vorbim mai târziu* (literally, "We'll talk later") as a non-SBU equivalent of the utterance above with *Mai vorbim* (roughly, "We'll talk again/ some more") for a corresponding SBU.

2.2. Routines and rituals

Within the heterogeneous class of SBUs, Kecskes (2003) makes a useful distinction between *situation-bound routines* and *situation-bound rituals*, to which I will refer, for reasons of brevity, as *routines* and *rituals*. The first subclass (e.g. *nice to meet you*, *take care*, *welcome aboard*, *poftă bună* i.e. "enjoy your meal") is commonly used in secular contexts and in future-oriented cultures, whereas the second (*God bless you*, *Doamne-ajută* i.e. "May God help you/us", etc., *alhamdulillah*, i.e. "thanks be to God", *inshallah*, etc.) can be used in both secular and religious contexts and are widely preferred in tradition-oriented cultures (e.g. Arabic, Turkish, Chinese or Japanese). As Kecskes (2014:75) remarks, unlike routines, such rituals are to be used in their original form, without any paraphrase or translation. This is why there is little chance, for instance, that an Arab speaker of English will utter anything like "God willing" instead of *inshallah*. Moreover, the use of rituals, unlike that of routines, is obligatory.

2.3. From ritual to routine

Another important difference between rituals and routines is that the latter "generally do not sound sincere, and interlocutors are aware of this" (Kecskes 2014:75). Not surprisingly then, it is SBU rituals that convey information about the set of deep-seated values and beliefs in a certain culture. However, Kecskes (2014) appears to draw the distinction between routines and rituals on mutually exclusive

terms. What happens when an SBU ritual loses its constitutive attributes? Is frequency of use indicative of the strength of a ritual or of the fact that routine seems to have set in? I direct these difficult questions towards such well-established verbal rituals as *alhamdulillah*, *inshallah* or *wallah* (i.e. "I promise by God that what I'm telling you is true"), which feature abundantly in everyday English, as spoken by and to Saudi students and staff at KKU. While these expressions retain the flavour of untranslated (and non-translatable) rituals, I can reasonably assume that, at least when used by non-Muslim Western speakers, they set out on a taxonomic journey from ritual to routine.

3. *Inshallah*

This part of my paper will start with some background information on the expression *inshallah* and will be followed by an account of how cultural differences can affect communication. For the last part, I will analyse some of the pragmatic uses of *inshallah* in spoken English discourse.

3.1. *Inshallah*: the ritual

There is, without a doubt, no better way to start speaking about *inshallah* than to trace it back to The Noble Qur'an. If you are not sure how to do this, any Saudi or Arab colleague will be more than happy to help by immediately producing a copy of the holy book, always at hand, and opening it to the right page: Surah 18, Al-Kahf (Chapter 18, The Cave), verses 23-24. Below I quote the English translation from the bilingual Arabic-English edition published in Madinah, KSA:

> *23. And never say of anything, "I shall do such and such thing tomorrow."*
> *24. Except (with the saying), "If Allah wills!" And remember your Lord when you forget and say: "It may be that my Lord guides me to a nearer way of truth than this."*

According to Wikipedia, "[o]ne's use of *insha'Allah* indicates not one's desire to succeed in an endeavor, but rather that the endeavor one embarks on will be within God's will, which might be interpreted as that which is best for humanity, the Earth, and all of Allah's creation."

This view was also well-received and endorsed without exception by all my informants, devout Muslim colleagues in the English department. I will come back to this interpretation in section 3.3., when I look at how and if *inshallah* can be used with certain speech acts.

As far as the romanized spelling of this Arabic phrase is concerned, some of my informants expressed disagreement as to whether it should be spelt as one word (*inshallah*) or more (*insha'Allah*, *in sha Allah*). Purists argued that it can only be three words, as in Arabic, others thought that *insh'Allah* (with the apostrophe indicating a glottal stop) would be a good compromise, in order to avoid the over-simplified spelling as one word. I was tempted to choose the middle course at first until I realized that the high degree to which this expression has been adopted in spoken English by non-Arab/non-Muslim speakers should be matched by an equally high degree of adaptation in the host language. I had already taken this decision when I discovered that *Webster's New World College Dictionary* (2010) includes *inshallah* in its most simplified form.

To conclude this part, the most important thing to remember is that every Muslim is and feels under the obligation of uttering *inshallah* whenever referring to something they want to do in the future. Needless to say, the implications at the level of intercultural communication are manifold.

3.2. Cultural differences and communication barriers

One of the most extensively investigated topics in applied linguistics, anthropology and other social sciences in the past forty years or so has been the relation between language and culture. It cannot be at all easy, therefore, especially in a limited space like this, to even try to give an overview of the main contributions in this field. However, the limited scope of my present paper will enable me to refer to some of the most relevant findings with respect to cultural dichotomies and how these can affect intercultural communication. The underlying idea of my approach is that increased awareness of the differences existing between various cultures and communication styles can only benefit someone's cultural competence and adaptability. In my particular case, the beneficiaries I have in mind are the students and teachers of EFL engaged in a necessarily intercultural enterprise, but I am convinced that most of the insights which can be derived are applicable to other areas where interpersonal communication and/or decision-making are essential.

A widely held assumption among intercultural scholars is that there is a strong tendency to see another culture through one's own cultural frame of reference. Thus an individual's culture becomes the standard or the norm against which other cultures are critically evaluated. Workers in the field of education (including teachers of EFL) should aim at raising cultural awareness in their students so that cultural differences may be viewed with a neutral, non-judgemental eye. Some political correctness enthusiasts maintain that an elevation of the very meaning of *different* could be the answer. Personally, I cannot endorse such an effusion of utopian prescriptivism: while the semantics of polysemous *different* is clear enough, its context-sensitive pragmatic meaning will always be problematic – "just different" or "not the same, and therefore bad or inferior".

Realistically, just like cultural differences, cultural stereotypes will always be around.

3.2.1. High-context vs. low-context cultures

An often-quoted cultural dichotomy which has inspired a significant amount of empirical research is the distinction between *high-context* and *low-context cultures*, first mentioned in Hall (1976).

The difference between high- and low-context cultures is in direct correlation with the roles played in communication by the extralinguistic context on the one hand, and the linguistic code, on the other. As we can see, the word *context* refers exclusively to the situational context and thus, whenever the meaning of a message is encoded mostly in the context and very little of it in the verbal code, the associated culture in which this typically occurs is a high-context one. Conversely, when the meaning of what is said is typically found in the verbal language rather than in the physical context, the culture in which this is the general tendency is called a low-context culture. Asian and South American cultures

belong to the first category while European and North American cultures to the second.

The implications at the level of discourse are that in high-context cultures the speaker does not have to be specific, as most information is to be found in the context, not in the verbal message. Moreover, the responsibility for a proper decoding and interpretation of what is meant rests with the listener, who will have to face two serious challenges: vagueness and/or pragmatic ambiguity.

On the other hand, in low-context cultures, it is the responsibility of the speaker to phrase his/her message in an accurate manner, which leaves very little scope for contextual ambiguity.

To illustrate this cultural dichotomy, I can think of how the meaning of what is said in a culture ranked as high context varies significantly, according to such contextual features as speaker, listener, setting (formal vs. informal), time, place, etc. Thus, the meaning of a message can be affected by the participants' social status, gender, race, religion, etc. Sometimes the spatial and temporal coordinates are important (e.g. the time of day, the day of the week, etc.). Certainly not all features bear the same degree of importance or relevance. In some Arab and East Asian cultures, social status is very important. Saudi Arabia, for instance, boasts a tribal society, with some tribes obviously being more influential than others. The first question which I am asked by locals or people from the Indian subcontinent in casual social encounters is invariably "From where?" so that I can be immediately classified. Luckily in my case, my sincere answer is a winner. Saudi Arabia may just be the only country in the world where the locals are literally overjoyed to hear that you come from Romania: we provide the best football players and coaches in the Kingdom. Whatever else I say after that does not matter much. The context I find myself in is meaningful enough.

The two terms, *high* and *low*, are not seen in an absolute sense, but rather along a continuum from high to low, which makes it possible for various cultures to be described as higher- or lower-context. Thus if Asian cultures are considered to be high-context, in contrast with European cultures which are typically low-context, the cultural spectrum remains broad enough to accommodate finer distinctions between higher- and lower-context cultures, for example, those in Eastern and Western Europe, respectively.

3.2.2. Directness vs. indirectness of expression

This opposition, which is seen here as a cultural dichotomy rather than just a contrasting pair to be encountered within one and the same culture, can be correlated with the two opposing types of culture mentioned before. Preference for direct communication is characteristic of low-context cultures, whereas high-context cultures will normally use indirect means of conveying a message. Moreover, under the umbrella of "directness vs. indirectness", we can distinguish further stylistic or rhetorical contrasts such as: simplicity vs. elaborateness, linearity vs. non-linearity or logical argumentation vs. emotional persuasiveness. Each of these contrasts can be investigated on their own, but I have chosen just to mention them, given the current purpose of my study. It is for the same purpose that the focus here is only on the differences which affect intercultural communication involving North American/European and (Saudi) Arab participants.

The first thing one can perhaps notice is the divide between direct and indirect communicators. Zaharna (1995) and Feghali (1997) both group these differences under *communication patterns*.

Directness in communication is usually associated with clarity of expression. Utterances are unequivocal, transparent, and repetitions are avoided. Metadiscursive expressions like *Let's get to the point*, *Let's not change the subject* or *Don't beat about the bush* will not be appreciated by Arab interlocutors and will have, if anything, a negative effect. When the answer to a *yes-no* question is *inshallah*, the American/European speaker would be well-advised to refrain from following it up with a *Is that a yes or a no?*, because the original answer will most likely be repeated. Rather s/he should reinforce it by repeating *inshallah* and hope for the best.

Avoiding a direct answer by Arab communicators is usually done in order to save face, both the speaker's and the listener's. This was pointed by Zaharna (1995: 249), Feghali (1997: 358) and supported by Saudi (Arab) colleagues as well as by my MA students in Language and Culture Awareness. However, given that in Western cultures an indirect or ambiguous response normally anticipates a dispreferred request refusal, for instance, it is not difficult to see why the Arab speaker's commendable attitude is likely to fall flat or even be a cause for frustration and concern. Other commonly heard examples, besides *inshallah*, include the use of *tomorrow*, *no problem* or *don't worry*, which Westerners soon learn not to take at face value but rather interpret as an indirect avoidance strategy.

3.3. *Inshallah*: a speech-act theoretic perspective

So far we have seen that the use of the expression *inshallah* is made mandatory for (non-)Arab Muslims by the Qur'an and that, given the cultural preference for indirectness, this expression occurs all too frequently in contexts where a direct communicator would expect a straightforward answer.

In the last part of my paper, I will look at the various communicative functions of *inshallah*, as they occur (or may occur) in English discourse. The core assumption of my approach is that by examining whether this expression is compatible or not with a certain speech act, more revealing insights can be gained as to why intercultural communication failures occur. Many questions, of course, still remain unanswered, the most important of which, perhaps, is whether the standard theory (e.g. Searle 1969) can account for specific manifestations of speech acts across cultures.

The examples I use (though not always mention) in this section are from various sources: fieldnotes, daily observations, interviews, the Internet, referenced articles and my own constructed examples, which I included in the interviews.

That *inshallah* is used with various meanings and intentions in everyday discourse is not difficult to observe. One of the former American commanders in Iraq, David Petraeus, is supposed to have said that "This is not an inshallah time", meaning, no doubt, that this is the time to take action without any delay or hesitation. I was not able to find whether this is just local folklore or not, but what I did find was the following statement he made during an end-of-year briefing for journalists in Baghdad: "Success will emerge slowly and fitfully with reverses as well as advances. Inevitably there will be tough fighting, more tough days and more tough weeks, but fewer of them, *inshallah*" (Colvin 2007). Here the meaning is obviously different, i.e. "hopefully".

3.3.1. *Promises*

The speech act with which *inshallah* is most frequently associated is that of promising. It is also one of the most problematic in intercultural communication. According to the propositional content condition in Searle (1969: 57), "In expressing that p, S predicates a future act A of S". This will inevitably trigger the use of *inshallah*. In fact, as Masliyah (1999: 101) points out, "the Muslim should add the formula of *inshallah* even when referring to an event which will undoubtedly occur in the future". Considering that Searle's preparatory condition for promising states that "It is not obvious to both S and H that S will do A in the normal course of events" (1969:59), we understand that *inshallah* simply has to be uttered.

But the most interesting part in the structure of the speech act of promising is the distinction Searle makes between the *essential condition* and the *sincerity condition*. The essential condition states that "S intends that the utterance of T will place him under an obligation to do A" (Searle 1969: 60). T here is used for "sentence", since S is used for "speaker". The sincerity condition, on the other hand, states that "S intends to do A" (1969: 60) and accounts for why some promises are sincere, while others are insincere.

I believe this distinction between sincerely wishing to do something, on the one hand, and undertaking an obligation to perform something is of utmost relevance in intercultural communication. As all my (Saudi) Arab informants pointed out, the use of *inshallah* in promises does not signal insincerity or not wishing to carry out the act, but rather the impossibility of unconditionally assuming responsibility for something which is not under the promisor's complete control. In other words, from a Muslim's point of view, another essential condition is missing from Searle's account: *inshallah*, i.e. *if* God wills.

This finding is also supported by Masliyah (1999: 99): "The use of this expression is… neither a simple means of shirking responsibilities nor a belief in fatalism". On the contrary, it expresses "a wish and a hope that a certain action will take place in the future" (Masliyah 1999: 100) and can even "assist" the speaker in seeing his/her wishes come true.

Webster's New World College Dictionary (2010), previously mentioned in section 3.1., includes two meanings for *inshallah*: 1. "God willing" and 2. "please God". If we combine the two meanings, we could perhaps understand the striking, oxymoronic description of a Muslim's use of *inshallah* as "active abandonment" or as "a[n] incentive to strengthen his good intention" (Masliyah 1999: 100).

As I mentioned before, the use of *inshallah* is most commonly associated with promises or rather, from a Westerner's point of view, with infelicitous commitments. Strangely enough, however, typical examples are more difficult to find and the reason for this, I believe, is that Arabs usually fight shy of volunteering commitments; they avoid what I might call "assertive promises". Instead, this speech act is elicited in the form of an answer to a *yes-no* question, uttered as a request:

Me: *Can you come to my office tomorrow?*
Student: *Inshallah.*

3.3.2. *Threats*

One of the speech acts that I found of particular interest with respect to the use of *inshallah* is that of threatening. I have to admit that in this particular case, my interest was purely theoretical, with my constructed examples attempting to replicate imaginary, yet possible situations:

If you do this again, I'll kill you.
If you try to see my daughter again, I'll sue you.
If I ever catch you talking to him (said to a daughter)*, you'll never go out again.*

In each of these cases the question was: can *inshallah* accompany a threat? And if "yes", is the threat effective anymore? If "no", isn't the speaker in conflict with the commandments in the Qur'an? (i.e. always to use *inshallah* when a future-time action is involved).

My underlying assumption was that either way, a Muslim speaker is faced with a dilemma which makes it impossible for him/her to issue a felicitous threat. This time, my informants' opinions were split, though not widely divergent. Some answered that *inshallah* is not normally used with threats, while others said "yes, but rarely". The reasoning behind this was somewhat similar: as already mentioned in section 3.1., the envisaged future action must be in the best interest of humanity and all of Allah's creation. It is what I might call the *moral constraint*. On the other hand, when speakers do use *inshallah* in threats, they believe that this does not run counter to the moral constraint and hope that by saying it, they will be assisted in carrying out the threat.

In addition to these arguments, I would like to mention that in my interviews I had assumed, according to the classical speech act theory, that a threat, just like a promise, belongs to the class of commissives. Other authors, however, believe that there is another difference between promises and threats, besides the "negative" aspect of the latter. Thus, according to Tsui (1994: 132), the most important difference is that "the purpose of a threat is not to commit the speaker to a future action, but to get the addressee to perform an action". Whereas a promise places the speaker under an obligation to perform the action, a threat clearly does not.

I believe that, to some extent, this finding can also provide an explanation for why *inshallah* does not normally occur in threats.

3.3.3. *Warnings*

Another future-oriented speech act is that of warning. Again, my legitimate question was: can *inshallah* be used with this particular speech act? My examples included hypothetical situations such as the following:

If you do this, God will punish you/you will burn in hell.
If you see him again, you will bring shame on our family.

This time my informants' answers to the question above were a unanimous "no". Indeed, there seems to be a sense in which a warning and *inshallah* just don't go together, but I could not work out what it is from the answers to my questionnaire. For one thing, if we gloss *inshallah* as "God willing" and repeat the last part of the examples above, the awkwardness of the combination becomes apparent:

?? […] God will punish you, God willing.
?? […] you will burn in hell, God willing.
?? […] you will bring shame on our family, God willing.

In my opinion, the true reason for the infelicitous use of *inshallah* with a warning lies in the specific nature of this speech act which, unlike a promise or a threat, excludes the speaker's personal involvement in and control over the undesirable consequences of non-compliance. If so, can a Muslim speaker's warning risk sounding like a sinful boast? Most probably not.

3.3.4. *Expressives*

The class of expressives includes "ritualistic acts in which speakers express civility and goodwill towards each other" (Tsui 1994: 152). As far as the use of *inshallah* is concerned, well-wishing is perhaps the speech act with which this expression is most frequently associated due to its future-oriented character. Here are a few examples found in Masliyah (1999: 103):

(to a pregnant woman) *Inshallah you deliver safely.*
(to an unmarried girl present at a wedding) *Inshallah the day comes soon when He takes you into account.*
(to a bachelor) *Inshallah God let you have […] a good and well-bred girl.*

Other more commonly heard examples are:

Have a nice vacation/weekend, etc. inshallah!
Good luck inshallah!
Enjoy your dinner inshallah!

In all these cases, the recipient can answer by thanking or by repeating the sacred word.

Leave-takings and farewells are also fully compatible here:

Keep in touch inshallah.
See you soon inshallah.

Again, replying by repeating the keyword for optimistic reinforcement winds up the exchange nicely.

Other expressives on the long list compiled by Masliyah (1999) to illustrate various contextual uses of *inshallah* are condoling and congratulating. However, this is done with little (if any) attention being paid to internal speech- act configuration. The examples in which *inshallah* is used do not actually count as either condolences or congratulations, but rather as wishes, because reference is made not to a past event but to one in the future:

Inshallah what he has missed in age, be added to yours.
Inshallah the deceased leaves behind longevity for you. (Masliyah 1999:104)

Let us note, in passing, that in other cultures, this wishing component will fail to have the intended consoling effect – quite the contrary.

Paradoxically, the use of *inshallah* in the example below, far from conveying the meaning of congratulating, sounds more like a consolation:

("Congratulating" a woman who has given birth to a daughter) *Inshallah, she will be followed by sons.* (Masliyah 1999:102)

In Middle-Eastern cultures it is very important for a woman to give birth to a boy, both for her "reputation" as a woman and for the future of the family – the husband may insist on his wife continuing to conceive until a baby boy is born. In a polygamous society, however, there are other options as well.

4. Conclusion

It is very difficult - if not impossible - to give definitive answers when dealing with the realm of intercultural encounters, and any attempt to do so may result in even more questions being left unanswered.

Developing intercultural and interactional competence, especially in English Language Teaching, is certainly not a one-time target, but an ongoing process.

My paper has analysed some of the uses of *inshallah* as it occurs in English, which is the lingua franca used by people from different cultures living in the Middle East. More specifically, the situations I had in mind were the interactions at KKU, to which I am a witness every day. These interactions involve verbal exchanges between students and teachers on the one hand, and among teachers themselves, on the other. The students (all Saudis) invariably use Arabic, not English, to communicate among themselves. Sometimes it appears that Saudi speakers make conscious use of Arabic expressions in English as a means of "disidentification" from the Western culture, to borrow a term from Bou Franch (1998:6).

What then prompts non-Muslim speakers to use such ritualistic expressions in their daily English? Can it be a conscious effort of cultural self-adjustment or adaptation? Or rather the alluring exoticism of what the online English *Wiktionary* now labels "Arabic English"?

Whatever it is, I keep overhearing now my other Romanian colleague making arrangements with a South-African (*Don't forget about tomorrow, inshallah*/*11 o'clock, inshallah*), now an American colleague reassuring a student (*I will mark you present, inshallah*). As for myself, if I see an impatient student making for the door before the class is over, I say to him *Whereto, inshallah?* (i.e. "Just where do you think you're going?"), which is normally followed by non-verbal compliance. Better still, when I learn that my favourite beef tenderloin is not currently in stock and find myself asking my local Egyptian butcher *Inshallah?*, he will just say: *Come on Friday, inshallah*, which is exactly what I was hoping to hear.

Maybe this is an *inshallah* time, after all.

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STUDIES OF LANGUAGE, STUDIES OF LITERATURE: A COGNITIVE RAPPROCHEMENT?

HENRYK KARDELA
Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin

Abstract: *Set in the context of the (inter)subjectivity research pursued in the general paradigm of cognitive science, and in Ronald Langacker's theory of cognitive grammar in particular, the paper discusses the merits of cognitive theory in literary studies. Assuming, as cognitive linguists do, that meaning emerges from discourse as a result of the speaker-hearer meaning negotiation process, we claim that the cognitive paradigm can open new vistas in literary research, allowing for a joint linguistic and literary textual analysis to be carried out.*
Key words: *author, reader, cognitive grammar, (inter)subjectification, virtuality of the fictional world, mind reading, Current Discourse Space*

1. Introduction

There is perhaps no better way of describing the role the reader was claimed to be playing in twentieth century literary studies than to quote from Barthes (1986:55):

> A text consists of multiple writings, issuing from several cultures and entering into dialogue with each other, into parody, into contestation; but there is one place where this multiplicity is collected, united, and this place is not the author, as we have hitherto said it was, but the reader: the reader is the very space in which are inscribed, without any being lost, all the citations a writing consists of; the unity of a text is not in its origin, it is in its destination; but this destination can no longer be personal: the reader is a man without history, without biography, without psychology; he is only that someone who holds gathered into a single field all the paths of which the text is constituted … We know that to restore to writing its future, we must reverse its myth: *the birth of the reader must be ransomed by the death of the author*. (italics added)

Indeed, as noted in Burzyńska (2006), Barthes's famous proclamation of the "death of the author" had shifted, in the second half of the twentieth century, the structuralist analysis of a literary work as a self-contained, fully autonomous creation independent of its creator, to the studies of the reader and his role in the reading process.

Yet, during the past several years, interesting attempts have been made to "bring the author back to life". Thus Claassen (2012), in his study *Author Representations in Literary Reading*, develops an empirical analysis of the author's presence in the text. Can one read *Ik, Jan Cremer*, Claassen asks [an autobiographical novel by Jan Cremer - H.K.; see the discussion in Claassen], "without having [the author's] image in mind"? And Claassen answers:

> According to some literary theorists, that is exactly what interpreters of literary texts *should* do (italics original). The author is considered irrelevant to the interpretation of a literary text, and this view has persisted in literary theory for a rather long time. At the same time the author concept remained implicitly or explicitly present in

> different areas of the literary field (such as edition philology, literary reviewing, literary historiography), and there is a remarkable discrepancy between literary theory on interpretation (where the relevance of the author was disputed) and the practice of literary reviewing (from where the author has never disappeared. (Claassen 2012:2)

According to Claassen (2012:225), in order to gain a better understanding of the reading process, it is essential to take into account "the readers' assumptions about the author's identity, attitude and communicative intentions". On Claassen's analysis, the reading process involves an agreement between the author and the reader to "join in a game of make-believe" (ibid.), a game during which the participants observe the so-called *default of good behaviour* principle. The reading process is described by Claassen (2012:226) as follows:

> I claim that the implicit mutual agreement [between the author and the reader], the joint pretence, generates certain expectations on the reader's part towards the author. The reader has to trust that the author is merely pretending. Although there are some clear conventional fictional markers, such as "Once upon a time," most texts do not have such clear markers and the reader is thus left to trust in the conventional agreement that the author is merely pretending. In general, the readers can imagine all sorts of fictional worlds, and authors call upon assumed common ground to help the reader to build a lively and detailed fictional world. In my opinion, the implicit mutual agreement from the reader's part also has an ethical or moral dimension; it implies that readers generally trust the author in not inviting them to imagine a fictional world that deviates from their moral values and norms, offering them a view on their world that they do not want to embrace. In other words, they trust that the author will not call upon a presumed common ground that the reader does not want to share with the author. I have called this the *default of good behaviour*.

In what follows, I will show how, under a cognitive approach, one can take both the reader's and the author's perspectives on text reading, without necessarily "paying the ransom of life" for either the author or the reader. We claim that the reader-text interaction involves the *(inter)subjectification* of the text by the conceptualizer (i.e. the speaker-hearer). As a result, a new text is created by the reader.

2. (Extreme) subjectification

Subjectification, also called *virtual movement*, has been defined by Langacker (1999a:298) as the "gradual replacement, through attenuation, of the *objective viewing arrangement* - OVA by the *egocentric viewing arrangement* - *EVA*." The process of subjectification can be presented as follows (Langacker 1999a:298; modified):

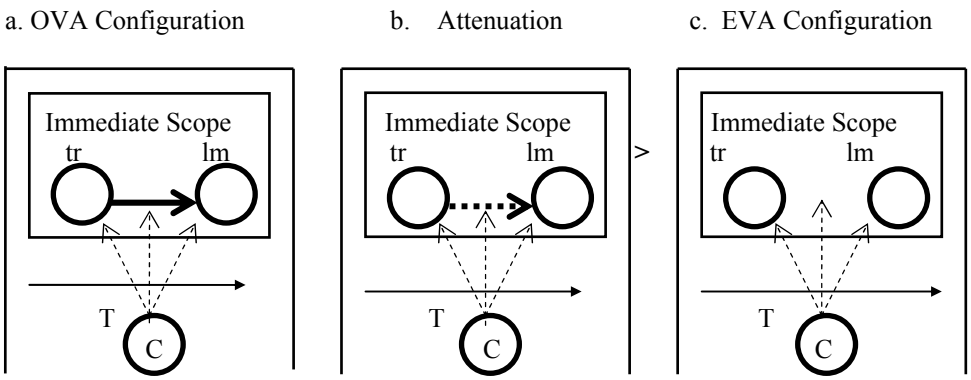

Figure 1. The subjectification process

Figure 1a represents the OVA configuration. Arrows stand for the relation objectively existing between the *trajector, a relational figure* (agent or experiencer) and the landmark, another relational figure (which can be a patient). T is processual time (time in which the conceptualization process takes place); C is the conceptualizer (i.e. the speaker and hearer), who is "off-stage" and who mentally scans the relation between the trajector and the landmark. Broken arrows symbolize the conceptualizer's mental operations. Figure 1b depicts the attenuation of the *OVA* relation: the relation between *tr* and *lm* is motivated to a lesser extent by the objective situation. The objective motivation between *tr* and *lm* is lost in the case of subjectification: the relation is based now on the entirely subjective relation established during the process of scanning.

The process of subjectification, which leads to the complete loss of an objective motivation between *tr* and *lm*, can assume an even more extreme form - that of *extreme subjectification.* Extreme subjectification is defined by Langacker (2003:15) as a situation in which "a speaker […] can carry out [conceptualizing activities] autonomously, without being driven by immediate observation of the process happening 'out there'" and in which "[n]ot pertaining to external developments, but residing solely in the conceptualizer's mental activity, the temporal unfolding of the process is construed with extreme subjectivity" (idem, 16). Thus consider the following two sentences (Langacker 2003:22):

(1) a. My mother will arrive next week.
b. My mother arrives next week.

As Langacker (2003:22) notes, ((1a)[12a in Langacker]) "is a direct description of an actual event. It presupposes the *canonical viewing arrangement* in which the speaker is observing and describing what happens [or, in this case, what will happen - H.K.]." The sentence in ((1b)[12b in Langacker]) is different. According to Langacker (ibid.), this example does not describe an actual event, but rather a virtual one. In Langacker's parlance, "the profiled processs is not the arrival per se, but rather its representation on a virtual schedule". The virtual schedule for (1b) can be presented as follows (Langacker 2003:22; adapted):

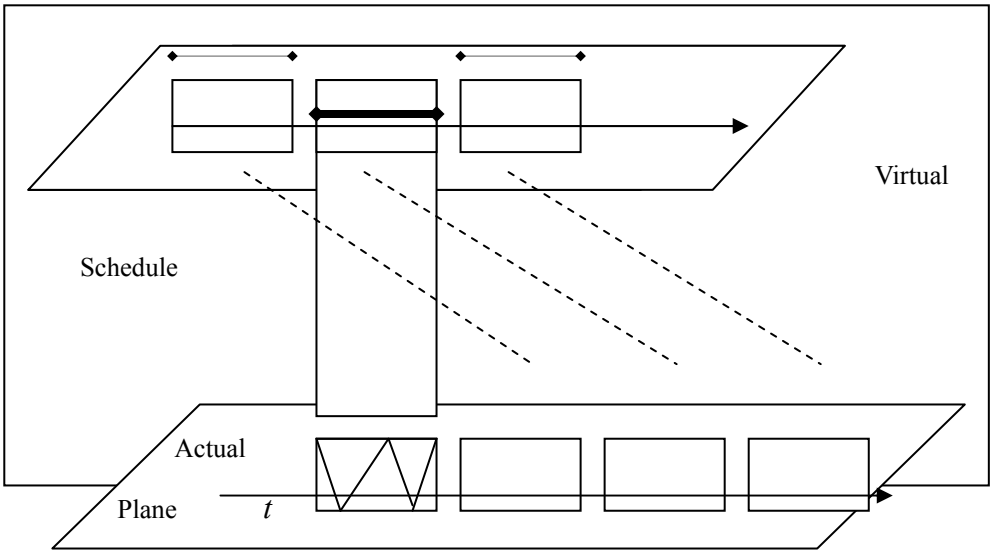

Figure 2. The virtual schedule

Boxes symbolize events taking place along the time axis (t); the box with squiggly lines on the actual plane stands for the speech event (utterance); short line segments including the line segment in bold (profiled process) symbolize the processes designated by the verbs; dotted lines are so-called correspondences, which associate "actual" events with "virtual" events. By using grammatical structures in the form of a sentence with a present tense verb such as *My mother arrives next week*, the conceptualizer is able to "read" the virtual document "at any time", with no reference to the actual circumstance of speech.

I claim that exactly the same process takes place in the case of text-reading: while reading a literary text, the conceptualizer (here: the reader) carries out conceptualizing activities autonomously, being driven solely "by immediate observation of the process happening in the literary work" and not "out there, in the real world". Seen from this angle, a literary work's fictional world constructed by the conceptualizer does not relate to the occurrence of actual events; it is rather, to use Langacker's (2003:22) wording, a "representation on a virtual schedule", a representation "inscribed on a virtual document, [which contains] a large number of virtual events and situations representing particular facets of the world's structure, each of which is normally expected to be instantiated in actuality under the appropriate circumstances" (2003:19).

In what follows, I shall present, drawing on Kędra-Kardela (2010; henceforth K-K), a cognitive model of text-reading involving the subjectification mechanism described above.

3. Reading as subjectification

The theory of literary text reading proposed in K-K is based on the idea that the text reading process involves the movement of the trajector, one of the two

relational figures of a predication (the other figure being the landmark). The movement of the trajector, which underlies the process of subjectification, can be presented as follows (Langacker (1999a:300):

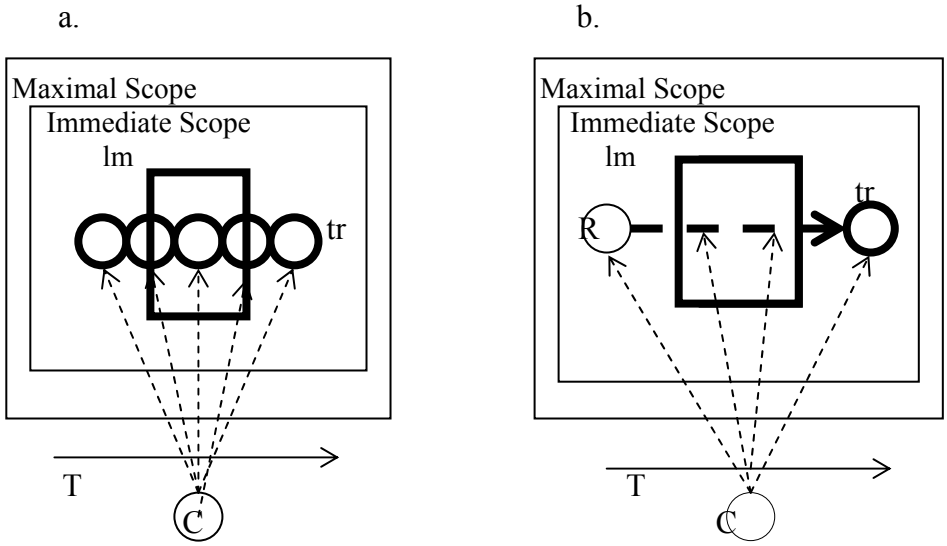

Figure 3 Movement of trajector in the subjectification process

Figures 3a and 3b describe the subjectification process from the point of view of the *scanning* process performed by the conceptualizer during the analysis of sentences such as, say, (2a) and (2b):

(2) a. The balloon is rising above the ground slowly but steadily.
b. The cliff is rising up to 150 meters above sea level.

In (2a), the conceptualizer traces a physical motion of the balloon rising off the ground. This situation is diagrammatically depicted in Figure 3a. Sentence (2b) is different: the conceptualizer follows "subjectively" the imaginary path of the cliff, which rises up from the sea level. The whole scene in (2b) is construed subjectively, because the conceptualizer assumes not the *vantage point* of the viewer of the scene, but rather a certain, speaker-oriented reference point, (R), which locates the trajector with respect to R. By moving along, the conceptualizer establishes now - in the absence of any physical movement - the mental link alone between *lm* and *tr* (cf. Figure 3b).

Now, the trajector movement involved in subjectification can, according to K-K, be posited in the case of the text-reading process as well, where *lm* is the "expanse" of the text scanned, via the trajector movement, by the conceptualizer/reader. In particular, during the reading process, the reader "subjectifies" the text (by mentally getting inside it) and, effectively produces a new text/interpretation. On this analysis, a literary text is a kind of scaffolding that "disappears" after the new, *virtual* text is produced by the reader. The latter

becomes, as already mentioned, a *representation inscribed in the virtual document of the world*.

Turning to the world of fiction, the following assumptions are made about the world of fiction (K-K 2010:138):

> (i) any global world of fiction involves several planes: the actual plane and one or more virtual planes which represent departures from the actual plane in such a way that a "plain" account of a story event becomes structurally more and more complex owing to focalization, shifts in time, different types of speech representation used, narrator's (un)reliability, etc.;
>
> (ii) the virtual planes are linked with the actual plane (or better: virtual planes) via subjectification in such a way that the presence of the reader (or his "interpretational effort") in a literary work is becoming more and more articulate as the virtual planes are being gradually "removed" from the actual plane.

The *virtuality of the world of fiction* can be represented diagrammatically as follows (based on Langacker's (1999b:79; cf. also K-K 2010:135):

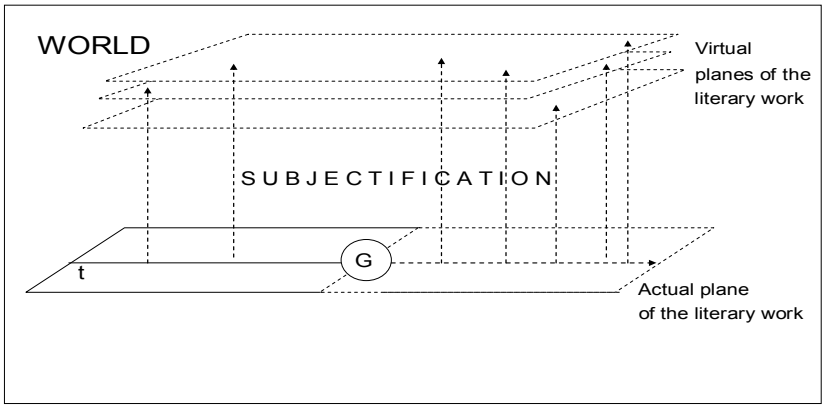

Figure 4. The virtuality of the world of fiction

The process of reading can now be described as follows. Following the cognitive imperative of *closure* to produce a "final, closed text", the reader constructs a fictional world of a literary work. In so doing, he formulates hypotheses concerning this world, evoking *cognitive narrative frames* (CNFs) — the familiar models of reality known to him (For a discussion of CNFs, see K-K). Yet, text expansion will never end as each new piece of information retrieved from the text by the reader, "checked" against the appropriate CNFs, opens up "unlimited" new interpretive possibilities.

The cognitive narratological model as proposed in K-K (2010:143; modified) looks as follows:

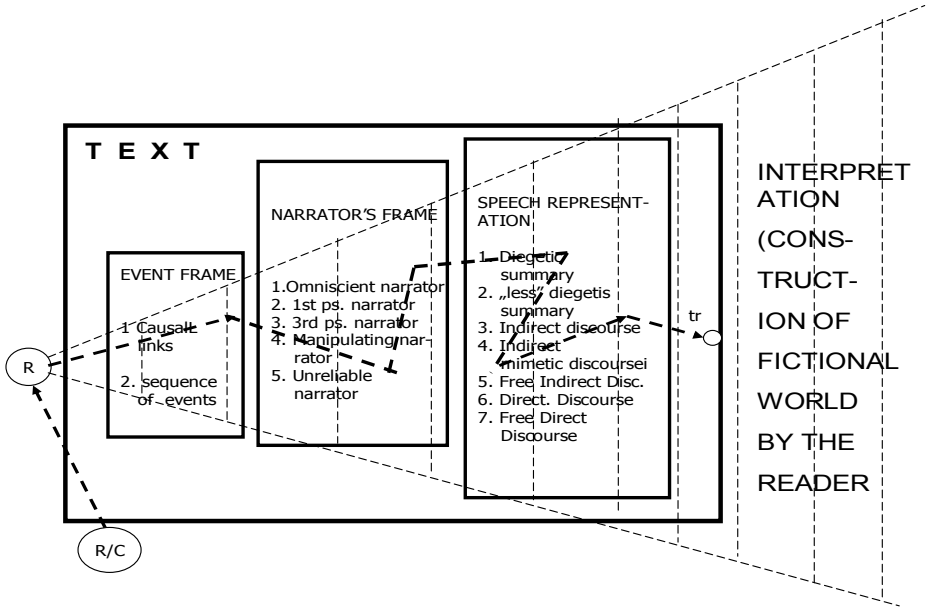

Figure 5. Reading as subjectification

R/C symbolizes the reader/conceptualizer who, in the process of subjectification, assumes the vantage point of R. The subjective relation is established via the abstract motion of the trajectory, which moves across the text's structure, scanning and comparing the text's composition with the CNFs evoked by the text's elements (here with the event frame, the narrator's frame, and the speech representation frame). The widening sides of the angle symbolize the openness of the text. The broken arrow linking R/C with R stands for the interactive relation, holding in so-called processing time T, i.e. the time in which conceptualization is made, between the reader and the fictional narrative. The "distance" between R/C and R is subject to variation and depends on the degree of the reader's intervention in the text: the greater the reader's involvement in the text, the shorter the distance between R and R/C. The shorter the distance, in turn, the greater the text's subjectivity, hence its virtuality.

Note that, as things stand, the burden of interpretation rests entirely with the reader. It should be clear though that the cognitive analysis of the reading process based on the idea of subjectification has to be modified if the author is to be taken into account. We turn to this issue directly now.

4. Reading as intersubjectification

According to Langacker, the dual nature of the conceptualizer, i.e. "the speaker-hearer", can be captured if we assume that these two participants in discourse engage in the so-called "mind-reading process, which can be presented diagrammatically as follows (Langacker 2007:183; modified):

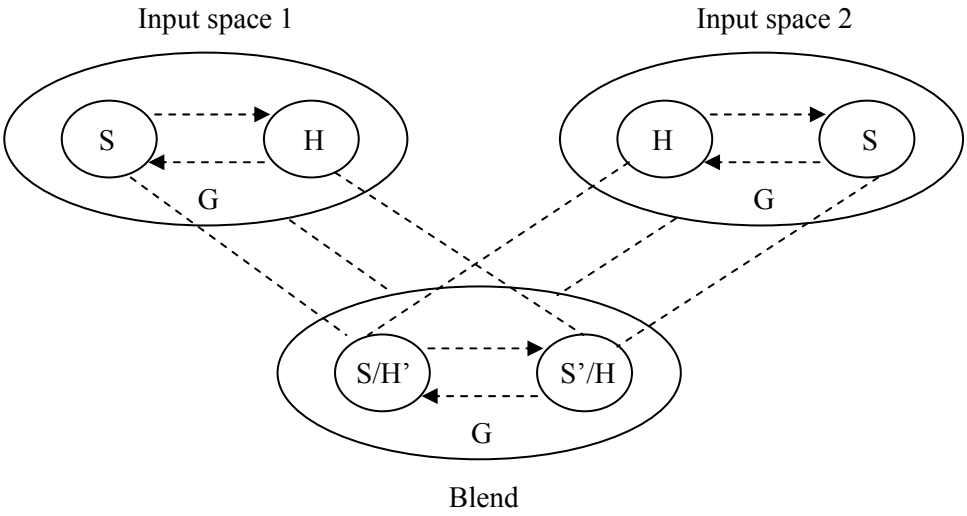

Figure 6. The mind reading process between the speaker and hearer

S symbolizes *speaker,* H stands for *hearer* and G for *ground*. In the case of the discourse participants' mind integration, a role switch of speaker and hearer takes place. Figure 6 provides a mental spaces-based representation of two *speech events*: in one speech event, the speaker (S) addresses the hearer (H); in the other speech event, it is the hearer that addresses the speaker. The blend, using Langacker's parlance, represents the *canonical speech event scenario*, where the roles of the discourse participants overlap: the current speaker (S) is also the potential addressee (H'), while the current addressee (H) is also the potential speaker (S').

The mind integration process plays a crucial role in the management of contextual knowledge by the discourse participants in their interpretation of words, sentences, and larger portions of linguistic structure. When engaged in verbal interaction with the addressee, the speaker establishes with the latter the common interpretational basis of what is being said, including the *Current Discourse Space* (CDS).

Figure 7 represents a context-based "common interpretational basis", including the CDS (upper box in the diagram), and the "negotiated" meaning of a linguistic expression (here: *this tall boy*; lower box). The CDS consists of three basic elements: the *current usage event*, the *previous usage event*, and a usage event that can be *anticipated*. The current usage event consists of so-called *objective content* (OC), i.e. the situation or a thing conceptualized that is communicated, via the mind-integration process, between the speaker (S) and the hearer (H). S and H form what is called the *ground*, i.e. persons and circumstances accompanying the production and understanding of utterances (cf. Langacker 2008:466; modified).

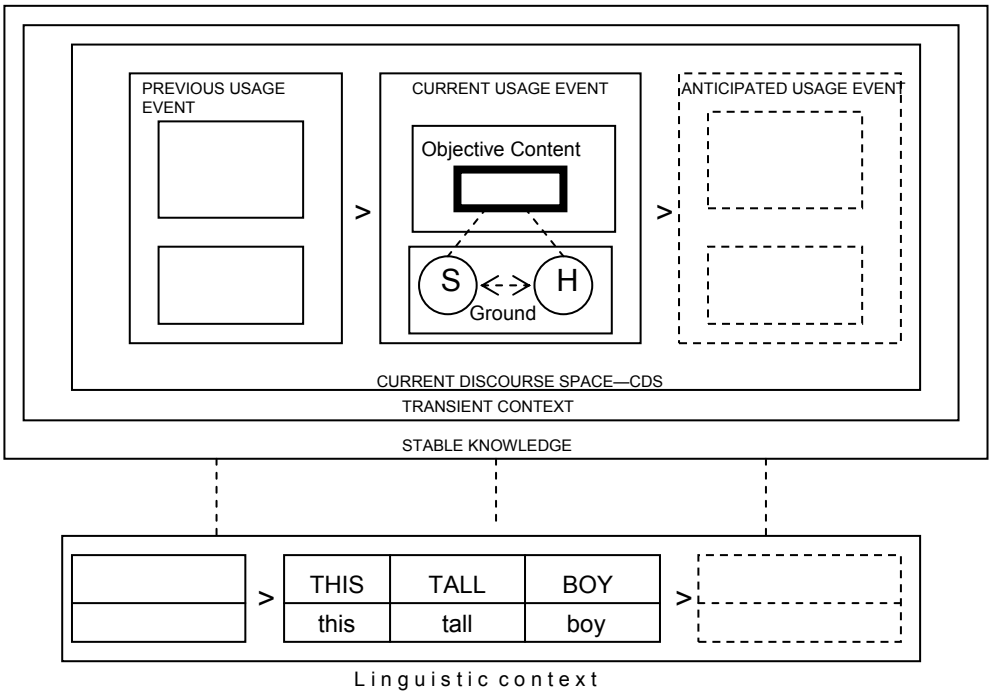

Figure 7. Discourse in Cognitive Grammar

Representing as it does the *intersubjective* nature of discourse, the Current Discourse Space, combined with the theory of mind reading, can, as argued in Kardela and Kędra-Kardela (2014; henceforth K, K-K), be fruitfully applied to an analysis of the literary text-reading process involving the author-reader negotiation over the text meaning. Before we discuss an intersubjectification-based theory of the reading process, as envisaged in K, K-K, it is necessary, to briefly digress on the very idea of intersubjectivity.

The idea of intersubjectivity has been formulated by Zlatev et al. (2008:3) as follows:

(i) Human beings are primordially connected in their subjectivity, rather than functioning as monads who need to ‘‘infer” that others are also endowed with experiences and mentalities that are similar to their own.
(ii) The sharing of experiences is not only, not even primarily, on a cognitive level, but also (and more basically) on the level of affect, perceptual processes and conative (action-oriented) engagements.
(iii) Such sharing and understanding is based on embodied interaction (e.g. empathetic perception, imitation, gesture and practical collaboration)
(iv) Crucial cognitive capacities are initially social and interactional and are only later understood in private or representational terms.

The idea of intersubjectivity has already been applied in literary research, among others by Rembowska-Płuciennik (2012:107; henceforth R-P). She defines intersubjectivity as “the ability to think about the reasoning of others as well as the ability to mentally represent the current, recollected as well as a fictitious state of

someone else's mind." As stated in R-P, "thinking about reasoning of others" requires what is referred to in cognitive psychology and philosophy as *mind-reading*, i.e. "human ability to ascribe to others the mental states relating to their knowledge of the world, the causality of their actions." (R-P 2012:107; my translation). Importantly, as noted by R-P, because intersubjectivity involves the "simulation of behavioral patterns" which enables "intersensory communication, empathy and identification with others" (idem 102), it must have a direct bearing on the process of reading. Indeed, the most important reason as to why we read is because literature "simulates behavioral patterns" which respond to "the multiplicity of points of view and the multiplicity of ways the world is perceived by the individual" (ibid.).

One of the forms of simulation is, R-P concludes, "the creation of a literary character by the author, the narrator and by other characters and the *reader's* construction of the character's mental representation" (idem 106).

Now, if *both* the author *and* the reader are claimed to be involved in the reading process, then the question arises how to incorporate this observation into a viable cognitive theory of text-reading. We can do this, it seems, by combining the subjectification-based theory of text reading as envisioned in K, K-K with Langacker's theory of CDS, involving the concept of mind-reading (cf. KK-K):

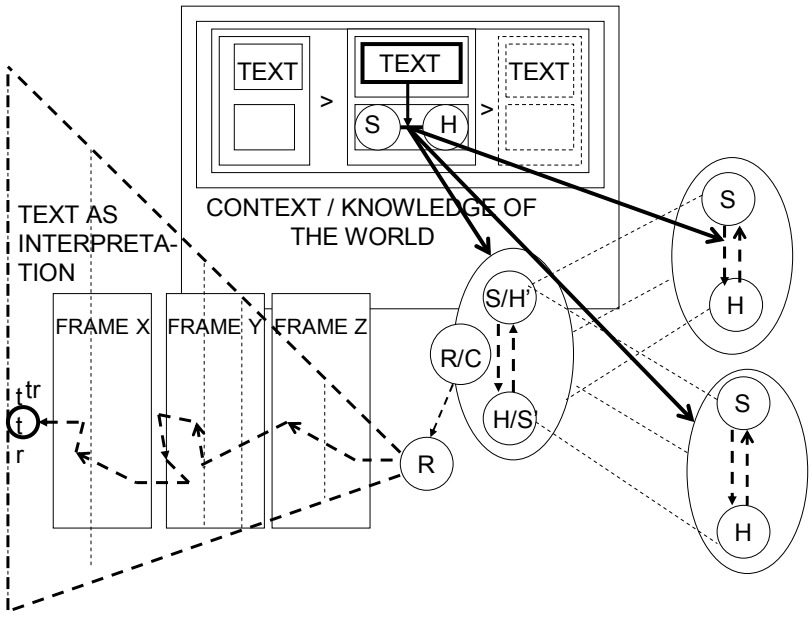

Figure 8. Reading as intersubjectification

In Figure 8, TEXT stands for "an objective content," i.e. for a (portion of) literary text, which undergoes the process of "intersubjectification". During the reading process, requisite CNFs are recruited by the reader (R/C) and the "author-

reader mind integration" takes place. As a result, a new, virtual text emerges - TEXT-AS-INTERPRETATION.

5. Conclusion

I hope to have demonstrated that cognitive grammar is capable of giving a viable account of the meaning negotiation strategy which takes place during the reading process between the author and the reader. It is important to state though what I have *not* claimed. I have not claimed, nor do I wish to claim, that cognitive linguistics can address *all* literature-specific issues, such as the esthetic nature of a literary work, the genealogical aspects of a writer's work or a literary work's reception. These are strictly "literary" concerns and must be tackled on grounds independent of cognitive linguistic analysis. I strongly believe though that a certain kind of rapprochement between linguists and literary theorists is possible, and, indeed, essential. It is essential because communication underlies the analyses of both linguists and literary theorists. Communication between the speaker and the hearer; communication between the reader and the author/text; communication between people.

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EXPLORING DISTRIBUTIONAL SEMANTICS WITH THE SPACEXPLORER TOOL

ÁGOSTON TÓTH
University of Debrecen

Abstract: *Distributional studies quantify the similarity of words by collecting word co-occurrence frequency information from large text corpora. According to the distributional hypothesis, this similarity is a semantic phenomenon. This paper aims to introduce the basics of Distributional Semantics and a new tool, spaceXplorer, which facilitates distributional investigations by collecting co-occurrence information from a Wikipedia snapshot (with or without using linguistic annotation) and displays word similarity information through a convenient, interactive user interface.*
Keywords: *cognitive science, computational linguistics, distributional semantics, lexicon*

1. Introduction

Distributional Semantics is a computational, practice-oriented, data-driven approach to representing meaning. Co-occurrence statistical information supplies empirical evidence about a word's general potential for replacing another word, which gives us the opportunity of measuring word similarity. According to the distributional hypothesis, this similarity is a semantic phenomenon.

Distributional Semantics is a very active research program in Cognitive Science. It is based on a structuralist view on meaning (with roots that can be traced back to Saussure and Harris, cf. Sahlgren 2008): Distributional Semantics focuses on what is internal to language and assumes that other aspects of meaning (e.g. reference) will also be reflected by language-internal phenomena or remain irrelevant for description. Approximating the meaning of words is carried out by assessing distributional properties as manifested in corpora.

A geometric procedure is commonly employed in Distributional Semantics to represent and compare meanings. Co-occurrence events between words are usually collected as numerical features in *feature vectors* that stand for words in a *vector space*. Meaning differences and similarities can then be conveniently represented and calculated in this vector space by working with the feature vectors. More details about this process will be provided in section 2.

As shown above, Distributional Semantics is bound with strong ties to Linguistics and Geometry. Computational linguists have also found the distributional methodology an efficient yet powerful way of acquiring semantic information about words. As far as language technology is concerned, some of the first vector-space applications included the task of finding relevant documents in Information Retrieval (Salton 1971). Question answering (e.g. Tellex et al. 2003) and document clustering (e.g. Manning et al. 2008) may be implemented in a similar way. Comparable systems have been developed for word sense disambiguation (Schütze 1998), thesaurus generation through automatized discovery and clustering of word senses (Crouch 1988, Pantel and Lin 2002) and

named-entity recognition (Vyas and Pantel 2009). Pennacchiotti et al. (2008) use Distributional Semantics in a cognitive semantic context: they propose a method for extending FrameNet's scope by covering more (potentially: frame-evoking) lexical items through distributional lexical unit induction.

Psycholinguistics also has a major role it Distributional Semantics as corpus-derived and psycholinguistic data correlate (gained from human similarity judgements, cf. e.g. Miller and Charles 1991, and from semantic priming experiments, e.g. Pado and Lapata 2007).

Distributional Semantics is a powerful model that has been used in many scientific disciplines, but it has an empirical side that can only be researched with proper tools that can process large corpora and find co-occurrence events between words.

2. How to build a Vector Space Model (VSM)?

Systems designed to collect distributional information about words rely on a geometrical interpretation of the empirical data (Widdows 2004). Each target word is represented in a multi-dimensional space by a feature vector. Each position of the feature vector signals or counts the number of co-occurrences of the given target word with one of the context words we use for describing target items. For example, if the word *drink* is a target word, the word *tea* is among the context words and *tea* occurs 23 times in the close vicinity (in the "context window") of *drink*, then the vector element corresponding to the word *tea* (in the context vector describing the word *drink*) will be set to 23:

$$v_{drink} = < freq_1, freq_2, \ldots, 23, \ldots, freq_t >$$

where *v* is a feature vector that represents a target word in a *t*-dimensional space; *t* stands for the total number of context words.

Large corpora (20-50-100 million words or even more) are necessary for this type of investigation. "Raw", unprocessed corpora may be suitable for the task. In the presence of linguistic annotation, we can take additional details into consideration.

We can compare the distributions of the target words by carrying out calculations with their feature vectors. Here, I will limit the discussion to two basic methods for comparing vectors: we can measure vector distances (Figure 1) or the cosine of the angle between vectors (Figure 2). The latter promises the advantage of being able to avoid problems arising from vector length differences, which is useful, since length depends on the frequency of context words.

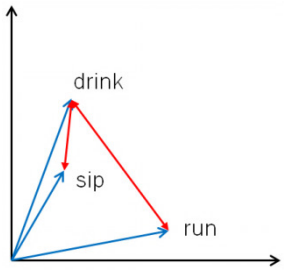

Figure 1. Vector similarity: distance

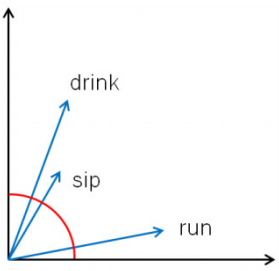

Figure 2. Vector similarity: cosine

3. The spaceXplorer program

Unlike 1st-order word co-occurrence phenomena (seen when words occur together, e.g. in idioms, compounds with open spelling, phrasal verbs, light verbs, collocations, etc.) which are possible to spot by collecting examples of words and listing them (a task readily supported by most concordancing programs), 2nd-order word co-occurrence phenomena, which are observed and quantified in distributional studies, are not directly visible to the naked eye. We need software tools that process text, find occurrences of target words and collect and statistically evaluate contextual information about each occurrence in context so that the degree to which *words occur with the same words* can be calculated.

3.1. Measuring word similarity using spaceXplorer

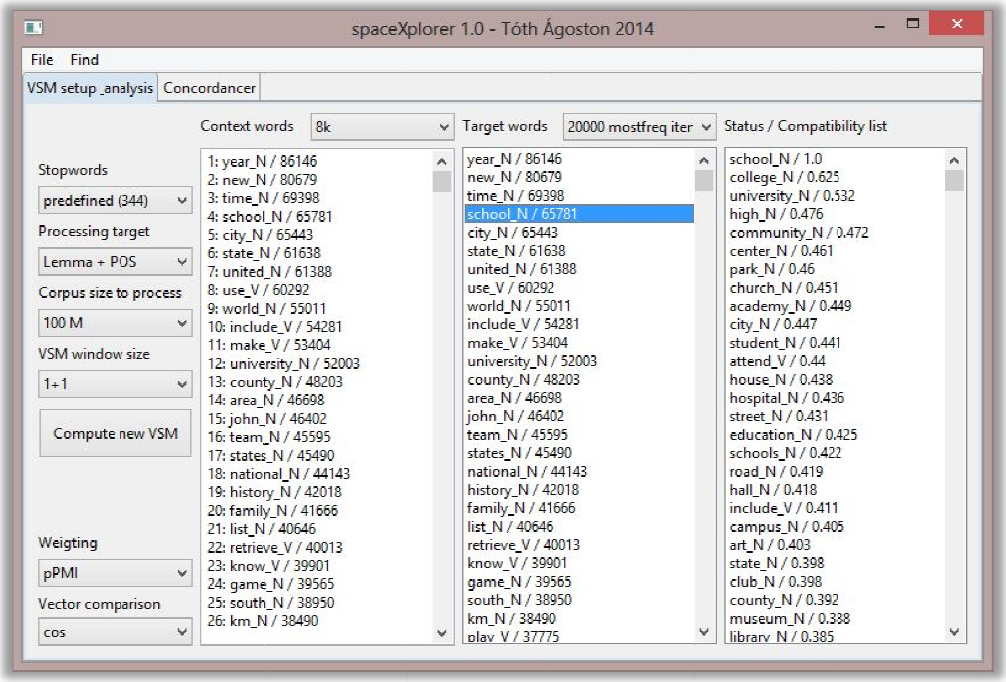

Figure 3

SpaceXplorer (Figure 3) is a text processing tool for distributional studies. Before we start processing the corpus, the following parameters must be set from a list of options available on the left side of the interface shown in Figure 3:

- stopwords*: whether we want to exclude the most common (function) words from processing,*
- processing target*: lemma or word form with or without POS labels,*
- corpus size to process*: up to 100 million words (using 10,000-word samples from the Wikipedia snapshot),*
- VSM window size: *the size of the moving window around the target word where the context words are detected.*

Near the top of the interface, we get options for selecting the amount of *target words* and *context words* for processing. The corresponding lists of target and context words become visible immediately, together with corpus frequency data, as shown in the *Context words* and *Target words* fields of Figure 3.

The present form of the program is prepared to process the TC Wikipedia ("Tagged and Cleaned Wikipedia") corpus available at <http://nlp.cs.nyu.edu/wikipedia-data/>.

Having set all these parameters, the user can start processing the corpus and collecting statistical information about the target words by pressing the "Compute new VSM" button. Processing time depends mainly on the amount of context words, target words and the corpus size. Running the program at its most time consuming settings requires about 24 hours on a single PC to complete. It can finish in much less time (sometimes in minutes) with more modest settings, which is useful for parameter tuning or when the program is run for demonstration purposes only. Crucially, the user can save the results and load them later; in this way, multiple investigations can be carried out without having to process the corpus again with the same parameters.

When corpus processing is over, we can select any target word from the *Target words* list: as a result, the *Compatibility list* field displays all (target) words in decreasing order of distributional similarity to the selected target. The degree of similarity is also displayed in the list. In Figure 3, for instance, the noun *school* is selected for analysis. The noun *school* appears at the top of the similarity list (compatibility score: 1.0), followed by the noun *college* (compatibility: 0.625) and the noun *university* (compatibility: 0.532). Compatibility scores are all relative to the distribution of the selected target word (*school_N*) and they show the level of freedom (0-1) with which a word can replace another word in the corpus using the selected parameter set. For calculating the compatibility scores and ordering the list, a similarity measure and a weighting scheme must also be selected on the interface (in this case: *pPMI weighting* and *cosine similarity*; you can find these settings in the bottom left corner). These options can be freely changed at any time without having to recalculate the word-context matrix by parsing the corpus again.

3.2. Creating concordances

A concordancer locates occurrences of a search expression and lists them in context. Concordance listings can be used in general linguistic research, lexicography and language learning. Concordances were used before electronic computers were invented in the middle of the 20th century; the first concordances were compiled for the Bible. In many cases, producing a concordance took years or even decades, and the result was published in several volumes. The invention of electronic computers sped up the process of compiling a concordance considerably. The spread of home computers also made the process interactive: you do not need to print the concordance, but you can generate it on the spot. Moreover, you can sort the concordance or change the options so that the pattern you are seeking becomes readily observable.

With spaceXplorer, you can create a concordance listing for the words selected from the *Compatibility list* field, which is filled with data during a VSM experiment. The concordance function can only be accessed after a VSM exploration is complete.

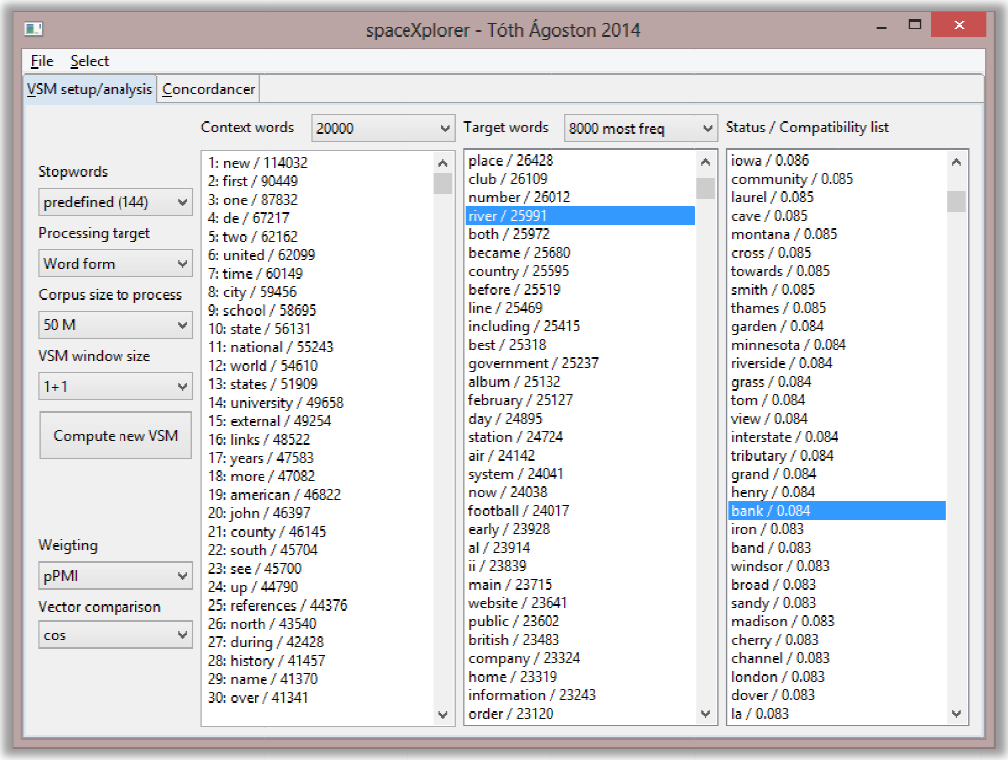

Figure 4

Figure 4 shows a compatibility list generated for the target word *river* by processing 50 million words (using no lemmatization and no POS labels at this time). After the analysis, the target words (the 8000 most frequent words of the corpus) are listed in descending order of compatibility with *river* in the *Compatibility list* field. Note that you do not see the beginning of the list in Figure 4, as the word *bank* has already been selected for further processing in this case. Also note that you do not have to browse the list manually: the program can help you locate target words and compatibles by using the corresponding functions on the *Select* menu.

When you activate the concordancer function by clicking on the *Concordancer* tab on the screen, you will get a *keyword in context* concordance shown in Figure 5. The major output elements are tabulated into columns:

- *left context,*
- *keyword (*bank*),*
- *right context,*
- *degree of relevance (0.0 – 1.0),*
- *context words available in the given sentence for calculating relevance.*

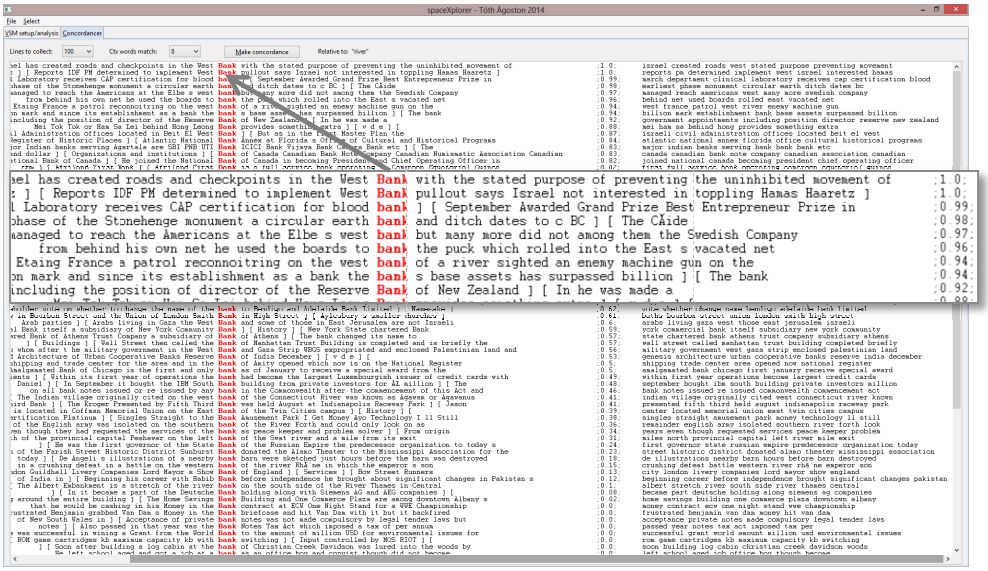

Figure 5

The concordance function comes with its own set of parameters. Most importantly, the user must specify the number of context words (used in the VSM-based part of the experiment) for calculating *relevance*. Theoretically, sentences with higher relevance score tolerate a change from the concordance keyword (in this case: *bank*) to the target word selected in the VSM experiment (here: *river*).

In this example, the following four sentences are returned as the most relevant ones on the basis of the Wikipedia data (relevance scores are specified in parentheses):

(1) *Israel has created roads and checkpoints in the West Bank with the stated purpose of preventing the uninhibited movement of… (1.0)*
(2) *Reports IDF PM determined to implement West Bank pullout says Israel not interested in toppling Hamas… (1.0)*
(3) *… Laboratory receives CAP certification for blood bank. (0.99)*
(4) *The earliest phase of the Stonehenge monument a circular earth bank and ditch dates to # BC… (0.98)*

Bank is a well-known example of homonymy (largely because of its "financial institution" and "river bank" senses). In this particular example, the program was meant to return examples with the "river bank" meaning, since the program was asked to locate sentences in which *river* and *bank* were interchangeable.

Sentences (1) and (2) seem to be correct at first sight. Unfortunately, sentences (1) - (3) are all affected by tokenization issues, the problem of chunking text into appropriate units. *West Bank* in sentence (1) and (2) is a proper name which should have been handled as a single word. The spaceXplorer program received no information about this tokenization option from the corpus (this is a very common problem with multi-word entities). Sentence (3) is similar: *blood bank* is a compound; therefore, it should have been handled as a single lexical item. Sentence (4) is unaffected by these tokenization problems and delivers a sense very

close to the expected "river bank" sense. Please note that the majority of the sentences listed in Figure 5 contain the "financial institution" sense as it is much more frequent (in the Wikipedia subcorpus being used) than the "river bank" sense.

Distributional Semantics collects data about *word types;* characterizing individual tokens (occurrences of a word) is a rarity in the literature. Some notable exceptions are Reisinger and Mooney's (2010) prototype-based approach, Erk and Padó's (2010) exemplars and Scheible, Schulte im Walde and Springorum's (2013) *Codis-Contexts* disambiguation method. They tackled the question of lexical ambiguity (in very different ways) within the framework of Distributional Semantics. The spaceXplorer program offers a traditional, *word type*-based approach to measuring distributional compatibility, without provisions for disambiguation. Therefore, distributional data remains fully affected by lexical ambiguity. The concordance function of spaceXplorer lets the user pick out authentic examples of use, while quantifying relevance of each corpus sentence as to the compatibility relation between the selected target word and the selected compatible(s); the user can browse the list and work with the examples that he or she prefers.

As shown above, the proper analysis and interpretation of corpus data continue to require human linguistic knowledge and intuition. In this respect, *distributional concordancing* is not different from traditional concordancing, where frequency, t-score, MI-score etc. information give assistance for the user to find collocations (by creating lists of potential collocations), but it is up to the human user to find the appropriate patterns.

4. Concluding remarks

The spaceXplorer program introduced in this paper is a clean, easily available, free distributional semantic tool, suitable for many situations. The program uses a Wikipedia snapshot and supports linguistic annotation (lemma and POS information). It lets the user carry out corpus-based word similarity experiments and it offers a concordancing facility.

The present form of the program is not suitable for massive qualitative evaluations, compositional distributional studies or for creating large word-context matrices. It does, however, support small and medium-size investigations, qualitative and quantitative studies, run on Windows computers, offer a graphical user interface (GUI) and let the user set the processing parameters easily and see the effect on the screen. It is also designed to be an ideal tool for teaching distributional semantics to students of linguistics and psycholinguistics. The program is available for free from the author of this paper (toth.agoston@arts.unideb.hu).

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THE NLP MODEL OF COMMUNICATION

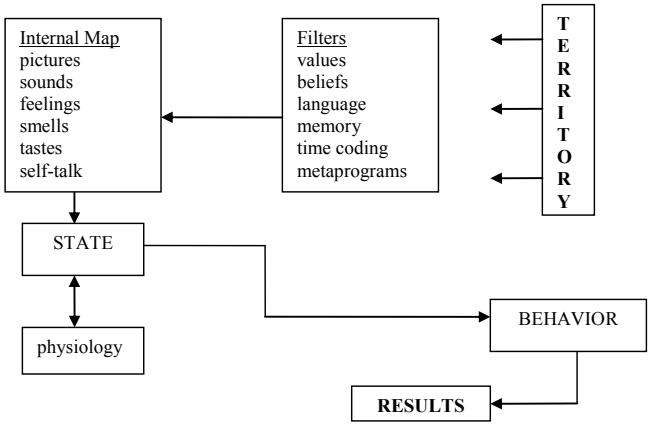
CRISTINA-MIHAELA ZAMFIR
'Ovidius' University of Constanța

Abstract: *The aim of this paper is to offer a simplified version of the NLP communication model which I will use to reveal more about how we communicate, generate ideas, make decisions and produce behaviour. I will first explain the mechanism of the model to give an overall understanding of how it works; then, I will analyze the implications of the relationship between communication and language which acts as a filter on the world.*
Keywords: *calibration, filters, internal representations, language, map of reality, territory*

1. Introduction

The world around us represents the *territory* and we can make sense of it by *filtering out* information. The result will be our own *map of reality*. According to Molden (1996:31), this map of reality "does not necessarily represent the *territory* from which we gathered the information to construct our map[…]A territory is always much more detailed than any map created to represent it" (my emphasis). The filters we use to sort out important information are our assumptions, perceptions, values, beliefs, language, memories, and the so-called "meta programs", i.e. the habitual filters. This filtered information makes up our internal map, which consists of pictures, sounds, feelings, smells and tastes.

I agree with Molden (1996) in that we are curious to explore the differences found in management thinking and behaviour. Perspective and difference in thinking are at the root of all behaviour, and at the basis of neuro-linguistic programming (NLP), which is a science of perspective and difference. Consequently, our experience of and response to the world are achieved through our representational systems and our behaviour is determined by our 'neuro-linguistic' maps of reality.



(Source: Molden 1996:32)

As it is obvious in the diagram, Molden's further explanation is that "our internal map and our physiology together create a state of being" (1996:32) which guides our behaviour.

Ten years later, Molden and Hutchinson (2006:26) considered that we "represent our unique version of reality - through pictures, sounds, internal dialogue and feelings, and sometimes smell and taste. We capture our personal understanding of reality through a combination of our external senses and our inner thoughts…This unique perspective of events is called our *internal representation* or *map of reality*" (my emphasis).

Comparing Molden's diagram (1996) to Molden and Hutchinson's explanation (2006), one can see that self-talk in the diagram is replaced by internal dialogue, and that smells and tastes are not given so much significance. Moreover, Molden and Hutchinson lay emphasis on understanding reality by a combination of external senses, from pictures to tastes, and inner thoughts representing "self-talk".

The way in which the functioning of visual, auditory and kinesthetic receptors is triggered by the various stimuli coming from the outside environment has already been pointed out. When referring to the business field, one should find ways of holding the attention of potential customers, as each individual has a variety of sensory inputs at their disposal. I consider that one of the best ways to manage an effective relationship with a customer is to learn how to listen to him and to create a favourable atmosphere. The client should *feel* positive about doing business with you, and maintaining a customer-oriented approach *shows* that you care about him/her, and *are looking out for him/her*. Most salespeople concentrate only on the respective sale and adopt a sales-oriented approach by saying: "From now on s/he must buy only from me". In this case, the seller would not stoop to earning more. His objective is to get the order on the spot, because the store must rise its monthly turnover. Conversely, a good approaching strategy along with values of opening and interrupting in case of a negotiation, the arguments and answers appropriate to overcoming objections, and certainly a complete list of questions make up the necessary 'tools' of a business encounter.

Hearing, *sight* and *touch* are the three important communication senses for both the salesperson and the customer. Knowing how to question in order to identify customer needs is the lead to overstating the product's merits. The salesperson should put himself/herself into his interlocutor's position and imagine what kind of benefits could be relevant. The client needs to *hear* as quickly as possible the advantages that the product brings to him/her, otherwise s/he will not accept an appointment. Moreover, the use of samples enhances the purchaser's *visual* curiosity, especially if there are attractive products which also generate the customer's sudden impulse to *touch* them. One can easily make sense of a product through the *tactile* experience, thus opening doors for a *firm* commitment to place an order. The impulses set up by the three receptors (sight, sound, feeling) are transmitted to the brain for possible responses. Thus, the question may arise: *How do the brain and nervous system handle incoming and outgoing signals*? As NLP theorists consider, we experience and respond to the outside world through our sensory representational systems.

From the seller's viewpoint, delivering the presentation into detail (without concentrating on it more than 50 per cent however) and modulating the *tone of his voice* so as to allow the listener to assess, consciously or unconsciously, the extent to which the salesperson believes what s/he says, should be a constant preoccupation throughout the selling process.

The sales agent should *keep a watchful eye* for everything that comes and *listen* carefully to his interlocutor. The latter will almost certainly bring about stimulus variation. Since the conversational marketing process involves human contact, and hence persuasion, NLP strongly advocates the necessity of *calibrating verbal and non-verbal language and mind reading the other person's thoughts***.** When *the bell rings* for the last round of product negotiation, one should concentrate on uncovering objections. During this stage, the salesperson keeps *a cool head* focusing on the interlocutor's buying signals and *feeling* when the time is right to shake hands and clinch the deal.

2. Language as a filter

In the construction of reality, language plays its decisive part as it itself construes reality (Halliday 1992:65) and is modelled according to the needs of the communicators.

According to the Sapir (1929) - Whorf (1956)Hypothesis, on the one hand, language actually determines the way the language user thinks (the *strong version* of the hypothesis being shared by Halliday 1992:65). On the other hand, language is one of the factors that influences our understanding of reality (the *weak version* shared by Hatim and Mason 1990:105).

Moreover, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis has implications for the international businessperson as expressed by Ferraro (2006:58):

> The hypothesis states that linguistically different people not only communicate differently but also think and perceive the world differently. Thus, by learning the local language, the international businessperson will acquire a vehicle of communication as well as a better understanding of why people think and behave as they do.

Our sensory and linguistic filters have the capacity to sort the environment, i.e. the *territory*, and operate on the variety of sense impressions sent from the outside world. NLP regards these *filters* as "*lenses on reality*", coming out of the relation between *I*, *me*, *my* and the things *beyond our experience*. Besides, Dilts and DeLozier (2000) point out the role of the *linguistic filter*, namely that of shaping and stabilizing our experience of the world.

By using language, we add meaning to the world around us. However, language is often not a true representation of our experience.

Generally speaking, language helps us generalize, distort and delete much information from our experience. The words we use give a very poor or over-simplified account of our experience. Our perception is selective and permanently gets more stimuli than we can filter. This leads to our misinterpretation or distortion of reality, as a result of changing or misplacing words.

Of course, this depends to a large extent on someone's *internal map*. If we want to change someone else's reactions and behaviour, s/he must be offered choices of different maps. For example, in business English, in general, and in negotiating and selling, in particular, oppositeness of behavioural profiles is extremely frequent, arousing *territory disputes*. The essential thing in these fields is *owning the territory*, because this can help you organize the territory as you like. In addition, there must be *respect for the other person's internal map*. According to Molden and Hutchinson (2006:99), a state of curiosity must be developed; this "will allow you to gain information *about the other person's map, which will help*

you to build rapport, communicate and influence…It does not mean you have to agree, but it is useful to understand" (my emphasis). Generally, it is only people that have worked in large organizations for a long time who can feel that they own certain parts of the territory. It has already been mentioned that the map is not the territory. We create our mental representation of the world which is not the reality. We do this by filtering information through our senses (our representational systems, abbreviated to VAKOG), the language we use in making generalizations, distortions and deletions.

3. Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to give an overview of a fascinating, relatively new field called Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), which is more than a model of communication. It is a way of thinking and a *frame of mind* based on the curiosity to find out each person's *map* of the world, and on the exploration of the *territory* from which we form our impressions about reality. The role of the sensory systems and the meta-programs were approached, as they represent an unconscious filter in the communication process. A person's *internal representation* was also analyzed, when similar filters and language patterns were used. This is one of the reasons why I introduced meta programs and internal representations in the same NLP model of communication, because I consider that our internal representation, just like our meta program patterns, are unique and act as filters on the world.

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NOTES ON THE AUTHORS

Gönül Bakay is an Associate Professor in Bahçeşehir University, İstanbul, Turkey, holding a PhD. in 18th century English novel. Her teaching expertise covers Women's studies and English literature from the 18th century to the present..She has published several books in Turkish: *Virginia Woolf ve İletişim* ('Virginia Woolf and Communication'*), Günümüz Türk Kadını Başarı Öyküleri*.('Success Stories by Contemporary Turkish Women'), Kadın ve Mekan ('Women and Space'), and *Atatürkü Yaşıyanlar* ('They had known Atatürk') and *Simone de Beauvoir: her Life, Philosophy and Art. Works*. She has published many articles both in Turkey and abroad.
E-mail address: gonulbakay@gmail.com

Diana Benea is a Junior Lecturer in the Department of English at the University of Bucharest, where she teaches a course in contemporary American drama and various seminars in American literature. She earned her PhD in Philology at the University of Bucharest in 2013, with a dissertation entitled *The Ethical and Political Imagination of Thomas Pynchon's Later Novels*. Her main research interests include contemporary American fiction; critical theories and methodologies; theater and performance studies.
E-mail address: dbenea@gmail.com

Elisa Bolchi is a temporary research fellow in English Literature at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan. She has analysed the reception of Virginia Woolf in Italian literary periodicals between the two World Wars, publishing the book *Il paese della bellezza* (Milan, EDUCatt, 2007) and some articles and essays in Italian and American journals and volumes. Her research interests lie in the fields of Victorian literature, modernist influences on postmodern writers, ecocritical literature.
E-mail address: elisa.bolchi@unicatt.it

Alina Bugheşiu, PhD, is a Research Assistant at the Technical University of Cluj-Napoca, North University Centre of Baia Mare, Romania. Her main interest is in the field of onomastics (especially commercial names and unconventional anthroponyms, such as nicknames and user/chat names).
E-mail address: alina.bughesiu@gmail.com

Violeta Craina is a graduate of the West University Timişoara, and is currently a PhD student at the same university. She teaches English at The National College "Constantin Diaconovici Loga" in Timişoara.
E-mail address: violeta_craina@yahoo.com

Péter Dolmányos, PhD, teaches English in the Department of English Studies of Eszterházy Károly College, Eger, Hungary. His research interests focus on a variety of aspects of contemporary Irish poetry. He has published several papers in this field in various scholarly forums, both in Hungary and abroad.
E-mail address: peter.dolmanyos@gmail.com

Carla Fusco teaches British Civilization at the University of Macerata, Italy. She has published critical essays on British travel writers, A.S. Byatt, Peter Redgrove, Kazuo Ishiguro, James Joyce, William Shakespeare, George Gissing, Charlotte Brönte, Geoffrey Hill, Carol Ann Duffy, Christina Rossetti, Doris Lessing, Iris Murdoch, Evelyn Waugh, Anthony Trollope and Muriel Spark. She is the author of a monography on Kazuo Ishiguro (forthcoming).
E-mail address: fuscocarla@libero.it

Gabriela Glăvan is an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Letters, History and Theology of the West University of Timişoara, Romania, where she teaches courses and seminars in comparative literature, discourse analysis and cultural studies; she has published a book on particular discourses of modernity in Romanian interwar literature, several academic studies on cultural and individual identity and is a constant contributor to various literary reviews.
E-mail address: gabrielleglavan@gmail.com

Mihăiță Horezeanu is a Senior Lecturer at the English Department of the West University, Timişoara, Romania, and Associate Professor at the Faculty of Languages and Translation at King Khalid University in Abha, Saudi Arabia. He holds a PhD in linguistics from the West University of Timişoara, with a thesis on English and Romanian intonation. His main research interests lie in the fields of phonetics, discourse analysis and intercultural pragmatics.
E-mail address: horezeanu@yahoo.com

Burak Irmak is a graduate of the Department of English Language Teaching at Dokuz Eylul University in Izmir, Turkey. He works in the department of Applied English and Translation at Beykoz Vocational School of Logistics in Istanbul.
E-mail address: burak.irmak@outlook.com

Justyna Jajszczok is a PhD candidate at the Institute of English Cultures and Literatures, University of Silesia, Poland. Her PhD dissertation deals with "The Parasite and Parasitism in Victorian Science and Literature". She has published articles on Charles Darwin, Charles Dickens and George Eliot, and Victorian beetle-collecting.
E-mail address: justyna.jajszczok@us.edu.pl

Henryk Kardela is Professor of Linguistics at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin, Poland. His fields of interest include lexicology, syntax, semantics, and the philosophy of linguistics, with special emphasis on cognitive linguistics theory. He is the author of three books: *A Grammar of Polish and English Reflexives*, Lublin: UMCS, 1985, *WH-Movement in English and Polish. Theoretical Implications*, Lublin: UMCS, *Dimensions and Parameters in Grammar. Studies on A/D Asymmetries and Subjectivity Relations in Polish,* UMCS, Lublin, 2000.
E-mail address: henkar@poczta.umcs.lublin.pl

Kağan Kaya has a PhD from Atatürk University, Turkey, and joined the English Language and Literature department of Cumhuriyet University as an assistant professor in 2010. He teaches British Drama courses. His research concentrates on the works of some contemporary British playwrights. His current interest is David Hare's political drama.
E-mail address: kkaya@cumhuriyet.edu.tr

Anna Kędra-Kardela is an Associate Professor in the Department of English at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin, Poland. Her current areas of interest include the Anglo-Irish short story, Gothic fiction, cognitive poetics, and narratology. She has authored two books: *The Ascent of the Soul. A Study in the Poetic Persona of Henry Vaughan's* Silex Scintillans (1992) and *Reading as Interpretation. Towards a Narrative Theory of Fictional World Construction* (2010), and co-edited *Perspectives on Literature and Culture* (2004), *The Craft of Interpretation: The English Canon* (2007) and *Expanding the Gothic Canon. Studies in Literature, film and New Media* (2014). She has also published articles on various aspects of cognitive poetics, (cognitive) narratology, and the short stories of Elizabeth Bowen and Frank O'Connor.
E-mail address: annakardela@poczta.umcs.lublin.pl

Mirela Lăpugean has a Masters Degree in Creative Writing from the West University of Timişoara, Romania, and is currently a PhD student at the same university. Her research field covers cultural studies, trauma studies and creative writing. She teaches English preparatory courses, translation studies, Cambridge preparatory courses and English for special purposes at the West University, Timişoara.
E-mail address: mirilapugean@yahoo.com

Marlena Marciniak works as an Assistant Professor at the Institute of English, Opole University, Poland. She specialises in Victorian fiction and culture, as well as masculinity studies. She has published several articles on the Victorian concepts of fatherhood, married life and male homosocial relations, as well as on the nineteenth-century ideals of manliness.
E-mail address: marciniakm@uni.opole.pl

Elisabetta Marino is a tenured Assistant Professor of English literature at the University of Rome "Tor Vergata", Italy. She has written three monographs, published a translation into Italian with an introduction, and edited six collections of essays. She has published extensively on the English Romantic writers (especially on Mary Shelley), on Italian American literature, and on Asian American and Asian British literature.
E-mail address: emarino@hurricane.it

Paul Mărgău, a graduate of the 'Babeş-Bolyai' University of Cluj-Napoca, Romania, is currently completing his PhD on English literature at the West University of Timişoara. His doctoral thesis aims to determine the changes in the perception of Gothic literature and of its representative figure, the monster, as well as the causes of its success and survival in all subsidiary and/or alternative forms of contemporary literature.
E-mail address: margau.alex.paul@gmail.com

Jacek Mydla is an Assistant Professor at the Institute of English Cultures and Literatures, at the University of Silesia, Poland. He holds an MA in philosophy and in English philology, as well as a PhD in literary studies. He conducts research and lectures in the history of British literature (e.g. Gothic fiction and drama and narrative theory). His book-length publications include: *The Dramatic Potential of Time in Shakespeare*, *Spectres of Shakespeare* and *Shakespearean Tide*. Forthcoming is a book on the ghost stories of M. R. James. In his recent articles, in Polish and English, Mydla has been concerned with romantic drama, British empiricism in the eighteenth century, and the supernatural in fiction.
E-mail address: zitrajacek@gmail.com

Anton Pokrivčák is full-time Professor at *Constantine the Philosopher* University in Nitra, Slovakia. In 1992/1993 he was a Fulbright Fellow in the Department of American Studies at Yale University. His works include essays on postmodern critical theories entitled *Literatúra a bytie* (*Literature and Being*, 1997), on some nineteenth and early twentieth century American poets (Emily Dickinson, William Carlos Williams, Wallace Stevens), fiction writers (Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville) as well as transcendentalists (R. W. Emerson, H. D. Thoreau) published as *Americká imaginácia* (*American Imagination)* in 2005. In 2006 he co-authored (with Silvia Pokrivčáková) the book *Understanding Literature*. He is also editor of the collection of essays *Literature and Culture* published in 2010. Recently, he has published several articles in the field of comparative literature.
E-mail address: apokrivcak@gmail.com

Valeria Polopoli is a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Humanistic Sciences of the University of Catania, Italy. She received her doctorate in Anglo-American Studies

from Catania University in 2011. She is currently working on a monograph on black British writing.
E-mail address: polopoli@unict.it

Adrian Radu is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Letters, "Babeş-Bolyai" University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. His main interests are Victorian literature, the contemporary British novel in a cultural context and contemporary Irish poetry. He is the author of several volumes of literary studies: e.g. *The Sign of the Phoenix*, dedicated to the short prose of D.H. Lawrence in the 1920s, in an archetypal anthropological perception; *The Literatures of Identity* offers a cultural perspective on the British literature of the 1980s; *The Palace of Art*, a critical and annotated anthology of Victorian literature; *Perceptions of Victorian Literature*, a critical study of the literature in the Victorian age. His most recent volume is *Good Usage*, an English grammar for advanced students.
E-mail address: adrian.radu@ubbcluj.ro

István Szabadi is a PhD student and part-time instructor at the Institute of English and American Studies of the University of Debrecen, Hungary. He received his MA degree in 2012 and started the British Studies Programme at the Doctoral School of Literature, as well as his divinity studies at Debrecen Reformed Theological University. His research interests include literature, theology and hermeneutics and the fantastic/miraculous in literature and theology. He is a member of the George MacDonald Society.
E-mail address: istvanszabadi89@gmail.com

Ileana Şora Dimitriu is a Professor of English at UKZN Durban, South Africa. She has published widely in the field of postcolonial literature from a comparative perspective, as well as on translation and intercultural studies. Her more recent research focus is on literature and spirituality. E-mail address: dimitriu@ukzn.ac.za

Ágoston Tóth is a Senior Lecturer at the Institute of English and American Studies of the University of Debrecen. His academic interests include all aspects of computational linguistics, lexicon design, distributional semantics, and he also takes a keen interest in neural, parallel and distributed machine learning. He has conducted research in computational linguistics, psycholinguistics, lexicography, and corpus linguistics.
E-mail address: agostont@live.com

Cristina-Mihaela Zamfir is a Lecturer in the Department of Modern Languages at the "Ovidius" University of Constanţa, Romania. She holds a doctoral degree from the University of Timişoara. Her research interests include language studies, psycholinguistics, ESP, NLP and communication. She is an NLP practitioner, certified by ITANLP Timişoara in March 2008. She has published numerous articles in the fields of ESP and English lexicology and semantics in national and international journals.
E-mail address: cristina_m_zamfir@yahoo.com