

B.A.S.

British and American Studies

2017

EDITURA
DIACRITIC

B.A.S.

British and American Studies

A Journal of the Romanian Society of English and American Studies

Editor

HORTENSIA PĂRLOG

Executive Editors

PIA BRÎNZEU
MIRCEA MIHĂIEȘ
LOREDANA PUNGĂ

Webmaster and Electronic Databases Editor

ADRIAN CÎNTAR

Advisory Board

ȘTEFAN AVĂDANEI	University of Iași
ANDREI AVRAM	University of Bucharest
ALEXANDRA CORNILESCU	University of Bucharest
MARCEL CORNIS-POPE	Virginia Commonwealth University
RODICA DIMITRIU	University of Iași
LUMINIȚA FRENTIU	University of Timișoara
FERNANDO GALVÁN	University of Alcalá UAH, Madrid
MAURIZIO GOTTI	University of Bergamo
J. LACHLAN MACKENZIE	Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam
ȘTEFAN OLTEAN	University of Cluj-Napoca
ISTVÁN D. RÁCZ	University of Debrecen
VIRGIL STANCIU	University of Cluj-Napoca
STEPHEN TAPSCOTT	MIT, Cambridge, MA

Publisher

THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE,
UNIVERSITY OF TIMIȘOARA

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

© British and American Studies, vol. XXIII, 2017

BAS. *British and American Studies* is indexed in the following data bases:
CEEOL, MLA, Erich Plus, Ulrich's (ProQuest), DOAJ, EBSCO

ISSN 1224-3086
e-ISSN 2457-7715

Publisher	ADRIAN BODNARU
Cover Design	DAN URSACHI
Cover Illustration	IOSIF O. STROIA — <i>O fluctuație cuantică</i>
Layout	DRAGOȘ CROITORU

EDITURA
DIACritic

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

CONTENTS

BEYOND UNBALANCED BOUNDARIES

- Elisabetta Marino** Regenerating Society: *Prometheus Unbound* (1819) by P.B. Shelley / **7**
- Martina della Casa** Writing and Translating the Self. Samuel Beckett and the Case of *Company/ Compagnie* / **13**
- Aycan Akçamete** Problematization of the Saviour Metaphor in Gillian Plowman's *Yours Abundantly, from Zimbabwe* / **27**
- Anca-Luisa Viusenco** Madness Narratives and Their Reception: Motivation, Challenges and Impact / **39**
- Anna Walczuk** From Split Self to Self Unified: Travelling to the Holy Land in Muriel Spark's Novel *The Mandelbaum Gate* / **51**
- Javier Rodríguez Doñate** "Addicted to the Twentieth Century": A Reassessment of Martin Amis' *Money: A Suicide Note* (1984) / **65**
- Kağan Kaya** Ayckbourn's Stage Reaction to Families Buried in Technology / **77**
- Milan D. Živković** Society in the English Literary Dystopia / **89**

PERIPHERIES OF VIOLENCE

- Alexandru Oravițan** Questioning a Cultural Landmark: The Twin Towers as *Center* / **101**
- Diana Benea** "Turning Setbacks into Comebacks": Representing Disability in Ping Chong's *Inside/ Out...Voices From The Disability Community* / **109**
- Alexandru Budac** A Mysterious Woman Enters a Grumpy Detective's Office: Why is Hard-Boiled Genre Still Entertaining Us? / **121**

- Mihaela Popuța** Narrating the Disaster / **131**
- Jadranka Zlomislić** Eros and Thanatos – Death and Desire on Campus / **137**
- Péter Gaál-Szabó** Separation and Black Christian Communication Strategy in Sermons of Vernon Johns and Martin Luther King, Jr. / **145**
- Silvia García Hernández** Cross-dressing and Gender Construction in Michèle Roberts's *Flesh and Blood* / **153**
- Raluca Goleșteanu** The City and Its Female Characters in the Lyrics of the Britpop Band *Pulp* / **163**

THE POWER OF WORDS

- Alina Bugheșiu** Linguistic Sign, Nominal Sign: English Commercial Names in Romania / **177**
- Mihaela-Ioana Topan** *Amore Pie* and Other Names in Mia Marché's *Finding Colin Firth* / **189**
- Vesna Lazović** Refugee Crisis in Terms of Language: From Empathy to Intolerance / **197**
- Katja Plemenitaš** Metaphorical Elements in Gendered Slurs / **207**
- Claudia E. Stoian** The Promotion of Romanian Landmarks in English: An Interpersonal Approach / **219**
- Ahmad Kareem Salem Al-Wuhaili** The Implied Language of Iraqi Politicians: Do The Iraqi Ever Apologize? / **232**
- Tadeja Tement** *To Kill a Mocking Bird* Fifty Years On: Translating Mind Style into Slovene / **243**
- Loredana Pungă and Hortensia Pârlog** Difficulties of Translating English Collocations into Romanian / **255**
- Simona Șimon** The Interpreter's DO's and DON'Ts / **275**

BEYOND UNBALANCED BOUNDARIES

**REGENERATING SOCIETY:
PROMETHEUS UNBOUND (1819) BY P.B. SHELLEY**

ELISABETTA MARINO

University of Rome "Tor Vergata"

***Abstract:** The paper analyses P.B. Shelley's lyrical drama *Prometheus Unbound*. Far from signifying the poet's retreat from society into an idealised world, the play was composed with the precise intention of regenerating the community, by presenting the model for a reaction to tyranny and oppression.*

***Keywords:** P.B. Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*, Romantic theatre, tyranny*

1. Introduction: *Prometheus Unbound*, beyond the boundaries of *Closet Dramas*

As Mary Shelley (1939: 295) pointed out in her *Note on Prometheus Unbound* by Mrs. Shelley, P.B. Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound, a Lyrical Drama in Four Acts* (inspired by Aeschylus's lost play) was mainly composed among "the mountainous ruins of the Baths of Caracalla", in Rome, in the Spring of 1819, while the final act was added a few months later (possibly in August), during the couple's stay in Tuscany. *Prometheus Unbound* has been regarded by the majority of critics as a fair example of *closet drama*, an expression denoting a play that was only meant to be read and not performed. It should be kept in mind that theatrical performances had undergone substantial transformations at the beginning of the Nineteenth century: managers regularly resorted to impressive backgrounds, elaborate costumes and extravagant horse shows, aimed at attracting large and often uncultivated audiences that longed to be entertained rather than instructed. The presumably unstageable mythological and pastoral plays created by several Romantic writers in this period (see, for example, Leigh Hunt's *The Descent of Liberty, a Mask*, Lord Byron's *Manfred* and Mary Shelley's *Proserpine* and *Midas*) have been widely perceived as a reaction to the supposed *crisis* of the stage (and of society), which implied retreating from it into an idealised world: hence, they are categorised as *mental* or *closet* theatre. As underlined by Tilottama Rajan (1984: 318), who sums up the way *Prometheus Unbound* has been primarily perceived by scholars since its publication in 1820, the drama has often been labelled "'intangible', 'vague and hollow', populated by characters who are 'spectral, often

formless, sometimes only voices”. Nonetheless, as Jeffrey Cox (1996: 247) compellingly argues, romantic dramas on mythological subjects did not wish to express an aristocratic withdrawal from society, nor did they signify the decline and fall of the cathartic potential of the theatre; on the contrary, they were meant to be interpreted as “an attempt to remake”, to rejuvenate the stage, by negotiating between tradition and innovation, thus claiming “cultural influence for a countercultural message” (Cox 1996: 247).

By focusing the analysis on the figure of Prometheus, this paper sets out to demonstrate that Shelley’s drama, far from expressing his lack of engagement in current events and his detachment from contemporary audiences, was actually conceived by the writer with the intention of providing his readers with poignant political and social criticism (impossible on a *real* stage because of censorship), as well as with a possible solution (or at least with a survival strategy) to overcome one of the most urgent problems of his time: tyranny and control, which were particularly oppressive during the Reign of George III and the Regency Period. By writing his play, Percy Shelley, a truly committed author, forcefully wished to offer his valuable contribution to the regeneration of society.

2. Political and social regeneration in *Prometheus Unbound*

It should not pass unnoticed that in his *Preface to Prometheus Unbound*, the poet highlighted his “passion for reforming the world” (Shelley 1939: 228) even though, as he also clarified, he did not aim at acting as an instructor: in his words, “didactic poetry [was his] abhorrence” (Shelley 1939: 228). Had he indicated the correct way to follow, had he drawn a line between right and wrong, he would have fallen into the same trap he wished to emancipate his readers from: that of despotism and autocracy. Two years after composing his play, in his dissertation entitled *A Defence of Poetry*, he would once more delve into the same subject, stating that: “a poet [...] would do ill to embody his own conceptions of right and wrong, which are usually those of his place and time, in his poetical creations, which participate in neither” (Shelley 1880a: 112). Conversely, the genuine purpose of poetry (deeply grounded in imagination) was connected in his view with the “awaken[ing] and [the] enlarg[ing of the] mind itself by rendering it the receptacle of a thousand unapprehended combinations of thought” (Shelley 1880a:111). Such a developed, creative, and dynamic mind, would be able to overcome the boundary between the *self* and *the other*, thus nurturing unconditional empathy and universal love which, for Shelley, was “the great secret of morals” (Shelley 1880a:111). Given what has been argued so far, it is not surprising that, in his *Preface to Prometheus Unbound*, Shelley (1939: 227) placed strong emphasis on the “fervid awakening of the public mind”, carried out by the “great writers of the golden age of our literature”. The pivotal role of the human mind in *moulding* reality was further elucidated in the following sentence: “the

imagery which I have employed will be found, in many instances, to have been drawn from the operations of the human mind, or from those external actions by which they are expressed” (Shelley 1939: 226). The closing remarks of Shelley’s *Preface* (1939: 228), specifying the purpose of his play, further tightened the connection between the human mind, imagination, and individual and communal moral regeneration:

My purpose has hitherto been simply to familiarise the highly refined imagination of the more select classes of poetical readers with beautiful idealisms of moral excellence; aware that until the mind can love, and admire, and trust, and hope, and endure, reasoned principles of moral conduct are seeds cast upon the highway of life which the unconscious passenger tramples into dust, although they would bear the harvest of his happiness. (Shelley 1939: 228)

P.B. Shelley acknowledged Aeschylus’s lost drama as the source for his *Prometheus Unbound*. As Federico Condello (2011: 45) has remarked, however, only 25 lines out of over 2400 are directly inspired by it. Moreover, while, in the Greek tragedian’s text, Prometheus cunningly earned his freedom by disclosing to Jupiter the prophecy concerning Thetis (had he married her, their son, stronger than his father, would have dethroned him), in Shelley’s play, Prometheus adamantly refuses compromise, and the King of the Gods is eventually overthrown by Demogorgon (the emblem of Necessity), at the beginning of the third act. As Shelley wrote in his *Preface*, “[he] was averse from a catastrophe so feeble as that of reconciling the Champion with the Oppressor of mankind” (1939: 225).

References to the political scenario in Shelley’s times can be detected in several lines of the play. In striking contrast with those scholars who concentrated solely upon the lyrical, almost dreamlike elements of the play – according to Gutteling (1924:283), for example, “the reader, carried along by rapturous music, often loses all sense of a binding dramatic plot”-, Richardson (1988: 131) maintains that “at one level, *Prometheus Unbound* can be read as Shelley’s critical response to the failure of the French Revolution”. In Prometheus’s reply to the Furies, for example, the poet clearly provides an outline of the revolutionary events in France, rapidly shifting from hope, to chaos and turmoil, and finally to dictatorship:

The nations thronged around, and cried aloud,
As with one voice, Truth, liberty, and love!
Suddenly fierce confusion fell from heaven
Among them: there was strife, deceit, and fear:
Tyrants rushed in, and did divide the spoil. (I, I, 650-654)

The Congress of Vienna is also evoked by the Fourth Fury, when she mentions “Kingly conclaves stern and cold/ Where blood with gold is bought and sold” (I, I, 530-531). Cameron (1943: 748) argues that the Furies may represent the

Napoleonic armies, while Jupiter might be associated with “Metternich, Castlereagh and their satellites”, but also with “the Tyranny of the Holy Alliance, to the overthrow of which Shelley looked forward”. Despite the obvious possible identification of Jupiter with George III or the Prince Regent, I believe that the King of the Gods actually embodies the very concept of absolutism: his are the features of any dictator in history, as it can be gathered by his own self-definition - “I am omnipotent,/ All else had been subdued to me” (III, I, 3-4) - or by the way his ghost (conjured up by the Titan to remind him of the curse he had cast on his persecutor) is portrayed by one of the characters, the nymph Panthea:

Panthea. The sound is of whirlwind underground.
 Earthquake, and fire, and mountains cloven;
 The shape is awful like the sound,
 Clothed in dark purple, star-inwoven.
 A scepter of pale gold
 To stay steps proud, o’er the slow cloud
 His veined hand doth hold.
 Cruel he looks, but calm and strong,
 Like one who does, not suffers wrong. (I, I, 231-239)

Jupiter’s domineering character is unchanging, there is no development in his mind, and every relationship he establishes is asymmetrical and unbalanced, including his union with Thetis, whose cries for help when the God first decided to possess her – “Insufferable might!/ God! Spare me! [...]” (III, I, 37-38) –, are mistaken by him for protestations of love. On the other hand, the very ideas of change and dynamism (which, as noticed before, Shelley fostered, linking them with imagination, creativeness, freedom of thought and morality) lie at the core of Prometheus’s personality. At the beginning of the play, victim and oppressor are alike: Jupiter’s blind violence in chaining the Titan is mirrored in his spiteful and vindictive words against him. Prometheus hopes that, one day, the “cruel King” will have to “kiss the blood/ From these pale feet, which then might trample [him]/ If they disdained not such prostrate slave” (I, I, 50-52). While listening to his own words, however, “he begins to recognize the Jupiter in himself” (Richardson 1988: 127) and, the very moment he is reminded of his curse against the tyrant (which he had forgotten), he thoroughly regrets his own senseless wickedness:

Prometheus. Were these my words, O Parent?
The Earth. They were thine.
Prometheus. It doth repent me: words are quick and vain;
 Grief for awhile is blind, and so was mine.
 I wish no living thing to suffer pain. (I, I, 302-305)

The Titan realizes that one’s thoughts actually shape reality – “Evil minds change good to their own nature” (I, I, 380-381) – and therefore opts for an inner

metamorphosis which will turn him into a Christ-like figure, capable of mercy and deep compassion. Panthea describes him as “a youth/ With patient looks nailed to a crucifix” (I, I, 584-585), and a few lines later, his “thorn-wounded brow” (I, I, 598) is mentioned. As Shelley seems to suggest, tyranny can be defeated when one of the terms of a binary opposition refuses to mirror the behavior of the other, when a mentality based on bifurcations is eradicated, when the one and *the other* eventually coincide. In his pamphlet *A Philosophical View of Reform*, remarkably written in the same months as *Prometheus Unbound*, he forcefully attributed the failure of the French Revolution to the brutal violence it had employed (Shelley 1920:17), whereas in his 1818 short essay *On Love*, he celebrated love, empathy as the force that *naturally* permeates universe, “the bond and the sanction which connects not only man with man, but with every thing which exists” (Shelley 1880b: 268). Jupiter, the tyrannical ruler, is defeated and dispossessed of his supremacy the very moment Prometheus ceases to regard him as a rival: Demogorgon is just the material executor of a profound change that has already occurred in the theatre of the Titan’s mind (very few lines of the play are actually devoted to the deposition of the hideous king of the Gods). Shelley’s vision of a free, renewed and regenerated society is a utopia where arbitrary powers no longer exist, where there is no religion but love, where social inequalities are a long forgotten nightmare, where the idea of belonging to a certain nation or tribe has become utterly irrelevant, and where men are eventually fit for self-rule, as a result of a process of self-emancipation:

The painted veil, by those who were, called life,
Which mimicked, as with colours idly spread,
All men believed or hoped, is torn aside:
The loathsome mask has fallen, the man remains
Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man
Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,
Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king
Over himself; just, gentle, wise: but man
Passionless? – no, yet free from guilt or pain. (III, IV, 190-198)

3. Conclusion: Shelley’s final words to the reader

Everything, however, is in constant flux, reality is changeable and despotism may lurk in unexpected places. Consequently, Percy Bysshe Shelley, the “unacknowledged legislato[r] of the world” (Shelley 1880a: 144), as he regarded poets in *A Defence of Poetry*, closes his play with a warning signal, entrusting his readers with a list of precepts, or, better, with tools that each person may decide to use in order to follow in Prometheus’s steps and continue to defeat hydra-headed tyranny:

These are the spells by which to reassume
An empire o’er the disentangled doom.

To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
 To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
 To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;
 To love, and bear; to hope, till Hope creates
 From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
 Neither to change nor falter nor repent;
 This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
 Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;
 This is alone Life, Joy, Empire and Victory. (IV, I, 568-578)

References

- Cameron, Kenneth Neill. 1943. "The Political Symbolism of *Prometheus Unbound*" in *PMLA*, 58(3), pp. 728-753.
- Condello, Federico (ed.). 2011. *Prometeo. Variazioni sul mito*. Venezia: Marsilio.
- Cox, Jeffrey N. 1996. "Staging Hope: Genre, Myth, and Ideology in the Dramas of the Hunt Circle" in *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 38(3/4), pp. 245-264.
- Gutteling, Johanna Frederika Cornelia. 1924. "Demogorgon in Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*" in *Neophilologus*, 9(4), pp. 283-285.
- Rajan, Tilottama. 1984. "Deconstruction or Reconstruction: Reading Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*" in *Studies in Romanticism*, 23(3), pp. 317-338.
- Richardson, Alan. 1988. *A Mental Theater: Poetic Drama and Consciousness in the Romantic Age*. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Shelley, Mary. 1939. "Note on *Prometheus Unbound*, by Mrs. Shelley" in John Keats and Percy Shelley. *Complete Poetical Works*. New York: The Modern Library, pp. 293-298.
- Shelley, Percy Bysshe. 1880a. "A Defence of Poetry" in Forman, Henry Buxton (ed.). *The Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley in Verse and Prose, Vol. VII*. London: Reeves and Turner, pp. 99-144.
- Shelley, Percy Bysshe. 1880b. "On Love" in Forman, Henry Buxton (ed.). *The Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley in Verse and Prose, Vol. VI*. London: Reeves and Turner, pp. 267-271.
- Shelley, Percy Bysshe. 1920. *A Philosophical View of Reform*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Shelley, Percy Bysshe. 1939. *Prometheus Unbound, a Lyrical Drama in Four Acts* in John Keats and Percy Shelley. *Complete Poetical Works*. New York: The Modern Library, pp. 225-293.

WRITING AND TRANSLATING THE SELF.
SAMUEL BECKETT AND THE CASE OF
COMPANY/COMPAGNIE

MARTINA DELLA CASA

University of Haute-Alsace

***Abstract:** This study aims to explore how Beckett's mode of writing the self is related to self-translation and how this allows us to reconsider the issue of autobiography within his work. The first part of the paper introduces the matter. The second one focuses on the understanding of his work as auto(bio)graphy or fiction. The third part underlines how this issue is problematized within *Company*, while the last one emphasises the idea that, given the implications of self-writing in his oeuvre, the way Beckett practices self-translation infers the existence of a reader who is led to acknowledge the text as fiction.*

***Keywords:** autobiography, autography, Company/Compagnie, fiction, Samuel Beckett, self-translation*

1. Introduction: Self translation and self-writing

When the volume *Beckett Translating/Translating Beckett* was published, one of the principal aims of its editors was to draw attention to an aspect of Beckett's work that had not yet been sufficiently taken into account: that of (self-) translation. In the same volume, Raymond Federman (1987: 7) furthermore stressed this idea by peremptorily defining this general lack of interest as a "gross omission". Since then, this void has been largely filled in, rendering it impossible to quote here all the studies that have been published in the last thirty years on Beckett's self-translations and on his bilingualism (and that of his works). As noted by Rainer Grutman (2009: 259), Beckett is "arguably the self-translator who has received most critical attention" and to the point that, although still defending the importance of Beckett's case to "gain many precious insights into self-translation" and bi- or multilingual writing, Grutman himself (2013: 190-192) has more recently argued that, if, on the one hand, self-translation can be considered a fundamental element for understanding the writer's work, on the other, in order to study self-translation itself, "the time has come to broaden our horizons not so

much by *moving* beyond Beckett as by *looking* beyond” him. These two statements depend on various common elements, the most important of which is the uniqueness of the writer’s bilingual project, covering all his production and profoundly influencing, in all its phases and evolutions, the nature and the *status* of his work, by implying a radical subversion of the traditional dichotomy of original/translation (Fitch 1988; Collinge 2000; Oustinoff 2001; Clément, Noudelmann 2006; Montini 2007, to name but a few).

Besides their different methods and approaches, scholars agree, and seem to have always agreed, not only on the importance of Beckett’s process of self-translation and on its problematic nature, but also on its consistency with his creative process, which offers a good starting point to explain why he methodically devoted himself to a practice that, as we know, he considered as a “losing battle” (Beckett qtd. in Knowlson, 1997: 438). A losing battle that has however led him over time to compose texts that were intended as objects of translation and therefore to merge together writing and translation in a unique creative process (Fitch 1988: 191; Oustinoff 2001: 25, Van Hulle 2015: xvii- xxvi). Along the same lines, I have elsewhere worked on Beckett’s self-translation (Della Casa 2015: 123-134) and its relation to the idea of “fidelity to failure” (Beckett 1984: 145), which now leads me to question its relation to self-writing, an issue that is in turn strictly related to that of the understanding of his work as autobiography or fiction.

If we think of self-translation as a process of rewriting involving a “morphing of the self” and, more specifically in Beckett’s case, self-reflexivity or even self-derision (Cordingley 2013: 2, Noonan 2013: 159-176), can this practice be considered as a re-enhancement of this problematic process that, within his work, is “writing ‘I’” (Nixon 2011: 35-36)? And if so, to what extent is this coherent with the aesthetical axioms of a writer that, despite constantly using and re-formulating autobiographical materials in his writings, “laughed uproariously at the idea of reaching ‘truth’ in so shifty an area as a human life” (Knowlson 1997: 652)? To try to offer a possible answer to these questions, I will focus on the case of *Company*, which in this context can be considered in many ways as one of Beckett’s most representative works. However, in order to do so, it is necessary to consider the issue of self-writing in his oeuvre from a more general point of view.

2. Auto(bio)graphy and the tyranny of fiction

When discussing Beckett’s engagement (or non-engagement) in autobiography, H. Porter Abbott (1987: 120) argued that even if his work is “coded as fiction” and “does not look like autobiography”, it is however rooted “in the near vicinity”. In a later work on Beckett’s post-war writings, the critic returns to the subject and identifies this domain as that of “autography”. Abbott (1996: 1-2) defines “autography” as the field embracing “all self-writing”, including

autobiography, which he therefore considers as a “subset of autography comprehending narrative self-writing and more specifically that most common narrative, the story of one’s life”. Abbott’s arguments expose the complexity of the problem. On the one hand, Beckett’s work clearly escapes from all literary canons and, in this specific case, from that of traditional autobiography, not only in its etymological meaning, as the narration of one’s life, but also as the literary genre defined by Philippe Lejeune (1996) in *Le pacte autobiographique*. On the other hand, on a more general level, autobiographical writing is itself a slippery terrain, especially when it comes not only to define, classify and name all those literary forms that differ from the traditional canon of autobiography, but also to establish the porous boundaries that are supposed to distinguish this field from that of fiction. This is confirmed by the proliferation of theories on the subject that followed Doubrovsky’s introduction of the concept of “autofiction” (Doubrovsky 1977, Gasparini 2008). In this context, Abbott chooses to use the term “autography” with regard to Beckett’s writings for reasons that he explains as follows:

The term “autobiography,” with its middle syllable “bio,” is literally self-life-writing. It carries with it the strong connotation of a life story, written by the one who lived that life. Autobiography in the sense of a memoir of life story is something Beckett had few illusions about, and the inadequacy of life stories is a theme that recurs throughout his oeuvre. So a better term than “autobiography” is “self-writing” and, better still, “autography,” which avoids not only the implications of historical narrative in “bio” but also the semantic baggage of “self,” a term as problematical for Beckett as the term “story”. Preferable to all these is the coinage “autographical action,” for it concentrates attention on the text, both as “self”-writing and as immediate action taking place as it is written. (Abbott 1996: x)

Abbott’s reading has the clear purpose of drawing attention to the present act of a subject writing (about himself), a process which he defines “not as a mode of recovery or reconstruction or even fictionalizing the past but as a mode of action taken in the moment of writing” (1996: ix-x). Therefore, the other reason that stands behind the critic’s terminological choice is that of understanding Beckett’s work “not as fiction, but as a species of autography (self-writing)” (1996: 2). The reading that he proposes does not however completely exclude fiction, a word that the author of *The Fiction of Samuel Beckett: Form and Effect* (1973) still uses in his later study, but to indicate a domain that seems to be included in that of autography, whose extension consequently overlaps that of Lejeune’s (1996: 41-43) “autobiographical space”, the comprehensive area where autobiographical writing and fiction cannot be distinguished, because both result in an act of enunciation that expresses a personal, intimate and subjective truth (Forest 2001). According to Abbott’s more recent study (1996), and as suggested by its title, such overlapping reveals the extraordinary project carried on by the author within his

work, that of *Beckett writing Beckett* – or, if we may propose a consequent variation to this title, that of *Beckett writing Beckett writing* – a process through which the author manages to subvert the canons of autobiography as well as those of narration, and is at the same time able to accomplish in his late work what Abbott (1996: 1-22) calls a “narratricide”. By using this word, clearly implying the elimination of the writer’s textual avatar, Abbott (1996: 21) argues that the peculiarity of the artist’s oeuvre is to be read as the result of his attempt “to approach unmediated contact” with his own work as well as with his readers and, consequently, to eliminate the boundaries of fictional form and allow the reader to experience the moment of creation, i.e. this “[w]ork forever in progress” which is writing for Beckett, as it was for Joyce (1996: 21).

This analytic perspective has indeed the advantage of focusing on the issue of autobiography in Beckett’s work by stressing the importance of the problematic virtual presence (“being present” in a temporal and spatial sense) of the speaking and/or writing subject(s) within the text. It furthermore highlights its(/their) substantial differences with regard to the traditional notions and figures of the narrator and of the author as well as to the role they play in both autobiography and prose fiction. Simultaneously, Abbott’s arguments raise the questions of what we consider as “fiction”, where we place its limits and how these boundaries influence our understanding of these figures, their reciprocal relations and those that are established with other figures that are particularly significant in this context, such as the main character or the reader of the text. These questions seem to become even more compelling when dealing with both autobiography and a writer such as Beckett, who declared: “I’m absurdly and stupidly the creature of my books” (Beckett qtd. in Anderton 2016: 34). As noted by Joseph Anderton (2016: 35), this statement summarizes the “distinctive type of subjectivity” implied by Beckett’s principal of fidelity to failure, which is a “creaturely subjectivity”. This category of being, in which Beckett includes himself as well as his own creatures, irrespectively of the role they assume in his works, implies in fact a subject that within or without the text is always, in an etymological sense, “placed under” and “subjected” to language, a language that creates – “I’m in words, made of words”, says the Unnamable – and inevitability fails him – “the words don’t come, the words fail” (Beckett 2009: 379, 404).

If, on the one hand, as demonstrated by Abbott (1996: 179), Beckett’s writings imply a continuous and radical sabotage and disassembly of narrative and of the “narratable self” – and therefore a deep questioning with regard to the boundaries and structures of both prose fiction and autobiography – on the other, by doing it the way he does, i.e. by simultaneously writing, rewriting and unwriting the self throughout his entire oeuvre, the writer insists on the fictional nature of language itself. He does so to the point that it is precisely from the reading of his writings that Federman (1981) has drawn the concept of “surfiction”, which implies that any act of writing is a creative act that does not reflect any reality within language, but produces it, and is therefore fictional (Gasparini 2008: 146-

153). These two processes do not in fact exclude each other. Even if Abbott argues that Beckett's work should not be understood as fiction, this does not prevent him from underlining that the writer insistently points out the "fabricated, propositional, wholly unverifiable nature" (1996: 16) of those narrative seeds that, despite the progressive process of denarrativisation that characterizes his work, are to be found even in his later texts. This however does not only happen with regard to the isolated fragments of (self-)narration, and texts such as *Worstward Ho* make this clear by deeply undermining the reliability of what is said through the (ab)use of figures of speech, such as *epanorthosis*, analysed by Bruno Clément, (1994: 179-191):

Say a body. Where none. No mind. Where none. That at least. A place. Where none. For the body. To be in. Move in. Out of. Back into. No. No out. No back. Only in. Stay in. On in. Still.
All of old. Nothing else ever. Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better. (Beckett 1996c: 89)

Even if the reader is given the illusion of assisting the author and sharing with him the exhausting moment of creation, this appears to be possible precisely thanks to the voice's insistence on the fictitious nature of what is said. Hence, the purpose of this paper is to stress the idea that the taxonomic and interpretative shift Abbott proposes not only does not infer in any way an inoperativeness of the notion of fiction in Beckett's work, but more likely depends on it and is based on the analysis of a process that would not exist otherwise. As suggested by the critic, the process he describes, that of Beckett writing Beckett, can in fact be understood as a countermeasure the writer takes against what Abbott defines as the "inevitability" or the "tyranny" of fiction (Abbott 1996: 120-122). But does it win the battle? And if so, in what way and what does that imply with regard to fiction and to what is considered as such within the author's work? To try to answer these questions, I shall now focus on the analysis of *Company*.

3. *Company* or the temptation of saying "I"

Company, the prose fiction that opens Beckett's second trilogy, *Nohow on*, was first written in English and then translated into French, but it is this latter version that was published first by the French publisher Minit in 1980. The text is composed of a sequence of paragraphs. Fifteen of them are memories of life scenes, while the rest compose their frame: "To one on his back in the dark a voice tells of a past. With occasional allusion to a present and more rarely to a future" (Beckett 1996a: 4). As noted by Knowlson (1997: 651-653), *Company* not only is the "first piece of extended prose fiction" Beckett wrote in seventeen years, but it is also the one that "comes closer to autobiography than anything [he] had written since *Dream of Fair to Middling Women* in 1931-2." At the same time, by merging

the autobiographical dimension with a metanarrative one that insists on the uncertainty of what is said, the whole text appears as both a reflection on the possibilities of autobiography and a statement of its impossibility. The opening line of the text does not allow any illusion with regard to its fictional nature: “A voice comes to one in the dark. Imagine” (Beckett 1996a: 3). The same idea is stressed immediately after:

To one on his back in the dark. This he can tell by the pressure on his hind parts and by how the dark changes when he shuts his eyes and again when he opens them again. Only a small part of what is said can be verified. As for example when he hears, You are on your back in the dark. Then he must acknowledge the truth of what is said. But by far the greater part of what is said cannot be verified. As for example when he hears, You first saw the light on such and such day. A device perhaps from the incontrovertibility of the one to win credence for the other. (Beckett 1996a: 3)

Since the beginning of this text, *Company*'s narrator invites the reader not only to recognize it as fiction, but also to be aware of the fact that he himself, by the very act of reading, actively participates in its development as such and is part of it. Furthermore, doubt is immediately shed within the fictive world as well, as the “hearer” to whom the voice recalls his own life memories cannot himself verify the truth of what is being said, exception being made for references to its present state. The whole situation displayed by this text can be read as a metanarrative universe, where the voice symbolizes the narrator, the man in the dark – the main character, and the dark in which he finds himself – the undefined domain of imagination. But a third party soon comes into play when the narrator of the text states: “And in another dark or in the same another devising it all for company” (Beckett 1996a: 4). This third unnamed other, who is said to be imagining the whole situation, according to the metanarrative discourse that takes place in the text, most likely symbolizes the figure of the author. The double nature of this puzzling and uncertain figure both creates and explains the possible confusion with regard to the spatial nature of the present action this “other” is carrying out. This is said to be taking place within the “same dark” of the voice and of the man lying in it or, simultaneously, in “another” undefined one that we can assume is that of the author of the narrative text as it unfolds in front of the readers' eyes. If on a deeper fictional level, this unnamed other seems to be devising it all for the company provided by the “figments” (Beckett 1996a: 33) of his own imagination, on a more unmediated level, he seems to do so to seek the company of the reader along the whole process, up to the end, when the exhaustion of words and, consequently, of fiction, draws the man lying in the dark, the mysterious other and the reader back to their original condition, i.e. solitude. The fundamental deceitfulness of the entire operation is thereby revealed:

Till finally you hear how words are coming to an end. With every inane word a little nearer to the last. And how the fable too. The fable of one with you in the dark. The fable of one babbling of one with you in the dark. And how better in the end labor lost and silence. And you as you always were. Alone. (Beckett 1996a: 46)

The (meta)narrative structure and the end of *Company* bring us back to the question of autobiography. As mentioned above, this work is not only a general reflection on the nature and structure of narration, but also of that specific type of narrative that is autobiography. Besides the fragmentation of life memories this text displays, which already questions the linearity and coherence of this specific type of narrative, *Company* undermines the very basis of autobiography, by denouncing what is said as being, at all levels, a mere fable and by consequently questioning the possibility of even saying (and writing) “I” in the first place, as well as of identifying the author with the narrator or with the character of the text:

Use of the second person marks the voice. That of the third that cankerous other. Could he speak to and of whom the voice speaks there would be a first. But he cannot. He shall not. You cannot. You shall not. (Beckett 1996a: 4)

The narrator of *Company*'s is extremely clear in this short passage of the text: to speak to the one in the dark, the voice uses the second person. This suggests proximity between the two. While not being able to speak to the man in the dark, the “other” is obliged to use the third person. This, in turn, suggests an irremediable distance between the two and also, according to the symbolic function of this “other”, a fundamental difference between the author and his textual avatar, i.e. the narrator. By stating that the first person would be used as well if this “cankerous other” could “speak to and of whom the voice speaks”, the narrator also infers that between the former and the latter there is a relation of identity. This explains the possible confusion, underlined in the text, between the “figment dark” in which the first finds himself (Beckett 1996a: 34) and that of the “other”. At the same time, however, the narrator also suggests that, despite the temptation to use the pronoun “I”, there is an impediment that prevents, and should prevent, this “other” from doing so. From the point of view of the metanarrative discourse that emerges from this text, this interdiction seems to stress, and rely on, the distinction underlined by Gerard Genette (after Émile Benveniste) not only between the subject that writes (the author or, in this case, the “other”) and the one who speaks in the text (the narrator, or the “voice”), but also between these two and the one they write or speak of (the main character, or the “one” in the dark). In the first case, this distinction depends on the same difference that renders any confusion between the author and the narrator of a text impossible on a narratological level, while in the second case it depends on the insuperable linguistic difference between the speaking subject and the spoken one, between the one that says “I” and the one that is said to be “I” (Genette 1972: 226). Even though the shift of pronouns in the

narrator's warning ("But he cannot. He shall not. You cannot. You shall not", Beckett 1996a: 4) leads to a collision between the narrative (and metanarrative) levels, between the narrator and the voice speaking to the one in the dark, and also reaffirms the insinuation of identity between the latter and the other one devising it for company. Their very use – instead of that the first person – confirms the interdiction itself and reinstates the distinctions it both establishes and implies. This prohibition can therefore be explained in two ways. The first is that if the pronoun "I" were used, the illusion of company would crash at all levels. The other consists in the menace that this pronoun represents for the subject it refers to, since its use would trap him in an inescapable linguistic system that could not but fail him by betraying his true nature, as suggested by a fragment of text where the first person is finally used:

For why or? Why in another dark or in the same? And whose voice asking this? Who asks, Whose voice asking this? And answers, His soever who devises it all. In the same dark as his creature or in another. For company. Who asks in the end, Who asks? And in the end answers as above? And adds long after to himself, Unless another still. Nowhere to be found. Nowhere to be south. The unthinkable last of all. Unnamable. Last person. I. Quick leave him. (Beckett 1996a: 16-17)

The entire text is based on confusion, which is in fact one of its main motifs – "Confusion too is company up to a point" (Beckett 1996a: 18) – and even if this embroiled narrative situation depends precisely on the fact that the metanarrative questioning it implies leads to identifying this "other" as the "[d]eviser of the voice and of its hearer and of himself" (Beckett 1996a: 18), the text still insists not only on their difference as figures and as distinctive instances of the narrative situation itself, but also on their common, fabricated and creaturely nature. Their identification in fact can only happen within fiction, as suggested in the above-mentioned passage by the allusion to a second "other" as the possible referent of the pronoun "I". This addition suggests that, once this unthinkable and unnamable "other" is referred to and spoken of, he is swallowed by the same darkness his creature lies in, or in a similar one, which differs from the first only in terms of metanarrative levels, but still is that of language and fiction. This becomes clear when names are given to the creature and its creator: "So W reminds himself of his creature as so far created. W? but W too is creature. Figment" (Beckett 1996a: 33).

This idea seems to be reinforced when assuming the reader's point of view, that same reader who, being referred to at the beginning of the text, becomes himself an instance of narration. So if we reread the entire (meta)narrative situation in this sense, by adding to it this complementary instance that, together with the "deviser", co-devises it all for company following the lead of the latter, all possible illusion of autobiography is furthermore disassembled and the reader is made completely aware of the fictional nature of the narrative situation he is asked to participate in. Starting from the first sentence of the text, the reader is assumed in

fact not only as an active actor of the creative process, but also a creature that fully belongs to it. The reader himself becomes at once his own creature and a creature of this unnamable other that he can assume as being Samuel Beckett, whose name is to be found on the cover of the book, but never in the text. This is perfectly coherent with what is said by the texts itself. Hence, if on the one hand *Company* clearly demolishes all the foundations of classical autobiography and does so by simultaneously exposing the limits and illusions of fiction, on the other, it repeatedly suggests, and makes it clear to the reader, that the only safe place with regard to fiction is that same silence in which the “last of all”, the subject that resists all linguistic attempts of capturing and defining it, lies. Together with the entire structure of the text, the allusion to this unnamable, unreachable and unthinkable figure, corroborates Abbott’s argument that Beckett, by deeply questioning the basis of autobiography and constantly displacing and playing with the boundaries of fiction, finds a unique way of escaping its tyranny and of being virtually present in his works at the same time. However, this happens in a way that, in the end, when it comes to the general understanding of his work, appears to make the balance weigh in favour of fiction, which inevitably remains the point of departure and arrival of all that is written, said and read. This conclusion seems to find confirmation when it comes to the issue of self-translation.

4. Conclusion: Reading and rereading Beckett

As recalled earlier, *Company* was first written in English, and its first draft was finished in Paris in 1979. Beckett immediately began its translation into French, which was the first version to be published and led the writer to revise the first version in English, which was then published by Calder (London) and Grove (New York). As discussed by Georgina Nugent-Folan in a recent study of the variants of these publications and their later editions, the differences and changes made on the first versions of these texts, not only confirm what many critics have repeatedly stressed, that is to say the interdependence of the French and the English versions, but also that, in the case of *Company/Compagnie*, we are actually dealing not with two, but with three texts – a French one and two English ones, the UK English *Company* and the US English one, which is the one used in this paper (Nugent-Folan 2015: 87-88, 97). Three different texts that inform one another, rendering it impossible to apply to them the traditional etiquettes of “original” or “translation”. It is needless to repeat that this allows us to fully consider self-translation as part of Beckett’s creative process. What I would like to argue instead is that these variants do not only suggest to what extent Beckett’s writing process remains open and in progress, but also the deep coherence the operation of self-translation reveals with regard to what is said within the text itself. To do so let us go back to it:

Might not the voice be improved? Made more companionable. Say changing now for some time past though no tense in the dark in that dim mind. All at once over and in train and to come. But for the other say for some time past some improvement. Same flat tone as initially imagined and same repetitiousness. No improving those. (Beckett 1996a: 24)

If we take into account what we know about Beckett's self-translations as well as the implications of the metanarrative discourse developed in this text, this passage of *Company* could easily be read as an explanation of his bilingual project allowing us, as it has already been largely demonstrated, to consider the operation of self-translation as a repetition of the creative gesture that this text recounts, but also an attempt to improve it according to the idea that what has been said within it might be "ill said", to borrow Beckett's words (1996b). In this sense, his self-translations can be understood as a sort of *hyper-epanorthosis* that both continues and corrects what has been said and written. Consequently, faced with the different versions of the text, whose variations concern not only the memories of life scenes, but also the more unmediated narrative frame, the bilingual reader of *Company/Compagnie* finds himself in a situation that resembles and amplifies that of the one in the dark, who cannot verify the truth of what is said.

This brings us back to our original question. This unique process of self-translation, that Brian T. Fitch (1988: 192, 228) understands as "intimately bound up with [Beckett's] conception of his fundamental enterprise as a writer", but also as a "way to distance oneself from what one has written", re-enacts the author's (self-)writing project at all levels. However, it does so in a way which forces the bilingual reader, even more so than the monolingual one, to be fully aware of the fictitious nature of what he has read and is reading. While the process of self-translation can be understood as a repetition of that specific mode of self-writing identified by Abbott (1996) as that of "Beckett writing Beckett", this very re-enactment, along with the variations it implies, seems to force the bilingual readers, irrespective of their knowledge of which version came first, to recognize as fictional the different universes they create, as well the present time in which the textual action is said to be taking place. This seems to lead towards a reconsideration of the taxonomic shift the critic proposes.

Abbott's (1988) definition of autography as a distinguished textual category, compared to that of fiction, relies in fact on the importance he attributes to the different act of reading these two call for. One of the key arguments of this distinction is that "to establish fiction as fiction in the first place, to play the game of fiction, we must recognize the text as before all else an act of fiction" as well as the "explicit or implicit indications that there has been an uncoupling or *décrochage* (to use Ricoeur's term), releasing its realm from time, history, the life of the author – in short, from that realm that guides us in contextualising historical acts." (Abbott 1988: 609). Which then brings Abbott to state that:

In contrast, autographical acts are distinguished by a proposed identity of writer and subject. This proposal cancels the fictional act and ties the narrative to time and this life. In this way, autography is immediately contextualised. It provides a tight interpretative circle when compared to the gulf that the term “fiction” proposes between author and text. It invites the special focus of an autographical reading on a textual action in progress in real time. (1988: 609)

If we consider Beckett’s work in these terms, we can surely acknowledge the fact that the writer can consistently reduce the gulf separating him from his own work. Nonetheless the latter itself seems to compellingly force the (bilingual) reader to recognize it as fiction. Furthermore it insinuates the possible identity of writer and subject, simultaneously providing the reader with the elements to both distinguish them, even when dealing with a textual action performing itself throughout the text, as in the case of *Company/Compagnie*. This suggests that when it comes to Beckett’s writings, this demystified autobiographical mode of reading identified by Abbott seems to paradoxically demand the (bilingual) reader to elude these elements. In fact the reader should proceed as if the text did not also suggest an uncoupling between the writer and the subject speaking within it and as if the process of writing coincided with the textual action in progress within the text, despite the fact that its different versions suggest that this is not so. As the bilingual reader is led to acknowledge it even more clearly than the monolingual one, Beckett’s way of writing and rewriting the self (throughout different texts and languages) still stands in fact, even if in a self-critical and ironical way, on that “as-if” which Ricoeur identifies as the foundation of the “‘literariness’ of the work of literature” (Ricoeur qtd. in Abbott 1988: 608). In the end, when dealing with Beckett’s writings, such as *Company/Compagnie*, the reader finds himself facing an extraordinary type of text that presents itself, as noted by Abbott (1996:11), as a “conceptual Möbius strip”, yet one whose starting and ending point seems to be that of fiction.

References

- Abbott, H. Porter. 1973. *The Fiction of Samuel Beckett. Form and Effect*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.
- Abbott, H. Porter. 1987. “Beckett and Autobiography” in Friedman, Alan Warren, Charles Rossman and Dina Sherzer (eds.). *Beckett Translating/Translating Beckett*. University Park and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, pp. 120-127.
- Abbott, H. Porter. 1988. “Autobiography, Autography, Fiction: Groundwork for a Taxonomy of Textual Categories” in *New Literary History. Critics, and Criticism: Some Inquiries*, 19 (3), pp. 597-615.
- Abbott, H. Porter. 1996. *Beckett Writing Beckett. The Author in the Autograph*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.

- Anderton, Joseph. 2016. *Beckett's Creatures: Art of Failure after the Holocaust*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Beckett, Samuel. 1984 (1949). "Three Dialogues" in Cohn, Ruby (ed.). *Disjecta*. New York: Grove Press, pp. 138-145.
- Beckett, Samuel. 1996a (1980). *Company in Nohow on*. New York: Groove Press, pp. 1-46.
- Beckett, Samuel. 1996b (1982). *Ill Seen Ill Said in Nohow on*. New York: Groove Press, pp. 47-86.
- Beckett, Samuel. 1996c (1983). *Worstward Ho in Nohow on*. New York: Groove Press, pp. 87-116.
- Beckett, S. 2009 (1958). *The Unnamable in Three Novels*. New York: Grove Press, pp. 283-407.
- Clément, Bruno. 1994. *L'œuvre sans qualités : rhétorique de Samuel Beckett*. Paris: Seuil.
- Clément, Bruno and François Noudelmann. 2006. *Samuel Beckett*. Paris: ADPF-Publications.
- Collinge, Linda. 2000. *Beckett traduit Beckett. De Malone Meurt à Malone dies, l'imaginaire en traduction*. Geneva: Droz.
- Cordingley, Anthony. 2013. "Introduction: Self Translation, Going Global" in Cordingley, Anthony (ed.). *Self-Translation: Brokering Originality in Hybrid Culture*. London: Bloomsbury, pp. 1-10.
- Della Casa, Martina. 2015. "L'esthétique d'un corpus bilingue: "en moi il y a toujours eu deux pitres". Écriture et auto-traduction chez Beckett" in Puccini, Paola (ed.). *Interfranchophonies. Regards croisés autour de l'autotraduction*, 6, pp. 123-134.
- Doubrovsky, Serge. 1977. *Fils*. Paris: Galilée.
- Federman, Raymond. 1981 (1975). *Surfiction. Fiction Now & Tomorrow*. Chicago: Swallow Press.
- Federman, Raymond. 1987. "The Writer as Self-Translator" in Friedman, Alan Warren, Charles Rossman and Dina Sherzer (eds.). *Beckett Translating/Translating Beckett*. University Park and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, pp. 7-15.
- Fitch, Brian T. 1988. *Beckett and Babel: An Investigation into the Status of the Bilingual Work*. Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press.
- Forest, Philippe. 2001. *Le roman, le je*. Nantes: Pleins feux.
- Gasparini, Philippe. 2008. *Autofiction. Une aventure du langage*. Paris: Seuil.
- Genette, Gerard. 1972. *Figures III*. Paris: Seuil.
- Grutman, Rainer. 2009. "Auto-Translation" in Baker, Mona and Gabriela Saldanha (eds.). *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, 2nd edition. London: Routledge, pp. 257-259.
- Grutman, Rainer. 2013. "Beckett and Beyond. Putting Self-Translation in Perspective" in *Orbis literarum*, 68 (3), pp. 188-206.
- Knowlson, James. 1997 (1996). *Damned to Fame. The Life of Samuel Beckett*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Lejeune, Philippe. 1996 (1975). *Le pacte autobiographique*. Paris: Seuil.
- Montini, Chiara. 2007. "La bataille du soliloque". *Genèse de la poétique Bilingue de Samuel Beckett (1929-1947)*. Amsterdam, New-York: Rodopi.
- Nixon, Mark. 2011. *Samuel Beckett's German Diaries. 1936-1937*. London and New York: Continuum.

- Noonan, Will. 2013. "Self-translation, Self-reflection, Self-derision" in Cordingley, Anthony (ed.). *Self-Translation: Brokering Originality in Hybrid Culture*. London: Bloomsbury, pp. 159-176.
- Nugent-Folan, Georgina. 2015. "Alternative *Compagnie*: Textual Variants in Beckett's *Compagnie/Company*" in *Journal of Beckett Studies*, 24 (1), pp. 87-103.
- Oustinoff, Michael. 2001. *Bilinguisme d'écriture et auto-translation: Julien Green, Samuel Beckett. Vladimir Nabokov*. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Van Hulle, Dirk. 2015. "Introduction: A Beckett Continuum" in Van Hulle, Dirk (ed.). *The New Cambridge Companion to Samuel Beckett*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. xvii- xxvi.

PROBLEMATIZATION OF THE SAVIOUR METAPHOR IN GILLIAN PLOWMAN'S *YOURS ABUNDANTLY, FROM ZIMBABWE*

AYCAN AKÇAMETE

Boğaziçi University, Istanbul

Abstract: *The paper argues that, as a part of human rights literature, in her play, Plowman adopts the reversed pattern of the SVS metaphor in Makau Mutua's work and that rather than Nell, the Westerner, who is supposed to be portrayed as the saviour, it is the people of Zimbabwe, the apparent victims, that become her saviours. Since Mutua establishes his theories contingent on the issue of otherness, the problem will be addressed in a way to conclude that it is the Zimbabweans that occupy the position of the big Other, not Nell, contrary to what Mutua establishes in his theories.*

Keywords: *Gillian Plowman, human rights, humanitarianism, Makau Mutua, the Other*

1. Introduction

Bearing autobiographical elements from the personal life of its writer, *Yours Abundantly, From Zimbabwe* is based on the letters Plowman herself received from the children of Zimbabwe (Plowman 2013: 14). Premiering in 2008 in The Oval House Theater in London, which is known for its production of African themed works, the play seeks to give a voice “to a little heard minority” (Plowman 2013: 14). In relation to the play, this paper will contend that the network of relations Plowman establishes between the Zimbabweans and Nell demonstrates the reversed pattern of the saviour-victim metaphor in Makau Mutua's work, and depending on this idea, it will be asserted that rather than Nell, who is supposed to function as the saviour, it is the people of Zimbabwe, the apparent victims, that become her emancipators and rescuers. Hence, the saviour depiction and its connection to the idea of the Other, correlated to the victim metaphor, form the core of the discussion. For this end, firstly Mutua's SVS metaphor will be elaborated on, as the main argument is established on his theories, followed by the contention that the lack of humanitarian aspect in Nell's deeds undercut her status as a saviour, leading to a set of power relations that fall opposite to those in the

SVS triangle. The absence of humanitarian value in Nell's acts of help, her real motive and underlying interest in Zimbabwe will be discussed, so as to strengthen the supposition that she does not fit the saviour metaphor. Finally, since Mutua builds 'the victim' dimension contingent on the issue of 'the Other', the discussion will be extended to problematize the relationship between the victim and the saviour in this respect, drawing the conclusion that it is the big Other – instead of the seeming saviour – that is the victim, contrary to what Mutua postulates.

The play is mainly established around the relationship between Nell, a dweller in England, and her acquaintances in Zimbabwe. The dramatic structure is established around the letters the Zimbabweans compose for Nell and her reading from these letters that recount the poor living conditions and refer to the brutal political hegemony in Zimbabwe. The beginning of this contact can be traced back to Nell's first visit to Zimbabwe and her encounter with Enock, a little boy for whom Nell begins to provide material aids from the moment they meet. The focal point is that the Zimbabwean people she is contact with besides Enock, including the schoolmaster Boniface and his wife Violet, primarily make material demands, which are met by Nell in return. The subplot that holds significance for the discussion is that Nell decides to move from England to Zimbabwe, which triggers a dispute between her and her daughter Georgia, further revealing that she has had a problematic relationship with her daughter. In the end, the reader is informed that Nell has moved to Zimbabwe, and she is still teaching at the school where Boniface used to be the schoolmaster before he passed away.

2. The saviour metaphor and Nell's position

2.1. Mutua's SVS triangle

In his work *Human Rights: A political and Cultural Critique*, Makau Mutua (2002) puts forth the idea of *human rights* as a metaphor and as a grand narrative centred around the triangle Saviour, Victim, and Savage, referred to as the SVS metaphor. The Savage refers to the government that operates by means of "the consumption of humans" who are its citizens, in other words its victims, ensuring that the barbarian culture depicted is a "negation of humanity" (Mutua 2002: 10). Whereas the state is only an instrument in this brutal system, the whole culture itself is deemed as "illiberal, antidemocratic, or ... authoritarian" (Mutua 2002: 11). On the other hand, what forms a foil to the anti-democratic state is the dimension of the Saviour that is heralded as the promisor of freedom "from the tyrannies of the state, tradition and culture" (Mutua 2002: 11). In other words, the democratic and Western Saviour rescues the Victim from the Savage.

What is of great concern for the following discussion is Mutua's postulation that the human rights discourse develops in a manner akin to the colonial discourse of the 19th century. Though he doesn't explicitly equate colonial discourse with that of human rights, Mutua asserts that "it is reasonable to draw parallels between

them with respect to some of their motivations and purposes” (2002: 236). Mutua hints at such analogy, stating that the human rights corpus “promotes a Eurocentric ideal” and this SVS metaphor results in an “‘othering’ process that imagines the creation of inferior clones, in effect dumb copies of the original” (2002: 12). With a corresponding approach, Mutua contends that the grand narrative of human rights hinges on “demonizing, and ‘othering’ that which is Non European” (2002: 15). This representation of the Other, that is the victim, who under no circumstances can be considered separately from the saviour metaphor, embeds a colonial perspective of the Other as “weak, powerless, prone to laziness, and unable on his own to create the conditions for this development” (Mutua 2002: 31). In short, it is manifest Mutua advocates the view that the othering process incorporated within the colonial discourse becomes an integral part of human rights literature, as well.

2.2. The lack of humanitarian dimension in Nell’s deeds

At this point, with respect to Mutua’s theoretical framework, the first element to be problematized in Plowman’s play is Nell’s incentive when she becomes increasingly obsessed with the idea of ‘saving’ the local people of Zimbabwe. The fact that her humanitarianism is largely undermined by her ulterior motive, which is chiefly personal and which makes her dependent on the Zimbabwean people - rather than vice versa - downplays her position as a saviour. In order to elaborate on the humanitarian aspect of Nell’s aid, Walzer’s (2011) and Wheeler’s (2002) theories on humanitarianism will be employed.

Walzer stresses that compassion is a prerequisite for any humanitarian deed. In his view, what could be referred to as humanitarian is what we believe to be acts of “human sympathy, freely flowing fellow feeling” (Walzer 2011: 70), in other words empathy and an understanding of a given situation. Deriving from the Jewish idea of charity, *tzedakah*, the highest form of help, is alleged to be the one that remains anonymous and does not reveal its source (Walzer 2011: 73). On the other hand, he alludes to the fact that some people who are leftists seem to be totally against the idea of charity, that is providing the material needs of the needy, on the grounds that it “concedes the power of the powerful and forces the poor into the position of beggars” (Walzer 2011: 74). Hence, it widens the gap in the power relations between those in need and the suppliers of aid, which renders the help destitute of any humanitarian facet. On another level, the helper has some choices to make as to which way to resort to, for one can adopt any means of assistance from a wide range of options: “You can help desperately needy people in ways that disempower them and turn them into permanent clients, or you can help them in ways that promote their independence and enable them to help themselves” (Walzer 2011: 76). In other words, the crux of the matter is that help cannot be heralded as humanitarian if it results in dependence on the provider. A similar suggestion is made by Wheeler. Although Wheeler argues from a different angle and discusses humanitarian state intervention, his idea on state humanitarianism

can be applied to Nell's case at an individual level. From this angle, he claims that "if it can be shown that the motives behind the intervention, or the reasons behind the selection of the means, are inconsistent with a positive humanitarian outcome, then it is disqualified as humanitarian" (Wheeler 2002: 39). As a consequence, so long as charity sustains the power relations, does not alleviate the status of the needy in a real sense and causes the deprived to become beggars, the sacrifices made and the seeming compassion of the helper do not justify the act as humanitarian. To put it another way, even though the result achieved may be humanitarian with positive outcomes, the real motives and the means opted for should be taken into account whilst evaluating the humanitarian value of a deed. Thus, when all these ideas on humanitarianism are brought together, it is possible to conclude that non-humanitarian actions would in turn serve to undercut the saviour status. In Nell's case, the elements that undermine her position as the saviour are, as stated above, the fact that her acts do not spring from a feeling of compassion but from personal interests, that they do not remain anonymous and turn the Zimbabweans into people whose mere expectation is their financial exigencies to be met.

To begin with, although through the letters of Zimbabwean people many atrocious events are narrated, Nell remains unresponsive to the misery of these people. The reader is provided with the letters of the local people, yet not with the letters composed by Nell for them. Letters from Boniface, Portia, Violet and Pertunia are recounted, yet no information with regards to Nell's reaction can be discerned anywhere in the play. Apart from Nell's indifference and irresponsive attitude, the extent to which Nell commiserates with the Zimbabwean people or imagines their situation becomes problematic, which can be taken as a hint at the lack of the fellow feeling Walzer touches upon. Elaine Scarry (1998) points out the difficulty of imagining other people, and states that, since it is difficult to imagine an acquaintance or a close friend, it becomes much harder to imagine someone you do not or barely know. Hence, it becomes even harder when it comes to "our ability to picture in the imagination *not* one person, but instead five, or ten, or one hundred, or one hundred thousand" (Scarry 1998: 45). She goes on to argue that "*the human capacity to injure other people is very great precisely because our capacity to imagine other people is very small*" (Scarry 1998: 45, emphasis in the original text). The fellow feeling mentioned by Walzer (2011) as a feature of humanitarianism becomes almost impossible, since Nell cannot imagine the others in Zimbabwe, especially when the plight of the whole country is concerned. Consequently, this impossibility or difficulty to empathize with the pain of the Other leads to a weakening of her status as saviour, since a feeling of compassion is not possible for her; therefore, her actions cannot be deemed as humanitarian.

By the same token, Nell's impotency to develop sympathy can be observed all throughout the play. One case in point is when Violet, the wife of schoolmaster Boniface with whom Nell is in contact, mentions she is aiding sick people and providing food for the poor children (Plowman 2013: 37). Moreover, she mentions

that AIDS has killed a friend because “there were no drugs to help her” (Plowman 2013: 37), to which Nell does not react; she merely moves on to narrating another letter from Pertunia, a young girl from Zimbabwe who asks Nell for materials (Plowman 2013: 37). Another incident is related to Lindy Dzingerai - another Zimbabwean woman who writes to Nell; she has no parents, but has four other sisters, all of whom “have nothing to eat, no clothes, no accommodation and no cash to go to school” (Plowman 2013: 45). Similarly, after she narrates Lindy’s situation, Nell continues by citing another story, the story of a boy (Plowman 2013: 45), but she remains unresponsive to all these stories. Even on receiving the news that Violet, with whom she has been in contact for a long time and who has been telling Nell about the difficulties she goes through, passes away, Nell simply reads the letter written by Violet’s husband Boniface, with no reciprocation following: “My dear wife, Violet, has passed away. She was run over by a police lorry” (Plowman 2013: 47). The narration moves on to Violet’s speech written as a protest against the government sent by Boniface, and concludes with Boniface stating that “[Violet] wanted you to have her favourite dhuku. I’m sorry. I used some of the administrative money to send it” (Plowman 2013: 49). Upon this lengthy message, the only sentence Nell enunciates is “What can I do” (Plowman 2013: 49), which makes her sound indifferent, even apathetic towards Violet’s brutal death and towards the fact that Violet felt close enough to send her a gift. Thus, her inability to imagine the others as well as her personal indifference undermine her position as a saviour; she does not sympathize with the pain or the poor conditions recounted, leading to a lack of a humanitarian dimension in her deeds.

The plot strands that undercut the saviour status are the material and financial concerns of both parties, not only of the Victim but also of the Saviour, which make the Zimbabwean people dependent on Nell in materialistic terms. Furthermore, the fact that the source of the aid is revealed also disrupts the humanitarian aspect of Nell’s deeds. In the first scene, when Nell meets Enock in Zimbabwe, she has a conversation with him, and her first contact with him is when she buys necklaces from him. As the conversation goes on, she immediately agrees to pay for his school fees (Plowman 2013: 20). It is apparent that right from the beginning the relationship is founded on an economic basis, given that, from that moment on, all the demands made by means of the letters concern material needs. For example, Wilson asks for money “to buy uniform” (Plowman 2013: 24), and Boniface assures Nell that “the fees” she sent “are enough for this term and even for next term” (Plowman 2013: 28). Likewise, Portia asks for “an English novel” (Plowman 2013: 35), Enock informs Nell on the arrival of “ten calculators” and asks for “a 60 watts solar panel” (Plowman 2013: 42). The focal financial interest is bilateral, since the demand and the provision work together for the same ends: material aid. Without relating to their pain, remaining indifferent and mute to their suffering, by merely supplying the material needs, being devoid of any compassion and understanding of their situation as a motive to act, because of her deliberate

choice of not remaining anonymous as a helper, and because of the means she employs, Nell's position is by no means that of a saviour, or that of humanitarian.

The ulterior motive underlying the act of provision is another point that weakens her saviour status. Nell has a problematic and complicated relationship with her daughter Georgia and uses the Zimbabwean people as a means to suppress this painful fact. Upon receiving the news that Nell is set on moving to Zimbabwe, Georgia seeks to change her mother's mind, and meanwhile it is unveiled that the mother-daughter fell apart a while ago. As Nell states: "Georgia, we split. You chose that! You chose not to see me. You want to decide when and where we meet – if we meet. I can't ring you up to discuss things. That was your decision" (Plowman 2013: 26). Nell refers to this separation and also to the fact that it was Georgia who chose to remain apart and not be in contact. This disagreement is also observed in the discussions of past events, which in turn discloses the fact that Nell was not relating to Georgia's real feelings as a child and had overlooked the unpleasant emotions that Georgia had experienced when she was young:

Georgia: We were never together. As far back as I can remember, I was farmed out somewhere. Doing something.

Nell: I thought you enjoyed all those things – horse-riding, ballet, drama.

Georgia: I hated those things. (Plowman 2013: 34)

It is apparent that Georgia is resentful of Nell because she in a way wasn't there for her daughter and was not concerned with Georgia's real feelings. Not only Nell's indifference but also Nell's toleration of her husband's affairs with other women made Georgia feel aggrieved. At one point, in a burst of anger, she confesses that she had witnessed her father cheating on her mother and blames Nell for putting up with his affairs, though she knew about them: "[T]he dying children of Zimbabwe may now be your greatest concern, but you never noticed I was a dying child. The horrible secret grew so big inside me that I couldn't breathe" (Plowman 2013: 50). Nell's failure as a mother in the eyes of her daughter becomes manifest through the remarks made by the latter. Hence, Nell attempts to become 'mothers' to those people and children in Zimbabwe, trying to conceal a flaw and to make up for the fact that she has failed as a mother to her own child. Georgia establishes an analogy between herself and children in Zimbabwe and this is also suggestive of the same idea: Nell is endeavouring to fill a void resulting from a failing relationship, which in turn implies her motives are not purely humanitarian.

Her obsession with becoming a good mother is incited even more as the Zimbabweans substitute her for a mother figure. A Zimbabwean girl named Portia, as an example, begins her letter by writing "Dearest Mother Nell" (Plowman 2013: 39), and Pertunia writes in a likewise manner: "Dear Mother" (Plowman 2013: 42). Wilson, addresses her in a similar way, by calling her "Dear mother figure Nell" (Plowman 2013: 40) and ends one of his letter stating: "You are our mother now" (Plowman 2013: 43). The story Enock tells at the beginning has a significant role

in Nell's identification with a mother figure, as well. Enock mentions that his mother is dead, yet the spirit of his mother told him that "someone would come to care for [him]" (Plowman 2013: 18). He further tells Nell that "My mother's spirit is wise to choose you" and draws an analogy between his own mother and Nell by mentioning that Nell's name is "nearly like my mother" because "[h]er name is Ellen" (Plowman 2013: 19). In other words, it is manifest that the more these people regard Nell as a mother substitute providing for their needs, the more Nell clings on to this relationship in order to substitute for the relationship she does not have with her own daughter, making every effort to supply their demands. One does not have to read between the lines to figure out Nell's real grounds since she, herself, also confesses the ambiguous rationale behind her acts: "I don't know what I'm doing, Boniface. I don't know why I'm doing it. I need to be needed. I feel lonely and useless and ... abandoned. I live in a vacuum ... I want to be loved. I want to be important to someone" (Plowman 2013: 44). Like Nell, Georgia is aware of the ulterior motive behind her mother's seemingly compassionate deeds, uttering that: "I wonder if you too are using the poor and deprived children of Africa to fill your empty life" (Plowman 2013: 32). This statement unveils the real reasons for the aid given by Nell, pointing to self-interest rather than compassion for the Other.

Even though Nell admits that she wants to be important, she wants to be more than that. She would like to replace all the mother figures that these people had, becoming the ultimate mother figure for them through buying their love. She explicitly states "did they love their mothers? Yes, of course, they did! I'm stealing that love. Because I need it. Because I can pay for it. I'm buying their love" (Plowman 2013: 44). The fact that she uses money as an instrument that empowers her to gain the love of these people divulges her actual motivation, which is finding daughter substitutes. She identifies herself with a mother figure able to replace all the mothers, a figure that meets every need. As a consequence, the question 'who is the saviour' becomes problematic in terms of the SVS metaphor, as Nell is not depicted as a saviour. Instead, these Zimbabwean people become her saviours suppressing her failure as a mother, and functioning as substitutes for the broken mother-child relationship Nell has with her daughter.

3. The issue of Otherness

3.1. Lacan and Žižek on 'the Other'

The discussion of the saviour metaphor can be extended to the issue of the Other, since the saviour and victim metaphor also operate on the notion that the victim is portrayed as the inferior Other, tantamount to the othering process in colonial discourse. The idea of the Other derives its roots from the acclaimed psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, who explicates the three registers in the development of the psyche: the Real, the Imaginary and the Symbolic. In very simplistic terms,

according to Lacan, in the realm of the Imaginary, of which the mirror stage is an indispensable part, the image, rather the imago in the mirror, forms the source of identification, which occupies the place of the Other, and is regarded as “ideal-I” (Lacan 1977: 2).

His idea that would form the kernel of the argument is that he differentiates between the little other and the big Other. Whereas the little other belongs to the realm of the Imaginary, the big Other is associated with Speech and the Symbolic, as an absolute Master in Hegelian terms (Lacan 1977: 232-233). The place of the Other is in fact first occupied by the Mother (Lacan 1977: 237), depending on whom the question of “che vuoi” – that is the question of ‘what does the Other want’, as Žižek puts it, or ‘what do you want’, as Lacan words it (1977: 238) – gains significance. This question holds a pivotal importance since it is what desire is established around. As Lacan postulates “if the mother’s desire is for the phallus, the child wants to be the phallus in order to satisfy her desire ... the Other’s desire” (1977: 221). Correspondingly, as Žižek asserts, “[t]he original question of desire is not directly ‘What do I want’, but ‘What do others want from me’ ... What am I to others?” (1997: 9). Basing his theories on Lacan’s, Žižek furthers the argument by stating that “apropos of every imitation of a model-image, apropos of every ‘playing a role’, the question to ask is: for whom is the subject enacting this role? Which gaze is considered when the subject identifies himself with a certain image?” (1989: 106). Therefore, what one becomes is very much integral to what the Other wants, in other words the Other’s gaze and desire is not solely a desire for the other, but it is also the desire to become the object of the desire of the Other. The Other, in this sense, is the one for whose gaze the roles are enacted.

3.2. Zimbabwean people as the big Other

As for the play, as scrutinized above, Mutua’s SVS metaphor is contingent on the idea that the victim is the inferior other and this process of othering functions in the same manner as the colonial discourse does. Nevertheless, the case in Plowman’s play is more complicated than this simple reductionist notion of the Other, since the gaze Nell strives to appeal to is the gaze of the Other, the Zimbabweans. In parallel to this idea, what can be observed throughout the play is that, as a result of the financial exigencies from the Zimbabwean people, Nell is now entirely responsible for meeting the demands in order to be appreciated or in order to appeal to the gaze. All these demands become an instrument through which Nell is rendered as the provider, a role she is obliged to live up to, if she is to gain the love she needs and yearns for. By the same token, if she fails to meet the expectations, she will lose the love she is desperate to have, hence the sole purpose and meaning in her life. Thus, the relationship between the Zimbabwean people and Nell, who is supposed to be the saviour and the Other whom victims look up to, is complicated, leading to the question of ‘who is the big Other?’.

To put it another way, contrary to Mutua’s triangle, in the give-and-take

relationship, instead of Zimbabwean people, Nell is the one who endeavours to appeal to a gaze, the gaze of the Other, rendering the Zimbabwean people as the big Other. Due to the fact that she provides these people with every exigency, like ballpoint pens (Plowman 2013: 41) or solar panels (Plowman 2013: 42), the Zimbabwean people are the Other for whose gaze she is trying to appear as likeable. The more they call her 'mother', the more she feels obliged to meet their demands, in order not to lose her significant position and not to become unappealing to their gaze. Nell becomes trapped in this relationship through her desire to become the object of the Zimbabwean people's desire. As quoted above, she performs her acts and takes on an identity as a result of the Other's desire. Hence, the question 'What does the Other want' gains a meaning, since Nell's answer to that question is becoming a material provider, considering that the Other is the Zimbabwean people. Therefore, this undercuts her position as a saviour or a homogenous superior Other to be imitated or emulated.

Besides, when Nell feels she is unable to provide aid to every person in Zimbabwe, she becomes anxious: "I feel so guilty. I can't feed the children I've got properly. And more letters have come. From other places. They're all coming to me" (Plowman 2013: 45). Once she realizes that she cannot appeal to a gaze in its fullest sense, or that she cannot become the object of desire for some people she cannot provide for, she feels panic-stricken and disappointed, since it is only via material supplies that she appears alluring to their gaze, and this is what establishes her identity around.

The final element that subverts the status of Nell as a saviour and the big Other is the fact that she inhabits Zimbabwe and becomes a teacher there. Georgia is the first to enunciate the assumption that, in order to flee from the savage country, the victims would like to be saved and settle in the land of promises: "They're conning you mother. They'll all turn up on your doorstep as illegal immigrants and you won't be able to send them back" (Plowman 2013: 25). Further on in the play, she makes a similar suggestion: "Don't you think this Boniface would much rather come and live here rather than the other way round" (Plowman 2013: 33). Georgia's remarks echo the simplistic idea of mimicry and emulation, taking for granted the idea that the saviour's land is an emancipatory setting. It also presumes that the West is alluring for the residents of "savage" countries, as what Mutua argues to be the case in human rights literature.

However, in this case, the local people of Zimbabwe and their land become Nell's saviours, since she is the one - as Georgia puts it - "turning up on their doorstep" (Plowman 2013: 25). Before Nell settles in Zimbabwe, she states that "I want to see the place where Enock sat and help another child to sit in that place and be as strong and funny and wise as he was" (Plowman 2013: 51), which evokes the sense that it is Enock whom she looks up to as a figure, not the other way round. Besides the fact that she is the one aspiring to live in Zimbabwe due to Enock's influence, as she would like to take on features she associates with Enock, he becomes a source for identification and ideal-I, rendering him as the big Other for

Nell. Moreover, what is striking is not only the fact that she goes to Zimbabwe, but also that she is employed as a teacher at the school where Boniface used to be the schoolmaster. At the end it is explicitly stated that “Nell Porter continues to teach at Ngwanda Secondary School”, even though Boniface was arrested and “died in prison” (Plowman 2013: 52). Hence, she not only settles in the country, but also remains the only prominent character in the play in charge of the children at school, since Violet also dies. As a consequence, not only the people but also the land eventually becomes Nell’s saviour, making the positions of victim/saviour vague, contrary to Mutua’s claims.

4. Conclusion

The starting point of the argument that forms the focal point of this paper is Mutua’s theories on the SVS metaphor. Mutua puts forth the idea that human rights literature adopts a manner analogous to that of colonial discourse with regard to establishing the saviour metaphor as a homogenous Other that rescues the victim from the savage land and constructing the victim dimension as the inferior one, suggestive of a the colonial discourse. Pertaining to the saviour status, the fact that Nell’s ulterior motives are bereft of any humanitarian value, especially due to a lack of empathy and compassion, and that her grounds are merely personal result in her being depicted as a victim rather than a saviour. Another facet that subverts her saviour dimension is that her deeds turn Zimbabwean people into beggars, or clients whose sole concern is financial exigencies, which points out to the fact that her means to provide help render her assistance as non-humanitarian. Moreover, the source of the aid does not remain unspecified, whereas help is supposed to remain anonymous in a humanitarian action. The real grounds for the assistance Nell gives is to find a substitute for the failing relationship she has with her daughter and a meaning to her barren life, so she is unresponsive and indifferent to the plight of the Zimbabwe people.

Furthermore, Mutua discusses the metaphor of the saviour in a way that encompasses the issue of *otherness*, implying that the othering process in colonial discourse extends to the one in human rights. Nonetheless, the positions are not as clear-cut, since the crux of the matter is that Nell enacts her role and establishes an identity aspiring to appeal to the gaze of the Zimbabwean people as a result of the question ‘What does the Other want’. She endeavours to become the object of desire by means of her provisions, and the Zimbabwean people become the Other for her, reversing the theories Mutua puts forward, since it is the Zimbabwean people who function as saviours, hence the big Other that functions as the source of desire. Besides, the fact that Nell resides in Zimbabwe and teaches in the school of Boniface and that she, in a way, desires to imitate Enock undermine her position as the saviour and the homogenous superior/Other. This, in turn, changes the Zimbabwean people into her emancipators instead of victims. Consequently, Plowman challenges the line and the distinction between victim and saviour

through the intricate set of power relations she establishes. Unlike the human right corpus that tends to provide depictions as pinpointed by Mutua, fortifying the dichotomy established by the colonial discourse, Plowman provides the reader with a picture where the provider is also in need of help. Her work, in a wider context, is significant, as it unveils the hidden or unquestioned aspects in this mutual relationship of give-and-take. Moreover, by portraying the land of the victim as a land of promises, she brings a new tone to the human rights literature and raises questions that have been neglected in terms of the binaries.

References

- Lacan, Jacques. 1977. *Écrit: A Selection*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. London: Routledge.
- Mutua, Makau. 2002. *Human Rights: A Political and Cultural Critique*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania.
- Plowman, Gillian. 2013. "Yours Abundantly, from Zimbabwe" in Robson, Cheryl and Rebecca Gillieron (eds.). *Plays for Today by Women*. Exeter, UK: Aurora Metro Publications Ltd., pp. 14 -53.
- Scarry, Elaine. 1998. "The Difficulty of Imagining Other Persons" in Weiner, Eugene (ed.). *The Handbook of Interethnic Coexistence*. New York: Continuum, pp. 40-62.
- Walzer, Michael. 2011. "On Humanitarianism: Is Helping Others Charity, or Duty, or Both?" in *Foreign Affairs*, 90(4) (July/August 2011). [Online]. pp. 69-80. Available: <http://www.jstor.org.seyhan.library.boun.edu.tr/stable/23039607> [Accessed 2016, May 2].
- Wheeler, Nicholas J. 2002. *Saving Strangers: Humanitarian Intervention in International Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Žižek, Slavoj. 1997. *The Plague of Fantasies*. London: Verso.
- Žižek, Slavoj. 1989. *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. London: Verso.

MADNESS NARRATIVES AND THEIR RECEPTION: MOTIVATION, CHALLENGES AND IMPACT

ANCA-LUISA VIUSENCO

“Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași

Abstract: *Madness narratives have managed to advance thorny issues regarding humanity and human rights, as well as raise profound questions such as: What is real? Can truth be regulated? Can mind and soul be equated? How much subjectivity is one, in fact, allowed? What is, however, the immediate impact of such charged texts upon those who come into contact with them? The present paper – an overview of the responses to both written (focusing on female-authored autobiographical texts) and filmic madness narratives – is, essentially, an attempt at comprehending both the individuals behind and those in front of the page and/or screen.*

Keywords: *author/reader/critic dynamics, autobiographical writing, filmic adaptation, madness narrative, viewing ethics*

1. Introduction

A heterogeneous class of texts, madness narratives are a blend of creative writing, pathography, scriptotherapy and activism. They include entirely *fictional* accounts of madness, instances of (auto)biographical fiction dealing with mental instability, the self-proclaimed *non-fictional* madness memoir, and even the so-called *relational madness narrative*, which approaches mental imbalance from the perspective of a close witness, rather than of the person touched by it.

The reception of such texts, whatever their subtype, and of the filmic adaptations that many have benefited from – from reader/viewer motivation to emotional costs – is highly challenging, as challenging as the process of writing/acting in/directing them. It is hindered by obstacles such as the readers' fears of an experience so alien that there might be no comprehension or empathy, or, on the contrary, of emotional contagion, the struggle of the former to piece together a story and, in the end, a person against the frequent backdrop of competing voices and confusing chronology, the critics' temptation to sacrifice the aesthetic value of madness narratives in favour of their socio-political messages

(and vice versa), or the complex ethical issues raised by the filmic portrayals of deranged, often highly violent or highly sexualized, individuals.

Autobiographical madness narratives authored by and centred on women (of which “The Yellow Wall-Paper” (1892) by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Shutter of Snow* (1930) by Emily Holmes Coleman, *Save Me the Waltz* (1932) by Zelda Fitzgerald, *The Snake Pit* (1947) by Mary Jane Ward, *The Bird’s Nest* (1954) by Shirley Jackson, *The Bell Jar* (1963) by Sylvia Plath, or Joanne Greenberg’s *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden* (1964) are representative examples) are undoubtedly the most problematic in terms of the response they elicit. In relation to them, one cannot escape questions such as: Does one respond to the madwoman in the text differently as a female reader/critic than one would from a male perspective? How does a feminist perspective inform one’s response? Do such texts have an intended audience, or are they the mere result of a mind pouring itself onto the page? How does one view the madwoman on the screen, in all her rawness, and negotiate between innate voyeuristic impulses, on the one hand, and the desire for genuine connection with another human being, on the other?

Despite decades of reformatory effort and undeniable, albeit insufficient, progress in the way mentally-challenged individuals are viewed and treated, however, society is still plagued by ignorance-bred intolerance, and listening to/reading/viewing the narratives of the *mad* (in the age of political correctness, embracing this word is often regarded as crucial to reclaiming one’s story), as challenging as it may be, is as imperative as ever. Such a narrative may indeed save the person who opens up through it, either directly or by means of a literary/on-screen character, and, being an unparalleled exercise in patience and compassion, the one who accepts witnessing the inner workings of an unstable mind, as well. Or, by rendering them inescapably vulnerable, it may damn them both.

2. Women’s autobiographical madness narratives and the perils of reading

Judy Long (1999: 16) summarizes the author/reader/critic dynamics in women’s autobiographical writing as follows: “The subject transforms her life, the reader relies on the autobiographical account for knowledge of the subject, and the critic magnifies commonalities and ‘universal themes’ found in the text.” In madness narratives, however, the relationship between the three – author, reader and critic – is much more complex, deriving from a more complex relationship between writer and text.

The role of the reader, already recognized as vital within the communicative act of any writer (in the absence of the reader, this act would be incomplete, therefore rendered meaningless), becomes particularly sensitive in the case of personal accounts of mental instability. Indeed, “in no other discursive project does the ‘reader’ so crucially aggravate the project’s realization” (Renza 1980: 293) as in texts based on unmediated experience, yet, in madness narratives, since they

“are not only histories of pain, but painful histories whose narrative articulations are as halting and unstable as the symptoms for which they attempt [...] to account” (White 1989: 1037), reading becomes both crucial and potentially dangerous.

Writing and reading are, from the very beginning, “powerful, mysterious, interior acts that define the self through contact with the thoughts and productions of others” (Charon 2006: 52) and, it is true, “writing, seemingly the most isolated of activities, becomes the means to the creation of an ideal intimacy” (Felski 1989: 89) in confessional literary works. However, in autobiographical texts dealing with madness, the meeting between writer and reader within the space of the text can occasion the simultaneous liberation of the writer of her emotional burden and the transfer of this burden onto the reader, as well as potentially-further-destabilizing introspection for the latter.

As readers, we turn to autobiographical writings “to satisfy a need for verifying a fellow human being’s experience of reality” (Mandel 1980: 58), yet, in such cases, the writer/reader pact can become perilous, for, in the end, “two strangers [...] ultimately surrender themselves to one another’s hands” (Charon 2006: 53). The result can be a reader that resists the text, fearful of its emotional load and/or a personal inability to properly process the text and, more importantly, to act on it, for most madness narratives (not only the overtly political ones) unavoidably appeal to consciences.

As a result, when (and if) eventually ready to fully embrace such a text and its potential emotionally-shattering impact, the reader of an autobiographical madness narrative is, essentially, nearly as courageous as its author.

3. The need for a balanced feminist critique of madness narratives

Penning a beautifully-crafted, yet true-to-the-suffering literary piece in the context of great inner turmoil is not a feat that many can accomplish. As a result, we find ourselves, as readers, in awe of the individuals who have managed to do so, and, irrespective of the emotional cost we may need to pay, inescapably drawn to their texts and the disarming sensitivity, humour and hope that, alongside the darkness, transpires from them. What happens, however, when you are what many may call *a reader with an agenda* – for instance, a feminist?

For the latter, madness narratives offer, beyond the rich array of emotions elicited (as with any reader), an opportunity for the analysis of “the implications for gender of the discourses and practices surrounding the identification and treatment of madness, and the diffusion of such discourses into everyday assumptions and behaviours on the part of non-‘experts’” (Caminero-Santangelo 1998: 9). The feminist interest in madness narratives (particularly the highly-appealing instances of autobiographical fiction) should, however, go beyond the *madwoman as symbol of subversion versus illusion of empowerment* controversy, around which the

discussion on female madness has been revolving within feminist circles since the publication, in 1979, of *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Imagination*, by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar. It should, in fact, essentially stem from what Mary Elene Wood (1994: 170) calls women's "need to listen to each other's stories of mental illness, institutionalization, recovery, fear – stories that can help us gain control of decisions about how to remedy our troubles without losing our voices or denying the voices of others."

Moreover, when approaching a madness narrative, a feminist critic should "attempt to draw out its innermost, private significance by viewing it as the symbol, as it were, or the parable of a consciousness in quest of its own truth" (Gusdorf 1956: 44). Indeed, what is generally witnessed in such texts, instead of the mad abandoning themselves to their own madness, as is often assumed, is a struggle to make sense of the latter, with the cognitive and emotional resources available.

Nowadays, when pain has become both "a powerful way through which we establish shared social ties [and] a guarantee of authenticity" (Lawler 2008: 24), it is our human essence, stripped of all social artifices, which we, in fact, hope to discover in madness narrative. Yet, when approaching such texts critically, one often risks misappropriating the voices behind them.

Indeed, two of the greatest challenges faced by the critic of madness narratives (feminist or otherwise) come, on the one hand, from character analysis in fictional accounts of mental instability, and, on the other, from the impossibility of *speaking/writing about madness* or about those who *speak/write madness*, for that matter, in the thoroughly objective terms that academic research requires, which can, apparently, only be achieved through an "obliteration of the pathetic resonance [and a] suppression [...] of the literary overflow" (Felman 1975: 224), in other words a dry, non-engaged discourse that is impossible when dealing with a topic with such far-reaching implications.

However, the greatest challenge is, in fact, precisely the one discussed above: despite one's decision to "move with the rhythms of the text, submit to the life of the text, feel the weight of each word, experience the effect of each mark of punctuation, notice the shifts in pronouns, respond to the white spaces as well as to the print on the page" (Benstock 1999: 10), in other words despite the most attentive and respectful involvement with the writing at hand, the lines one reads may be very different from those that were written. What feminist critics may, thus, risk, is, on the one hand, attributing to such works a greater impact upon the author than they truly have, and, on the other, becoming blinded by our own ideology, an ideology which, like all such passionately-embraced (and professed) systems of thought, is "mere deception – in essence self-deception [which] obscures truth in order not so much to mislead others as to maintain and increase the self-confidence of those who express and benefit from such deceptions" (Arnold Hauser, qtd. in Scull 1989: 82).

The result would lie in what Rita Felski (1989: 158) deplores as “the ease with which imaginative writing is turned into sociological fodder.” It is an ease which must, however, be pitted against the rather sterile ideal of *art for art’s sake* – after all, as Jane Marcus (qtd. in Robinson 1983: 115) points out, “successful plots have always had gunpowder in them,” and, consequently, the ability to start social revolutions. Yet, how does the critical misappropriation occur in the first place?

It starts from the assumption that, once a writer decides to publish one of his or her works, s/he supposedly loses all rights over it: the text ceases to belong to its creator and becomes the property of the reader. There are, however, readers who see writing and reading as two forms of the same imaginative act and are, thus, able to enrich the text, unearthing new meanings, and there are those who virtually mutilate the text.

Unfortunately, a worrying number of critics, (for critics are – or should be – first and foremost, readers), fall into the second category, of readers acting as plundering troops. They strip the text apart, bit by bit, and then they rearrange the pieces according to the precepts of their particular school of thought. This dismembering and subsequent convenient remembering, which seems particularly tempting in the case of pieces of writing that do not appear as carefully-balanced wholes, but the result of a stream of consciousness, is as damaging as regarding the text as *tabula rasa* from the very beginning.

Indeed, each piece of writing elicits both an emotional and an intellectual response, and only by bringing both our heart and our mind to the text can one truly grasp its message. Yet, before being a judge of aestheticism, sentencing to or absolving from cultural oblivion, establishing hierarchies and shaping canons, a critic should be a respectful translator. S/he should shed light upon a text (and this can, indeed, be done from a multitude of perspectives, for each text is multi-layered, although there are pieces of fiction which seem tailor-made for a specific interpretation), not render it undecipherable while seeking to decipher it, or virtually rewrite it, planting evidence where evidence is not to be found.

It is true that each critic works with an ideology at the back of his/her mind, but this ideology should never overpower the text itself: it should be transparent, but without rendering the text opaque. Such a balance is not, however, easy to achieve, especially when one assumes a certain perspective from the very beginning, a perspective which requires the dwelling on specific concepts and the use of specific terminology. One must, nevertheless, be aware at all times that the text can be approached in several other ways.

In the case of madness narratives, in particular, there are three such critical directions, each with its own narrow (and narrowing) premises: the psychoanalytical one, the socio-historical one, and the feminist one. In relation to the traditional relationship between literature and psychoanalysis, wherein the former is treated as clinical material, for instance, Emanuel Berman (1993: 2) pointed out that “In their enthusiastic search for psychological explanations, they

[psychoanalysts] risked missing the irony and subtlety of texts, risked disregarding the complex interplay of writer and reader.”

As a result, instead of favouring such an approach, in which women’s language becomes “one more site of symptomatology and thus less a manifestation of subjectivity, like the female body, to be analysed and discussed” (Wood 1994: 150), or, on the contrary, one that historicizes or aestheticizes the experience, a critical reading of female-authored and female-centred madness narratives should, in fact, strive toward an interdisciplinary dialogue.

The balancing of a feminist perspective with the socio-historical and literary directions does make sense, since, on the one hand, given the elusiveness of the term *madness*, tracing a context is, indeed, vital, and, on the other, the aesthetic value of madness narratives should not be subordinated to their function as political tools – as Anne M. Lovell (1997: 355) emphasized, “narrative analysis joins [...] two [equally powerful] concerns: the aesthetics of storytelling, with its metaphoric quality and capacity to evoke real and imagined worlds through sensory images and sensate feeling, and the analytic but dynamic treatment of social action as text.”

Such a critical endeavour requires finding a way “to avoid repeating [...] the very gesture of excluding madness which is constitutive of history as such” (Felman 1975: 212), therefore going against centuries of patronizing tradition. Writing about mental instability demands, consequently, “an abandonment of the pretentious attitude [and associated language] of therapists and diagnosticians toward ‘disturbed’ figures and a greater willingness to let literature be our therapist, that is, to allow it to teach us new ways of looking at ourselves” (Berman 1993: 3) (for this should be the true meaning of therapy) through these individuals whose lives seem, at first, so un-relatable.

Indeed, what is primordial is the understanding of mental disturbances as subjective experiences – lost in the analysis of madness as either a cultural construct or a biological manifestation, one risks reifying it and overlooking its very personal, and most often very painful, reality – and, more importantly, as human experiences, with human responses.

4. On-screen madness narratives and the ethics of viewing

Filmic adaptations of autobiographical madness narratives are doubly interesting for anyone researching the topic: on the one hand, together with translations, adaptations constitute, through the highly-productive tension between written text and on-screen text, both covert and overt forms of criticism, and, on the other, the madman and the madwoman are, conventionally, some of the most visually portrayable individuals (which has, of course, made them equally appealing to playwrights).

The relationship between book and film is, in this case as in that of any filmic adaptation, a sensitive one, for, as always, one must ask oneself how much of the original content can be preserved on screen and in what form, what is altered, how and why. Film manages to do what Hugo Münsterberg (qtd. in Gabbard and Gabbard 1999: XV-XVI) describes in *The Film: A Psychological Study* (1916) as telling “the human story by overcoming the forms of the outer world, namely, space, time, and causality, and by adjusting the events to the forms of the inner world, namely, attention, memory, imagination, and emotion.” Is it, however, more effective than literature in telling this story? As Paul Loukides and Linda K. Fuller (1996: 3) suggest, “our most important views of the world are not hung out like banners of meaning, but are embedded in the minutia of characters, actions, places, and objects within the world of film.” Film tells, thus, the most important stories, but it often does so in ways that are available only to those able to deconstruct the layered edifice of meaning upon which the former is built.

As far as portraying madness is concerned, given its disruptive (in terms of conventional patterns of thought, emotion and behaviour) and disconcerting nature, mental imbalance, which “disturbs daily existence, transgresses the familiar, and crosses a socially imagined line that separates it from its opposite – normal, sane, healthy, natural, usual” (de Young 2010: 27), demands to be represented, and films do appear to be the perfect medium for that. Indeed, throughout the past century, they have capitalized considerably on madness being “a ready-made locus for the horrible and the terrifying in human existence” (Pedlar 2006: 18), therefore a highly attractive topic for audiences willing to experience it from the safe position of an outsider (despite fears that mental instability may, in fact, be too depressing to show in such a magnified manner as on the big screen).

Consequently, one can piece up a history of cultural assumptions regarding mental instability by following the chronology of its filmic depictions. One will, thus, discover, for instance, that, for a fair amount of time, in keeping with “a dehumanized [...] depthless treatment [that] not only distances seer and reader from the character but usually makes this character impervious to further inspection” (Spiegel 1976: 146), both mentally-disturbed persons and mental health professionals have more or less been dealt with as stock characters. The explanation is fairly simple: as mentioned above, under the reign of his psychosis, the (conventionally depicted) madman is, indeed, *the* visual subject. Or is it the *object*? What about the *madwoman*, the markedly-sexed mentally-unstable individual? Are the ethical issues regarding her portrayal even deeper than those regarding the depiction of madmen?

As Barbara Tapa Lupack (1996: 6) points out, “Hollywood has typically presented negative views of women, particularly those who are poor role models or whose glamour makes them unattainable ideals, and defined female film characters in relation to their sexuality [...]” Is the madwoman a negative model *par excellence*? At the height of Freudian vogue, it did appear so: mental disturbance was regarded as the product of misconstrued attempts at emancipation, and the

deranged women on screen were presented as a (not-very-subtle) warning against a potential rebellion of female viewers against their preordained (therefore healthy) roles. A film is, after all, like all cultural artefacts, a product of its age, as much as that of the vision of its screenwriter and director.

There is, then, in agreement with Lupack's observation above, a tendency to oversexualize the mad subject, women in particular. From childlike bare-breasted women in what appears to be an Edenic state of innocence regarding one's body, to sexually-predatory asylum inmates (an echo of views of madness as a return to the bestial), to mentally unstable *femme fatales* who corrupt their male psychiatrists, film's madwomen are often presented as "thoroughly saturated with sexuality" (Foucault 2006: 104). How does one watch such overt displays of sexuality in individuals who have little control over their actions? It can by no means be light-heartedly.

From Anatole Litvak's *The Snake Pit* (1948), through Hugo Haas' *Lizzie* (1957), Anthony Page's *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden* (1977) and Larry Peerce's *The Bell Jar* (1979), to James Mangold's *Girl, Interrupted* (1999) and onward, a nuancing of the image of the madwoman has, undeniably, occurred. Yet, as visible in films such as Darren Aronofsky's *The Black Swan* (2010) (not an adaptation, like those above, but a production equally relevant in the discussion on the problematic connection between madness and creativity - another of the heated transdisciplinary debates centred on madness), the stress on the sexual has been preserved.

There is, generally speaking, in film, a shift of emphasis from what the mind of the character experiences to what the body of the actor can convey to the audience. The visual and auditory devices employed in the filmic depiction of such a problematic subject as the mentally-unstable individual, irrespective of gender, tends to transfer the focus from madness as inner drama to its outward manifestations: cries, moans, repetitive gestures, contorting bodies, incoherent and accelerated speech etc., often exaggerated to the point of becoming grotesque so as to increase their impact. This is also due to the fact, unlike literature, film can, most often, grant only indirect access to a character's thoughts and feelings. As a result, madness becomes, on screen, a spectacle reminiscent of the public's visits to eighteenth-century asylums. This revelry in the delights of the ugly leaves, unfortunately, little room for compassion and genuine engagement with the character, for it places the mad individual on screen in the "straightjacket of [the] gaze" (Scull 1989: 274).

How does one, for instance, justify the pleasure one derives from watching the mentally-deranged villain on screen commit a sadistic murder and the enduring popularity of such characters? Our delight in "the 'madly bad'" (Menzies et al. 2005: 3) of film is, yet again, a question of seeing the values on which society is built (and in which, as *sane* individuals, we find refuge when confronted with the possibility of our own dormant madness) enforced through what appears as the very embodiment of the result of the collapse of these values. The outcome of

filmic productions featuring such characters is, however, a disproportionate view of the frequency of violent behaviour among individuals suffering from mental afflictions.

Is pity, on the other hand, a legitimate response to the madman or madwoman on the screen? Where does compassion end and pity begin? Many individuals whom society labels as “mentally unstable” do not see themselves as deplorable and being turned into the recipients of pity is by no means acceptable, therefore witnessing such a reaction to on-screen representations of mental instability (which, in many cases, is, unfortunately, mere *presentation*) must not be easy. There remains, nevertheless, within numerous viewers, a considerable level of discomfort at the thought of authors of autobiographical works dealing with mental instability finding themselves, in certain cases, submitted to a greater level of vulnerability-inducing exposure than they had anticipated when agreeing to the filmic adaptation of their narrative. In the view of such members of the audience, writing may have proved cathartic for these authors, but, given the large audiences that film is able to touch and the expectation-defying popularity that some adaptations enjoy, the filmic production which uses the madness narrative as a starting-point could, on the contrary, act as a catalyst for mental deterioration.

Viewing madness is, as expected, a delicate issue. What are, on the other hand, the implications of portraying, rather than being a spectator to, on-screen madness? According to Michael Fleming and Roger Manvell (1985: 17), “for the film artist, madness is a subject which probes the darkest and most hidden side of our being”. What are, therefore, the inner resources that playing a blood-thirsty mentally disturbed villain or a person about to commit suicide because they can no longer endure the emotional numbness of depression drain?

Accepting such roles, which, for some actors involves much more than just putting on a mask, more precisely an immersion into the inner life of the character so profound that it leads to the near-dissolution of their own personality, requires the outmost confidence in one’s mental balance. However, sadly, such confidence can be misleading and actors playing mentally-unstable individuals (which, apart from raw talent, demands great empathy and, often, considerable research) find themselves emotionally worn out (at best). After all, “when you stare for a long time into an abyss, the abyss stares back into you” (Nietzsche 2002: 69). There is, then, the assumption that a convincing portrayal of a mentally-disturbed character necessarily suggests the actor’s own unacknowledged and/or undisclosed mental troubles, which may prove quite harmful career-wise.

5. Conclusion

Whether one writes, reads, plays or views madness, it is always a soul-consuming act. Yet, as emphasized above, writing madness is often a question of survival, and, in a world in which madness has come to be trivialized, reading and

viewing madness should be regarded as an act of self-education, for, as history has proved countless times, indifference and vulnerability make up the recipe for abuse, in all its forms.

Madness narratives teach us that responding critically and responding empathetically are not, in fact, mutually exclusive, and that, as long as their authors continue to write them and we continue to discuss them (whether in the academia or in other, more inclusive, settings), they will undoubtedly contribute to the erasing of the stigma.

Moreover, contrary to the idea that films are, in the end, a form of entertainment, and entertainment constitutes a “rearrangement of our problems in shapes which tame them, which disperse them to the margins of our attention” (Michael Wood, qtd. in Gabbard and Gabbard 1999: 4), thus contributing to a desensitizing of the public, filmic portrayals of madness, have, undeniable flaws aside, been raising awareness regarding the complex issue of mental instability and its relevance for society as a whole for decades, and they will undoubtedly continue to do so.

References

- Benstock, Shari. 1999. “The Female Self Engendered: Autobiographical Writing and Theories of Selfhood” in Watson Brownley, Martine and Allison B. Kimmich (eds.). *Women and Autobiography*. Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, pp. 3-13.
- Berman, Emanuel (ed.). 1993. *Essential Papers on Literature and Psychoanalysis*. London/New York: New York University Press.
- Caminero-Santangelo, Marta. 1998. *The Madwoman Can't Speak: Or, Why Insanity is Not Subversive*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Coleman, Emily Holmes. 1981 (1930). *The Shutter of Snow*. Introduction by Carmen Callil and Mary Siepmann. London: Virago.
- Charon, Rita. 2006. *Narrative Medicine: Honouring the Stories of Illness*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- de Young, Mary. 2010. *Madness: An American History of Mental Illness and Its Treatment*. Jefferson: McFarland.
- Felman, Shoshana. 1975. “Madness and Philosophy or Literature’s Reason” in *Graphesis: Perspectives in Literature and Philosophy*, Special issue of *Yale French Studies*, 52, pp. 206-228. Yale University Press. [Online]. Available: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2929755> [Accessed 2012, August 20].
- Felski, Rita. 1989. *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Fitzgerald, Zelda. 2001 (1932). *Save Me the Waltz*. London: Vintage.
- Fleming, Michael and Roger Manvell. 1985. *Images of Madness: The Portrayal of Insanity in the Feature Film*. Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.
- Foucault, Michel. 2006 (1961). *History of Madness*, ed. Jean Khalfa, transl. Jonathan Murphy and Jean Khalfa, 3rd edition. London: Routledge.

- Gabbard, Glen O. and Krin Gabbard. 1999. *Psychiatry and the Cinema*, 2nd edition. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press.
- Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. 1995 (1892). "The Yellow Wall-Paper" in Schulman, Robert (ed.). *The Yellow Wall-Paper' and Other Stories*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 3-19.
- Greenberg, Joanne. 1989 (1964). *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden*. New York: Signet.
- Gusdorf, Georges. 1956. "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography" in Olney, James (ed.). *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*. 1980. Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 28-48.
- Jackson, Shirley. 1966 (1954). *The Bird's Nest* in Hyman, Stanley Edgar (ed.). *The Magic of Shirley Jackson*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux.
- Lawler, Steph. 2008. *Identity: Sociological Perspectives*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Long, Judy. 1999. *Telling Women's Lives: Subject/Narrator/Reader/Text*. New York: New York University Press.
- Loukides, Paul and Linda K. Fuller. 1996. "American Themes, American Dreams" in Loukides, Paul and Linda K. Fuller (eds.). *Beyond the Stars: Themes and Ideologies in American Popular Film*, vol. 5. Bowling Green: Popular Press, pp. 1-6.
- Lovell, Anna M. 1997. "'The City Is My Mother': Narratives of Schizophrenia and Homelessness" in *American Anthropologist* (New Series), 99 (2), pp. 355-368. New York: Wiley and Sons (American Anthropological Association). [Online]. Available: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/682216> [Accessed 2012, August 21].
- Lupack, Barbara Tapa. 1996. "Vision/Re-Vision: Adapting Contemporary American Fiction by Women to Film" in Lupack, Barbara Tapa (ed.). *Vision/Re-Vision: Adapting Contemporary American Fiction by Women to Film*. Bowling Green: Popular Press, pp. 1-44.
- Mandel, Barret J. 1980. "Full of Life Now" in Olney, James (ed.). *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 47-72.
- Menzies, Robert, Dorothy E. Chunn and Wendy Chan. 2005. "Introduction" in Chan, Wendy, Dorothy E. Chunn and Robert Menzies (eds.). *Women, Madness and the Law: A Feminist Reader*. London: Glasshouse, pp. 1-18.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2002 (1886). *Between Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*. Introduction by Rolf-Peter Horstmann, transl. Judith Norman. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Pedlar, Valerie. 2006. *The Most Dreadful Visitation: Male Madness in Victorian Fiction*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.
- Plath, Sylvia. 2005 (1963). *The Bell Jar*. New York: Harper Perennial.
- Renza, Louis A. 1980. "The Veto of the Imagination: A Theory of the Autobiography" in Olney, James (ed.). *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 268-295.
- Robinson, Lillian S. 1983. "Treason Our Text: Feminist Challenges to the Literary Canon" in Warhol, Robyn R. and Diane Price Herndl (eds.). *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*. 1997, revised edition. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, pp. 115-128.
- Scull, Andrew. 1989. *Social Order/Mental Disorder: Anglo-American Psychiatry in Historical Perspective*. Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Spiegel, Alan. 1976. *Fiction and the Camera Eye: Visual Consciousness in Film and the Modern Novel*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.

- Ward, Mary Jane. 1973 (1946). *The Snake Pit*. New York: Signet.
- White, Deborah Elise. 1989. "Studies on Hysteria: Case Histories and the Case against History" in *Modern Language Notes*, 104 (5) (Comparative Literature). John Hopkins University Press, pp. 1035-1049. [Online].
Available: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2905364> [Accessed 2012, August 19].
- Wood, Mary Elene 1994. *The Writing on the Wall: Women's Autobiography and the Asylum*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

**FROM SPLIT SELF TO SELF UNIFIED:
TRAVELLING TO THE HOLY LAND
IN MURIEL SPARK'S NOVEL *THE MANDELBAUM GATE***

ANNA WALCZUK

Jagiellonian University, Kraków

***Abstract:** The Mandelbaum Gate holds a special place among Muriel Spark's novels not only on account of its length and rather traditional narrative structure, but also for its autobiographic reverberations. The main female protagonist, Barbara Vaughan, who struggles with the question 'who am I?', is a Roman Catholic convert, torn between her Jewish and Christian parentage and trying to restore her personal integrity in the midst of epistemological chaos. The aim of the article is to demonstrate how the journey through the conflict-ridden Jerusalem assists the protagonist in arriving at her own integrated and reconciled self. The multicultural Holy Land, where the sacred and the profane exist side by side, and truth gets intertwined with lies, becomes a testing ground for Barbara's personal identity which is gradually being rescued from the traps of indefiniteness and excruciating rifts. Muriel Spark's quest for her own voice in fiction runs parallel to Barbara's journey towards her unified self. Hence the article also proposes to look upon The Mandelbaum Gate in terms of the novelist's coming to grips with her own formula of fiction, viewed as a literary mode of telling lies in order to reach truth.*

***Keywords:** pilgrimage, multiculturalism, division, identity, novel*

1. Introduction

An account of a journey as the narrative formula for all kinds of epistemological quests is a strategy quite frequently employed in literary fiction. Travelling through a definite geographical area or across fantasy lands provides a useful framing in fiction for an exploration of the most intimate recesses either in the private life of the individual, or in the public life of the whole community. Hence, understandably, the journey in the novel has acquired a status of a rhetorical macro-figure and consequently it has become a metaphor for various processes of discovery that may take place at different existential levels: spiritual, mental, emotional, social, communal, or political. Examples range from Conrad's

moral quest in *Heart of Darkness* to C.S. Lewis's spiritual epiphanies in his interplanetary novels, *Out of the Silent Planet* and *Voyage to Venus*.

2. Traditional form at variance with Spark's general mode of writing

In the *The Mandelbaum Gate* (1965) Muriel Spark uses an account of a journey through the divided Holy Land as a narrative modus operandi for the epistemological quest combining different planes of life: spiritual, emotional, social and political.

In this respect *The Mandelbaum Gate* falls within a broad category of novels which make use of a popular and fairly traditional fictional discourse. Thus at first glance the novel appears least innovative among Spark's works of fiction and rather remote from the postmodernist code that she usually pursues. The considerable length of the narrative text is also untypical, for here Muriel Spark abandons her preferred compactness of structure and economy of expression.

Although the literary paradigm of travel fiction adopted for *The Mandelbaum Gate* is by no means unusual, the novel holds a special place in Muriel Spark's entire creative output and that is why it deserves more assiduous critical attention. Consequently, a closer look at it shows that in *The Mandelbaum Gate* the journey which is the framing device for the epistemological pursuit is not only inscribed into the imaginatively presented territory of the Holy Land, but it transcends it and runs through a much broader area of verbal discourse. As a result, the female protagonist's travel through the conflict-ridden Jerusalem is matched with a parallel movement of the authorial narrator, who seeks her own distinct voice in fiction across the expanse of words which constitute not only the representation of social life in the novel, but also the fabric of Sparkian narrative. Therefore, in *The Mandelbaum Gate*, the discovery of the personal self in the course of the pilgrimage is inextricably connected with the quest for an artistic identity of its author and creator. The connection is made explicit in the sermon of an insubordinate English priest-pilgrim who violates the formal regulation that forbids preaching during the Mass at the Holy Sepulchre and in his lengthy address points to the deep-seated link between an act of pilgrimage and a work of art:

The act of pilgrimage is an instinct of mankind. It is an act of devotion which, like a work of art, is meaning enough in itself. (*MG*, 210)

3. The autobiographic component

It would be an exaggeration to claim that *The Mandelbaum Gate* is an autobiographic novel, or even that it belongs to the newly coined genre of 'life writing'. However, the parallels between Barbara Vaughan, the main protagonist of the novel, and Muriel Spark herself, are significant and too overt to be ignored. Both Muriel Spark and her fictitious creation, Barbara Vaughan, are Roman

Catholic converts, and that which they have in common is not only their formal, but also existential commitment to Roman Catholicism as a fixed frame of reference and a norm against which they measure all important facts of life. Significantly, in the novel Barbara Vaughan is presented as “the sort of person who somehow induced one to think in terms of religion if one thought about her at all” (*MG*, 73).

In her interviews and non-fiction writing, Muriel Spark often refers to the significance of her conversion to Catholicism for the shape of her private life and for the development of her career as a novelist. Kelleher (1976: 79) claims that for Muriel Spark Roman Catholicism “is much more than an item of biographical interest: it is a potent force which has profoundly affected the shape of her art”. The close link between Muriel Spark’s religious belief and her creative writing has been underscored in a great number of critical articles and books dealing with her work, among which Ruth Whittaker’s study, *The Faith and Fiction of Muriel Spark*, can be counted as one of the most notable examples. Although many of her novels, especially the later ones, do not show any outstanding characteristics that would justify classifying them as so-called Catholic fiction, still Muriel Spark is frequently viewed as a Catholic writer, which is evident, for instance, in her inclusion in the book edited by J. Friedman (1970) and devoted to “some twentieth-century Catholic novelists”. Spark herself strongly emphasises the connection between her acceptance of the Catholic religion and her writing fiction. In the interview with Sara Frankel she admits that:

... finding my writing voice coincided with my becoming a Catholic. I think becoming a Catholic made me feel more confident, because it took care of a lot of problems. You know, it’s a matter of when you’re at sea you like to have a compass so you can know where the needle’s pointing north, and then you can go on from there. That’s what my conversion meant to me: *That’s settled*, that’s where I depart from, that’s the north, the norm, and I can go around from that point. (*Partisan Review* 1987: 445)

It is one of Sparkian personal paradoxes that, regardless of her formidable spirit of dissention, which can be viewed as a distinctive trait of her character, Muriel Spark in her works of fiction always stresses the need for a solid foundation in norms to build upon, or purposefully deviate from. That is why, in the same interview, she firmly reasserts:

It’s very important for me to have a point of departure, because in the modern world nobody has any fixed belief or fixed idea of anything, and in a world like that a fixed point is very important. And it’s not that I took it on for convenience – it’s that I can’t *not* believe that there is this norm. What other norm could there be, for someone brought up in the Western world, really wanting something? Whether we like it or not, the Christian-Judaic tradition that grew up around the Mediterranean

dictates what we think is good and evil, and defines all the absolutes that we hold to be important. (ibidem)

In her 1992 autobiography, *Curriculum Vitae*, Muriel Spark speaks of “the existential quality of [her] religious experience” (202). In *The Mandelbaum Game*, a parallel work with autobiographic overtones in the mode of fiction, Barbara Vaughan intensely experiences the same “existential quality of [her] religious experience” during her pilgrimage in the Holy Land. While Barbara’s travel is presented by means of the narrative, Muriel Spark’s journey of inward writerly exploration is executed through its fictional discourse.

The Mandelbaum Gate was published a decade after Muriel Spark’s conversion and it is viewed as the fruit of her stay in Israel in 1961, when she was covering Eichmann trial for the British press. The choice of the frame of the pilgrimage for both, Barbara’s journey and Spark’s own quest in terms of fiction, is not accidental, because a pilgrimage to a holy place has always been connected with the pilgrim’s attempt to restore the sense of the self and to see it in relation to the other, where the other, within the frame of a pilgrimage, invariably stands for the divine as well as for the human. Another important aspect of a pilgrimage concerns the fact that it involves not only attaining the set target but also, or even primarily, it is related to a process of healing. It should be emphasised that the fictitious Barbara’s pilgrimage is not directly based on any analogous enterprise of the novelist – her creator. Jerusalem is obviously recognised by all Christians as the cradle of their religion, and that is the most apparent reason why Barbara, like Muriel Spark – the author of the novel, attaches great importance to travelling to the Holy City of her newly found Faith. However, the journey through the territory of the Holy Land divided between Israel and Jordan, and inhabited by Jews, Christians and Muslims, has a broader meaning than its immediately religious significance. It concerns another important analogy between the author of the novel and its fictitious protagonist: Muriel Spark’s father was Jewish, and her mother was Presbyterian; Barbara Vaughan is a half-Jew by her mother, which according to the Jewish tradition is more important because it means being Jewish by law. Thus Barbara Vaughan shares with Muriel Spark the same cultural identity which is, on the one hand, rooted in joint Judeo-Christian tradition, but on the other hand, it is split between Jewish and Christian parenthood.

4. Query about identity

Having family roots in two different cultures and two religions is largely the reason why Barbara Vaughan is constantly bothered by the question “who am I” (*MG*, 23, 36), which reverberates through the narrative of *The Mandelbaum Gate*. The unequivocal answer is difficult to give, because, on the one hand, both sides of Barbara’s family claim her for themselves, but on the other, they reject her on the grounds of her mixed origin. Though Barbara sometimes finds her split identity

excruciating, it does not prevent her from looking upon it with moderate detachment and benign humour:

‘They [the Aaronsons, on the Jewish maternal side] wouldn’t worry who I married, now,’ Barbara said. ‘They always knew I wasn’t quite the right blood for them. Only half right. The other half was wrong.’ [...] ‘And the Vaughans [on the Gentile side],’ said Barbara cheerfully, ‘always knew I hadn’t quite the right background. They felt I was too fond of the Aaronsons. My environment was half wrong.’ (*MG*, 39)

Barbara’s reflections are triggered by her conversation with her cousin Michael Aaronson, who has guessed her feelings for Harry Clegg and realises that if they get married “the family won’t like it” (*MG*, 39). Despite the fact that Barbara seems to be reconciled to the idea that she is bound to have “the outcast status” (*MG*, 39), the question “who am I?” does not lose its poignancy and, in consequence, it urges Miss Vaughan to go on a pilgrimage through the Holy Land to the core of her religion and to her self-fulfilment in love and acceptance of the other. Barbara’s difficulty in answering the question “who am I?” leads her to the self-reflexive answer “I am who I am”, with clear biblical reverberations of God giving his name to the inquiring Moses (cf. Exodus 3:14). Unsurprisingly, Barbara sees such reply as perfectly fitting for the transcendent order of the divine, but at the same time she discards it as completely unacceptable in the terrestrial order of the humankind. The same query which bothers Barbara in the novel has its analogue in the life of Muriel Spark, who traces the origin of her autobiography, *Curriculum Vitae*, to a casual question which she was once asked, “who are you, darling?”:

I thought it a very good question, and still do. I resolved, all those years ago, to write an autobiography which would help to explain, to myself and others: Who am I. (*CV*, 14)

What Spark explains in her autobiography in the language of discursive prose, Barbara Vaughan finds out across a broad range of experience and sundry adventures presented in the narrative mould of the work of fiction.

In imaginative terms, the question “who am I?” is underscored by strategies of camouflage and dissimulation whereto Barbara is compelled to resort, because in Jordan, Jews or part-Jews arriving by way of Israel have not been welcome, and the possession of a certificate of baptism, no matter whether authentic or false, has made no difference. That is why Barbara travelling across the Holy Land and trying to piece together disparate elements of her life uses subterfuge and disguise, masquerading either as an Arab servant with her face veiled in public or as a Roman Catholic nun accompanied by her Arab male friend, dressed up as a Franciscan. Thus she follows the deviant epistemological path to resolve her fundamental ontological and existential dilemma. In this respect again, like in

many other similar situations, the character of fictitious Barbara bears a close resemblance to the author of the novel. For Muriel Spark frequently repeated that in her novels she tells lies in order to arrive at truth. In the 1963 interview with Frank Kermode, she confirms her interest in absolute truth, declaring concomitantly that lies in fiction can be used as a means of reaching truth and so, accordingly, they can be treated as an “imaginative extension of the truth” (*Partisan Review* 1963: 61–82). Interestingly, Frank Kermode (1967: 64) raises the same issue in his study, *The Sense of an Ending*, when he claims: “[Literary fictions] find out about the changing world on our behalf. [...] [T]hey do this, for some of us, perhaps better than history, perhaps better than theology, largely because they are consciously false”. Likewise, Irving Malin (1970: 97-98) stresses Muriel Spark’s tendency to use false clues and arbitrary far-fetched associations, and argues that by employing such narrative strategy, Spark always teaches the reader something about the overall true “cosmic design” of things.

Barbara’s decision to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land of her newly embraced religion coincides with another important moment in her life, which is

Barbara’s decision to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land of her newly embraced religion coincides with another important moment in her life, which is her intended marriage with Harry Clegg, an archaeologist working at that time on the site of the Dead Sea excavations in Jordan. The private and religious motifs of Barbara’s journey converge and get considerably reinforced by the fact that Harry is divorced and Barbara, as a Roman Catholic bound by the ecclesiastical law, must wait for the annulment of Harry’s previous marriage - an indispensable condition she has to comply with, if she wants to become Clegg’s wife and remain within the Church.

Both the private and religious reasons for travelling to the Holy Land and making the pilgrimage to the foremost sites of Christianity can be viewed in terms of Barbara’s overriding quest for her true self, combined with the desire to restore it to its full potential. The latter motif is intrinsically connected with Barbara’s growing realisation that restoring the true sense of herself entails the need to break free from false identities imposed upon her by other people, especially by her female friend Ricky, whose friendship Barbara gradually finds more and more enslaving. Here again Barbara’s experience overlaps with the novelist’s. Muriel Spark in her autobiographic essay, “My Conversion”, written soon after her formal entrance into the Roman Catholic Church and, notably, published in 1961, the same year when she stayed in Israel covering the Eichmann trial, stresses the significance of her conversion for her novel writing, and insists on the necessity to put aside other people’s voices so as to speak with one’s own:

I think there is a connection between my writing and my conversion, but I don’t want to be too dogmatic about it. [...] I find I speak far more with my own voice as a Catholic and I think I could prove it with my stuff. Nobody can deny I speak with my own voice as a writer now, whereas before my conversion I couldn’t do it

because I was never sure what I was, the ideas teemed but I couldn't sort them out, I was talking and writing with other people's voices all the time. (Spark 1961: 59–61)

The admission "I was never sure what I was" deserves special notice, for it points to the quest for one's true 'self', which is a common denominator of Muriel Spark the novelist and her imaginative creations, among which Barbara Vaughan and *The Mandelbaum Gate* are particularly noteworthy.

5. Convergence of the opposites

Barbara seeks existential integrity and harmony and that is the main reason why she embarks on a mental and spiritual journey projected in geographical terms, and located in the area of discord and division which call for reconciliation and unification. Jerusalem, as the pivotal Holy City of Sparkian narrative and the cornerstone of her protagonist's personal quest, represents not only the politically fractured block of Western civilisation, but also a cleavage in the very hub of life. However, paradoxically, the ever-present rupture irresistibly bespeaks the need for healing and a drive towards a reunion. Accordingly, the narrative of *The Mandelbaum Gate* makes it clear that Jordanian Jerusalem and Israeli Jerusalem all the time remain the same one city. Likewise, the Holy Land, apart from being an important religious target for pilgrimage, is simultaneously an anthropomorphic image of the main protagonist, who, no matter how torn she is between opposite and contradictory forces, never ceases to be one person, though desperately seeking to recover her own 'self' and restore the undermined sense of her true identity. This is succinctly expressed in the words of Barbara's friend, Freddy, who through his own restorative journey has come to ignore artificial barriers and divisions, even if they are sanctioned by blood and culture: "Jewish blood or Gentile blood, the point is it's hers" (*MG*, p. 196). Therefore in the portrayal of the character of Barbara, Muriel Spark offers what Joseph Hynes calls an oxymoronic vision. Here it refers to the restored self of the main protagonist, where the opposites converge holding a promise of a new unified personality:

For the first time since her arrival in the Middle East she felt all of a piece; Gentile and Jewess, Vaughan and Aaronson; she had caught some of Freddy's madness, having recognized by his manner in the car, as they careered across Jerusalem, that he had regained some lost or forgotten element in his nature and was now, at last, for some reason, flowering in the full irrational norm of the stock she also derived from: unself-questioning hierarchists, anarchistic imperialists, blood-sporting zoophiles, sceptical believers – the whole paradoxical lark that had secured, among their bones, the same life for the dead generations of British Islanders. She had caught a bit of Freddy's madness and for the first time in this Holy Land, felt all of a piece, a Gentile Jewess, a private-judging Catholic, a shy adventuress. (*MG*, 173)

The passage well illustrates the extent to which Sparkian discourse in the novel is charged with the master figure of oxymoron. The oxymoronic vision establishes the principal vantage point for viewing Barbara in the novel: “unself-questioning hierarchists, anarchistic imperialists, blood-sporting zoophiles, sceptical believers [... and] a private-judging Catholic, a shy adventuress” are blended together to produce a new entity presided over by Barbara’s feeling of being “all of a piece” which opens and closes the above-quoted excerpt of the narrative.

It is not only the Gentile and the Jew that intersect in Barbara’s personal history. There are many more similar instances of contradictions and disparate elements overlapping; and they all presuppose a deep-rooted paradigm of unity wherein division appears only accidental. The territory which Barbara covers in her pilgrimage is holy as the sacred repository of human and historical worth, but it is also unholy as the living city full of animosities, teeming with intrigue, deceit, espionage and double dealings. The profane and the sacred spaces overlap in the Holy Land and as such they constitute the proper stage for human existential drama of a quest for a unified vision of life and of oneself. Pursuing the pilgrim’s itinerary teaches Barbara that cracks have to be ignored or repaired, and gaps have to be spanned in order to find out that two opposite parts are in fact complementary.

Undoubtedly, various forms of division and split, both encountered in the outward world and experienced as the inward reality, present grave problems for Barbara and her companions. Nevertheless it should be emphasized that, in the novel, all forms of rift and discord are invariably treated in a humorous manner. The frequently hilarious and witty tone of voice in the narrative often reflects the narrator’s amused consciousness of the paradoxical nature of existence, stretched between great human aspirations combined with high principles of belief and incompatibly low standards of people’s ordinary conduct, as can be seen in the description of one of Jewish quarters in Jerusalem:

Up there at the end of this orthodox street, it was said, the Orthodox Jews would gather on a Saturday morning, piously to stone the passing motor-cars, breakers of the Sabbath. And across the street, streamers stretched from building to building, bearing an injunction in Hebrew, French and English:

DAUGHTERS OF ISRAEL, OBSERVE MODESTY
IN THESE STREETS!

This, Freddy assumed to be for the benefit of any tourist-woman who might, for some mad reason, wish to walk in this Orthodox Jewish quarter wearing shorts or a low-cut sun dress; the local women themselves needed no such warning, being clad and covered, one way or another, all over. (*MG*, 7)

The Orthodox Jews’ strong public disapproval of anybody disturbing the Sabbath is rendered in the narrative in terms as their desire to “piously [...] stone the passing motor-cars”, which throws into sharp relief the clash between high experience of religious piety and low execution of the actual practice of devotion.

The similar effect of a clash is achieved through the incongruity between the content of the injunction concerning the appropriate clothes for women in the Jewish quarter and the potential addressees of that directive as well as the choice of the three languages: Hebrew, French and English, in which the request is worded for the benefit of “daughters of Israel”.

6. Story of adventure and the element of fun

Barbara’s pilgrimage is not only a journey of self-discovery but it is also an occasion to experience great mirth and delight in what gradually emerges as a fascinating adventure of life. Hence Barbara’s entire journey and her unruly conduct in the course of it are primarily presented as an inexhaustible source of divertissement and joy for the protagonist. Without diminishing the danger and risk involved in Barbara’s secret dealings in Jerusalem, the narrative brings fun to the foreground of her experience. That is why Barbara sees her escape from the convent not in terms of a pragmatic ploy, or else jeopardy involved, but in terms of pleasure.

Like Muriel Spark herself, Miss Vaughan- the pilgrim thinks about turning her adventure of self-discovery, entailing the reparation of the fissures in her life, into an amusing story. It is significant that, for Barbara, having fun is intrinsically connected with “making a good story of it” (*MG*, 173). Accordingly, she frequently refers to a potential for an entertaining story that can be found in each event: “It will make a lovely story to tell afterwards” (*MG*, 276), Barbara says to her friend when she declines any help from the British Embassy and stays in hiding while suffering from scarlet fever. In this respect Barbara prides herself on her mental affinity with the Vaughans, who had a rare gift of turning every unfavourable incident of their lives into a good and entertaining story.

During Barbara’s pilgrimage, not only the actual lived adventure has the potential to remedy the split personality, but also turning the personal experience into a narrative promises the same effect of therapeutic joy. The escape from the convent is both factual, as a useful strategy, and figurative, as the liberation from the psychological confines that impair personal development. Therefore, in *The Mandelbaum Gate*, the order of truth in life and the order of narrative fiction naturally come together:

It was not any escape from any real convent, it was an unidentified confinement of the soul she had escaped from; she knew it already and was able to indulge in her slight feeling of disappointment that they had not been caught. It was fun to get away but it would also have been fun to get caught and to have had to explain something, and for Freddy to have explained. It would have made a funny story to tell Harry later on. (*MG*, 174)

When Barbara eventually tells Harry the story of her adventurous journey in the Holy Land, he responds with a comment that oscillates between humour and gravity, and in point of fact strikes the note of a profound theological truth concerning transcendent joy, which borders on ecstasy and is unrelated to any happy occurrences or a common understanding of simple contentment.

Tell me – suppose you'd been killed – what's the technical Catholic difference between a martyr and a jolly good sport? (*MG*, 277)

7. Truth articulated in the polyphony of voices

Even though at first sight *The Mandelbaum Gate* strikes the reader as a fairly traditional novel, it nonetheless represents a thick narrative comprising a number of subplots masterly intertwined with the central story line of the pilgrimage, and the portrayal of the main protagonist significantly reinforced by other characters supporting the plot. Hence Barbara's search for her unified 'self' not only gets inscribed into a number of complementary subplots but, more importantly, it is recounted through a polyphony of voices. Such narrative strategies sustain and buttress up the protagonist's own journey of discovery and healing. Some of the characters that provide backing for Barbara's journey, like the English preacher at the Holy Sepulchre whose words have an enormous impact upon her, or Saul Ephraim, her Israeli guide from the Hebrew University, are only incidentally encountered; others, like Joe Ramdez and his son Abdul and daughter Suzi, or Freddy Hamilton, a British diplomat who decides to shake off his regular life of law-abiding and obedience, become Barbara's close companions, or even accomplices, in her clandestine escapades in the Holy Land. Evidently, in Spark's handling, the narrative of the disjointed state of affairs cannot achieve proper structural unity, unless it is told in the plurality of voices which, paradoxically, are the surest guarantee of unison. Likewise, Barbara's unified self can be eventually restored, but only if its cleaved parts are brought together and treated simultaneously as separate and complementary.

It has to be strongly emphasised that in *The Mandelbaum Gate* the main protagonist's quest for the unified self is inextricably connected with the quest for truth, and the polyphony of voices in the narrative structure can be matched on the philosophical plane with the plurality of epistemological paths leading to the ethical quality of truth. Thus Barbara Vaughan's pilgrimage to find out her personal identity corroborates Muriel Spark's quest for the suitable formula of the novel as an imaginative medium for grasping truth. As already mentioned, Muriel Spark defines her objective in writing fiction as getting at truth by means of lies. In keeping with the novelist's creed, Barbara's pilgrimage towards her true, i.e. integrated self, leads through the lies of false appearance, disguise, misleading façades or conspiracy.

The borderline between reality and appearance gets blurred, and, no matter how unlikely it seems, truth lies somewhere in between, at the meeting point of what is and what is not. While travelling in the Holy Land, Barbara continually sees the intertwining of fraud and veracity in the holy places she visits and, consequently, she observes that “it’s difficult to separate the apocryphal from the true in this part of the world. It always has been” (*MG*, p. 184). Barbara’s two most conspicuous character traits, “a sense of fidelity in the observing of observable things” (*MG*, p. 18) and “the beautiful and dangerous gift of faith” (*MG*, p. 18), have to be reconciled just as the apocryphal reconciles the homely claims of reason and imagination with the impossible demands of faith. In the course of her pilgrimage, Barbara learns that facts, against their inherent factuality, are unbelievable by nature. She has an acute sense of the pointlessness of explaining her suspicious movements in the Holy Land to the authorities, when she listens to Abdul who “piled lies upon truth” (*MG*, 105).

They will never believe a pilgrimage, a fever. Who goes on a pilgrimage like this? You went like a spy, and they’ll arrest Suzi and take my father’s house in Jericho, and his wives, if you tell the facts. And if you don’t tell the facts there is trouble for you from your own government. Who believes all this hiding for a pilgrimage? (*MG*, 321–322)

The complex reality Barbara encounters is epitomised by the “orange groves” of Abdul, underscored in the title (“Abdul’s Orange Groves”) of chapter IV of *The Mandelbaum Gate*. The eponymous orange groves do not exist in any material reality, however, they symbolise all Abdul’s longings and, in consequence, they become a significant idiom in his discourse referring to the life where lies intersect with truth, and dreams overlap facts.

It is a much telling feature of *The Mandelbaum Gate* that the quest for the true self is inextricably connected with contriving plots; and plotting has a multiple significance in the novel, for it combines Barbara’s scheming during her exploits in the Holy Land with the novelist’s impulse for the making of stories. The inclination to plotting and its urgency is yet another factor which hints at the close similarity between Barbara Vaughan, the fictitious character, and Muriel Spark, the author of the novel. Barbara’s journey towards a reclaimed unity of her selfhood is paralleled by a similar movement towards personal and authorial integrity in Muriel Spark, which took place after her conversion and which is evidenced in her fiction and non-fiction prose. In this respect, Spark’s first novel, *The Comforters*, published in 1957, is particularly noteworthy, for it adopts a clearly autobiographic vantage point to raise the issue of authorial freedom and creativity, and to investigate in imaginative terms the intricate relationship between the author and the fictional character. Almost ten years later, *The Mandelbaum Gate*, in realistic terms of a quasi-documentary, accomplishes a deep-structure merger of the author and the character, without simply making the character the author’s *alter ego*.

8. Conclusion

Psychological studies demonstrate that there may be two ways of repairing the split self: one involves placing it in the context of interpersonal contacts within a community, the other proposes regarding the self in relation to an external frame of reference. Muriel Spark incorporates both in her novel: the split communities of the Holy Land and the organising frame of the journey-pilgrimage. Travelling across the conflict-ridden Holy Land becomes for Barbara a psychological and spiritual journey from her split self to the self unified; and she ends her pilgrimage with a strong sense of being cured from the cleavage in personal identity she has been experiencing before.

The Mandelbaum Gate, apart from being the narrative of personal self-discovery, is also the novelist's powerful statement couched in the idiom of fiction about the intriguing interplay between division and unity. The novel closes with a twist of authorial and universal irony when Muriel Spark makes the eponymous Mandelbaum Gate a borderline which does not separate but connects. The dividing Gate is the central image in the fictional landscape of Spark's Jerusalem; it is supposed to be a dumb guardian of division and a barrier that prevents communication. However, the Gate, which at first appears as a formidable obstacle to confront, eventually turns out to be a completely insignificant feature of one of the streets in Jerusalem:

... hardly a gate at all, but a piece of street between Jerusalem and Jerusalem, flanked by two huts, and called by that name because a house at the other end once belonged to a Mr. Mandelbaum. (*MG*, 330)

The novel closes with this statement, and thus it concludes the narrative and the journey across the mental and geographical areas marked with cracks and ruptures, but incessantly seeking – and finding – unity.

References

- Frankel, Sara. 1987. "An Interview with Muriel Spark" in *Partisan Review*, 54 (3), pp. 443-457.
- Friedman, Melvin J. (ed.). 1970. *The Vision Obscured. Perceptions of Some Twentieth-Century Catholic Novelists*. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Hynes, Joseph. 1993. "Muriel Spark and the Oxymoronic Vision" in Hosmer, Robert E. Jr. (ed.). *Contemporary British Women Writers. Texts and Strategies*. London: Macmillan, pp. 161-187.
- Kelleher, V.M.K. 1976. "The Religious Artistry of Muriel Spark" in *The Critical Review*, 18. Melbourne, p. 79.
- Kermode, Frank. 1963. "The House of Fiction" in *Partisan Review*, 30 (1), pp. 61-82.

- Kermode, Frank. 1967. *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Malin, Irving. 1970. "The Deceptions of Muriel Spark" in Friedman, Melvin J. (ed.). *The Vision Obscured. Perceptions of Some Twentieth-Century Catholic Novelists*. New York: Fordham University Press, pp. 95-107.
- Spark, Muriel. 1957. *The Comforters*. London: Macmillan.
- Spark, Muriel. 1961. "My Conversion" in *The Twentieth Century*, 170 (1011), Autumn, pp. 58-63.
- Spark, Muriel. 1966. *The Mandelbaum Gate*. London: Macmillan. (Abbreviated in quotations as *MG*).
- Spark, Muriel. 1993. *Curriculum Vitae*. London: Penguin Books. (Abbreviated in quotations as *CV*).
- Whittaker, Ruth. 1982. *The Faith and Fiction of Muriel Spark*. London: Macmillan.

**“ADDICTED TO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY”:
A REASSESSMENT OF
MARTIN AMIS’ *MONEY: A SUICIDE NOTE* (1984)**

JAVIER RODRÍGUEZ DOÑATE

University of Zaragoza

***Abstract:** The aim of this essay is to demonstrate that Martin Amis’ *Money*, first published in 1984, is a novel fully influenced by its age. Drawing on the insights provided by critics of postmodernism and philosophers of history, such as Brian McHale, Saul Newman, Jean Baudrillard or Fredric Jameson, the essay seeks to demonstrate that Baudrillard’s concept of the “loss of the real” underlies the plot of *Money*, and that the commodification of culture in the age of late capitalism has an effect on the form of the novel and the depiction of the characters, particularly of *John Self*.*

***Keywords:** Amis, loss of the real, money, postmodernism*

“The extent of the power of money is the extent of my power. Money’s properties are my properties and essential powers [...]. Thus, what I am and am capable of is by no means determined by my individuality. I am ugly, but I can buy for myself the most beautiful of women [...]. Does not my money therefore transform all my incapacities into their contrary?” (Marx, 137-8)

1. Introduction

Money, first published in 1984, is a novel fully influenced by its age. Late capitalism, free-market economic policies and, enveloping all this, postmodern culture are the main motifs of both the novel and the decade of its publication. The novel’s setting varies between the United Kingdom and the United States of America, at a time when the two countries were alike in what concerns the ideology of their respective political leaders, Margaret Thatcher (1979-90) and Ronald Reagan (1981-89). During the 1980s, Thatcher and Reagan maintained a powerful relationship, a great interest towards each other’s policies and a mutual

admiration. In what concerns Great Britain, the Thatcher administration revised the previous economic model, linked with Keynesian economics, which had been in force since the end of World War II, and moved towards a system based on monetarism, an economic system that limited or even deprived the state of any form of intervention in economic issues and thus contributed to the reduction of the influence exerted by the public sector. At first, the results of this shift were partially positive since, as Jim Tomlinson (2012: 75) points out, “the Conservatives’ success in combating inflation was episodic”, and this was a target of utmost importance for the British Prime Minister. However, he adds (2012: 76), “in the early 1980s, [...] monetarism as an economic policy failed; the government did not find a way to effectively control monetary growth and [inflation] showed no permanent reduction”. In like manner, the economic policies implemented in the United States by Ronald Reagan aimed to put an end to the “economic uncertainty” (Thompson 2007: 7) of the 1970s. During this decade, the Government aimed to stimulate the demand in order to put an end to economic stagnation. Since the previous measures had failed, once in the White House, the Reagan administration brought about a stimulation of consumption and a shift to neo-liberalism, an economic theory that places the “responsibility” of vitalising economy on the population and the private sector, while reducing investment in the public sector. As Graham Thompson points out, Milton Friedman, winner of the Nobel Prize in Economics, argued for the efficacy of these measures and advised Reagan about how to carry out this enterprise. Friedman himself was “appointed to Reagan’s Economic Policy Advisory Board in 1981” (Thompson 2007: 7-8).

During this decade, politics and culture were inevitably linked more tightly than usual, as culture and values were put into action against the conservative politics. Saul Newman’s vision of the postmodern condition is illuminating in this respect. He (2005: 4) notes that in postmodern times the subject no longer plays an independent role in the field of politics; instead, the postmodern subject is “affected, and indeed constituted, by conditions that are often outside his control”. Thus, such key cultural theorists as Jean Baudrillard and Fredric Jameson coincided in their explanation both for the reasons and the consequences of this new age of capitalism. Drawing on Marx’s and Mandel’s interpretations, Jameson classified the history of capitalism into three stages, with the contemporary age being characterised by “a prodigious expansion of capital into hitherto uncommodified areas” (Jameson 1984: 36), that is, as an age ruled by the idea that everything can be sold and bought, that everything has become part of the market and is, thus, commodified. This is the main point of concurrence of both theorists, even though Baudrillard had come to that conclusion more than a decade earlier. As Steven Connor notes,

In his *The Mirror of Production* Baudrillard refers to Marx’s three-stage genealogy of the growth of the market [and] assents to this genealogy but [...] argues [that] it is no longer possible to separate the economic or productive realm from the realms of

ideology or culture, since cultural artefacts, images, representations and even feelings have become part of the world of the economic. (1989: 50-51)

Bearing this contextual analysis in mind, I will carry out a reassessment of Martin Amis' *Money: A Suicide Note*, with the aim of determining the influence that the 1980s cultural and political background had on the form and meaning of the novel and, more particularly, on the characterisation of its protagonist, John Self, and on the relationship he has with the other characters.

2. John Self

John Self is an alcoholic, onanistic and self-destructive character, who describes himself as “addicted to the twentieth century” (91). This excessiveness and the fact that his family name, like the names of the vices in morality plays, is emblematic of his ruling humour: selfishness, points to John Self as an archetypal character. As Amy J. Elias (1993: 21) points out, “his condition becomes metaphorical: it is the condition of contemporary British culture”, which, it may be added, is embodied and, at the same time, ironically put into question by Self. In other words, his condition is representative of the corruption of values brought about by the age of late capitalism. The author responds to this situation by creating a satirical narrator-character, who tells his debased life story from his own perspective. Thus, he incessantly addresses the readers in an attempt to make them empathise with him. But he also shows that he is aware of his condition when, for example, he states that “perhaps there are other bits of my life that would take on content, take on shadow, if only I read more and thought less about money” (Amis 223). In an interview published by Nicholas Tredell, Martin Amis acknowledged that his main target when developing John Self was to create a character that would epitomise the excessiveness of consumerism in contemporary society. He pointed out that Self “is consumed by consumerism, all mere consumers are” (Tredell 2000: 63); and that: “Self’s absolute and dangerous faith in money [...] makes him vulnerable” (qtd. in Tredell 2000: 76). In other words, John Self is a victim of his capitalist logic and, thus, unable to see further when it comes to distinguishing between reality and fiction, if economic exchange does not intervene.

John makes a living out of TV commercials, and his success in this area is noted by a film producer, Fielding Goodney, who lures him into directing a film and signing up the actors who will appear in it. The spot he had created to advertise a type of fast food called “Hamlette” may help readers understand to what extent Self’s work is based on the process of commodification of culture. As he explains,

Me, I was up in Stratford making a TV ad for a new kind of flash-friable pork-and-egg bap or roll or hero called Hamlette. We used some theatre and shot the whole thing on stage. There was the actor, dressed in black, with his skull and globe [...]

when suddenly a big bimbo wearing cool pants and bra strolls on, carrying a tray with two steaming Hamlettes on it... (69)

According to Robert Duggan (2009: 91), “this is a fictional example of what Michael Bristol (1996) has termed ‘big-time Shakespeare,’ where the cultural capital of the Bard is exploited to sell commodities”. Furthermore, when talking about the concept of “cultural capital” it is imperative to take into account Holt N. Parker’s examination of popular culture in his essay, “Toward a Definition of Popular Culture” (2011). Together with these two interpretations, it may be added that the Self’s add combines two elements requiring dissimilar cultural capital according to whether the product is to be consumed or produced. On the one hand, television or, in this case, TV advertising belong in the group of products that require little, or no cultural capital to be consumed, and high cultural capital to be produced. On the other, Shakespeare can be acknowledged as the clearest example of a figure that requires a huge cultural capital both to be produced and consumed. At first sight, this might seem an eclectic combination, but if the premises formulated by Jameson in “Postmodernism and Consumer Society” are taken into consideration, it may be postulated that this combination responds to the postmodern blurring of barriers that, in this case, puts at the same level “the zenith of high culture [and] the emptiness of the popular culture of television and tabloid newspapers” (Duggan 2009: 90).

In *Simulacra and Simulation*, Baudrillard (1974: 125) indicates that advertising, the job Self devotes his life to, “is perhaps the most remarkable mass medium of our age”. He also explains that: “what has happened in postmodern culture is that [...] we have lost all contact with the real world [and] reality itself has begun merely to imitate the model”. As is well known, Baudrillard distinguishes various “orders of simulacra” and associates the third with the postmodern age. Characteristically, in this order, “there is no longer any distinction between reality and its representation” (qtd. in Felluga 2011, n. p.), precisely the situation in which Self will find himself throughout the novel.

As Christopher Lasch (1991: 41) contends, “every age develops its own peculiar form of pathology [...]. In our time, the preschizophrenic, borderline, or personality disorders have attracted increasing attention, along with schizophrenia itself”. This comment can be applied to John Self, as, from the very beginning of his narration, he keeps complaining about a disease he calls “tinnitus” (Amis 1) and attributes to it the fact that he hears four voices that affect him seriously,

First [...] is the jabber of money, which might be represented as the blur on the top rung of a typewriter [...]. Second is the voice of pornography. This often sounds like the rap of a demented DJ [...]. Third, the voice of ageing and weather, [...] the ever-weakening voice of stung shame [...]. Number four is the real intruder. I don’t want any of these voices but I especially don’t want this one [...]. It has the unwelcome lilt of paranoia, of rage and weepiness (108)

In *Postmodernist Culture*, Connor (1989: 50) notes that one of the main points in Jameson's 1983 essay, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society", is that postmodern culture has been deeply affected by the "schizoid experience of the loss of the self". This is precisely what happens to John in the novel, as each of these voices corresponds to an aspect of his personality. In fact, put together, all of them "come to constitute Self, who he is, how he sees and hears the world [and] how he relates to others" (Diedrick 2004: 76). As a consequence, the reader finds a fragmented and pseudo-schizophrenic character that fits into the stereotypical definition of the postmodern self. Considering this, the extent to which he overuses the personal pronoun "I" or the possessive "me" throughout his narration becomes ironic and paradoxical. His narcissistic traits and individualism are emphasised throughout the novel and it is precisely this that finally betrays him, shedding light on his incapacity to look beyond his egotistic self so as to discern what is really going on around him.

3. Structural analysis and characterisation

The novel is divided into nine parts that exclusively vary, depending on whether Self is in London or in New York. Diedrick (2004: 79) puts into question the logic of the arrangement of these sections, by arguing that the narrative is so influenced by Self's incessant hangovers and alcohol abuse that it acquires a complex and chaotic structure. Similarly, some other features of the protagonist's personality are reflected in the narrative and as a consequence, it is reasonable to count on the author's intentionality in his attempt to mess up the structure with this resource.

3.1. New York

In New York, John lives in Room 101 of a hotel where he establishes a friendship with the bellboy. As Self himself eventually realises, this is the number of the torture chamber in the Ministry of Truth, where Winston Smith ends up in George Orwell's *1984*, a novel that, together with *Animal Farm*, is constantly alluded to in *Money*. He also forges a deep relationship with Martina Twain, the estranged wife of Self's British partner, Ossie Twain. The protagonist describes Martina as a classy, educated and good-looking young woman. Martina represents everything that Self is not: she is fond of high culture and healthy food, whereas John feeds on trash and is always making excuses to avoid reading. Actually, he believes that spending such an amount of time together with her has led him to undergo a "high-culture shock" (Amis 2005: 326). Throughout the novel, Martina's efforts to make him change are in vain. Although she even persuades him to go to the theatre and the opera, there is in fact no substantial evolution in John's attitude. However, Martina puts him on a diet and convinces him to do some exercise: "what am I doing? [...] I'm staying in shape for Martina [...] this is my metamorphosis" (2005: 338). In this comment, the fact that he uses Kafka's famous

term “metamorphosis” adds a disquieting, ironic and proleptic warning that any possible change will be for the worse, as it is clear that he does not make enough efforts to improve his physical and cultural condition.

Martina’s concern throughout the novel is to help John to understand what is going on around him by, among other things, giving him books. Orwell’s *Animal Farm* is the first book she asks him to read and it represents one of the many literary parodies of the novel. When Martina gives the book to John, he cannot avoid reading it “strictly as an animal story” (Diedrick 2004: 89) and hence he identifies with the dogs that appear in the satire:

What would I be in *Animal Farm*? [...] I think I might have what it takes to be a dog. I am a dog. I am a dog at the seaside tethered to a fence while my master and mistress romp on the sands. I am bouncing, twisting, weeping, consuming myself. (Amis 2005: 207)

In this quotation, Self describes himself as a dog, with all its pejorative connotations: laziness, greed, over-sexuality and quarrelsome-ness. Self himself makes his animalisation explicit later on when he states: “I live like an animal - eating and drinking, dumping and sleeping, fucking and fighting - and that’s it. It’s survival” (Amis 2005: 277). The second novel Martina gives him to read is *1984*, also written by Orwell. Both novels are allegories about the ills of corrupted power, but he misses the whole point by reading them literally. In the case of *1984*, Self identifies with “an idealistic young corporal in the Thought Police” (223) and says he would be comfortable in Airstrip One, which is “the totalitarian state of Oceania dedicated to reducing human freedom and choice by steadily narrowing the range of thought” (Diedrick 2004: 102-103). In fact, Self belongs to a world which is worryingly similar to that prophesied by Orwell. Unlike Winston Smith, the protagonist of *1984*, John lives in a “free” society, but his freedom is equally determined by the status quo.

Nonetheless, the major intertextual reference of the novel takes place when Martina convinces John to accompany her to see an adaptation of *Othello*, the famous Shakespearean tragedy. Again, John misreads the plot of the play, since he believes that Desdemona has been unfaithful to Othello, rather than trying to comprehend the implications of the events. This misreading of the plot points to his male-chauvinist opinion of women in general and of Selina Street, his fittingly named, promiscuous and greedy lover, in particular, who is having an affair with Ossie, Martina’s husband. In other words, the importance of this episode resides in the fact that, as Robert Duggan (2009: 93) notes, John Self “does not realise that he is at the centre of an Othello-like plot” and is incapable of reacting accordingly.

3.2. London

The novel begins with a suicide note signed “M.A.” Consequently, the reader is led to believe that, perhaps, Martin Amis will adopt a certain role in the

novel; and indeed, this suspicion is finally confirmed, as a writer called “Martin Amis” enters the diegesis, when Self is at the pub he frequents during his stays in London, “The Shakespeare” (Amis 2005: 57) – yet another example of the exploitation of the Bard’s cultural capital. Martin accompanies Self along several parts of the novel and their relationship becomes closer and closer, until Self ultimately hires him as the scriptwriter of his film, in a desperate attempt to improve the one written by Doris, the script writer hired by Self’s “moneyman” (19), Fielding Goodney.

According to novelistic convention, author and characters belong in different planes of existence. As Brian McHale (1987: 222-223) explains, “an author, by definition, occupies an ontological level superior to that of his or her character [and] to sustain a relation with a character [...] means to bridge the gap between ontological levels” (222-23). This is precisely what Amis does in *Money*; as stated by Catherine Bernard (1993: 124), “the presence of Amis’s persona in *Money* [...] as the ultimate cynical Faustian puppet-master is [...] another mystification which blurs the limits between reality and fiction”. The presence in the diegesis of a character whose name is identical to that of the real author has, then, important implications. Firstly, it supposes a major frame-break, that situates fiction and reality on the same level, thus providing evidence for Jameson’s contention that postmodernism seeks to blur ontological boundaries and, subsequently, to destroy “the illusory reality of the fictional world” (McHale 1987: 197). Patricia Waugh (1984: 29) supports this premise when she states that in postmodern novels it is “impossible to know when one frame ends and another begins”. The second effect is that, by entering the diegesis, the author becomes not only omniscient but also omnipresent, a God-like figure who is in control both of the real and the narrative worlds, since he is both inside and outside the diegesis. Needless to say, in Martin Amis’ novel, the omnipresence of the character named like the author stands in a relation of parodic excessiveness with respect to the omniscience embodied by the authorial narrators of realist fiction.

Notwithstanding this, Duggan (2009) believes that, with the inclusion of a character named like himself, Amis intends to make the readers aware that this is by no means an autobiographical novel. This hypothesis is sustained by the striking differences between Self and the Amis character, who is described as a “suave, intelligent, highly-educated, comfortably middle-class writer” (Diedrick 2004: 95). Besides, the cardboard Martin provides an example of the differences between his and Self’s cultural levels, when he tries to explain to him some literary rules that have to do precisely with this issue:

‘The distance between author and narrator corresponds to the degree to which the author finds the narrator wicked, deluded, pitiful or ridiculous. I’m sorry, am I boring you?’

-‘Uh?’

‘This distance is partly determined by convention. In the epic heroic frame, the author gives the protagonist everything he has’ [...].

‘Uh?’ I repeated. I had just stabbed a pretzel into my dodgy upper tooth. (246)

Self’s bewildered answers lead the reader to assume that he does not understand anything of what Martin tries to explain to him. Additionally, the fact that John is “listening” to him while he is eating a mundane pretzel enhances the aforementioned difference of cultural baggage between the two characters, making it easily recognisable. The distance between both characters was acknowledged by the flesh-and-blood author himself when he recognised that: “I was wondering whether I did put ‘me’ in there because I was so terrified of people thinking that I was John Self” (qtd. in Tredell 2003: 63). As a matter of fact, it is possible to consider the talk quoted above not only as a mere literary lesson, but also as a disingenuous metacomment, aimed at explaining the symbolic distance separating them in terms of omniscience.

Self is unable to discern all this. Although he suspects that there is something strange in his life, he never goes further to try and discern what it is, or perhaps he is unable to do so due to his ignorance. Still, he eventually becomes aware that he is “controlled by someone [...] not from out there [but] from here” (330). At the end of the novel, the whole world Self thought he lived in breaks into pieces. He realises that he has been the victim of a con created by Martin Amis, while he thought that Martin was writing the script of his film. This revelation takes place while the two characters are playing a game of chess, in what can be interpreted as yet another metafictional wink, on this occasion, at Samuel Beckett’s *Endgame*. Martin acknowledges his guilt, as Robert Duggan (2009) has pointed out, making an allusion to W. H. Auden’s essay “The Joker in the Pack” (1962), as Martin states: “I entered the picture. I was the joker in the pack” (374). This intertextual reference has unavoidable connotations. First of all, Auden’s essay deals with Shakespeare’s *Othello* and both allusions to the Bard and specifically to this tragedy are extremely significant throughout the novel. Secondly, Auden (1962: 256) explains in the essay that “the practical joker desires to make others obey him without being aware of his existence until the moment of his theophany”, that is, until the moment when the joker confesses. This is exactly what happens in *Money*, with Martin Amis’s character confessing the manipulation he has submitted John Self to. Indeed, Martin is “the prime mover behind Self’s ruin, the puppet-master behind the scenes” (Duggan 2009: 95), who handles the *tempo* and decides to confess in a final act of exultation and cruelty.

During Self’s stays in London, he dates with Selina Street, a reckless money-seeking vamp, devoted to materialising all his dreams of the perfect object of desire. John and Selina have a relationship based on corruption and sexuality. Significantly, when we first know about her in the narrative, John states that: “Selina Street owes me money” (Amis 2005: 5). This pronouncement, especially at this stage, immediately links her to the idealisation of material possessions that dazzles and at the same time obsesses Self throughout the novel. As Daniel Lea

(2005: 73) argues, “Self is a consumer *par excellence*, who has fully assimilated the grammar of supply and demand into his *Weltanschauung*, meaning that [...] he sees with the eyes of capitalism and interprets with its logic”. As a matter of fact, being a victim of the age of exacerbated consumerism and late capitalism brings about all sorts of problems to his personal life, and more specifically, to his social relationships. At one point in the novel, Self states that: “Selina says I’m not capable of true love. It isn’t true. I truly love money” (Amis 2005: 238). Although at one point John even says that he loves Selina, it is certain that there is no true love between them, since what he really loves is “her corruption” (37). This gives way to thinking, as Diedrick (2004: 91) points out, that “Self loves Selina’s commodified sexuality, not Selina herself”. In summary, theirs is a tie only sustained by the power of the commodification of values, which makes the protagonist unable to maintain a relation without thinking in capitalist terms.

Throughout the novel, one of John’s main goals is to marry Selina and this thought invades his mind on several occasions. The reason for this is, ironically enough, his egotism, which makes him be obsessed with the idea that he is the only one who can make her happy, coupled with his worry about what would happen financially to him if they do not marry: “I must marry Selina [...] If I don’t, I think she might sue me for every penny I have” (173). Self’s attitude echoes Christopher Lasch’s contention that human relationships have become more trivial in our contemporary age, that people “today invest in social relations [...] with undiminished emotional importance” (1991: 187). This trivialisation of John and Selina’s relation is yet another example of the parallels between the commodification of the age and the protagonists’ behaviour.

4. Conclusion

Trapped, on the one hand, by the late-capitalist system and, on the other, by the side-effects of the mass-media, John Self is the epitome of the postmodernist *alazon* fending for survival against the cultural and political background of the 1980s. He is the product of a self-absorbed, money-seeking and trivial generation, whose lack of humanist values mirrors the corruption of the higher strata. The world Self lives in is a world ruled by individual competition, with the wills and interests of the free-market and the mass-media dominating and blinding of the masses. In cultural terms, one of the main elements in Baudrillard’s theory of the “loss of the real” is the role of media culture, that is, television, magazines, billboards and the like. Baudrillard (1998) hypothesizes that, in the postmodern age, we are further away from reality than we used to be in the previous stages of simulacrum, because nowadays we perceive it through these mass media instruments, and they present reality through the filter of mass consumption and consumerism, instead of giving information about it as they were supposed to do. As the analysis has attempted to demonstrate, Baudrillard’s theory of the “loss of

the real” underlies the plot of *Money*. John Self is utterly ignorant of the reality that surrounds him and, at the same time, so enclosed within his dreamy self-centred existence that he is incapable of figuring out that he has been the victim of an elaborate con by the other characters, including Martin Amis, until the end of the novel, when Amis tells him that “they were all actors” (360) in what might be described as a grotesque and ludicrous (in)morality play. Additionally, the outcome of the conservative political background of the 1980s is undoubtedly reflected in Self’s characterisation: extravagance, excess, a disproportionate emphasis on individualism and the lack of a clear identity point to John Self as the iconoclastic counterpart of the classic hero, that is, as an unheroic figure and a “grotesque parody of superfluous consumption, shorn of morality and self-restraint” (Lea 2005: 70), typical of the postmodern period.

References

- Acheson, James and Sarah C. E. Ross (eds.). 2005. *The Contemporary British Novel*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Amis, Martin. 2005 [1984]. *Money*. London: Vintage.
- Auden, Wystan Hugh. 1962. “The Joker in the Pack” in *The Dyer’s Hand and Other Essays*. London: Faber and Faber, pp. 246-272.
- Baudrillard, Jean. 1973. *The Mirror of Production*. St Louis: Telos Press.
- Baudrillard, Jean. 1994. *Simulacra and Simulation*. Trans. Sheila Faria Glaser. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Baudrillard, Jean. 1998. *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Beckett, Samuel. 1958. *Endgame*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Bernard, Catherine. 1993. “Dismembering/Remembering Mimesis: Martin Amis, Graham Swift” in D’Haen, Theo and Hans Bertens (eds.). *British Postmodern Fiction*. Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, pp. 121-144.
- Bristol, Michael D. 1996. *Big-time Shakespeare*. London: Routledge.
- Connor, Steven. 1989. *Postmodernist Culture*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- D’haen, Theo and Hans Bertens (eds.). 1993. *British Postmodern Fiction*. Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi.
- Diedrick, James. 2004. *Understanding Martin Amis*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press.
- Duggan, Robert. 2009. “‘Big-time Shakespeare and the Joker in the Pack’: The Intrusive Author in Martin Amis’s *Money*” in *Journal of Narrative Theory*, 39(1), pp. 86-108.
- Elias, Amy J. 1993. “Meta-mimesis? The Problem of British Postmodern Fiction” in D’Haen, Theo and Hans Bertens (eds.). *British Postmodern Fiction*. Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, pp. 9-31.
- Felluga, Dino. 2011, January 31. “Modules on Baudrillard II: On Simulation” in *Introductory Guide to Critical Theory*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.purdue.edu/guidetotheory/postmodernism/modules/ baudrillardsimulation.html> [Accessed 2016, April 9].

- Foster, Hal (ed.). 1983. *The Anti-Aesthetic. Essays on Postmodern Culture*. Washington: Bay Press.
- Jackson, Ben and Robert Saunders (eds.). 2012. *Making Thatcher's Britain*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Jameson, Fredric. 1983. "Postmodernism and Consumer Society" in Foster, Hal (ed.). *The Anti-Aesthetic. Essays on Postmodern Culture*. Port Townsend, Washington: Bay Press, pp. 111-125.
- Jameson, Fredric. 1991. *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Keynes, John Maynard. 2003 (1936). *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*. [Online]. The University of Adelaide Library Electronic Texts Collection. Available: <http://cas.umkc.edu/economics/people/facultypages/kregel/courses/econ645/winter2011/generaltheory.pdf> [Accessed 2016, April 12].
- Lasch, Christopher. 1991. *The Culture of Narcissism*. New York: Norton.
- Lea, Daniel. 2005. "One Nation, Oneself: Politics, Place and Identity in Martin Amis' Fiction" in Acheson, James and Sarah C. E. Ross (eds.). *The Contemporary British Novel*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 70-81.
- Marx, Karl. 1988 (1884). *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. New York: Prometheus Books.
- McHale, Brian. 1987. *Postmodernist Fiction*. London: Routledge.
- Newman, Saul. 2005. *Power and Politics in Poststructuralist Thought*. London: Routledge.
- Orwell, George. 2013 (1945). *Animal Farm*. London: Penguin Books.
- Orwell, George. 2008 (1948). *1984*. London: Penguin Books.
- Parker, Holt N. 2011. "Toward a Definition of Popular Culture" in *History and Theory: Studies in the Philosophy of History*, 50(2), pp. 147-70.
- Thompson, Graham. 2007. *American Culture in the 1980s*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Tomlison, Jim. 2012. "Thatcher, Monetarism and the Politics of Inflation" in Jackson, Ben and Robert Saunders (eds.). *Making Thatcher's England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 62-77.
- Tredell, Nicholas. 2000. *The Fiction of Martin Amis*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Waugh, Patricia. 1984. *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-conscious Fiction*. London: Routledge.

AYCKBOURN'S STAGE REACTION TO FAMILIES BURIED IN TECHNOLOGY

KAĞAN KAYA

Cumhuriyet University, Sivas

Abstract: *The paper analyses the premature warnings of British playwright, Alan Ayckbourn, who foresees that the modern family has been under the onslaught of technology. His dystopia, Henceforward... (1987), set in the flat of the high-tech addict protagonist, Jerome, tells one of the traditional family stories of the playwright. However, the paper focuses on Ayckbourn's neglected dramatic mission - that of securing the British family.*

Keywords: *Alan Ayckbourn, British drama, dystopia, family, technology*

“Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.”
(Tolstoy (2001), 1875-1877:1)

1. Introduction

British playwright, Sir Alan Ayckbourn, is often referred to as a famous farceur. However, he is not pleased with this label, because with a “tireless dedication to the idea of theatre and... fierce moral concern with the state of the nation,” (Billington 1989), he has a distinctive multi-dimensional understanding of drama. In fact, he expresses sociologically harsh criticism of British middle-class man through his black comedy, in the light of his vision of drama.

Henceforward..., which is the thirty-fourth play of the playwright, is a very noteworthy fraction of Ayckbourn's tenet, for several reasons. It received the Evening Standard Award for Best Comedy in 1989. It was the second quickest transfer of all Alan Ayckbourn plays to the US, Houston's Alley Theatre. Even the title of the play suggests a kind of manifesto of the playwright which declares that he is resolute in the changes of his drama. There is a profound “shift in tone and genre in Ayckbourn's work” (Hudson 2006: 186) after *Henceforward...* It propounds that Ayckbourn must not be called only a traditional farceur. In his

introduction to his *Collected Plays One*, Ayckbourn himself states, of the comic tone of the play, that

Henceforward... is on the surface a comedy but it does present a gloomy prediction of a possible future world where society, maybe as a direct result of the behaviour portrayed in *A Small Family Business*, has all but collapsed. And I suppose any play in which the hero allows his wife and daughter to die whilst he finishes writing his latest composition can't be considered funny. (I wonder where I got this reputation for being a comic dramatist.) (Ayckbourn 1995: ix-x)

Henceforward..., which is one of the serious state-of-the-nation comedies of the playwright, specifically demonstrates the potential risks that the average family including British middle-class would face in the technology-oriented world. Although it is easy to claim today that British family is in danger due to the negative effects of new science and technology, it must have been hard to voice such futuristic and serious criticism in 1987, when he wrote *Henceforward...*. In an interview, Ayckbourn criticises the contemporary family, saying that “we get more and more computer-literate, more and more little boys sit down in front of computer screens and find them much more satisfying than playing outside with their mates” (Watson 1988: 147).

As opposed to many studies and reviews of the play, this paper does not pay attention to the other conflicts present in the play, but concentrates mainly on familial problems. Although *Henceforward...* “stands a significant and particularly rich Ayckbourn creation that has much to say about the nature of art, love and human relationships” (Murgatroyd 2016), my paper puts familial conflicts at the heart of the research, and aims to analyse Ayckbourn's premature sociological warnings for British society.

Henceforward... tells audiences a well-known, serious and gloomy story of past, present and future. The play is about the modern man who has no time for his family. It covers a short and recent span of time, from June to October. The un-Ayckbourn but funny plot centres on a composer, “a man about forty”, (Ayckbourn 1998:1), Jerome Watkins who tries to get his child back after his wife, Corinna, a defenceless forty-year-old bank manager left him four years ago. At that time, their daughter, Geain was nine. The basic reason for their separation was that Jerome behaved as if he were programmed by high-technology, as most people today seem to be. He now wishes to convince the social service official, Merilyn that it would be good for his daughter to stay with him for long periods of time; in this way he would just take his revenge on his ex-wife, and more importantly he would be able to compose new musical pieces. Jerome is a wizard on the Synclavier, a word processor for sounds, which synthesises music by sampling natural sounds. He also creates an android, Nan 300 F out of a robot that he bought for his household management. He, then, pretends to have a home in which his daughter would be happy, with the help of this robot. Therefore, he pretends that Nan is his so-called

fiancée. Meanwhile, Corinna tries to return home and reunite the family. However, Jerome seems to be a man stuck in the web of art and technology. He does not care about his ex-wife and his daughter. He leaves his own family members, who become the victims of a feminist-terrorist sect called Daughters of Darkness. This certainly causes a tragedy.

The present article contributes to the literature on Ayckbourn in three ways. Firstly, as previous studies have mostly neglected Ayckbourn's ideas and warnings focused on British middle-class family, this paper makes the family the main concern of the research. It reveals that Ayckbourn foresees the danger for the family, which was much nearer than one expected when he wrote *Henceforward...*, as the playwright always seems to have some words to say to protect the British family. Secondly, based on the existing literature, it focuses on new ideas about the children-parents relationships reflected in the play. And thirdly, it analyzes the difficulties of being a child in a single-parent family, the negative effects of technology use on a child, in the light of Ayckbourn's drama – based on his sociological sensitivity and prescriptive intelligence.

2. Technology and the relationship of the couple

Ayckbourn organizes his plays mostly around the British middle-class married couples, as his frequent theme is marriage. He reveals the unlucky marriage stories of these couples. They deal mainly with the lack of communication, parenthood responsibilities, and affection, as in the case of Teresa and Bob of *How the Other Half Loves*. Some of the couples are unfaithful spouses, like Bob of *How the Other Half Loves* and Paul of *Absent Friends*, or they are generally insensitive to, or thoughtless and negligent of the needs of their partners, like Dennis of *Just Between*, or Gerald of *Woman in Mind*.

Henceforward... has only an on-stage divorced couple, Jerome and Corinna. They fail to share their emotions and thoughts properly before and after their divorce. There is a lack of communication between them even when they are a family. Above all, Jerome has never talked to Corinna and Geain since they left home. Corinna has not allowed him get into connect with them, she has not let him have any photos of Geain who is now thirteen. Jerome luckily has one of the video recordings of his daughter which was taken when the family was together.

However, the most devastating family problem is Jerome's indifference and his technology addiction. Ayckbourn admits that Jerome is "the closest I get... He's very selfish... Jerome is after different things... This man is after creative fulfilment" (Dukore 1991: 14). He is the key figure who is enslaved in his technologically-equipped house. Besides, he programmes Nan 300 F as a new childminder that he has brought home. Nan is also programmed to do the cleaning and the cooking. This suggests that Jerome prefers a machine to his wife at home. He even hires an actress, Zoe, to record her voice in order to adapt it for his robot.

In fact, Jerome is in pursuit of the best pronunciation of the word: ‘love’, which he wants to sell to an advertisement company, and more importantly, which he wants to use in order to make Corinna feel inadequate and envious. While waiting for Corinna, Geain, and Mervyn, Jerome’s intentions seem quite clear: “I want to present them with a relationship that’s so perfect that not only can she not find fault with it, but doubles her up with jealousy. It leaves her eating her heart out with envy and frustration” (31); that is why he not only tries to change Nan technologically, but also to change it physically, and make it look like a real woman.

As a result, Zoe describes both Jerome and Corinna as “vindictive” (31), which disturbs Jerome much. He reacts to her revealing that he is hostile to all women in the society, exclaiming: “God, you bloody women. You don’t half stick together, don’t you?” (31). Jerome also reveals to the actress Corinna’s vicious attitude:

She’s not the one who’s been forbidden to see her own daughter. Denied all those precious moments watching her child grow up. She’s not the one who’s been left to live in an empty flat. Unable to work –unable to write a single note of music for four years. Four years! (31)

Jerome, like Dennis of *Just Between Ourselves*, or Gerald of *Woman in Mind*, is a man who is not aware of his responsibilities as a husband. While he requires a robot-like or puppet-like woman to do housework and obeys his own rules and life style at home, he is not even able to mend the door of his house. It is ironic that he creates a new robot to do housework, but he is not able to mend a door. “Ayckbourn’s men are frequently embarrassed or defeated by toys and inanimate objects” (Holt 1999: 25), especially by electronic ones. They are real “bunglers” (Hornby 1991: 108). According to the playwright, Jerome

to a large degree is a child... He behaves badly and when his mother scolds him he sulks. But he longs for forgiveness. Because he desperately needs Corinna’s approval... Everything he does in the play – well, nearly – is related to his feelings for Corinna. To hurt her, to make her love him – to make her react. (Ayckbourn 2016)

Jerome is also a stereotype husband who demonstrates how a man can manipulate a woman. Ayckbourn’s men generally do not *accept their wives* for what *they are* and Jerome is one of those men. He is the representative of “the national masculine siege mentality” (Rabey 2003: 97) of the eighties. In fact, accepting people does not itself mean agreeing with his wife, approving of his wife, waiving his own rights, or downplaying his wife’s impact upon him. Jerome can still take appropriate actions to protect or support him, or he can simply let people be. Either way, he must accept his wife for who she is. He may not like it,

he may not prefer it, he may feel sad or angry about it, but at a deeper level, he is at peace with it. However, he prefers a robot instead of her.

On the other hand, the playwright describes Corinna as a woman who, “like anyone who lives with anyone for any length of time, knows Jerome’s weakest point. She knows how to punish him.” Ayckbourn (2016), indicating that every woman is a Corinna. A woman may think that divorcing is the best way to punish a man and win the sex war, but this is not so. Corinna does not realise that “it means punishing herself” (Ayckbourn 2016). After leaving Jerome, Corinna also feels really alone, with a daughter that she cannot control. She becomes aware that marriage is not a game played between a man and a woman, as she becomes aware that she has lost her house, her own castle, to a robot. Londre (1996: 71) says that “Nan is a metaphor for the changing roles of women” in the eighties.

The playwright makes use of technology as a subject matter, referring to both tragic and comic aspects of marriage. The play points out that the modern man really prefers rational machines to irrational human beings. On the one hand, Nan’s transformation into a domestic woman figure is a criticism of Corinna as a wife. The ideal feminine robot, Nan, registers everybody around as a child, trying to wash their faces, telling them tales before going to bed. All this and her appearance with Corinna on the same stage simply gets everybody to smile, and at the same time causes Corinna to be envious of Jerome, as he planned her to feel. As a result, Corinna confesses that: “[...] I am simply amazed. I didn’t think anyone could do it, Zoe. Make a civilized animal out of this man.” (63) Her tragic and ironic remark shows that Nan has already filled her place as a wife. Jerome, on the other hand, turns into a man with the soul of a robot at the end of the play. He prefers staying at home to going out with his family. His emotionally becoming a machine is really disturbing. ‘Love’ becomes an artificial word stuck in the meaningless sentences of this couple. Jerome prefers the recorded artificial form of this word to Corinna’s. While Jerome makes Nan ready to show her affection and gets the word, ‘love’ repeated all the time during the interview with Mervyn, he does not want to be with Corinna anymore. Jerome prefers a simulacrum of Corinna rather than her real existence. “Jerome is looking for love, and it’s right under his nose” (Ayckbourn 2016), even if Jerome confesses that the robot was there just to impress his ex-wife. Corinna’s last effort to win back her own home is in vain. Jerome has already turned into a mechanic husband. He chooses to lose his whole family, while trying to find the meaning of love among his technological equipments, in spite of the fact that he hears Corinna trying to save their marriage while she is explaining to Geain why she must not stay with the robot:

In the past, your father and I, we have – we have both been selfish, we have been thoughtless and stupid and – human. But we have also been, in our time, warm and spontaneous and amusing and joyful and loving. Which is something we can also be, because we are human. But which that machine can never be. You see? (GEAIN *seems to be still waiting to be convinced.*)

What we are going to do now, the three of us – you, me and Jerome – we are going down to that car and we are driving home together. And we're all going to start again. All of us. As of now. Isn't that right, Jerome? Jerome? (94)

Ayckbourn's other plays, e.g. *Standing Room Only*, *Communicating Doors*, *Comic Potential* and *Surprises*, also present technology as a source of conflict. However, *Henceforward...* is his fully sci-fi play. The playwright asserts that "Henceforward... [...] provided me with the opportunity to indulge my love of robots. In particular the British (sorry-about-that-mate-we're-still-waiting-for-the-part) sort of robot: totally eccentric, idiosyncratic, unserviceable and unreliable" (Ayckbourn 2016), a robot that breaks down the relationships among the family members.

3. Technology and the destruction of the concept of home

The eighties was a period of light and shadow. The overall image of the age tends to be positive with the development of the middle class and the emergence of the underclass, just like in the Victorian time. This was largely due to the new monetarism and commercialism, when money was the supreme ruler of the world, to the detriment of the human. During the Thatcherite era, dependency culture was replaced with enterprise culture, whereas the academic world was faced with cuts – often painful and undeserved. In the case of many intellectuals, the result was indifference, fatalism and isolation. Isenberg (1991) points out that the playwright constructs the background of his play through the Thatcherite dystopia, which is what the New Industrialism had turned Britain into:

The playwright was at a party a while back when a woman acquaintance started talking about her boyfriend, an art historian. The historian lived in such a desolate, run down part of England, Ayckbourn recalls, that everyone else on the block had moved out. Describing the neighbourhood, the girlfriend said she was afraid to visit anymore.

This background paves the way for the playwright's constructing his own space with "no windows, or, at least, what there were are curtained off and no light comes through the heavy steel shutters outside." (1) His scene belongs to his composer protagonist, not to a historian who might live in such a place. Jerome's society "is on the edge of breakdown: a Dystopian vision of hell in which outer London suburbs like Edgware are policed by mobs of vigilante feminists (the Daughters of Darkness) [...] Ayckbourn is projecting into the future fear many people have today of walking the streets" (Hudson 2006: 195). That is why it is probable that Jerome walls himself off - because of Pinteresque safety reasons.

Ayckbourn creates a loveless atmosphere for Jerome's house. He makes his audience realize that the setting is a musical lab. Ayckbourn is not unfamiliar with such a place, as the play reflects some of his own home atmosphere: it is known

that his father, Horace Ayckbourn, was once a lead violinist with the London Symphony Orchestra. At the same time the setting is like Ayckbourn's own working area, where he writes his plays. Ayckbourn describes this place so vividly, as if he had lived in:

It's a curious room [...] There is a sofa, two swivel chairs and a low coffee-type table – all modern. That's really extent of the recognizable furniture. The remainder of the room is filled with some very sophisticated electronic equipment. Not an amateur electronic rat's nest of wire and cable but custom-built units containing computers, tape and disc recorders – racks of amplifiers filters, reverb units and gismos of all descriptions. At one end, several keyboards... The room, in fact, betrays the contradictions in his own character. For while the immaculate technical equipment is kept lovingly protected from the slightest speck of dust, the rest of the room – the living area – is in fair chaos. Remnants of instant meals, old tea and coffee cups, the odd item of clothing... And, strangely, the overall impression given off, despite all the modern paraphernalia, is of something faintly Gothic [...] (1)

In this chaotic atmosphere, Jerome has two purposes. First, he wishes to take his daughter Geain back. Second, he wants to create his new music to live on. Although he builds his own isolated atmosphere for himself, he cannot manage to be creative after he is left by himself. An artist cannot survive without his skills and art, and he needs his loved ones around to create something valuable. The play dramatically announces that an artist becomes unsuccessful and even useless, when his main source of life and inspiration - his family or his loved ones - are lost. The key factor, then, for an artist to create any form of art is the love in his heart. Without emotional relief, an artist becomes an ordinary man. Jerome points out his waning ability to create in the absence of love, in a conversation with Zoe, whom he hired to do some recording:

Zoe: I'd love to hear some of your music. Could I, possibly?

Jerome: Yes. Perhaps. Sometime. As I say, I haven't written anything for – ages.

Zoe: Since they left?

Jerome: Nearly.

Zoe: Four years. Heavens. You really did need them, then, in some ways? Well, your muse did.

Jerome: Geain. I needed Geain. I need her back more than anything in the world.

(*ZOE, for the first time, notices the signs of his inner stress.*) (38)

In order to compose a precious and unique work of art, an artist also needs a peaceful atmosphere. Jerome is not an amateur, but he lost his ability to create art when he lost his family. His house may be full of technological equipments meant to help him to compose musical lyrics, but it cannot be called a real home and a work place anymore.

Jerome loses his family and his warm work atmosphere. He is not aware that in order to do his job, he needs Corinna. He behaves as if he did not need her. He has been metamorphosed into a different person, contrary to the claim that he is “a misanthrope, a hermit by nature” (Rawson 2000). In this monetary and “depersonalised” (Gussow 1988) world, Jerome unavoidably “loses his own humanity; he begins to seem robotic” (Gussow 1988) in the artificial atmosphere that he himself creates.

Jerome’s artificial home is best observed when Corinna comes back home with Geain and Mervyn. In Ayckbourn’s plays “the family home is the crucible in which the concept of the family can be tested [...] The problem is that the getting together of a family group often accentuates all the stresses in the family life” (Holt 1999: 23). However, there is no such atmosphere in *Henceforward...*, as the family is not together anymore. Jerome’s house has become just a place where one can hear only the sounds of robots or technological equipments, such as the beeps of his answering machine, or the artificial sounds of the word, ‘darling’:

Jerome: (*Calling*) Darling!
 Zoe’s Voice: (*From the kitchen*) Hallo, darling?
 Jerome: Darling, what are you doing?
 Zoe’s Voice: (*Off*) I’m just finishing off in here, darling.
 Jerome: Darling, come on in, they’ve arrived.
 Zoe’s Voice: (*Off*) Right you are, darling. Just a tick. (55)

While Jerome recreates his robot, he either forgets one significant problem or he never thinks of it. He partly manages to transform his home, with the help of an android, creating an approval atmosphere, while the outdoor atmosphere is totally unsuitable for a child. He forgets about the vandalism, annihilation, destruction existing outside. Gangsters are everywhere. Jerome, himself, cannot go out of his home without a sword. “The microcosm of Jerome’s inability or unwillingness to accommodate the feelings of others is reflected in the macrocosm of the violent world outside his flat” (Hudson 2006: 188). Through this kind of atmosphere, Ayckbourn reflects the economic progress of Thatcher’s England, and at the same time, the soullessness it brings about. Rich (1989) thinks that “Ayckbourn reveals an immensely disturbing vision of contemporary middle-class England poisoned by the rise of economic ruthlessness and the collapse of ethics” in those Thatcher years. In such an atmosphere, it is already impossible to create something new. Instead, one loses what one possesses; Jerome loses his real life with his wife and daughter.

4. A victimized child

Geain experiences the most psychologically devastating effects of the technology-based house. Geain was apart from her father simply because of his life

style in his own technology-oriented world. In this isolated world, she becomes the victim of her father who is really selfish. When she is a little girl, there is not even a tiny clue that might show that Jerome cares about her. Corinna is also guilty because, through her divorce, she causes Geain an emotional trauma. Corinna behaves towards her daughter as if she were a doll, and does not have a satisfactory relationship with her, using her a kind of revenge material against Jerome.

However, Geain differs from other children characters in Ayckbourn's plays. She does not try to look for her father among the clouds, like Suzy of *Mr. A's Amazing Maze Plays*, or create a whole imaginary family, like Lucy of *Invisible Friends*, to overcome her loneliness. She manifests her reaction to her family through her aggression and boy-like behaviour style.

Geain is a teenager and she displays some weaknesses. Her aggression against her mother may partly be caused by her being at the puberty age. Yet, it is mostly caused by her growing up without a father. "Having been deprived of contact with her father for the last four years – she has opted to dress like boy and join the male Dominance Movement" (Londré 1991: 93), to punish him. At the same time, in his stage directions, Ayckbourn's costume design reveals that this is a kind of reflection of Geain's hermaphrodite rejection of her mother's thoughts and acts:

She wears a not unfamiliar parody of male work clothes circa 1955. But hers are carried to some extreme. Heavy boots, cord trousers with a wide leather belt, padded rather incongruously at the crotch, old, faded shirt open at the neck to reveal the currently fashionable 'hairy vest' i.e. an undershirt knotted with a mass of supposed chest hair. The back of her jacket is studded with words: SONS OF BITCHES. Her hair is short, brushed straight back and oiled; her only make-up the blue chinned, unshaven look. (75)

Corinna is alone and silent about what Geain wears or how she acts and behaves. She cannot cope with her daughter's problems alone anymore, although she is a successful working mother - a bank manager. Corinna "loses her ability to function as a mother" (Londré 1991: 91), has no ability to discipline her own daughter. She cannot be a woman that Thatcher would prefer to see at that time. Campbell (2007: 102) indicates that "[Thatcher] had become a role model for career women the world over, but also wished to be seen as the guardian and champion of family values." While Corinna is one of the successful Thatcherite period career women, she cannot manage to be both father and mother for Geain. She just tries to escape from her problems and return to Jerome.

Ayckbourn creates a dystopic atmosphere: one day androids would take over motherhood roles in society. This reveals that Ayckbourn not only questions the identity of women, but also their motherhood roles. That is why there is no skilful mother on the stage. Even Zoe Mill, the actress hired for her voice by Jerome, is a single woman who has no child-rearing abilities. Zoe "lists among her credits

Hedda Gabler, Queen Margaret, Madame Arkadina, and the mad Mrs. Rochester - all of them women who have either lost their children, ignore them, or detest the thought of bearing them” (Karlson 1993: 69). Nan, the originally childminder robot, on the other hand, has many more maternal qualities than both Corinna and Zoe. She clearly reveals her maternal skills through her actions, when she comes across Geain for the first time:

(Promptly) I'd love to have children of my own. Wouldn't it be lovely to hear them rushing about the flat, laughing and yelling? With the right man – someone who'd share them – they'd be everything I ever wanted. I suppose you're either maternal or you aren't. I know which I am. (*A Silence*, 71)

Ayckbourn seriously criticizes all mothers. He implies that most women have no capacity to bring up their own children. Therefore, he chooses a robot as the best woman-childminder. It is really a rare thing to come across a “fully-equipped” mother in his plays, except for Nan of *Henceforward...* and Lucy of *Mother Figure*. It is Mervyn who points out that Nan also has a kind of motherhood ability intrinsically, while talking to Jerome: “Jerome: Well, it's - it's just part of her - basic - original - I mean it was there already in her, you see... / Mervyn: As it is within all women, Mr. Watkins. All women...” (81).

Henceforward... partially contains some details of Ayckbourn's childhood, too. Ayckbourn grew up in a single-parent family before her mother's second marriage. He describes his childhood “as lonely but not particularly miserable” (Allen 2001: 22), but he sometimes mentions harsh brawls between his mother and his stepfather.

Similarly, Jerome is not a man who is ready to be a father. He is a domestically unsuccessful man. He does not think about his daughter's need for real mother and father affection and for the warmth of a family. He never tries to reconcile with his ex-wife for the sake of his daughter. He even tries to change his daughter. Ayckbourn indicates that “we all try to alter each other subtly, and this man has the chance to change the people around him completely. When Jerome has seen Geain after eight years' time, he immediately distances from her because of her appearance. He even does not want to accept that she is his own daughter, as she seems a “travestite truck-driver” (79). It is really absurd that Jerome expects warm acts from his daughter, while he does not provide any for her. Above all, he thinks that Geain is a “treasure” (77), as she is merely important for his inspiration and his career:

Jerome: Geain. I need Geain. I need her back more than anything in the world...

I recorded her over several days...

Zoe : You mean it was actually her? Actually Geain you used?

Jerome: Yes. That was the first occasion I started using purely natural sounds – sampling and treating them. It took months. (38)

Ayckbourn morally criticizes both parents and ridicules them on the stage. Jerome develops his ability to use all technological equipments and builds a new robot, but loses his ability as a father. Although it would be easy to become a good husband and father for his family, he chooses to stay at home with an android. Jerome is not aware of the chaos he causes, because, while he tries to take revenge on his wife, he causes his daughter's psychological and emotional collapse. Therefore the playwright's stage critically lacks a skilful parent, with the exception of the feminine robot, Nan.

5. Conclusion

In *Henceforward...* Ayckbourn has much to say about the nature of art and love, the relationship between science and man, and about human relationships in general. However, this paper concentrates first of all on the relationship between technology and man and on human relationships. Secondly, it concentrates on the bad influence of technology on the unity of family and on a victimized child.

Ayckbourn suggests in his play that "Computers are, on the one hand, quite reassuringly constant, but dangerous because you don't in the end, get anything back from them. No conflict and no criticism" (Watson, 1988: 147). My paper clearly reveals Ayckbourn's direct criticism of the parents, Jerome and Corinna, in terms of their own relationships and family roles, and it reflects Ayckbourn's own thoughts about the British family; for the first time, it also pays attention to the only child character in the play.

References

- Allen, Paul. 2001. *Alan Ayckbourn: Grinning at the Edge*. London, New York: Bloomsbury.
- Ayckbourn, Alan. 1988. *Henceforward...* London and New York: Faber and Faber.
- Ayckbourn, Alan. 1995. "Introduction" to *Plays One*. London: Faber and Faber, pp. ix-x.
- Ayckbourn, Alan. 2016. <http://henceforward.alanayckbourn.net/styled-16/index.html> (Official Website).
- Billington, Michael. 1989. "Review: *Henceforward...*" in *The Guardian*, 28 December. [Online]. Available <http://henceforward.alanayckbourn.net/styled-5/styled-11/index.html> [Accessed 2015, November 23].
- Campbell, John. 2007. *Margaret Thatcher: Volume One: The Grocer's Daughter*. London: Vintage Books.
- Dukore, Bernard F. 1991, "An Interview with Alan Ayckbourn" in Dukore, Bernard F. (ed.). *Alan Ayckbourn: A Casebook. Casebooks on Modern Dramatists*, vol. 11. New York, London: Garland Publishing, pp. 3-23.
- Gussow, Mel. 1988. "Stage Views; Ayckbourn's Laughter has a Bitter Edge" in *New York Times*, February 28. [Online]. Available: <http://www.nytimes.com/1988/02/28/>

- theatre/stage/view/-ayckbourn-s-laughter-has-a-bitter-edge.html [Accessed 2016, May 3].
- Holt, Michael. 1999. *Alan Ayckbourn*. Plymouth: Northcote House Publishers.
- Hornby, Richard. 1991. "Ayckbourn's Men" in Dukore, Bernard F. (ed.). *Alan Ayckbourn: A Casebook*. New York: Garland, pp. 103-113.
- Hudson, John. 2006. *Alan Ayckbourn: Subverting the Form*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. Kingston University. [Online]. Available: <http://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos...> [Accessed 2015, October 25].
- Isenberg, Barbara. 1991. "Humour from the Dark Side: Alan Ayckbourn Writes Plays that Speak to a Common Bleakness in Today's Society – and They Work on Both Sides of the Atlantic" in *Los Angeles Times*, November 10. [Online]. Available: http://articles.latimes.com/1991_11_10/entertainment/ca-2027_1_ayckbourn_play/4 [Accessed 2015, October 25].
- Karlson, Albert. E. 1993. *Laughter in the Dark: The Plays of Alan Ayckbourn*. New Jersey: Associated University Presses.
- Londre, Felicia. H. 1996. "Alan Ayckbourn" in Gale, Steven H. (ed.). *Encyclopaedia of British Humorists*, vol. I. New York: Garland, pp. 66-72.
- Murgatroyd, Simon. 2016. *Henceforward...* [Online]. Available: <http://henceforward.alanayckbourn.net/styled/index.html> [Accessed 2015, December 8].
- Rabey, David Ian. 2003. "Subversion and Conciliation: Comedy from the 1960s to the 1990s" in *English Drama since 1940*. London: Longman, pp. 87-106.
- Rawson, Christopher. 2000. "Stage Review: 'Henceforward...' to the Past, Sci-fi Comedy Has a Retro-futuristic Charm" in *Post-Gazetta Drama Critic*, July 21. [Online]. Available: <http://old.post-gazetta.com/magazine/2000072/hence6.asp> [Accessed 2015, November 23].
- Rich, Frank. 1989. "Review/Theatre; Ayckbourn's England and Its Dark Laughter" in *The New York Times*, June 22. [Online]. Available: <http://nytimes.com/1989/06/22/review-theater-ayckbourn-s-england-and-its-dark-laughter-html> [Accessed 2016, January 11].
- Tolstoy, Leo. 2001. (1875-1877). *Anna Karenina*. Trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. New York: Viking Penguin.
- Watson, Ian. 1988. *Conversation with Ayckbourn*. London and Boston: Faber and Faber.

SOCIETY IN THE ENGLISH LITERARY DYSTOPIA

MILAN D. ŽIVKOVIĆ

Union University, Belgrade

Faculty of Law and Business Studies 'Dr Lazar Vrkatić', Novi Sad

Abstract: *The paper deals with the nature of totalitarian societies in Anthony Burgess' A Clockwork Orange and Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale. Apart from the fundamental characteristics and values of these societies, as well as the particular views of both a male and a female writer on this subject, the paper analyzes the relationship between dystopian and real modern societies through various authors' observations.*

Keywords: *A Clockwork Orange, The Handmaid's Tale, characteristics, dystopian society, literary dystopia, values*

1. Introduction

Dystopian societies are specific places, unique in their nature, values, and characteristics. Their birthplace is the environment of literary dystopia. Such societies are actually imaginary places, i.e. alternative worlds, which could, more or less, possibly exist in reality. Therefore, one might observe a dystopian society as an experiment in which all inhabitants, institutions, and organizations could be under the direct surveillance of experts from various scientific and social disciplines. Apart from literature, the elements of this society may be analyzed through the prism of psychology, sociology, political sciences, economy, or linguistics. This clearly states the complex nature of dystopian society. Still, this phenomenon resides within the boundaries of literary dystopia and has literary and artistic value, as part of the canon of dystopian literature, a sub-genre of science fiction. Given such a context, it may be justified to start this analysis at the birthplace of dystopian society - literary dystopia. Two dystopian societies will be analyzed: Anthony Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange* and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*. Apart from the different values, features, and individuals in these two dystopian societies, the particular aspect of the male/female writer's view will also be considered, as well as the position of the main male (Alex) and female (Offred) characters in the societies of these literary dystopias.

One of the clearest definitions of a dystopian society, its characteristics, and its peculiar nature is captured in Mark Hillegas' words:

Appalling in their similarity they describe nightmare states where men are conditioned to obedience, freedom is eliminated, and individuality crushed; where the past is systematically destroyed and men are isolated from nature; where science and technology are employed not to enrich human life, but to maintain the state's surveillance and control of its slave citizens. (qtd. in Moylan 2000: 111)

Dystopian society is apparently much closer to modern people and their world than are the stories of perfection offered by utopian writers. Through the history of mankind, nearly every attempt to achieve some kind of utopian goal resulted in a most horrible dystopia. The fact is that the personal utopia of one individual is not necessarily the personal utopia of another. As a consequence, we generally have elements of dystopian societies, some stronger and some weaker, reflected in the real world, based on eternal mutual conflicts.

Dystopian societies clearly have all the features of totalitarian societies. These societies feature a political system where the ruling class, a political party, or an individual cannot recognize the boundaries of its power and, therefore, it tends to control every aspect of social and private life. It is an authoritarian regime that relies on media control and propaganda, on control of all state institutions, constant surveillance of the population, and a lack of nearly all basic freedoms. A totalitarian society tends to control every walk of human life, whereas dictatorship and tyranny exclusively refer to political power. Extremism and a great amount of violence and terror aimed at potential rebels define such societies. German scholar and philosopher Hannah Arendt (1906-1975) said that a totalitarian movement was a "mass organization of atomized, isolated individuals with total, unlimited, unconditional loyalty" (Arendt 1998: 332). A totalitarian society finds a way of terrorizing people from the inside, recruiting politically neutral people and obtaining the most devoted followers. The cult and, sometimes, the charisma of a leader can definitely contribute to the enlargement and popularity of totalitarian ideas. In this way, the totalitarian minority becomes a totalitarian majority. Aggressive propaganda, terror against the population, an atmosphere of fright, and the destruction of all social and individual freedom are the main features of totalitarian societies, i.e. dystopian societies.

The two dystopian societies analyzed in this paper are, undoubtedly, totalitarian societies with their own specific characteristics. The state in Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange* is a police state which embraces psychologically repressive methods to make their inhabitants completely loyal. This is a totalitarian society in the making, where the regime aims to *cure* the whole population in order to achieve its absolute obedience. In the Gileadean state of Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, we see the complete transition of the state from democracy to totalitarianism. Repression, degradation, and humiliation of the whole society are

presented, as a culture transforms itself into a specific ideological, theocratical society, based on an orthodox reading and understanding of the Bible. It is worth noting that this society originated from a pure capitalist, consumer society, which can be interpreted as an obvious warning to contemporary real world scenarios.

2. The totalitarian state in Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange*

Although the dystopian society in *A Clockwork Orange* may not be so explicitly presented as in Huxley's *Brave New World* or Orwell's *1984*, it is no *less* dystopian, only *less noticeable*. It is a society of a closer future, featuring the main character Alex and his teenage gang – one of those gangs which terrorize the population at night. In day time, people are terrorized by the state, which is forcing them to do their futile jobs. Culture and art in this society are suppressed and seen as a subversive occurrence or are transformed into some banal pop music and an international television network. The majority of the population watch selected and controlled news from this network, do not leave their homes in the evening, and the police, the supposed defender of citizens, have been transformed into a repressive force, with its members – criminals from the streets – wearing uniforms. Through a story of crime prevention and with the help of these police forces, the state actually provokes fear in the loyal inhabitants, establishing a clear path towards a totalitarian society. In one segment of the book, we see F. Alexander, one of the characters, a writer and extreme opponent of the present authorities, describing the existing society in the following way:

Recruiting brutal young roughs for the police. Proposing debilitating and will-sapping techniques of conditioning. (...) We've seen it all before," he said, "in other countries. The thin end of the wedge. Before we know where we are we shall have the full apparatus of totalitarianism. (Burgess 2013: 173)

It is evident that the state employs all the methods at its disposal in order to consolidate its repressive society. Still, the uniqueness and unconventional nature of Burgess' dystopia can be seen through the words of Robert O. Evans who claims that *A Clockwork Orange* does not

fit the dystopian convention Burgess inherited. He borrows some of its devices, but... it is the statement about mankind, not the fictive structure in which it is embedded, that matters. (qtd. in Sisk 1997: 59)

Apparently, this critic understands that Burgess' dystopia breaks some boundaries of traditional dystopia and society, introducing motifs and elements like a happy ending, which would be completely unacceptable in Orwell's *1984*. In Burgess' society, we even encounter a hint of a democratic system, which is unacceptable in classical dystopian society.

One of the most convincing arguments that this society is fully dystopian is the existence of the so-called *Ludovico Treatment*, a tool for the conquest of people's minds in order to achieve complete obedience. Similar to Huxley's hypnopedia in *Brave New World*, the core of this treatment lies in Pavlov's principle of classical conditioning: it is essential to cause long and intensive stress to a man (long enough to lead to a nervous breakdown), so that new forms of behaviour may be easily adopted. Consequently, such a *refined individual* accepts these new forms of behaviour as his own, i.e. they become instinctive reactions. In such a methodology, the notorious combination of flowers and electrical shocks applied to babies in *Brave New World* has been replaced in Burgess' world with the combination of Ludovico serum and movies with extreme violence that Alex is forced to watch in order to be *healed* in the end. The violent trait of Alex's nature should be cured with another type of force and violence. This treatment causes Alex to also develop a feeling of disgust towards music (which he obsessively liked before the treatment) and sex (because of the violent scenes presented in combination with sexual images).

However, the central problem of this dystopian treatment lies in moral issues, i.e. the individual's lack of choice. Some would say that Alex deserves such treatment after his criminal activities and behaviour towards other people; after all, he did not refuse violence of his own will, but rather under the influence of a negative stimulus. In Alex's case, post-treatment, only the mere thought of violence makes him feel sick and produces psychological and physical obstacles. Thus, while Alex might maintain aspects of his violent personality internally, he cannot act on such impulses freely. In essence, it is the question of free choice. This transformation of "evil people" into "good people" is explained to Alex by Dr. Branom, one of the creators of this dystopian, Ludovico Program:

What is happening to you now is what should happen to any normal healthy human organism contemplating the actions of the forces of evil, the workings of the principle of destruction. You are being made sane, you are being made healthy. (Burgess 2013: 119)

The real nature of a singularly dystopian, totalitarian society may be seen in these words. The state uses all techniques that may help to remove any presence of human individualities. Undoubtedly, Alex is a violent young man who deserves to be punished, but such disciplining should not include the forcible changing of his way of thinking. The introduction of the state in this process clearly reveals its immoral intention of achieving complete obedience among its inhabitants. In addition, one may find evidence in the text of the state's plans to continue its mission by using the Ludovico Treatment on political opponents. One such occurrence can be found in the words of a minister – a member of the government: "Soon we may be needing all our prison space for political offenders" (Burgess 2013: 101).

From the above, it is evident that the dystopian society in *A Clockwork Orange* has established clear goals devoid of any moral norms or humane principles. Dystopian society relies on brutality, violence, restrictions, and obedience, and these elements may be found throughout Burgess' iconic work.

3. The dystopian state in Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*

The nature of the Gileadean state presented in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* could be best illustrated through the name of the main character in the novel. We get to know the whole story from the narration of Offred and her name clearly indicates her subordinate position in this society. She does not belong to herself, nor has she any individual freedom – she belongs completely to her imposed husband, Fred. Michele Lacombe has given us an interesting interpretation of the handmaid's name: "Offred" may be understood and read as "offread", meaning "misread", as a message to the readers that they could misinterpret Offred's words (Lacombe 1986: 320). In contrast, Roberta Rubenstein (qtd. in VanSpanckeren, Castro 1988: 103) introduces another original linguistic suggestion – "Offred" as "offered", directly emphasizing the narrator's position as a sexual object in this dystopian society. Her position as a slave is apparent in this society, because she is only Fred's handmaid. We actually come to realize that her real name is June and she is aware of the importance of not forgetting her real name, as it is perhaps the sole remnant of her individuality. This name is the connection with her past, with a more normal and free society than the contemporary one in the book. We may suppose that the narrator was hiding her name on purpose because the dystopian Gileadean world would not deserve to know it at all. This collective, impersonal, and cruel world could not bear any form of individuality.

It is worth mentioning that seven of the fifteen chapters in *The Handmaid's Tale*, including the first and last chapters, bear the title *Night*. This is clearly indicative of the dark atmosphere of a dystopian society as well as a subjective impression of the main narrator. Offred is aware of her position as the main narrator and her story is direct, like ordinary communication. This direct choice of wording and style of narration represents a sign of insecurity and hesitation, one which critic Frances Bartkowski (1989) defined as an indicator of shock, present among the population in Gilead because of the rapid and ruthlessly efficient change of reality caused by revolution. Through the mind and language of the main character, we become familiar with the situation in her country, where a sudden change flared, exerting an overpowering influence on the whole population.

Offred, as the main narrator, gives us insight into this society before and after revolution. Subjective narration in the first person, based on unreliable memories from the past, may result in potential restrictions of Offred's recounts. In a world without a past, she constructs her human dignity from her memory. The dystopian Gilead is a society with no written documents available to any of its

citizens – and oblivion is the greatest weapon of every totalitarian country, aiming to deprive its people of any concept of freedom. The story itself is fragmented and incomplete, without a clear answer regarding the date when this society was established and how the repression actually started. The sixteenth chapter, *Historical Notes*, while revealing a lot of important details, does not deliver a full reckoning of accounts.

The Theocratic Gileadean society, based on extreme interpretations and readings of the Bible, seems to have appeared gradually, as a consequence of the collapse of consumer capitalist society. It is interesting that the new establishment chose to adopt words and texts from the Bible as the foundation of this new society, but not their true meanings and spirit. A dystopian state destroys words, their meanings, and contextual understanding, and in their stead creates self-proclaimed neologisms with ideological purposes. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, the greatest part of North America is Gilead, an authoritarian oligarchy, where complete power is concentrated in hands of a small male minority, the so-called *Commanders of the Faithful*, who control the inhabitants with the regular army – the *Angels*. Still, the key role in this society is played by the *Guardians of the Faith*, who act as a kind of police force, as well as by the most notorious and dangerous segment of power – the *Eyes*, who serve as a secret police. These terms make it clear how the state repression actually functions in a dystopian society. By using words with the opposite meaning of the methods they stand for, the state tries to obscure repression; we may see here the direct influence of Orwell's *1984* and his dystopian society – Oceania. The terror of this dystopian country can be seen in its treatment of various social groups: Christian followers (Baptists); Afro-Americans (*Children of Ham*), who are forced to move to remote and uninhabited parts of the country; Jewish people, who must choose to either accept official Christianity or be transferred to Israel; homosexuals, who are labeled *Gender Traitors* and are exterminated; doctors who practice abortion, Catholics, and miscellaneous rebels, all of whom are constantly being persecuted. In dystopian Gilead, human fertility is at an extremely low level, so the Commanders have created a new model of giving birth and raising children, based on a literal interpretation of the Bible. If a handmaid gives birth to a healthy child to her commander, she would be saved from being sent to the radioactive deserts, or so called *Colonies*. And, more importantly, she would never be proclaimed *unwoman* and sentenced to death. Only women may be proclaimed fruitful or barren, not men. Women, in this society, are categorized hierarchically according to their ability to reproduce and their social class. Additionally, beyond these basic parameters, they are marked by uniforms of various colors – commanders' wives wear blue clothes (they are allowed to drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes, watch television, travel), daughters wear white, while handmaids wear red with veils on their heads. Older, infertile women wear green and they are called *Marthas* (when they work in households of commanders), but they can be *Aunts* as well, possessing one of the most tyrannical functions – training future handmaids and

controlling the female population as a whole. They are extreme and fanatic in fulfilling their tasks and they wear brown uniforms like Hitler's SA units (Sisk 1997: 110). Some women are *Econowives*: they have many functions in households, but, basically, they replace poorer men in house and marital duties. Because of their multi-tasking role, they wear uniforms with red, green, and blue stripes.

Margaret Atwood creates a purely dystopian society, where women are defined and ranked according to their reproductive capability. Offspring and motherhood are idealized and dehumanized at the same time.

The Gileadean society is the embodiment of repression and artificial values as well as of the degradation of all human values. This regime does not promise some false utopian future to its inhabitants, relating to the democratic potential of their rule. On the contrary, the main source for the development of this society's establishment is found in the ruined consumer capitalist society, which had reached the limit of its progress in all directions. Also, Gilead is not the product of some instant revolution, but power has been achieved gradually, just as have the restrictions of freedom. The author herself gives the best description of the introduction of totalitarianism:

Things continued in that state of suspended animation for weeks, although some things did happen. Newspapers were censored and some were closed down, for security reasons they said. The roadblocks began to appear, and Identipasses. Everyone approved of that, since it was obvious you couldn't be too careful. They said that new elections would be held, but that it would take some time to prepare for them. The thing to do, they said, was to continue on as usual. (Atwood 1985: 154)

The start of these changes was fairly innocent, having the support of a majority of the population. Offred emphasizes the lack of resistance to these changes and she justifies it with fear. Female rights were completely abolished and, formally, this was completely legal. A barbaric, dystopian state was in development. The parallel with the Nazi dictatorship in Germany is apparent – Hitler succeeded in gaining the support of the majority with his racist theories. In Gilead, the dystopian regime used the latent hatred between the sexes and misogyny to impose restrictions on female rights. This society degraded women to the status of slaves, taking away their personal names. What is more, the majority of the men in this society are also degraded unless they are members of state services, the police, the army, the guards, or highly ranked commanders. For most men, contact with women is forbidden and any violation of these rules is severely punished.

Political power in this society is crucial and proportional to the level of freedom of each individual. Consequently, freedom is directly dependent upon social status. The constant wars, instability, and infertility are the elements eternally used by authorities to justify repression, siege, and a lack of all rights and

liberties in this society. As with all other dystopian societies, hatred among people and social classes is utilized as the universal tool for eternal power.

4. Conclusion

While these two dystopian novels have significantly different plots, what remains the same is the nature of their dystopian societies. Both societies are totalitarian, closed societies, based on fear and the rule of a privileged minority. The authorities in both societies use violence and the power of the state in order to discipline the populace, suffocate their individual characteristics, and change their way of thinking. The greatest ambition of both dystopian societies is to achieve absolute obedience among their inhabitants. In the center of both dystopias, we have an individual – Alex in *A Clockwork Orange*, and Offred in *The Handmaid's Tale*. They are quite different personas, but both are aware of the discouraging living conditions in their societies and both desire some kind of change.

In both cases we have a unique use of language, which plays a crucial part in the creation of these dystopian societies. Alex's language, Nadsat, may be seen as a weapon against the totalitarian regime and is not understandable to a majority of the population. While Alex performs and expresses violence through this language, it remains one of the rare individual characteristics in this dystopian society. Paradoxically, Nadsat becomes the only weapon against totalitarianism. It becomes the expression of free choice, rebellion, and revolt against the world of dystopian values. Even the free choice of violence becomes better than the forced values of dystopian society. Offred, as the main character and narrator, uses language in a specific way, emphasizing the position of women in her society, yet not neglecting the dystopian society's torture of both men and women. Her language represents a strong contrast to the repressive regime, a sign of freedom, a mark of individuality that cannot be taken away from the Gileadean inhabitants. The authorities clearly recognize the power of language and introduce numerous restrictions: they ban female names, many other words, and restrict communication among people. This society is based on a theocracy, the extreme use of words from the Bible, and constant control of every movement, forbidding any form of individuality recognized in language.

In these two dystopian societies, we encounter a male and a female approach to the nature of such societies. These two points of view have some particularities, but, essentially, they both reflect the restrictive attitude of these societies towards the fundamental human rights and liberties. Both societies ban every form of individual expression, insisting on the collective values prescribed by authorities. In these societies, everybody and everything may be recognized as an enemy. Constant crises and wars, fear and tension are important manipulative elements in these societies, leaving no room for change and revolution. Still, in both societies analyzed here, we see that change could happen through the activities of the main characters. It is impossible to alter the natural human desire for freedom and the

expression of free will. Both societies must be seen as warnings of our potential, alternative future, which may become real if people allow it to happen. The main value of literary dystopian societies lies in their clear presentation of such possible real future societies.

References

- Arent, Hana. 1998. *Izvori totalitarizma*. Beograd: Feministička Izdavačka Kuća 94.
- Atwood, Margaret. 1985. *The Handmaid's Tale*. [Online]. Available: http://www.umnet.com/download-ebook/74267-The_Handmaids_Tale [Accessed 2016 May 18].
- Bartkowski, Frances. 1989. *Feminist Utopias*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Burgess, Anthony. 2013. *A Clockwork Orange*. London: Penguin Books Ltd.
- Lacombe, Michele. 1986. "The Writing on the Wall: Amputated Speech in Margaret Atwood's 'The Handmaid's Tale'" in *Wascana Review* 21(2), p. 320.
- Moylan, Tom. 2000. *Scraps of the Untainted Sky*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Sisk, David W. 1997. *Transformations of Language in Modern Dystopias*. Westport: Greenwood Press.
- VanSpanckeren, Kathryn and Jan G. Castro. 1988. *Margaret Atwood: Visions and Forms*. USA: Southern Illinois University.

PERIPHERIES OF VIOLENCE

QUESTIONING A CULTURAL LANDMARK: THE TWIN TOWERS AS *CENTER*

ALEXANDRU ORAVIȚAN

West University of Timișoara

Abstract: The centered nature of the Twin Towers within the post-9/11 phenomenon deserves an analysis due to its now iconic status in the history of the early 21st century. A view through the lens of Derridean deconstruction reveals a semiotic framework which questions this grounding locus of an entire order in the Western world and from which agents of cultural hegemony irradiate.

Keywords: Americanness, cultural hegemony, deconstruction, 9/11, semiotics, World Trade Center

1. Introduction

In the live broadcasts and countless photographic reproductions and reprints after the events of September 11, 2001, via the 24-hour news cycle, the image of the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center falling one after the other has permeated the collective psyche on a global level. It is safe to assume that this impactful image is the ultimate foreground and the quintessence of the event as a whole. By comparison, the attack on the Pentagon and the crash of United Airlines Flight 93 became instances in the background of the 9/11 tapestry. The centered nature of the Twin Towers in the entire context of September 11, 2001, and the post-9/11 phenomenon deserve an analysis due to their era-defining dimensions at the onset of the 21st century.

The aim of this paper is to question the foreground and background of the 9/11 tapestry contained in the image of the Twin Towers, by tackling the means by which this landmark has been centered in the collective psyche. Furthermore, the representation of an entire world order put forward by this iconic landmark of Americanness must be dissected in order to comprehend the ways in which this topos has been employed to justify a series of sociocultural and political discourses in the post-9/11 universe. This undertaking will be conducted by using the tools provided by Derridean deconstruction and semiological analysis.

2. Questionable centrality

A point that must be made at this stage regarding the symbolic nature of the Twin Towers is precisely their epitomizing a “Western value-system and a world order” (Baudrillard 2003: 37). This marks the potency and the charged nature of the Twin Towers as a sign within the structure of American and Western culture. Instantly recognizable and a recurrent element in products of popular culture meant to produce spontaneous consent and sympathy in the psyches of those contemplating them, the Twin Towers became a locus which grounded the entire structure or order in the Western world and from which agents of cultural hegemony irradiated. After their fall, the legacy of the Twin Towers has become a subject of intense debate, particularly due to the site’s politicized and historic significations (Watts 2009: 413). An entire quest for appropriating the site was initiated, largely through mass media coverage, which translated into an emplacement of the public topos of the Twin Towers within a personal space, producing “prosthetic memories” (Wilson Baptist 2015: 4). The endeavor of representing the unrepresentable has thus been firmly enshrined in the post-9/11 collective mindset. However, the success of this exercise may only be achieved by establishing connections with the visual residuals of the past.

In pre-9/11 photographs or impressions of lower Manhattan, the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center instantaneously stand out against the backdrop of the surrounding structures. Even if the focus is not directly placed on the towers as such, their presence in the overall panorama is sufficient for them to become the center by which the image and its signification are decoded; they instantly bring up umbrella terms such as *New York* or *America* itself. The semiotic sign of the *Twin Towers* thus automatically spills onto other signs, therefore triggering what Derrida regarded as a trace. The Twin Towers are thus a departure point, the foreground by which the seminal nature of this trace can be followed.

Just like the Eiffel Tower in Paris, analyzed meticulously by Roland Barthes in an essay dedicated to the centrality of this locus in the Parisian and the French landscape (Barthes 1983: 236-250), the Twin Towers represented the ultimate embodiment of the vertical axis in the landscape of New York. In his essay “Walking in the City”, Michel de Certeau explores at large the centralized perspective one gains of the city from the top floors of the World Trade Center. The urban jungle of Manhattan unfolds horizontally before one’s eyes, together with other landmarks of American exceptionalism, such as the Empire State Building or the Statue of Liberty. From this vertical axis, one has the impression that the objects or signs on the horizontal axis are set in a certain order; the vertical axis orders the play of signs one would be confronted with if one were a pedestrian “walking in the city” (Certeau 1988: 91-110).

As stated by Derrida (2001: 352), the vertical axis (in this case, the World Trade Center) or the center not only gives coherence to the structure or system surrounding it, but it also enables the unfolding of the elements within the “play”

of the entire form or system contemplated. Therefore, from the top of the Twin Towers, one could read or decode a certain narrative of Americanness, infused with key significations derived from exceptionalism, liberty and capitalism, coupled with the thriving of free markets. And, just as Barthes (1983: 236) noticed, by quoting Guy de Maupassant on the Eiffel Tower, the Twin Towers offered a person the sensation of being at the very “center” of the structure at hand; the “presence” at the center becomes the gateway through which the entire structure or system is “experienced” and, arguably, celebrated. When contemplating the Twin Towers, one experienced America itself, together with all its associated myths. Consequently, the Twin Towers were a key instance by which the American spirit, presence and order were represented for a global audience, a foreground from the American experience as a whole, a symbol of American exceptionalism, vital to the American subject.

More specifically, the centrality of the Twin Towers for the American psyche and the urban landscape of New York can also be grasped by making a comparison with Roland Barthes’ semiological analysis of the Eiffel Tower in Paris: both are vertical structures which have become metonymically associated with the cultures that have produced them. They are both landmarks which have become indispensable to the general picture of their corresponding landscapes, a continuous presence in everyday life, which gradually strips them of any concrete attribute; they become “phenomenons (sic) of Nature” destined to exist into infinity, but whose meaning becomes permanently questionable (Barthes 1983: 236). The excessively and apparently timeless foregrounded nature of these signs exerts a fascination for one’s gaze; in their absence, the mind attempts to automatically reconstruct them in the landscape one has before oneself. Therefore, the trauma caused by the absence of the Twin Towers from the landscape of lower Manhattan after September 11, 2001 becomes explainable due to the indispensable nature of this sign - or “inevitable”, as Barthes (1983: 237) calls the Eiffel Tower.

Moreover, the centrality and the unmistakable, apparently irreplaceable nature of this landmark and its associated baggage of significations turn it into what Barthes (1983: 237) calls a “pure sign”, “virtually empty”; just like the Eiffel Tower, the Twin Towers are an “ineluctable” sign “because it means everything”. An entire plethora of significations linked to Americanness and its values can be identified with the sign of the World Trade Center. In this way, the Twin Towers become what Derrida conceptualizes as a ‘transcendental signified’, grounding the system of Americanness in the geography of lower Manhattan. Meaning constantly bombards this structure, as onlookers are fascinated by its presence and desire to identify themselves with it, to share and bask in the limelight of its values; yet, once this meaning is ascribed to the landmark itself, it reverberates back towards those who have ascribed this meaning in the first place. This is what makes it possible to identify the Twin Towers as a center from which cultural hegemony is driven and irradiated by the hegemonic culture contained within the larger system of the Towers.

The fascination exerted by the Twin Towers and their fetishization can also be incorporated into the discussion of their centrality and the ensuing trauma after their ultimate demise. The fact that numerous visitors clamoured for a visit to the Windows on the World restaurant and the platform on the upper floors of the building in order to enjoy the panorama of New York suggests that “a certain essence” (Barthes 1983: 241) of the city was grasped by the onlooker, enabling him or her to be part of the much desired centrality or foreground of the experience of America and New York as a cultural metropolis. Furthermore, in spite of their geometrical perfection generated in the abstract multiplication of twinness, the Towers enable access or contact to a remarkable “human space”, as they are a product of both glance and sight and the materialization of a topical human imaginarium, a summation of cultural values (Barthes 1983: 241-242).

The bird’s eye view made possible by the Twin Towers offered not only perception but also an opportunity for the intellectual process of decoding the signs one encounters while gazing onto the unfolding urban landscape. This perspective from above is analyzed by Barthes (1983: 242) as capable to make one “transcend sensation and see things in their structure”. The structural argument is the key towards grasping the centrality of the vertical axis against the horizontal one. When the cultural significations and diverse meanings are added to the mix, one is presented with the supreme argument for the Twin Towers’ importance and centrality for the American collective psyche and the Western world order before 9/11: it not only grounds a structure, but it also makes this structure readable, thereby circulating it in iconic form in the entire world and making the rest of the world fascinated with and, in some way, connected to this center. Marginality is thus disregarded. This idea may also be encountered, in a rephrased manner, in Barthes (1983: 250) when he comments on the polarizing effect of the Eiffel Tower: “one can feel oneself cut off from the world and yet the owner of a world.”

This paradoxical nature is also echoed by Michel de Certeau, specifically regarding the Twin Towers, in his seminal essay “Walking in the City”. Similarly to Barthes, Certeau (1988: 91) focuses on the “texturology” of the panorama, which represents “the architectural figures of the *coincidatio oppositorum*”, firmly indebted to binary oppositions. Moreover, just as in Barthes’ case, significant attention is given to the pleasure of “seeing the whole”, to the notion of being “lifted out of the city’s grasp” and to the position at the top of the Twin Towers, which “transforms the bewitching world by which one was ‘possessed’ into a text that lies before one’s eyes. It allows one to read it” (Certeau 1988: 92). The centrality of the Twin Towers for the overall comprehension of this ‘text’ of Americanness, conveyed at a global level, is therefore firmly established.

Michel de Certeau also makes some observations of interest for the context of post-9/11 literature and the fall of the defining element of the perceived background – the Twin Towers themselves. A special category of subjects can be encountered in the urban background; they resort to walking and wandering as a primary means of experiencing the text of the city proper. Certeau (1988: 93) calls

this category “Wandersmänner” and defines its members with the help of the relationship established by their corporality with the city itself: their bodies “follow the thicks and thins of an urban ‘text’ they write without being able to read”. This signals the first sign by which the Twin Towers, as the central topos of both New York and the American consciousness that projects it to the world, can effectively be deconstructed and thus proved to be a contradictory landmark, whose potential significations can yield mixed messages.

By stressing the incapacity to assign a universally accepted signification to the grand text of the city, a “transparent text” as he labels it, Michel de Certeau (1988) actually depicts the Twin Towers as a sign which betrays the absence of logocentrism. The signification of centrality that the World Trade Center wishes to project onto the American psyche is thus continuously deferred into the span of the city proper and the countless contradictions that this texturology provokes. The Twin Towers thus leave merely a trace of signification which is universally perceived as a manifestation of centrality. Certeau explores these contradictions and signals the possibilities of alternative centers arising from the midst of those centers already established within the texturology of the city proper: “to plan a city is both to *think the very plurality* of the real and to make that way of thinking the plural *effective*” (Certeau 1988: 94, emphasis in the original).

However, the stage of planning is superseded by added and construed significations, such as those attained by landmarks like the Twin Towers, which become signs that suggest a certain degree or dimension of power to the onlooker. The apparently stable and extremely visible nature of this sign against the contradictory background enhances it with a lasting and imposing dimension, akin to the durable and forceful shades of power. Yet, once the artificial nature of the centrality of such topoi is revealed, their stabilizing nature crumbles into the texturology of their background. Certeau (1988: 95) observes that “the language of power is in itself ‘urbanizing’, but the city is left prey to contradictory movements that counterbalance and combine themselves outside the reach of panoptic power”. This betrays the hitherto unacknowledged importance of the background that escapes a view accustomed to decoding signification from the signs projecting centrality and logocentrism.

The process of decoding is primarily conducted through walking and gazing. While the focus of the gaze is directed towards a questionable centrality, the idea of walking is a centerless undertaking per definition: “To walk is to lack a place. It is the indefinite process of being absent.” (Certeau 1988: 103). Once the space of the Twin Towers becomes an acute absence and no strong bearing of orientation is left, this absence of a center is heightened exponentially towards traumatic proportions within the larger context of the city, perceived as “an immense social experience of lacking a place” (Certeau 1988: 103).

The deconstruction of the Twin Towers’ full presence, in Derridean terms, can be grasped not only from the artificial nature of its contemplation. One has to go directly to the ephemeral nature of the vertical axis as such; even though it

offers a space of contemplation of the surrounding system which it organizes, the vertical axis in itself becomes an absence. By enabling a sense of presence from the standpoint that it offers, the vertical axis is removed from the spectrum of perception, despite its being an omnipresence in the system outside its boundaries. This is fully evident in Barthes' essay on the Eiffel Tower; this remarkable landmark, taken as a whole, can not only be deconstructed into smaller segments, but it can ultimately be revealed as an "empty", "transparent" structure:

(...) the surprise of seeing how this rectilinear form, which is consumed in every corner of Paris as a pure line, is composed of countless segments, interlinked, crossed, divergent: an operation of reducing an appearance (the straight line) to its contrary reality (a lacework of broken substances), a kind of demystification provided by simple enlargement of the level of perception. (Barthes 1983: 249)

Indeed, just as the Eiffel Tower lacks a physical center due to its mechanical make-up and construction plans, so too can the Twin Towers be seen as a structure without a precise locus. However, the way in which centrality escapes the Twin Towers is wholly different from the case of the Eiffel Tower. Here, the doubling of the sign can be blamed for the absence of centrality. Through the multiplication of the vertical axis, the symbolic potency of its singularity is eradicated. Moreover, no precise center can be confined either to the two towers or to the hinterland between them, betraying the failure of a virtual vertical axis, even though there are two material signs which may attain its reversed significations.

The absence of a standard, of a singular entity by which the Twin Towers can be decoded, brings to the surface their construed centrality in the American psyche, as emphasized by Baudrillard (2003: 39), who explains: "Only the doubling of the sign truly puts an end to what it designates". Thus, even though the Twin Towers projected a sense of imperialism, it was an artificial and carefully constructed one. Furthermore, it is only the destruction of both towers that was able to prevent the creation of a vertical axis. Had only one tower fallen, the message from the fundamentalist margin would have been incomplete and the strike a failure.

3. Conclusion

The artificial centrality of the Twin Towers and of the larger structure of the World Trade Center allowed for a supplementary transfer of meaning and substance to it. Furthermore, it is by this sustained reliance on its centrality that the overwhelming trauma and grief can be accounted for after the 'demise' of the towers. The unspeakable nature of the trauma is thus part of the virtual centrality of the Twin Towers and their fall during the horrendous attacks of September 11, 2001.

References

- Barthes, Roland. 1983. "The Eiffel Tower" in Sontag, Susan (ed.). *A Barthes Reader*. New York: Hill and Wang, pp. 236-250.
- Baudrillard, Jean. 2003. *The Spirit of Terrorism*. Trans. Chris Turner. New York and London: Verso.
- Certeau, Michel de. 1988. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Trans. Steven Rendall. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press.
- Derrida, Jacques. 2001. *Writing and Difference*. Trans. Alan Bass. London: Routledge.
- Watts, Linda S. 2009. "Reflecting Absence or Presence? Public Space and Historical Memory at Ground Zero" in *Space and Culture*, 12(4). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, pp. 412-148.
- Wilson Baptist, Karen. 2015. "Incompatible Identities: Memory and Experience at the National September 9/11 Memorial and Museum" in *Emotion, Space and Society*, 16. Amsterdam: Elsevier Publications, pp. 3-8.

**“TURNING SETBACKS INTO COMEBACKS”:
REPRESENTING DISABILITY IN PING CHONG’S
*INSIDE/ OUT... VOICES FROM THE DISABILITY COMMUNITY***

DIANA BENEÀ

University of Bucharest

Abstract: *In conversation with recent contributions in the field of disability studies, the article analyzes the representation of disability experience in Chinese American playwright Ping Chong’s Inside/ Out: Voices from the Disability Community (2008), produced within the framework of his ongoing series of community-based performance works entitled Undesirable Elements (1992-). Aligning Chong’s theatrical piece with the cultural model of disability, the paper examines the political stakes of self-representation through testimonial performance, as a site of critical intervention into the classic repertoire of mediated representations of disability.*

Keywords: *community theatre, disability, performance, representation*

1. Introduction: Ping Chong’s *Undesirable Elements* (1992 -)

From the documentary plays of the Federal Theatre Project in the 30s, to the socially committed work of such companies as El Teatro Campesino, the Free Southern Theater, or the San Francisco Mime Troupe during the civil rights movement, to Anna Deavere Smith’s ground-breaking solo performance work on ethno-racial identities in the early 90s, and, more recently, to the national conversation on homosexuality and tolerance sparked by Moises Kaufman and the Tectonic Theater Project’s *The Laramie Project Cycle* (2000-2009), socially engaged theatre and performance has represented one of the most vibrant and productive strands in the theatre landscape of the United States. Over the past two decades, American theatre has reinforced its relevance as a space for critical reflection addressing some of the most pressing social concerns of our times in a compelling and oftentimes innovative aesthetic language. Among the theatrical forms contributing to this renewed engagement with social and political issues, community-based drama has stood out as a productive space for such explorations. An influential figure of the contemporary American stage ever since the 70s, Ping Chong has created, directed and produced a substantial body of work in a variety of

formats, including theatre, performance art, multimedia works, and dance. In 1975, Chong founded his independent theatre company, the Fiji Theatre Company, later renamed 'Ping Chong + Company', whose mission is "to create works of theater and art that explore the intersections of race, culture, history, art, media and technology in the modern world," while also revealing "beauty, precision, and a commitment to social justice" (Ping Chong + Company Website). Resisting any comfortable classification, Chong has been described as a "hyphenated" voice amalgamating a multiplicity of artistic media, genres, styles, and diverse traditions, including "Brecht, Meyerhold, devised theatre, postmodernism, modern dance, Chinese opera, Japanese cinema, [and] multimedia performance" (Frieze 2006: 85). Thematically, Chong's works address various ramifications of the topic of "culture and the other" (Chong 1989-1990: 63) set in multiple temporal and spatial contexts, with a focus on intercultural encounters and the intricate processes of cultural difference and assimilation. Formally, the productions employ a variety of different strategies (video projections, shadow images, puppets, stylized choreography etc.) to achieve compelling visual experiences, relying on defamiliarizing effects.

Critics have traced a significant shift in Chong's career, from the abstract explorations of the themes of identity and otherness in his pre-1990 works, to "the more historically, geographically and biographically stable work" produced in the last three decades (Frieze 2006: 92), a move described by Chong himself as one "from disconnectedness to connectedness" (Chong qtd. in Wehle 2004: 28). *Undesirable Elements*, Chong's ongoing series of community-based works, illustrates the more overt political engagement and interest in questions of social justice characterizing the second stage of his career. This enhanced concern with socio-political issues – articulated in a more straightforward manner – has found a fertile space in the format of community-based drama.

Famously described by Richard Owen Geer (1993: 28) as "theatre of the people, by the people, and for the people", community-based theatre relies on an "aesthetic of access" (Kuppers 2007: 4) at all the stages of the play development and production process. For Ping Chong and his company, the process starts with a residency of several weeks in a particular community, during which they conduct interviews with potential participants in response to specific issues relevant to their communities. The playwriting team then selects six or seven interviews representing a multiplicity of perspectives on the given community-specific issues, which are scripted and arranged in a chronological structure, as a collage of intersecting testimonials interspersed with relevant historical background about the issues in question. Finally, the play is performed by the interviewees themselves, many of whom are not professional actors, usually in their own communities, in regional and college theatres, as well as in arts centers, museums, community centers, and other less conventional venues. Community-based performances are frequently followed by discussions with the audience and other activities in the

communities in question, thus testifying to the wider impact of the projects, extending beyond the framework of the plays as such (Zatz 2012: 209-210).

Since 1992, the company has produced nearly fifty works as part of the *Undesirable Elements* series (across the U.S., along with several European cities and Japan), all of which aim to investigate various instances of otherness, more specifically, the particular cultural and social issues pertaining to the lives of “outsiders’ in their communities” (Zatz 2012: 207). The son of Chinese opera professionals, who immigrated to the United States and settled in New York’s Chinatown, Chong is no stranger to this condition of otherness. The playwright defines himself as an assemblage of various dimensions of otherness in point of his hyphenated ethnic identity, sexual identity, as well as his position within the artistic establishment:

As an artist, I’m an outsider in American society. As an experimental artist, I’m an outsider in the art world. As a person of color, I’m an outsider; as an immigrant, I’m an outsider; as a gay man, I’m an outsider. It’s the position that fate has allotted me, but it’s a valuable position to be in, because I think every society should have a mirror held to it by the outsider. (Chong qtd. in Goff 2001: E1)

The name of the series itself, “undesirable elements,” encapsulates a long history of discrimination against diverse forms of otherness. Frequently employed in the late 19th century and the early decades of the 20th, the umbrella term designated a variety of threats “which would not add to the well-being of our society,” as Senator Charles Fairbanks, later vice president of the U.S. (1905-1909), stated in a congressional record of 1902. Included in his list were “idiots, insane persons, paupers, or persons liable to become a public charge, persons with a loathsome or contagious disease, persons who have been convicted of a felony, or other infamous crime or misdemeanor involving moral turpitude, polygamists, assisted immigrants, and Chinese laborers” (qtd. in Gold 2012: 319). Chong’s series engages with the contemporary “undesirable elements” of American society, aiming to give voice to the various forms of historical injustice they had to confront.

While the original aim of *Undesirable Elements* was to explore the lives of hyphenated Americans negotiating their identities at the intersection of two or more cultures and languages, the more recent productions of the series have addressed more specific forms of displacement, zooming in on the plight of young people from war-torn regions coming to the U.S. as refugees (*Children of War*, 2002), on the testimonies of child sexual abuse survivors (*Secret Survivors*, 2011), or, most recently, on the experiences of Muslim New Yorkers (*Beyond Sacred: Voices of Muslim Identity*, 2015). *Inside/ Out...Voices from the Disability Community*, the production to be discussed in what follows, tackles the challenges inherent in living with a disability, a condition that, as Chong notes in the introduction to the play, is “rarely acknowledged or discussed in conversations

about civil society and social justice, and even more rarely explored in theatrical settings” (Chong 2012: 113). Commissioned and produced by the VSA (standing for Very Special Arts), an organization dedicated to providing art and education opportunities to individuals with disabilities, the play premiered at the John F. Kennedy for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C., on June 27, 2008.

2. Disability performance and the political stakes of representation: Ping Chong’s *Inside/ Out...Voices from the Disability Community*

Theorists have long stressed the activist function of community-based performance, regarding it as a “venue for ‘public discussion’ of vital issues central to their communities, as well as an arena for gaining visibility and staging their identity” (Conquergood 2006: 360). Staging an identity on their own terms within the context of this theatrical format is especially relevant for the members of a community that has historically been the subject of mediated representation in mainstream cultural texts, resulting in the circulation of a limited repertoire of stereotypical images and discourses. As several scholars have argued, disability has been systematically represented through the lens of the “otherness” or non-normativity of the disabled body, which has been frequently figured as a peculiar text on display, awaiting analysis or decoding on the part of some qualified “readers”.

To quote Douglas Biklen and Robert Bogdan’s influential typology of prevalent media portrayals of disability, such protocols of representation have traditionally included the following ten stereotypes constructing a predictable horizon of expectations: the “pitiable and pathetic” character; the passive victim or “object of violence;” the “sinister and/ or evil” figure; the “atmosphere,” i.e., the background character, lacking any development, employed for the purpose of creating atmosphere; the courageous and good-hearted “Super Crip” overcoming barriers against all odds; the “laughable” object of ridicule; “his/ her own worst-and only-enemy,” i.e., the self-victimizing character unwilling to transcend their limitations; the “burden” on their caregivers; the “nonsexual” figure unable to engage in any romantic relationships; finally, the less-than-human character “incapable of fully participating in everyday life,” including a family and a career (Biklen and Bogdan 1977: 6-9). Other scholars have engaged in in-depth analyses of the ways in which various cultural or literary sites have contributed to the naturalization of certain narratives about disability – for instance, the popular genre of the sideshow played a key role in disseminating the cultural figure of the disabled as an exotic freak, hence to the perpetuation of a discourse of “enfreakment” (Hevey qtd. in Thomson 1997: 17). Furthermore, as Davis demonstrates in his brief analysis of some excerpts from Joseph Conrad’s novels, allusions to disability (sometimes embedded in metaphorical constructions) abound even in texts not explicitly concerned with this condition. Such indirect references subtly reinforce the cultural work performed by direct representations of disability,

serving to consolidate an ideology of “normalcy” constructed in opposition to the category of the “abnormal” (Davis 2013: 10-11). In fact, as Thomson suggests, cultural representations of disability have acquired so much explanatory power and social meaning that they have come to “inform the identity – and often the fate – of real people with extraordinary bodies” (Thomson 1997: 15). The product of a privileged non-disabled gaze trapped in its own mixture of voyeuristic fantasies, compassionate urges, and fears of bodily otherness, this classic repertoire of direct and indirect representations has very rarely depicted individuals with disabilities as ordinary people with ordinary lives.

The aforementioned representational patterns reflect a broader theoretical framework of understanding disability that has been labeled the medical model. At the core of this model lies a conception of disability as a “private and individual” impairment or physical limitation requiring “medical prevention, cure or rehabilitation” (Shakespeare 2013: 216). However, more recent models of conceptualizing disability have stressed the ways in which the medical model – and its framing of disability as dysfunction and pathology – represents a pernicious discourse that politicizes, medicalizes and objectifies individuals with disabilities, thus perpetuating various forms of discrimination. Engaging in a “structural analysis of disabled people’s social exclusion” (Shakespeare 2013: 214), the social model has emerged as a critique of the medical model, aiming to reframe disability as the result of disabling social processes. If the previous model located disability within the firm boundaries of the medical discourse, the social approach examines disability as a social issue, calling for measures geared towards removing the barriers – ranging from environmental to attitudinal – preventing persons with disabilities from leading more fulfilling lives (Shakespeare 2013: 216). Criticized for failing to explain the “complex interplay of individual and environmental factors” (Shakespeare 2013: 220) in the creation of disability, the social model has been nevertheless instrumental in promoting an agenda of disability rights and in redefining disability as a positive social identity. Recent contributions in the field of disability studies have sought to shed more light precisely on the underexplored space of interaction between embodiment and social forces. While acknowledging the potentially debilitating effect of particular social conditions, the cultural model of disability emphasizes instead the embodied experience afforded by disability as “a productive locus of identification” (Snyder and Mitchell 2006: 10).

A politics of resignifying disability with an emphasis upon agency is intimately related with the question of self-representation. While individuals with disabilities had been previously excluded from self-representation, the more recent models of disability aim to shift the locus of representation within the community itself, bringing to the fore the seldom heard voices of the disabled and thus disrupting the hegemony of the ableist discourse. The disability arts movement has provided disability artists with a space to explore disability, allowing them to legitimize their experience as intrinsically valuable and worthy of aesthetic attention. The last three decades have thus witnessed a “disability renaissance”

(Couser 2013: 457) across artistic media and cultural practices, mounting a critique not only against the previous representations of disability, but also against more traditional conceptions about art (in terms of subject matter, producers, audience). Writing about the flourishing genre of the disability autobiography, Thomas Couser stresses the political dimension of disability art as a critical intervention, arguing that such narratives should be regarded “not as spontaneous ‘self-expression’ but as a response – indeed a retort – to the traditional misrepresentation of disability in Western culture generally (457). The question of self-representation in such narratives is therefore always already “a political as well as a mimetic act – a matter of speaking *for* as well as speaking *about*” (458, emphases in the original).

Within the broader context of the disability arts movement, theatre and performance have offered a particularly effective arena for the exploration of this topic, given that the medium itself is predicated on the construction of a “shared space in which performers and audiences are co-present, mutually informing, and in communicative process” (Johnston 2016: 25). As Alisa Solomon (2012: x) argues, theatre is “a space of self-making,” a space in which bodies become desirable, “through theatre’s magical mechanisms of empathy and display”. Disability theatre thus becomes a site where bodies previously perceived as undesirable “others” could be reclaimed and positively resignified as desirable. From the perspective of theatre-specific representation-qua-embodiment, disability theatre has been concerned with more practical matters as well, advocating for the participation of professionals with disabilities at all the stages of theatrical production, with a special focus on the casting of disabled performers in disabled roles, thus challenging the traditional mode of “cripping up”, i.e., the casting of non-disabled actors as disabled characters (Sandahl qtd. in Johnston 2016: 42).

In Chong’s play, the standard set of the performance is minimalist: seven black folding chairs arranged in a semi-circle, a microphone and a music stand for each performer. The performers all take their places in front of their music stands, each in their own pool of light, introduce themselves and begin to tell their stories, within the framework of what emerges as a “choral work” (Solomon 2012: xiii) of interwoven autobiographies. Chong highlights the importance of the act of naming oneself as a first step in claiming one’s identity; in fact, as the playwright argues, the whole show is an extended “act of naming” (Chong qtd. in Abrash 2012: 166). Some of the performers have lived with disability all their lives: Monique Holt, a performing artist and a theatre professor at Gallaudet University, who arrived in the U.S. as a Korean adoptee, is deaf (her part is interpreted by voice actress Mindy Pearl Pfeffer); Matthew S. Joffe, an educational therapist and director of the Office for Student Guidance and Disabled Student Programs at LaGuardia Community College, was born with Moebius Syndrome; Christopher Imbrosciano is a young actor with cerebral palsy. Others have become disabled only later in their lives: Zazel-Chavah O’Garra, a dancer and disability rights advocate, is a brain tumor survivor; Vivian Cary Jenkins, a former healthcare expert and Peace Corps volunteer, became blind later in life; Blair Wing, an actress, was paralyzed at the

age of eighteen as a result of a car accident. Finally, the cast includes a performer who experienced the condition indirectly: Josh Hecht is a director whose mother had multiple sclerosis.

Personal stories are narrated against the background of the history of disability legislation in the U.S., from the forced sterilization of people with disabilities adopted by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1927, to the disability activism emerging in the early 1970s, to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and, finally, to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, which protects individuals with disabilities from discrimination in the workplace, in housing, and in public accommodations. The historical interludes of the performance also trace significant shifts in popular perceptions of, and attitudes towards, disability, from an early stage of forced invisibility (suggested, for instance, by president Franklin Delano Roosevelt's efforts to hide the extent of his disability in public), to a steadily increasing degree of visibility and acceptance, as illustrated by the first performer with a disability to star in a primetime TV show in 1980. The official legislative history along with that of popular representations serve as the backdrop for the micro-histories articulated in the personal testimonies of the performers.

Predictably, most of these personal narratives of living with disability revolve around multiple instances of marginalization and stigmatization. As such, most of the performers remember their childhood through the lens of similar experiences of having been bullied in school: Monique attended a public school where the hearing pupils always made fun of the very few deaf kids (Chong and Zatz 2012: 126); Matthew recounts how he was always tormented by his classmates, while his friends were bullied for hanging out with him (123); in kindergarten, Christopher noticed how his peers' parents would always pull their kids away from him, even if cerebral palsy is not contagious (136).

Another thematic thread running through the testimonials foregrounds how most of the performers had to face discrimination in their professional lives as well. Despite his expertise in the field, Matthew's application for a position as coordinator of a center for teenagers with learning disabilities is rejected, as the medical director fears his disability "will traumatize the youth" (Chong and Zatz 2012: 132). Similarly, Blair fails to get a part for an actress in a wheelchair, because she is "too pretty" and "does not look disabled enough" (152); ironically, the role goes to a non-disabled actress in the end. Interestingly, the question of representation is explicitly taken up in Blair's testimonial in light of this experience. Arguing that media representation can be instrumental in challenging assumptions about disability, Blair notes how current representational patterns either render this condition invisible or promote melodramatic "miracle" narratives about overcoming personal tragedies. Overall, such accounts of professional discrimination serve to frame disability as a social phenomenon, pointing to the failure of the wider social institutions to address the specific needs of the disability community. As one of the performers argues, "conversation is a two-way street. If

people lack the ability to adapt to my language, then their lack of flexibility makes me disabled” (141).

Against the background of this social model highlighting the debilitating effects of an ableist ideology upon the experience of disability, the production emphasizes uplifting moments of triumph when the performers arrive at a heightened understanding of their condition and their potentialities. Departing from an understanding of disability as a series of discriminatory encounters, the testimonials in the latter part of the play gesture towards events when the performers “begin to find [their] own identity” (Chong and Zatz 2012: 129), or decide to “reinvent” (159) themselves, foregrounding their role in “not let[ting] anyone or anything stop me from living my life the way I want to” (158) or in “educat[ing] people on how to treat me as a person and not as a disability” (158). To quote the title of the keynote speech given by Zazel for Long Island University’s graduation, these stories are instances of “turning setbacks into comebacks” (156), reclaiming agency over their lives and redescribing disability as an inherently meaningful experience.

The testimonial narration of personal stories is interrupted eight times throughout the play, for a section entitled “What do people think of/ what do you think of when you hear the word disability?” The first time the question is uttered, as “what do people think of?”, each performer comes up with one word typically associated with disability in the collective imaginary, ranging from derogatory terms to politically correct designations: “cripple, handicapped, lame, retard, moron, gimp, freak, weak, challenged, dependent, special, short-bus” (Chong and Zatz 2012: 118). Emphasizing the limitation or deviance inherent in disabled bodies, this list becomes an effective pretext whereby the performers engage in a confrontational manner with the ableist discourses that have been historically employed to define them. Offering a counterpoint to such labels, the final item in the list calls attention to the commonality shared by abled and disabled people alike – “a human being” (118).

Having critically appropriated and thus exorcised the language used to describe the disability community from without, the other seven sections assembled under the heading “What do YOU think of when you hear the word disability?” (emphasis in the original) attempt a rethinking of disability from within, through the lens of the individual perspectives of the performers, thus producing a necessary corrective to the aforementioned list of labels. As scholars have noted, disability performance artists frequently cite the prevailing discourses on disability, which have circulated such devaluing representations, and then juxtapose them with the alternative discourses produced by the disability community (Eisenhauer 2007: 18). In Chong’s piece, through the lens of such revisions, disability emerges as a different ability, or as a “mixed ability [that] puts everyone on an even playing field” (Chong and Zatz 2012: 144). Other accounts take a broader view of disability, describing it as a condition that “has the potential

to shed light on what it is to be human” (145), or as “P-O-S-S-I-B-I-L-I-T-Y” (128).

While most of the accounts suggest that language – in particular, such derogatory terms as those in the list above – is instrumental in perpetuating the dominant discourses on disability, one performer examines the issue from a different angle, arguing that a focus on “terminology and political correctness” might obscure “the real issues” (Chong and Zatz 2012: 157). What this remark suggests is that disability discrimination will not disappear by using more sensitive terms to describe it; on the other hand, raising awareness about such issues as those explored in the testimonials might further the disability agenda in a more effective manner. While the use of certain terms to describe disability has been a matter of debate in the field of disability studies, especially in the context of “a lack of ways to understand or talk about disability that are not oppressive” (Thomson 2013: 347), the play does not offer any definitive answer in this respect, giving voice to a number of different strategies to refer to disability experience – by reappropriating words from the ableist lexicon, using politically correct terms, or proposing alternative designations.

Having redefined disability from seven different perspectives, the performance ends in a circular movement, with a brief scene where the performers reintroduce themselves and restate the circumstances of their birth, without any further detail on their condition. The project of claiming one’s identity – inherent in the act of naming and in the overall concept of the performance – has now been completed.

While the autobiographical dimension of the testimonials is important, disrupting any attempt at homogenizing disability culture, the community-oriented approach of the production is worth noting as well. In fact, the whole textual and visual orchestration of the production gestures toward the construction of an on-stage community. The structure of the play itself is illustrative in this respect: not simply a series of monologues, but a collage of cross-cutting testimonials, weaving in and out of each other, organized according to the chronology of events and punctuated by moments from the political history of the disability movement. Sometimes the entire cast repeats a word, phrase or sentence from one performer’s account, uttering it in a collective voice and isolating it for emphasis. Other times, the performers become characters in their colleagues’ testimonials, playing the roles of family, friends, doctors, etc. This polyphonic articulation is doubled by a choreography of ritualistic gestures that are similarly performed as a group, such as clapping, signing in American Sign Language, or “freezing” together in intervals of stillness marking significant moments in the play, such as the signing into law of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Articulating a chorus of diverse yet harmonizing voices expressing their experiences with disability, the performers thus enhance the impact they would have had individually. The production is therefore not only the locus for a reclaiming of personal identity on stage, as I have previously argued, but also the site where a coalition or a community of resistance

can be articulated. In an interview, Matthew Joffe (2012: 212) discusses his experience of performing in the play precisely from the perspective of this double dimension: on the one hand, as an act of “bar[ing] my soul on stage without the fear I sometimes have walking the streets amidst the stares and jeers that often surface”; on the other hand, as the opportunity to be part of a community and to experience “the sense of family which made it easier to step in to characters and their stories on stage”. The performer concludes by equating his participation in this theatrical event with an act of “balancing the books,” or, in other words, of counteracting previous discrimination by “putting a plus entry into the column where a negative experience once stood” (212).

3. Conclusion: *Staring Back* and reclaiming the subject position

Two scenes recounted by Matthew Joffe in his testimonial provide a fitting description of the shift in the politics of the gaze that informs Chong’s play and, in broader terms, the field of disability performance and other cultural practices predicated on self-representation. Recounting a medical visit in 1958, when he was five years old, Matthew remembers the doctors’ gaze equating his body with the location of pathology: “several doctors’ residents come in to observe me. They all crowd around me to get a good look, like I am an animal at the zoo” (Chong and Zatz 2012: 122). In a later part of his testimonial, the performer describes the experience of stepping on stage for the first time in terms of a shift from having been stared at “all my life . . . without my permission”, to “choosing to let them [the audience] stare” (Chong and Zatz 2012: 140). Chong’s theatrical piece thus becomes a space of self-reflexive viewing where the performers directly address the audience in recounting their stories, while the spectators themselves are made aware of their position as observers and of the implications of their gaze.

Contemporary disability performance is predicated on critically reappropriating the medical and/ or sideshow gaze by “transforming the objectifying stares of the viewers into moments of personal agency through the performative act of *staring back*” (Eisenhauer 2007: 12, emphasis in the original). As recent contributions in the field of disability studies have argued, the never neutral stare projected upon the disabled body has been such a powerful mechanism that it has come “to produce disability identity” (Thomson 2013: 347). In this context, the act of *staring back* represents a critical intervention geared towards challenging the politics of looking subtending the cultural history of representations of disability.

In line with recent conceptualizations of disability as “a site of resistance and a source of cultural agency previously suppressed” (Snyder and Mitchell 2006: 10), the testimonials in Chong’s piece destabilize such representations by capturing the breadth and complexity of disability as an experience that is at once embodied and social. Foregrounding the intrinsic value of disability experience as an affirmative site of identification, while also engaging in a critical analysis of the social

circumstances surrounding this experiential area, Chong's piece testifies to the effectiveness of self-representation – within a community-based format – in reframing discourses about a topic that is yet to be explored in a more substantial manner in theatrical settings.

References

- Abrash, Victoria. 2012. "An Oral History of an Oral History: Voices of *Undesirable Elements*. Interviews by Victoria Abrash" in Zatz, Sara (ed.). *Undesirable Elements: Real People, Real Lives, Real Theatre*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, pp. 165-170.
- Biklen, Douglas and Robert Bogdan. 1977. "Media Portrayals of Disabled People: A Study in Stereotypes" in *Interracial Books for Children Bulletin*, 8 (6-7), pp. 4-9.
- Chong, Ping. 1989-1990. "Notes for Mumbblings and Digressions: Some Thoughts on Being an Artist, Being an American, Being a Witness" in *MELUS*, 16 (3), pp. 62-67.
- Chong, Ping. 2012. "Introduction" to "Inside/ Out ...Voices from the Disability Community" in Zatz, Sara (ed.). *Undesirable Elements: Real People, Real Lives, Real Theatre*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, p. 113.
- Chong, Ping and Sara Zatz (in collaboration with the performers Josh Hecht, Monique Holt, Christopher Imbrosciano, Vivian Cary Jenkins, Matthew S. Joffe, Zazel Chavah O' Garra, Blair Wing). 2012. "Inside/ Out ...Voices from the Disability Community" in Zatz, Sara (ed.). *Undesirable Elements: Real People, Real Lives, Real Theatre*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, pp. 117-161.
- Conquergood, Dwight. 2006. "Rethinking Ethnography: Towards a Critical Cultural Politics" in Madison, D. Soyini and Judith Hamera (eds.). *The Sage Handbook of Performance Studies*. Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi: Sage Publications, pp. 351-365.
- Couser, G. Thomas. 2013. "Disability, Life Narrative, and Representation" in. Davis, Lennard J (ed.). *The Disability Studies Reader*, 4th edition. New York and London: Routledge, pp. 456-459.
- Davis, Lennard J. 2013. "Introduction: Disability, Normality, and Power" in Davis, Lennard J. (ed.). *The Disability Studies Reader*, 4th edition. New York and London: Routledge, pp. 1-14.
- Eisenhauer, Jennifer. 2007. "Just Looking and Staring Back: Challenging Ableism through Disability Performance Art" in *Studies in Art Education*, 49 (1), pp. 7-22.
- Frieze, James. 2006. "The Mess Behind the Veil: Assimilating Ping Chong" in *Theatre Research International*, 31 (1), pp. 84-100.
- Geer, Richard Owen. 1993. "Of the People, By the People, and For the People: The Field of Community Performance" in *High Performance*, 16 (4), pp. 28-31.
- Goff, Nadine. 2001. "Outside Looking in: Artist Ping Chong Defies Labels in His Quest to Explore Our 'Otherness'" in *Wisconsin State Journal*, 22 March, E1.
- Gold, Martin B. 2012. *Forbidden Citizens: Chinese Exclusion and the U.S. Congress: A Legislative History*. Alexandria, VA: The Capitol.Net.

- Joffe, Matthew S. 2012. "Staging a Comeback/ Participant Form" in Zatz, Sara (ed.). *Undesirable Elements: Real People, Real Lives, Real Theatre*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, pp. 211-213.
- Johnston, Kirsty. 2016. *Disability Theatre and Modern Drama: Recasting Modernism*. London, Oxford, New York, New Delhi, Sydney: Bloomsbury.
- Kaufman, Moises and the members of Tectonic Theatre Project. 2014. *The Laramie Project and The Laramie Project: Ten Years Later*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Kuppers, Petra. 2007. *Community Performance: An Introduction*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Shakespeare, Tom. 2013. "The Social Model of Disability" in Davis, Lennard J. (ed.). *The Disability Studies Reader*, 4th edition. New York and London: Routledge, pp. 214-221.
- Solomon, Alisa. 2012. "Introduction" in Zatz, Sara (ed.). *Undesirable Elements: Real People, Real Lives, Real Theatre*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, pp. ix- xvi.
- Snyder, Sharon L. and David T. Mitchell. 2006. *Cultural Locations of Disability*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Thomson, Rosemarie Garland. 1997. *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Thomson, Rosemarie Garland. 2013. "Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory" in Davis, Lennard J. (ed.). *The Disability Studies Reader*, 4th edition. New York and London: Routledge, pp. 333-353.
- Wehle, Philippa. 2004. "Citizen of the World: Ping Chong's Travels" in *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*, 26 (1), pp. 22-32.
- Zatz, Sara. 2012. "Methodology: An Overview. Introduction and Impact" in Zatz, Sara (ed.). *Undesirable Elements: Real People, Real Lives, Real Theatre*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, pp. 207-210.

Online resources

<http://www.pingchong.org/the-company/> for *Ping Chong + Company* website [Accessed 2016, September 12].

**A MYSTERIOUS WOMAN
ENTERS A GRUMPY DETECTIVE’S OFFICE:
WHY IS HARD-BOILED GENRE STILL ENTERTAINING US?**

ALEXANDRU BUDAC

West University of Timișoara

***Abstract:** Hard-boiled is not only a literary subgenre of crime fiction, but also an expression of a typical American aesthetic. Its characters and repertoire have almost nothing in common with the European tradition concerning the rationalistic detective. One should understand hard-boiled fiction as part of the legacy of American modernist novel. Although the rules of the genre might seem rather traditionalistic, hard-boiled fiction has never been out of fashion since its Golden Age, because various writers from different places in the US have used it as a means to attune their style to urgent moral issues at a certain time.*

***Keywords:** detective fiction, hard-boiled, metropolis, modernism, postmodernism, violence*

1. Introduction: The first class of American detectives

The hard-boiled genre has always been underrated as escapist and it is indeed to a high degree, although it might be useful to ponder a little bit on Raymond Chandler’s observation in “The Simple Art of Murder” (Chandler 1977: 232) that “All reading for pleasure is escape...” One knows the traditional repertoire: fedoras and trench coats, the *femme fatale*, the lights of cars probing the rainy nights, tires screeching on asphalt, the red tips of cigarettes glowing in the dark, narrow alleys where anything can happen, the mansions of the rich with a dubious past, the heist gone wrong, the landlady or the landlord ready to turn in the lodgers in exchange for a generous tip, the hateful hoodlum descending from a black sedan, the political crook and his unstable offspring, corrupted cops who hope for the detective’s immediate undoing. Why should all these be looked down on as easy gain? Perhaps the reputation of hard-boiled fiction owes much to its blooming in the pulp magazines during the era of the sophisticated modernist novel. Hard-boiled seems to be a sum of conventions and clichés, although it is

precisely apparent strict rules that ensure literary flexibility. Whereas European detective fiction gratifies the reader with elaborate patterns, clues intellectually chosen and the whole “whodunit” paraphernalia, the hard-boiled literature is not mainly about the case. It is not always about detectives either. It conjures up a morally charged atmosphere and a particular American aesthetic. Praising the detective story in a 70s lecture, Jorge Luis Borges (1999: 499) deplored the contemporary American genre considering it too realist, too brutal and sexually charged, lacking the rationalistic finesse of classic masters such as Arthur Conan Doyle, G.K. Chesterton or E.A. Poe. But he was wrong. Borges did not understand that hard-boiled marked a completely different turn in crime fiction. A private eye’s job is never done, at least from an ethic point of view. Perhaps violence should be considered the most constant feature indeed, yet each one of the great hard-boiled writers rethinks the genre afresh, coping with literary influences both from inside and from outside of detective literature and adapting slang, daily habits, landscape, ethnic *mélange*, architecture and so on to his or her own designs. Hard-boiled fiction assesses American mores at a certain time. However one should not pass over its romantic vein condescendingly.

Hard-boiled is “a big city genre in setting and attitude” (Irwin 2006: 200). William Faulkner was very fond of detective fiction and always wanted to master it – not only novels such as *Intruder in the Dust* or *Sanctuary* prove this, but also his friendship with Dashiell Hammett and his screenwriting for the Howard Hawks’ adaptation of Chandler’s *The Big Sleep* – yet Faulkner’s universe is much too rural (Irwin 2006: 200; Bloom 2015: 418). The private eye is the American heir of the *flâneur*, the romantic stroller of grand urban spaces. Walter Benjamin opposed the *flâneur* to the busy crowd. He or she is “out of place”, an anomaly among workers, busy pedestrians, cinema goers, carriages, and cars. The *flâneur* needs “elbow room” where everybody else is jostling in a hurry and seeks leisure time where there is none anymore (Benjamin 2007:172-174). Surprisingly, the first American detective is French – Auguste Dupin, Poe’s invention. Dupin investigates the Parisian crime world maybe because, as Borges (1999: 495-496) put it, Poe was not interested in the real way a shamus from New York would do his inquest, and a fictional stranger from overseas served his uncanny endings best. However, Poe’s most important contribution to hard-boiled genre is not the detective – Dashiell Hammett’s Sam Spade and Raymond Chandler’s Philip Marlowe are the very opposite of Dupin –, but his definition of what John T. Irwin (2006: 186-187) calls “the area of motive”, the suggestion of a perverse principle “in the human psyche bent on vexing the self by making it perform acts the conscious mind identifies as being in the self’s worst interests”. The same somber intuition was much better refined in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s “Wakefield” (1835) (Irwin 2006: 10,16,187), the story of a man who one day walks out of his house in London to live for twenty years in a neighbouring street, and then, just as suddenly, returns to his wife. In Harold Bloom’s terms, Wakefield is “a possessed nonentity”, whose compulsive behaviour makes him “a kind of daemon for whom there is no freedom of choice”

(Bloom 2015: 226). The almost gnostic vision of a fallen world and the improbable promise that there is light hidden in darkness imbues the hard-boiled universe and narrative codes. The detective might seem a mere romantic quester or disgraced angel with bad habits among evil archons and his different avatars converge to an ideal type, difficult to pin down properly. Sometimes, as in James Cain's novels or Elliott Chaze's, the patterning mind of a detective is nowhere to be found, despite the fact that hellish prospects cloud the city. Equating "hard-boiled" to "detective fiction" is not very precise. The American private eye as charismatic avenger used to be an alternative to the official lawman. He surfaced both in real life and in fiction shortly after the figure of the cop had been compromised during the Prohibition (Mihăieș 2008: 14-15). According to Chandler, one of the most difficult tasks of the writer who wants to bring such a popular genre within the artistic realm is to conceive the character not as role-playing, but as part of a simple, yet credible story, in which the understanding of bad motivations and the criminal context turn out to be more important than just revealing the culprit's identity (Mihăieș 2008: 66-67, 90-92).

When *film noir* built an enthusiastic audience in Europe after World War II and the French film critics tackled it with their specialized jargon, an existentialistic approach was applied to hard-boiled fiction retrospectively, ignoring the American specific, a trend which backfired at American literary and film criticism during the '60s and '70s as well (Irwin 2006: 9-10). F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway, rather than Sartre or Camus, are the prime influences in the area. The place of hard-boiled fiction in the history of modern American literature has to be fully apprehended. Whereas *The Great Gatsby* idealized the self-made man and the gangster's sentimentality – it seems that among Fitzgerald's real models for Jay Gatsby were Max Gerlach and Edward Fuller, two Long Island bootleggers – and set the standard for the "character-driven novel of manners", *Tender is the Night* played gracefully on the conflict between "the professional and the personal" (Irwin 2006: 66-68, 105, 109-110, 193; Mihăieș 2008: 279-280). One finds all three issues at the core of the novels written by Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, James Cain, and W.R. Burnett. Hemingway's boasting of masculinity, concise style and teen bravura artistically conveyed are also a pervasive influence, although not one happily acknowledged by the hard-boiled writers who were his contemporaries (Irwin 2006: 189-192). "The Killers", Hemingway's short story first published in 1927, has been invoked frequently as a piece of genre *avant la lettre* (Leonard Cassuto 2015: 297) and, in *The Sun Also Rises*, Jake Barnes ponders, after he kisses the prostitute Georgette good night on the stairs, that: "It is awfully easy to be hard-boiled about everything in the daytime, but at night it is another thing" (Hemingway 2016: 28).

Perhaps Jonathan Lethem is right (Silverblatt 2011: 26) and hard-boiled, like science fiction, is no genre at all, but just "sweetly pathetic confessions of adolescent longings" cloaked in literary forms. *Gatsby* was fatherless (Tanner 1990: xxxii) and so is the detective who roams the hostile streets using his fists,

delivering a leering and cynical rhetoric, and epitomizing a rough appropriation of Emerson's "self-reliance".

2. Trying to outdo the Golden Age masters

The importance of urban setting becomes even more conspicuous with the second generation of hard-boiled writers. Whatever means works for both investigators and perpetrators on the East Coast might turn out useless on the other side of the continent. An L.A. detective without a car is as ludicrous as a New York hitman who does not sneak out using the fire escape of a red brick building. California's *noir* is actually "bleached blond (dust, hills, hair), bleached blue (sea, sky), neon lights in the not-quite night" and corruption out in the sun, whereas Manhattan's and Brooklyn's is a "cold, practiced big city big business crime" (Jackson 2011: 36-37). The Florida hard-boiled is quite watery and swampy, not just geographically, but morally too.

John D. MacDonald made Florida a hard-boiled attraction during the 60s through his Travis McGee series and the commercially catchy idea that each title should give its colour to the book cover: *Nightmare in Pink*, *A Purple Place for Dying*, *A Deadly Shade of Gold*, *Dress Her in Indigo*, *The Green Ripper*, *Cinnamon Skin* and so on for about twenty one hues. Travis McGee is not a detective. He calls himself "a retriever" who recovers values others have lost and then keeps half as his meritorious income. Travis lives on a house-boat called *Busted Flush*, which has a pair of Hercules diesels. Nautical terms and sailor slang abound. "Home is where the privacy is", he informs us wisely in the opening of the first novel in the series, *The Deep Blue Good-By* (MacDonald 2013: 3). Travis, narcissistic, athletic and handsome, has made a credo out of protecting women in danger – although very often he shows his misogynistic side – and considers himself a Don Quixote riding not Rocinante, but "Miss Agnes", a Rolls Royce converted into a pickup truck. Of course, as a literary character, Travis McGee is a caricature, an utterly annoying one, yet John D. MacDonald's transgressions of the classical conventions paved the way for much gifted Florida hard-boiled novelists, such as Charles Willeford (2004), a writer with a keen ear for smart dialogue. Willeford's cop, Hoke Moseley, an investigator exhibiting false teeth, who does not investigate too passionately anyway, made his entry in the acclaimed *Miami Blues*. Director Quentin Tarantino hailed the novelist as an inspiration to his own *Pulp Fiction* screenplay and the whole *Miami Vice* television craze of the '80 had strong liaisons with the rich crime fiction tradition of the southeastern peninsula (Fisher 2000).

Jim Thompson (2010) blurred the differences between hard-boiled and the thriller. His writings undermine precisely the condition that hard-boiled action must be a big city game. Thompson's protagonists live in small towns, far from the mobsters of Miami, political crooks of New York or the real estate sharks of Los Angeles. Deputy Sheriff Lou Ford of Central City, Texas, is a modest fellow,

affable, polite and a terrible bore. Actually what the community sees as a dull and gawky character in *The Killer Inside Me* is a psychopath. Thompson's narrator embodies both the lawman and the murderer. The first person perspective is that of a twisted mind. Thus everything we read proves unreliable and very unsympathetic. Jim Thompson's men and women are despicable. Usually a hard-boiled fiction has at least one charismatic character (sometimes even the villain does not lack the power to enchant), which is not the case here. His brutal and cold novels are crafty nevertheless: crispy style, manic repetitions, dialectal dialogue, and elaborate descriptions of body language. He also draws on psychoanalytical lore to motivate sadistic propensities. Despite being a prolific writer and his collaborations with Stanley Kubrick, Jim Thompson has never been very appreciated in the United States. He gained a considerable audience in France instead – his fictions exemplify the notions of *noir* and *maudit* (accursed and self-destructive) at the same time – where “his work has been likened to that of Jarry, Céline, and Lautréamont” (Gifford 1986: 56).

When one talks about hard-boiled fiction, Greek philosophy is not quite the first reference that comes to mind. Ross Macdonald, one of the most refined writers in the genre, was a graduate of the University of Michigan at a time when the New Criticism came under the attack of the Chicago School. Although he did not take part in the polemic – he also wrote a PhD dissertation on Samuel Taylor Coleridge – Macdonald paid attention to the Neo-Aristotelianism of the Chicago scholars and their endorsing “of the *four* causes of literary art: the efficient cause (the poet), the material cause (language), the formal cause (mimetic content), and the final cause (effect on the reader)” (Sharp 2003: 407-408). Macdonald admired Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler until the publication of Chandler's private correspondence and especially of one grudging letter to the mystery critic James Sandoe, in which he disregarded Macdonald's early novel *The Moving Target*, placing the young writer in the category of “literary eunuchs” (Sharp 2003: 406-407). Ross Macdonald's whole writing career was an unabated strain to take distance from Chandler's work. However his novels had been incessantly compared to those of his famous predecessor, to Macdonald's chagrin.

Macdonald found in Aristotle's *Poetics* the principles for a new approach within the detective literature, conceiving it as a “modern form of classical tragedy” (Sharp 2003: 413). In his Lew Archer series, the psychoanalytical “family history” takes the place of the ancient gods. Lew Archer should be described as a Freudian private eye in the 60s California, when the young generation rebelled against their parents, a discontented yet clever mediator between fathers who had put their lives to test during World War II and sons who put under question this very paternity, or between abused mothers and runaway daughters. Macdonald is the master of cumulative plot. Archer is summoned to investigate a routine issue – a stolen Florentine box, an eloped bride, a mother-in-law drowned in the swimming pool – and then, by twist and turns he stumbles upon an intricate net of guilt, where there is no good versus evil. As he explains to one of his occasional sweethearts in

The Goodbye Look (even this title seems to be darting to Chandler's *The Long Goodbye*):

'The life is its own reward,' I countered. 'I like to move into people's lives and then move out again. Living with one set of people in one place used to bore me.'

'This isn't your real motivation. I know your type. You have a secret passion for justice. Why don't you admit it?'

'I have a secret passion for mercy', I said. 'But justice is what keeps happening to people'. (Macdonald 2012: 143)

Ross Macdonald stressed the importance of plot devising, in contrast, he thought, to Chandler's solely concern for language. His aim was "to turn the mystery into a mode of novelistic expression" rather than to follow the established rules of the genre (Sharp 2003: 411, 415). In *The Instant Enemy*, Alexandria (Sandy), the daughter of Keith and Bernice Sebastian, Archer's clients, runs off with Davy Spanner, an instable and violent teen delinquent. Things turn from bad to worse when the two youngsters kidnap the millionaire Stephen Hackett, Keith's employer, apparently in order to kill him. Although it is a "world of high velocities and low morals" (Macdonald 2008: 19) and a time when one can find a television set in every home, the way Lew Archer approaches the case from the very beginning urges us to pay attention to undertones that suggest a story much older than the hippies of California. While questioning Laurel Smith, Davy's enigmatic, affectionate and overprotective landlady, the detective's mind apprehends the case through metaphor. The broader the literary context, the better the inquest.

She raked her dyed head with her fingers, then rose and went to the picture window. With her back to me, her body was simply an object, an odalisque shape against the light. Framed in dark-red curtains, the sea looked old as the Mediterranean, old as sin (Macdonald 2008: 30).

The whole process of information retrieving and the pursuit of the runaways fuel the arrogance of the Hacketts – and especially that of Stephen's dominating mother –, bring to light the dysfunctional relations between the Sebastians, set off the teenagers' traumatic memories, and multiply the crimes. Every second character has a front seat in the big picture at the end. Unresolved murders from the days of old, identity thefts, domestic violence, institutionalization, drug and sexual abuse conjure up not only the hubris of three families perversely related, but also one of the most pervasive American literature motifs, namely the compromises and immorality on which wealth is built. Overwhelmed by the consequences of Freudian drives and the actions of wandering psychopaths, Archer feels free only on the highway, where he rationalizes the facts and sums up the day, while rolling on the blacktop:

I had to admit to myself that I lived for nights like these, moving across the city's great broken body, making connections among its millions of cells. I had a crazy wish or fantasy that some day before I died, if I made all the right neural connections, the city would come all the way alive. Like the Bride of Frankenstein. (Macdonald 2008: 127)

Roads and cars also further crime in *Black Wings Has My Angel*, Elliott Chaze's novel, published in 1953 by Gold Medal Books, the famous pulp fiction publisher at that time. Chaze is one of the forgotten masters of the hard-boiled genre, who is being rediscovered enthusiastically. A reporter and columnist born in Mamou, Louisiana, and serviceman on the Pacific front during World War II, he wrote a few novels, yet none endures as his masterpiece, *Black Wings Has My Angel*. It is a classic story. Timothy Sunblade, an escaped convict, seeks work here and there in the South, meets Virginia, a lavender-eyed prostitute, and together they hatch a scheme to rob an armoured car in Denver. As soon as they get rich, their relationship falls apart dramatically.

The novel is so artfully conceived that it makes one ponder if it is the story or the style that matters in the end. In his preface to the newly re-release of the book, Barry Gifford (2016: vii) emphasizes the fact that Chaze "was a disciple of Hemingway: brief, often blunt sentences devoid of unnecessary frills of explication. Like Hemingway, he was a newspaperman – the five Ws (who, what, where, when, why) were his commandments". Unlike most hard-boiled novels, *Black Wings* has a slow action. Tim's voice, who remembers while waiting in the death row, quickens the pulse of events by way of delaying the climax. The first person perspective, albeit cold, switches to melancholic mood every time Virginia's sizzling figure is evoked. The characters' background requires gradual unveiling too. The man is a fugitive from the Parchman Penitentiary and an ex-POW from a Japanese concentration camp at the same time. The war experience brings an even darker note to his nihilist ruminations. Unpredictable and sophisticated, Virginia might not be just a rapacious Louisiana call girl either. She runs from the New York organized crime milieu, where she is not known by that name. Their relationship is utterly sexual, violent, obsessive, and masochistic. They use each other for purposes not entirely acknowledged. However, Virginia seems much proner to kill Tim remorselessly than the other way around.

What begins as a trip in the Colorado Mountains ends up with the discovery of an abandoned mine shaft, where a security van and potential victims could be thrown into. No matter how simmering the erotic bond and how sensuous the writing, Elliott Chaze does not let you forget that Tim and Virginia are cold-blooded killers. While in Denver, they pose as a happy and respectable couple. He finds a job as a power-shear operator and they rent a house in a neighborhood where everybody makes a virtue out of watering the lawn. Yet their impish designs are unabated at work. Tim beguiles his colleagues into helping him build the trailer where an armoured car could be sneaked into safely and the same real estate agent

who brought the pair to the neighborhood will tell them all they need to know about an abandoned mansion. There are no detectives in the novel. The FBI agent who investigates Tim is a mere shadow in pursuit, always two steps behind. The cops the couple runs into accidentally are incompetent brutes, no less murderous than they are. It is not the law that defeats them. The punishment is inherent to their character. Soon after Tim and Virginia start to spend lavishly in New Orleans at the tables of the rich, the downfall accelerates. He is haunted by the image of the guard he killed and eager to see the black bottomless mine shaft again, while she becomes more lascivious and venal. Gluttony transpires through her once beautiful body. Neither the heist day, nor the terrifying finale provides the novel's climax. It is the moment when Tim spies on Virginia, who locks herself in the armoured car with both the capture and the dead man, that seals their fate:

She was sitting on the floor, naked, in a skitter of green bills. Beyond her was the custodian, still simpering in death. She was scooping up handfuls of green money and dropping it on top of her head so that it came sliding down along the cream-colored hair, slipping down along her shoulders and body. She was making a noise I never heard come out of a human being. It was a scream that was a whisper and a laugh that was a cry. Over and over. The noise and the scooping. The slippery, sliding bills against the rigid body.

She didn't know I was alive. (Chaze 2016: 126)

The double entendre – Virginia's body and the custodian's body – makes the whole scene quite harrowing. Maybe Tim's angel flutters its black wings, but the lavender eyes, the creamy hair, and the deadly green of the dollar bills are the recurrent colours in his confession.

3. Conclusion: Detectives without clues, patterns without detectives

Hard-boiled is not only a genre. It is also an aesthetic, a plethora of literary styles, which have the rendering of a pessimistic view on the modern world in common. Even though the characters might epitomize principles on both extremities of the moral scale, hard-boiled fiction tends to be realistic rather than allegoric. The American detective is not the rationalistic white knight of European crime fiction, although his younger versions somehow pertained to that ideal, to which they brought a vigilante touch. After the era of Hammett and Chandler, the detective's persona and frame of mind have become more and more ambiguous in an increasingly chaotic world. As Shelley Jackson put it in her interview with Jonathan Lethem, nowadays a detective's pattern is just an "alternate patterning of reality", at a par with conspiracy theories or neuropsychiatric disorders, such as Tourette's. It does not matter anymore if the pattern matches reality or not. "What matters is it works" (Jackson 2011:42). Thus one may say that being a detective

has turned into our everyday condition. As to the villains, it is ironic that hard-boiled curves back to the first piece of the genre, namely Hemingway's "The Killers", where there are just the killers and the everyman unable to stop them.

Perhaps "hard-boiled" means a set of conventions and brushing universal issues concerning life and death. But as soon as the best authors accommodate these conventions to their own endings, entertainment and art find a spectacular equilibrium. I suppose this is why the genre has been alluring to various writers and surfaces in novels such as Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*, *Inherent Vice*, and *Bleeding Edge*, Cormac McCarthy's *No Country for Old Men*, Robert Coover's *Noir*, William Gibson's *Neuromancer*, William T. Vollmann's *The Royal Family* or Jonathan Lethem's *Gun with Occasional Music* and *Motherless Brooklyn*, among others.

References

- Benjamin, Walter. 2007 (1968). "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" in Arendt, Hannah (ed.) *Illuminations. Essays and Reflections*. Trans. by Harry Zohn. Preface by Leon Wieseltier. New York: Schocken Books, pp. 155-200.
- Bloom, Harold. 2015. *The Daemon Knows: Literary Greatness and the American Sublime*. New York: Spiegel & Grau.
- Borges, Jorge Luis. 1999 (1978). "The Detective Story" in Weinberger, Eliot (ed.). *Selected Non-Fictions*. Trans. by Esther Allen, Suzanne Jill Levine, and Eliot Weinberger. New York: Viking, pp. 491-499.
- Cassuto, Leonard. 2015 (2012). "The American Novel of Mystery, Crime, and Detection" in Bendixen, Alfred (ed.). *A Companion to the American Novel*. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 291-308.
- Chandler, Raymond. 1977 (1950). *The Simple Art of Murder*. New York: Ballantine.
- Chaze, Elliott. 2016 (1953). *Black Wings Has My Angel*. Introduction by Barry Gifford. New York: New York Review of Books.
- Fisher, Marshall Jon. 2000. "The Unlikely Father of Miami Crime Fiction" in *The Atlantic*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2000/05/the-unlikely-father-of-miami-crime-fiction/305143/> [Accessed 2016, August 25].
- Fitzgerald, F. Scott. 2000 (1926). *The Great Gatsby*. Introduction and Notes by Tony Tanner. London: Penguin Books.
- Gifford, Barry. 1986. "The Godless World of Jim Thompson" in *Western American Literature*, 21(1). Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, pp. 55-56.
- Gifford, Barry. 2016. "Introduction" in Chaze, Elliott. *Black Wings Has My Angel*. New York: New York Review of Books, pp. vii-x.
- Hawthorne, Nathaniel. 1955 (1835). "Wakefield" in *Hawthorne's Short Stories*. New York: Vintage Books, pp. 35-44.
- Hemingway, Ernest. 1993 (1927). "The Killers" in *The Essential Hemingway*. London: Arrow Books, pp. 419-429
- Hemingway, Ernest. 2016 (1926). *The Sun Also Rises*. New York: Scribner.

- Irwin, John T. 2006. *Unless the Threat of Death is Behind Them: Hard-Boiled Fiction and Film Noir*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Jackson, Shelley. 2011 (2001). "Involuntary Deconstructionism": *Paradoxa*. Interview with Jonathan Lethem in Clarke, Jaime (ed.). *Conversations with Jonathan Lethem*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, pp. 32-45.
- MacDonald, John D. 2013 (1964). *The Deep Blue Good-By*. New York: Random House.
- Macdonald, Ross. 2008 (1968). *The Instant Enemy*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Macdonald, Ross. 2012 (1969). *The Goodbye Look*. London: Penguin Books.
- Mihăieș, Mircea. 2008. *Metafizica detectivului Marlowe*. Iași: Polirom.
- Sharp, Michael D. 2003. "Plotting Chandler's Demise: Ross Macdonald and the Neo-Aristotelian Detective Novel" in *Studies in the Novel*, 35(3). Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, pp. 405-426.
- Silverblatt, Michael. 2011 (1999). "An Interview with Jonathan Lethem" in Clarke, Jaime (ed.). *Conversations with Jonathan Lethem*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, pp. 24-31.
- Tanner, Tony. 1990. "Introduction" in Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *The Great Gatsby*. London: Penguin Books, pp. vii-lvi.
- Thompson, Jim. 2010 (1952). *The Killer Inside Me*. London: Orion Books.
- Willeford, Charles. 2004 (1984). *Miami Blues*. New York: Vintage Books.

NARRATING THE DISASTER

MIHAELA POPUȚA

West University of Timișoara

Abstract: *The experience of narrating a disaster seems a necessary endeavor at the core of many of American author Paul Auster's novels. The present paper analyses the means employed in narrating both first-hand and second-hand atrocities in Paul Auster's works.*

Keywords: *apocalypse, disaster, memory*

1. Introduction

Up to a certain point, the narratives I focus upon in this paper can be read as stories of regret. A pang of conscience troubles both the characters and the readers when exposed to the reflective nostalgia of these stories, and this is not necessarily because they reveal preposterous secrets from their pasts, but because they show how selfish and unbelievably auto-destructive people are. Humankind has seen many horrors, yet it seems we never truly learn from its mistakes, so history is on repeat. Always intrigued by what is to come, people forget what it was that brought them here in the first place. The last centuries have had rough starts, critics such as Heffernan (2008), Berger (1999) or Zamora (1989) point out, and there is still an eerie feeling that some inevitable disaster will bring the world to a sudden end. Literature, just as the other arts, has picked-up the subject, and consequently many contemporary writers, Auster included, have been dwelling upon narratives associated with chaos. What is more, a common pattern has been formed, in which, in the aftermath of any disaster, writing and implicitly narrating emerges.

The pain, the stillness, the despair and the shock of shared tribulation stand at the core of such narratives. Don DeLillo (2001: 39) has claimed that writers, and I would add artists in general, “[continuously try] to give memory, tenderness, and meaning to all that howling spaces [of disaster].” Accordingly, conjuring images of repeated catastrophes has become a mainstream entertainment. True enough, imminence and the curiosity that they produce is what attracts the reader to gulp such stories. But, I truly think that it is not just the rush of the unpredictable that draws us in, it is also the knowledge that such events cannot be avoided. Unlike the nineteenth-century novels, which focused on reestablishing the disrupted nature of things at the end of their plots, contemporary postmodern novels emphasize such

impossible endeavors by making us acknowledge loss and chaos. The disasters mentioned in nowadays novels evoke a sense of confusion and unreality. They are constructed around states in which the lives of individuals become unclear and they lose sight of their future. There is nothing awaiting them after the disastrous end. In other words, contemporary narratives lack in a precise resolution. We are thus, alongside Auster's characters, forced to accept our imperfections and revisit our pasts with all their shadows prowling our present.

2. Shaping the story

By means of his novels, Auster underlines the fact that the stories which materialize from such revisions are mostly gloomy, though not entirely devoid of hope. As far as hope goes, Auster's narratives allow for such feelings to emerge whenever the apocalyptic end is near. Interestingly enough, the apocalypse is constantly hovering over his characters, while taking various forms. In the novels I will analyze, distressing events in the shape of death, accidents, illness, war or weird phenomena follow the characters, who, without exception, perceive them as sudden, ruinous and violent. Indeed, it is the common belief that disasters are represented by "anything that befall of ruinous or distressing nature; a sudden or great misfortune, mishap or misadventure." (OED 2014) In Auster's works everything happens out of sudden; the plot does not build up, but simply materializes, as do the characters. Sudden occurrences bring about either good fortune, which is only delusory, or misfortunes and dramas. In this sense, there is always a 'but' in the narrative, which makes it even more appealing. At times, two opposite results come out of an unexpected event, or merely happen simultaneously, complicating the plot even further. In any case, suddenness gives the characters creative force and hope. It becomes Auster's stories, and transforms them entirely: "Something happens and from the moment it begins to happen, nothing can ever be the same again" Auster (1998: 76) states in his work *Hand to Mouth*. The outcome of sudden incidents is that the protagonists, just like the writer himself, find it difficult to define the unexpected. The author calls similar events 'revelations' or 'epiphanies', and though the positive meanings of these terms are worth noticing, it is equally important to bear in mind that sudden incidents in Auster's works of fiction are more than often traumatic and catastrophic for his characters' development.

Disasters of the sort previously mentioned are, according to Auster's characters, unavoidable, illogical and without doubt the result of erroneous decisions. Due to the outrageous scale they gain, disasters have come to be synonymous, according to Louis Parkinson Zamora (1989: 346) with 'cataclysms' and 'apocalypses'. The paradox of apocalypses is that they imply the beginning and the end at the same time. They give open access to interpretation, change and critique. The emphasis on apocalyptic developments unveils the author's moral and

critical approach to quite redundant issues, such as that of a history that teaches us nothing; a history that is shaped to accommodate our needs. The effect that this has on the narrative is immediate, in that the stories are endowed with subtext and they become heavy with meaning. Nothing alarms readers more than hints at World War II, or the more recent 9/11. Combine this with the daily moral decisions one has to take and you end up with a perfect cocktail of despair and helplessness, with just a pinch of self-awareness. Absence and fear replace presence, and Auster lets this transpire in his novels. A wicked writer, Auster conducts a voyage through time and space, making it possible for both readers and characters to revise and re-examine the chances and decisions they have taken in their lives, and that have brought them absence rather than presence. Chance is, after all, the only element that never fails his writing, and is consequently primordial for any of his constructed worlds to exist. But that is not all. With new perspectives comes also the realization of possible developments and endings. The 'what if?' is a key element, which allows the author to make use of constructed realities, or, as I have labeled them, parallel worlds, which vary from potential utopias to perfectly balanced dystopias. They come to life due to the presence of disasters and apocalypse-like scenarios.

3. The Apocalypse

Auster's works have emerged in the post war period, and are thus infused with a mixture of apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic imagery that reflects the contemporary American uneasiness, but not only. His stories abound in crises. The protagonists of his novels deal with identity crises, time and space crises, or traumas, and any story that hints at a utopia ends up being the exact opposite. In her 2014 paper on the management of crises, Diane Morgan argues that crises are part of the American culture, to the point that they are created whenever hope is lost. In so far as Auster's narratives are concerned, this statement seems to be true. Each time his characters proceed into discovering the truth, this is due to their loss of confidence either in themselves or in their social and political environment. It is not that they lack in dreams or desires, but they find themselves rather in the impossibility of believing that they can be achieved or satisfied. This is mainly the result of multiple mishaps that befall them repeatedly. This is how their utopias become dystopias. Contemporary writers have reached this conclusion too, and nowadays, dystopias have taken utopias' place. Additionally, dystopias are even more difficult to understand, because of the terminology employed in their creation and rendition. Furthermore, dystopian scenery, i.e. disasters and apocalypses, remain a constant topic in fiction, even though the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries have presented us with glimpses and possibilities of the post apocalypse. This may well be so, because the common, the known, the true is inserted in such narratives of destruction and dystopias are made unbelievably real. Consequently,

the American Dream, the representation of perfection achieved through hard work and big hopes lurks in the background, unattainable, like a ghost of the glorious 'good old days'. Auster's characters seek it too, or at least imagine it, but they are aware it cannot be.

Gallardo and Russell (2014: 3) note that the American Dream is nothing else but a self-made utopia in the mists of a culturally engrossed dystopian America. This is, according to him, the "mother" of all utopias. The one that subjectively defines what is not American; what should or should not fall into this category. If this is true, and I believe it to be so, then the American Dream also defines what is dystopic and unwanted. Since it no longer has a reference for the positive aspects of the American society, the American Dream has become, in contemporary literature, linked to events and spaces that hide individual, social and political problems. Thereupon, novels as those of Paul Auster have been transformed into areas of negotiation that tell us how identities, spaces and memory are all changeable and changing. These narratives are not simply the histories of people, but stories of alienated, troubled and lost groups. The everyman character is, in Auster's novels, closest to the reader. As such, we can't fail to notice our reflection in Auster's characters. Readers and protagonists of the fictional world are involved in the same acts of acknowledging real, factual dystopian life, so the question that constantly arises in Auster's stories is: how would I react?, or more precisely, how have I reacted to disaster?

On the one hand, Annette Magid (2015: 226) argues that apocalyptic or similar scenarios are employed as reactions for the sake of engendering social criticism and of proving that hope is part of human nature. What is more, in her opinion, apocalyptic visions are necessary to create self-awareness and awake our intrinsic desire for survival and utopia. On the other hand, Kermode (2000: 8) suggests, on this subject, that apocalyptic narratives hint at "our deep need for intelligible ends. We project ourselves [...] past the End so as to see the structure as a whole." Indeed, what Auster's stories prove, among other things, is that there is no better vantage point than the one given by the end. To this purpose, Auster's characters are shaped by specific traumas and their after-effects, and their actions only demonstrate that narrating catastrophes enables individuals to move through time and space, and retrace what was before and what they have witnessed during the event proper, thus re-writing history in their own way. This process gives insight into what is able to pass from the 'before' to the 'after' stages of the apocalypse. Should we analyze Auster's narratives from this perspective, we would see that there are three categories of artefacts of the post-apocalypse that undergo the transition: narrations, knowledge and habits. All three help to produce the new world, so regardless of the individuals' desire to sever all links to the past, this proves to be impossible. What narrating the disaster does though is to allow individuals to envision alternatives, which would otherwise be challenging to delineate and structure into a coherent whole.

4. Conclusion

While both the body and the mind of Auster's protagonists are subject to violence, narrating the disaster becomes a way of delaying to face it. The same can be said about the creation of parallel worlds, which give the characters the opportunity to stall time and avoid the unavoidable, cruel or unpleasant future. Inventing another crisis in alternative parallel worlds is a sign of repetition-compulsion, i.e. the need to endlessly narrate the disaster so that it sinks in as an undeniable truth. Auster's novels are, in this matter, a collection of personal disasters that represent the epitome of racism, violence, and a misunderstanding of the world we live in. He narrates the disaster because such things are constantly on the verge of oblivion, when they should not be forgotten. In spite of being old stories, Auster's narratives echo many of today's race, gender and, why not, immigration issues. If anything, they demonstrate that nothing has changed along the years.

References

- Auster, Paul. 1998. *Hand to Mouth*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Berger, James. 1999. *After the End: Representations of Post-Apocalypse*. Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press.
- DeLillo, Don. 2001. "In the Ruins of the Future" in *Harper's Magazine*, pp. 33-40.
- Gallardo, Pere and Elizabeth Russell (eds.). 2014. *Yesterday's Tomorrows: On Utopia and Dystopia*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Heffernan, Teresa. 2008. *Post-Apocalyptic Culture: Modernism, Post-Modernism and the Twentieth-Century Novel*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Kermode, Frank. 2000. *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction with a New Epilogue*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Magid, Anette M. (ed.). 2015. *Apocalyptic Projections: A Study of Past Predictions, Current Trends and Future Intimations as Related to Film and Literature*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Morgan, Diane. 2014. "The Flat Management of 'Crises' on Our Spherical Planet: Anarchist Order for a Sustainable Future" in Gallardo, Pere and Elizabeth Russell (eds.). *Yesterday's Tomorrows: On Utopia and Dystopia*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. 59-71
- Oxford English Dictionary. [Online]. Available: <http://www.oed.com> [Accessed 2014, April 17].
- Zamora, Lois Parkinson. 1989. *Writing the Apocalypse: Historical Vision in Contemporary U.S. and Latin American Fiction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

EROS AND THANATOS – DEATH AND DESIRE ON CAMPUS

JADRANKA ZLOMISLIĆ

University of Osijek, Croatia

Abstract: *The paper examines the ways in which works belonging within the sub-genre of the academic novel deal with the human preoccupation with illness and death. Don DeLillo's White Noise (1985) and Philip Roth's The Dying Animal (2001) have been selected as representative portrayals whose thematic concern is not only closely related to the world of higher education, but also stretches across the American cultural landscape with its expressed fear of aging and death. Philip Roth and Don DeLillo differ in their writing styles, but in their novels both depict the American male academic trapped by the fear of dying and illness. The paper explores the transformation of the social and psychological landscape of America, which redefined modern American culture with its perceptions of aging, dying, death, and grieving. The aim of this paper is to show how these two novels reflect the modern American cultural denial of death through characters engaged in a daily struggle between Eros and Thanatos.*

Keywords: *academic novel, aging, death, Don DeLillo, dying, Philip Roth*

Not too many years ago, there was a ready-made way to be old, just as there was a ready-made way to be young. Neither obtains any longer. (Roth 2001: 36)

1. Introduction

Since its beginnings in the 1950s, the academic novel has evolved from a sub-genre to a mainstream genre in American fiction, with an abundance of works not only by professors, but also by renowned contemporary American novelists. The setting has remained the university campus, and academics are still its main characters, but its focus has broadened from issues related to the goings on within the campus, to insightful representations of issues extending beyond the confines of the ivory towers.

Philip Roth's *The Dying Animal* and Don DeLillo's *White Noise* have been selected as representative works because they highlight the fear of death, aging,

and dying and engage in shaping the reader's awareness and understanding of the experience of aging and coming to terms with illness, the fear of death, and death itself.

According to research by Olshansky et al. (2009: 842), "the aging of the baby boom generation, the extension of life, and progressive increases in disability-free life expectancy have generated a dramatic demographic transition in the United States". In order to bring about a change in society's negative view of the elderly and ensure "the emergence of a productive and equitable aging society", twenty-first century America must meet the demands of "facilitating public policy that enhances the opportunities and mitigates the challenges posed by the consequences of individual and population aging" (Olshansky et al. 2009: 842). Of particular interest for this paper is the fact that, despite the significant decrease in the risk of death brought about by advances in medical technology and increased life expectancy, there has not been a noticeable decrease in the presence of the basic anxiety and fear connected with aging and dying.

The stories of the two protagonists, Roth's David Kepesh and Don DeLillo's Jack Gladney, are interwoven with the themes of impending death and the first-person experience of aging. These two white, upper middle-class, heterosexual American male academics are intent on flaunting their intellectual and sexual prowess in their daily struggle between Eros and Thanatos.

There is a general consensus that although "the fear of death is natural and present in everyone", most of us are prone to repressing awareness of our own mortality until fear is triggered by the appearance of the threat of death (Becker 1973: 15-17). Kepesh's awareness of aging and the fear of dying are heightened as a result of his relationship with a much younger woman and Gladney's fears grow with the exposure to a deadly substance and life-threatening diagnosis.

2. Philip Roth's *The Dying Animal*

Roth's *The Dying Animal* has been described by Shostak (2007: 123) as a "brutally honest exploration of male sexuality confronted by desires that will not die even in the face of disease and decay". The dying animal could refer to the main protagonist, David Kepesh, who belongs to the generation that "managed not to be born before Roosevelt took office" (Roth 2001: 138), and who is being stripped of social dominance due to society's prejudices and stereotypes against the elderly. In addition, further references to the dying animal have been traced in the aging male sexual psyche and numerous reviewers are in agreement with Williams (2012: 571), who has characterized Roth's novel as "an elegy for that bygone time of professional white male license". It is interesting to note that the film adaptation of Roth's *Dying Animal* is entitled *Elegy*.

Kepesh's intellectual and sexual dexterity aids him in reclaiming "some stake in a patriarchy lost by virtue of his advanced years" (Sutherland 2012: 3). Although he recognizes that "It's sex that disorders our normally disordered lives"

(Roth 2001: 33) and that at sixty-two “the organ most conspicuous throughout [his] life is doomed to dwindle into insignificance” (34), his advanced age does not discourage him from taking part in the “carnal aspect of the human comedy” (36). He continues to engage in sexual pursuits with younger women, which he claims are not “a last shot at [his] youth” (34). Though not disheartened, he does admit that “you note the [age] difference every step of the way” (34) and “[f]ar from feeling youthful, you feel the poignancy of her limitless future as opposed to your own limited one” (34). Kepesh also likens his spring-autumn relationships to “playing baseball with a bunch of twenty-year-olds. It isn’t that you feel twenty because you’re playing with them. You note the difference every second of the game. But at least you’re not on the sidelines” (34). He finds consolation in the fact that he is still in the game and because he has been fortunate enough “by virtue of [his] continuing vitality” to feel himself “jauntily independent of his decay” (35). He critiques the social bias and constraints imposed by the society against “sexually and intellectually potent and relevant elderly male figure[s]” (Sutherland 2012: 15) who “fail to abide by the old clock of life” (Roth 2001: 37).

In response to such a lack of understanding, the culture war stories come from the generation of novelists like Roth, who are “expressing their consternation at the changes in mores and the loss of male privilege” (Williams 2012: 570). Sutherland (2012: 61) observes the ways and means by which elderly males use “gender essentialist strategies as crutches by which to better spur their reclamation of patriarchal recognition... by seek[ing] a limited and denigrated feminine subject... in an effort to prove their own subjective viability”.

Roth satirizes the American culture by pointing out that the above mentioned “feminine subjects” are always within Kepesh’s reach because of the sexual revolution that brought about the emergence of a new generation of young women whom Kepesh calls “astounding fellators” (Roth 2001: 9). Kepesh’s discussion on the liberal social-politics of the 1960s sexual revolution does not concern itself with economic, political, or social issues, but focuses on the pursuit of individual freedom and happiness that resulted in the ample opportunity for casual sexual gratification. It is interesting to note that Kepesh gives a brief history of the United States, from Plymouth Plantation to the present, but it all comes down to the sexual revolution and the consequences that have since shaped the modern American sexual landscape.

Although Kepesh’s “perpetual promiscuity serves as sporadic reaffirmation of self” (Sutherland 2012: 42), his relationship with Consuela brings on more longing than sexual gratification, as the cultured, sophisticated academic, in his younger days known as the professor of desire, is literally brought to his knees as he suffers and turns into the eponymous title of the book. He sees himself as sick with desire and recites Yeats: “Consume my heart away; sick with desire / And fastened to a dying animal / It knows not what it is” (Roth 2001: 102). He is plagued by a fear of losing Consuela and wonders how “can you hold a young woman at my age? ... I am rapt, I am enthralled, and yet I am enthralled outside

the frame. What is it that puts me outside? It is age. The wound of age” (Roth 2001: 40-41). He is particularly afraid of losing Consuela to a younger man and he seems to prefer Consuela to his other student-conquests because “[s]he truly was of a bygone era...a throwback to a more mannerly time” (Roth 2001: 11). He sees in her “the promise of masculine redemption”, because she was brought up in “a time more accommodating to patriarchy, a time in which men’s dominion was very much de rigueur” (Sutherland 2012: 43).

Kepesh explains, the young measure time backward, to when they started. “Time for the young is always made up of what is past”, but when one gets older, or is seriously ill, one “measures time counting forward, counting time by the closeness of death” (Roth 2001: 148). His fear of aging is compounded by an unexpected encounter with illness and death as he sees his long-time friend and confidant, George Hearn, suffering a massive stroke. After being unconscious for a week, George is discharged from the hospital to be taken home by his family to die. His demise stretches over an additional nine days, during which we accompany Kepesh and witness both hope and desperation, as the last battle is fought and lost. Moreover, the fact that George’s death was unexpected and untimely intensifies Kepesh’s sense of loss. Roth emphasizes that we hang on to society’s norms and conventions to ease our fears and find comfort in dealing with death. As long as people are aging and dying in order, we find solace at funerals by thinking that the person had a long life. Kepesh comments, “It hardly makes extinction less monstrous, that thought, but it’s the trick that we use to keep the metronomic illusion intact and the time torture at bay” (Roth 2001: 149).

Five months after George’s death, Kepesh is faced with Consuela’s disease and confesses: “It was because of George’s death that I imagined the worst for Consuela” (Roth 2001: 114). Thus, the dying animal referred to by the title could also be the main female character, Consuela Castillo, a young woman battling with a life-threatening disease. The age gap sets Kepesh and Consuela apart, but Kepesh brings in a new perspective as he equates illness with aging.

Finally, we realize that Roth is satirizing the age and himself as part of that age. As Safer (2006: 7) emphasizes, “Comedy is Roth’s tool to address serious issues that speak directly to the human condition”, and in *The Dying Animal*, we sense the proximity of advanced age as a wakeup call to face death realistically.

3. Don DeLillo’s *White Noise*

In the novel *White Noise*, Don DeLillo focuses on encountering death and dying on a personal level. Harack (2013: 304) observes DeLillo’s departure from postmodernism to delve “beneath the surface of American life and meditat[e] more deeply on the nature of individual and cultural trauma, as well as its intersection with the experience of time and embodiment”. The protagonist, Jack Gladney, is a typical postmodern character struggling to negotiate multiple identities. He is a

thoroughly secularized American with a feeble sense of self-worth and self-identity, who is burdened by trying to find a sense of belonging and incorporate his multiple social identities, such as a college professor, the head of Hitler studies, a colleague, a husband, an ex-husband, a father, a stepfather, a consumer, an American.

His thanatophobia can be traced back to his atheistic beliefs. With no religion to turn to, he attempts to find the meaning of life and death by paying homage at the modern day consumer shrines. He perceives shopping as a religious experience through which he strives to achieve a fullness of presence and sense of fulfilment. According to Barret (2001: 101), Gladney strives to compensate his lost sense of self and lack of spirituality with parodic attempts “to infuse his mundane and superficial life with some grander meaning”.

His despondency fuels his excessive anxieties and his fear of death is heightened as he dismisses the belief in God and the afterlife, and must come to grips with his own mortality. In his behaviour, we see much similarity to Fromm’s (1974: 87) consequences of contemporary “disintegration of the love of God” that are reflected in people being “anxious, without principles or faith”.

His stronghold and safe haven is not found in God and religion, but in achieving a domineering presence by using Hitler. We even witness an instance of unmasking, when a colleague observes that, off-campus, without his dark glasses and gown, Gladney looks like “[a] big, harmless, aging, indistinct sort of a guy” (DeLillo 1986: 83), which is far from “the fantasized version of autonomous selfhood” (Engles 1999: 756) that he is intent on projecting. Gladney went to great lengths to create a professionalized self and earn prestige in academic circles. He added false initials to his name, put on weight and wore dark glasses and a robe, took German language lessons in secret and even cultivated the habit of “looming” around campus and the supermarket, hiding behind his dark glasses and academic robe. He admits his insecurity by stating that he is the “[f]alse character that follows the name around” (DeLillo 1986: 17). Through his work as a professor of Hitler Studies, he struggles to overcome his internal conflict of living with the constant fear of death.

As DeLillo explains in an interview, Hitler represents for Gladney

...a perverse form of protection. The damage caused by Hitler was so enormous that Gladney feels he can disappear inside it and that his own puny dread will be overwhelmed by the vastness, the monstrosity of Hitler himself. He feels that Hitler is not only bigger than life, as we say of many famous figures, but bigger than death. Our sense of fear –we avoid it because we feel it so deeply, so there is an intense conflict at work. I brought this conflict to the surface in the shape of Jack Gladney. (DeCurtis 1991: 63)

In Gladney’s academic subculture, the university departments are likened to supermarket departments, where knowledge is a commodity and even Hitler

becomes a commodity that Gladney sells on the academic market. As Cantor (1992: 44) observes, “Hitler would seem to symbolize all the irrational and dangerous forces that have destabilized modern life, but for Gladney he provides the solid foundation of a successful career”.

Gladney bears an uncanny resemblance to Featherstone’s (1982: 27) description of the narcissistic individual of the affluent consumer society who is “‘excessively self-conscious,’ ‘chronically uneasy about his health, afraid of ageing and death,’ and ‘eager to get along with others yet unable to make real friendships’ and ‘attempts to sell his self as if his personality was a commodity’”.

He and his colleague, Murray Jay Siskind, are “satirically depicted as narrow, overly professionalized academics” (Engles 1999: 768), whose interactions provide insights into the fear and anxiety of the contemporary world. At the very beginning of the novel, Murray says, “I want to immerse myself in American magic and dread” (DeLillo 1986: 19). De Lillo does just that as he moves beyond academic issues to focus on media and technology that govern our lives and are agents of both life and death in contemporary American culture. Gladney often reflects upon the toxicity of his environment; his concerns erupt despite his best efforts to suppress them.

With the Airborne Toxic Event, everything that Gladney and his community have been repressing comes to light, as the body and mind are inescapably linked in an embodiment of the threat of death. Wilcox (1991: 352) accurately comments that here “[T]he experience of dying is utterly mediated by technology and eclipsed by a world of symbols. The body becomes simulacrum, and death loses its personal and existential resonances”. As Gladney encounters the medical images and graphics of the computer scan reporting the prognosis of his death, he comments that “You are said to be dying and yet are separate from dying ... It is when death is rendered graphically, is televised so to speak, that you sense an eerie separation between your condition and yourself. ... It makes you feel like a stranger in your own dying” (DeLillo 1986: 140). This illustrates that “for both Baudrillard and DeLillo the symbolic mediations of contemporary society deprive the individual of an intimate relation with death, with the result that society is haunted by the fear of mortality” (Wilcox 1991: 353, n. 4).

After his exposure to a toxic substance, Gladney’s obsession with the fear of death escalates to the point that it prevents him from feeling truly alive. His actions reflect his fears. He has become increasingly superstitious; odd numbers have come to remind him of death; half-awake and in a dream-like state, he is gripped by the chilling thought that he has died, and that a mysterious apparition has come to get him.

In order to ease his mind of fear, he forms false conceptions about death. He is reluctant to believe that he could be a victim and according to him “These things happen to poor people who live in exposed areas. Society is set up in such a way that it’s the poor and uneducated who suffer the main impact of natural and man-made disasters” (DeLillo 1986: 114).

Jack's wife, Babette, is just as obsessed with death as her husband. She hides from her husband that she took part in a trial treatment of Dylar, an experimental drug supposedly created to alleviate the fear of death. She also hides the fact that she had to consent to an affair with the company's project manager, Willie Mink, to get access to the medication. When Gladney finds out about the affair, he decides to take revenge on Mink by taking his supply of Dylar and killing him in a senseless endeavour geared towards "gaining life-power, storing up life-credits" (DeLillo 1986: 298). However, his plan backfires and, although he does manage to wound Mink, he gets shot in return and ends up turning for help in a hospital run by atheist nuns. This whole disappointing episode makes Gladney recognize their similarity as two bleeding and suffering human bodies: "The old human muddle and quirks were set flowing again. Compassion, remorse, mercy" (299). Jack transforms from a vengeful killer to a selfless rescuer who does all he can to keep Mink alive. Yet, as he processes his actions, he quickly perceives them as an exalted redemption and exclaims: "I felt virtuous, I felt blood-stained and stately, dragging the badly wounded man through the dark and empty street" (299). It becomes evident that his overall selfish nature has taken over once more and "Jack soon constructs another scenario in which he again acts out a media-induced, life-affirming sense of himself" (Engles 1999: 778).

As Glover (2004) observes, "Jack Gladney is on a quest that could end with new knowledge that might abrogate his fear of mortality; the trouble is that the episteme which governs his mind (and the white noise which perpetually impedes his thinking) will not allow him to find it".

3. Conclusion

The novel becomes a meditation on modern society's fear of death and the daily struggle between Eros and Thanatos. What we can learn is that the fear of death should not keep us from truly living our lives: "When we dead awaken, we see that we have never lived" (Ibsen). Both DeLillo and Roth have depicted postmodern America's difficulty in facing death in a disaffected society that is engaged in a daily struggle between Eros and Thanatos.

References

- Baudrillard, Jean. 1998. *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*. London: Sage.
- Barrett, Laura. 2001. "How the Dead Speak to the Living: Intertextuality and the Postmodern Sublime in *White Noise*" in *Journal of Modern Literature*, 25 (2), pp. 97-113.
- Becker, Ernest. 1973. *The Denial of Death*. New York: Free Press.
- Cantor, Paul A. 1992. "Adolf, We Hardly Knew You" in Lentricchia, Frank (ed.). *New Essays on White Noise*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 39-62.

- DeCurtis, Anthony. 1991. "An Outsider in This Society: An Interview with Don DeLillo" in Lentricchia, Frank (ed.). *Introducing Don DeLillo*. Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 43-66.
- DeLillo, Don. 1986. *White Noise*. New York: Penguin Group.
- Engles, Tim. 1999. "Who Are You, Literally?: Fantasies of the White Self in *White Noise*" in *Modern Fiction Studies*, 45 (3), pp. 755-787.
- Featherstone, Mike. 1982. "The Body in Consumer Culture" in *Theory, Culture & Society*, September 1 (2), pp. 18-33.
- Fromm, Erich. 1974. *The Art of Loving*. New York: Perennial Library.
- Glover, Christopher S. 2004. "The End of DeLillo's Plot: Death, Fear, and Religion in *White Noise*" in *Americana*. [Online]. Available: http://www.americanpopularculture.com/archive/bestsellers/delillos_white_noise.htm [Accessed 2016, July 12].
- Harack, Katrina. 2013. "Embedded and Embodied Memories: Body, Space, and Time in Don DeLillo's *White Noise* and *Falling Man*" in *Contemporary Literature*, 54 (2), pp. 303-336.
- Ibsen, Henrik. 2016. *When We Dead Awaken: A Dramatic Epilogue*. eBooks @ Adelaide. [Online]. Available: <https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/i/ibsen/henrik/when/> [Accessed 2016, July 12].
- Olshansky, S. Jay, Dana P. Goldman, Yuhui Zheng, and John W. Rowe 2009. "Aging in America in the Twenty-First Century: Demographic Forecasts from the MacArthur Foundation Research Network on an Aging Society" in *The Milbank Quarterly*, 87 (4), pp. 842-862.
- Roth, Philip. 2001. *The Dying Animal*. New York: Vintage.
- Safer, Elaine B. 2006. *Mocking the Age: The Later Novels of Philip Roth*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Shostak, Debra. 2007. "Roth and Gender" in Parish, Timothy (ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to Philip Roth*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.112-126.
- Sutherland, Angus James. 2012. *Performance Issues: Enacted Age/ Essential Gender in Ravelstein, The Dying Animal, Elegy, and Beginners*. MA Thesis, Georgetown University. [Online]. Available: <https://repository.library.georgetown.edu/handle/10822/557573> [Accessed 2016, March 15].
- Wilcox, Leonard. 1991. "Baudrillard, DeLillo's *White Noise*, and the End of Heroic Narrative" in *Contemporary Literature*, 32. (3), pp. 346-365.
- Williams, Jeffrey J. 2012. "The Rise of the Academic Novel" in *American Literary History*, 24 (3), pp. 561-589.

**SEPARATION AND BLACK CHRISTIAN
COMMUNICATION STRATEGY IN SERMONS OF
VERNON JOHNS AND MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.**

PÉTER GAÁL-SZABÓ

Debrecen Reformed Theological University

***Abstract:** In the co-cultural discourse delineated by Mark P. Orbe, three types of preferred outcomes shape the communication strategy of members of minority groups: assimilation, accommodation, and separation. It is the latter type that I examine in the speeches and sermons of Vernon Johns and Martin Luther King, Jr. in order to add a tinge to their ultimately integrationist/accommodationist oeuvre.*

***Keywords:** African American sermons, co-cultural, separation, Vernon Johns, Martin Luther King, Jr.*

1. Introduction

The 1950s and 1960s mark a profound change for the African American community from many points of view, but perhaps, most importantly, and underlying other changes as well, they mark its new self-awareness. It is this renewed understanding of the black self that becomes palpable in the speeches and sermons of black religious leaders, seeking to position itself in relation to and in the context of mainstream America. Regarding black Christian communication tactics, the integrationist and accommodationist approach and objectives are commonly taken for granted, also identified as characteristics of the “moderate” wing in the Civil Rights era. In view of Mark P. Orbe’s (1998) co-cultural discourse, however, it is not at all obvious that black Christian leaders only rely on any clear-cut category of accommodationist tactics, as their overall strategy would suggest, especially since, as pastors, leaders like Vernon Johns and Martin Luther King, Jr. often rebuke and chastise their audiences, black and white alike. It is the preferred outcome of separation (the other two being integration and accommodation in Orbe’s scheme) that I will thus examine in the sermons of the two religious leaders in order to offer a more varied look at their communication toolkit and their ultimately accommodationist oeuvre.

2. The communication tactics of separation in black Christian sermons

Even though the question of separation is commonly raised in discussions concerning the Nation of Islam, it is not at all self-evident to limit the discourse to Black Muslims. As early as 1956, King told an interviewer,

We're not going to harm anybody unless they harm us. When a chicken's head is cut off, it struggles most when it's about to die. [. . .] A whale puts up its biggest fight after it has been harpooned. It's the same thing with the Southern white man. Maybe it's good to shed a little blood. What needs to be done is for a couple of those white men to lose some blood, then the Federal Government will step in. (qtd. in Rieder 2008: 260)

Strangely similar to the early Malcolm X, who asserts at one point, "Our religion teaches us to be intelligent. Be peaceful, be courteous, obey the law, respect everyone; but if someone lays hand on you, send him to the cemetery" (1965: 12); King is aware of more militant communication tactics as possible tools in the scenario. From the perspective of intercultural communication, thus, the tactics of separation refers to a more or less outspoken, i.e., aggressive or (non-) assertive, communication practice, which can be traced in the speeches and sermons of Christian leaders, who cannot otherwise be considered separatist.

Similarly to Black Muslim dynamics of isolation, the communication maneuvers employed by King and Johns also work toward establishing group cohesion by insisting on the general homogeneity of African Americanness and differentiation from whites and white Christians. In doing so, they rely on communication practices which are characteristic of separation, i.e., primarily on working with stereotypes, exemplifying strength, and even attacking ingroup and outgroup members.

Showing increasing vehemence over the years, his "American Dream", delivered at Ebenezer Baptist Church, Atlanta, on Independence Day in 1965, claims place for African Americans in the American nation, and thus signals accommodative strivings in the first place. King, however, employs assertive practices of separation to display a distinct autonomous identity and isolation in the sense of differentiation from whites:

noncooperation with evil is as much a moral obligation as is cooperation with good, and so throw us in jail. (Make it plain) We will go in those jails and transform them from dungeons of shame to havens of freedom and human dignity. Send your hooded perpetrators of violence into our communities after midnight hours and drag us out on some wayside road and beat us and leave us half-dead, and as difficult as it is, we will still love you. (Amen) Somehow go around the country and use your propaganda agents to make it appear that we are not fit culturally, morally, or otherwise for integration, and we will still love you. (Yes) Threaten our children and bomb our homes, and as difficult as it is, we will still love you. (Yeah). (King 1965: par. 22)

By identifying Ku Klux Klan crime as representative of the whole white community and even accusing it of willfully siding with the Klan, King embraces white images prevailing in the African American community (the sermon was delivered in an all-black church in the South) and thus creates/maintains the distance between the two groups.

Stereotyping does not only refer to simplifying the scope of white action, but theologizing about character as in “Loving Your Enemies”:

There’s another reason why you should love your enemies, and that is because hate distorts the personality of the hater. We usually think of what hate does for the individual hated or the individuals hated or the groups hated. But it is even more tragic, it is even more ruinous and injurious to the individual who hates. You just begin hating somebody, and you will begin to do irrational things. You can’t see straight when you hate. You can’t walk straight when you hate. You can’t stand upright. Your vision is distorted. (King 1957: par. 23)

King’s evaluation of white conduct cannot, by any means, be identified as reverse racism and dismissed as a “paranoid outlook on life” (Rokeach 1960: 76) – a typical characteristic of isolation – as, unlike Black Muslim rigid classification of whites, he foresees change in the opposing group and urges acceptance and convergence:

There must be recognition of the sacredness human personality. Deeply rooted in our political and religious heritage is the conviction that every man is an heir to a legacy of dignity and worth. [. . .] This idea of the dignity and worth of human personality is expressed eloquently and unequivocally in the Declaration of Independence. (King 1986b: 118-9)

He does, however, present the Black Church and the African American community in general as a moral community – a tactics that Black Muslims also make use of - through the setting up of a moral binary and positioning himself and blacks on the moral side of it.

King establishes, in this way, a space in which an autonomous black self can dwell and employs thereby a politics of distancing to contrast the two races morally. The peculiar combination signifies a particular “compartmentalization” (Rokeach 1960: 36), which, in the first place, builds on the “coexistence of logically contradictory beliefs” (1960: 36) to establish homogeneity of self-affirmation and thus enable continuation of self by forcing “magical” leaps over possible inconsistencies in the reasoning stemming from the incompleteness of the trauma work – a phenomenon often underlying absolutisation or authoritarianism from a content point of view (1960: 77); and the “accentuation of differences and minimization of similarities” (1960: 37), which relates contentwise to isolation (1960: 78).

Black Christian along with Black Muslim articulation of separation and the quasi aggressive communicative separation in Orbe's footsteps serve purposes of isolation, primarily in the sense of categorization, of the Black self from the significant white other. The identificatory move proves of phenomenological importance as it serves as a precondition for possible subsequent intercultural dialogues. Eszter Pabis (2014: 26) refers to this aspect of categorization, "Borders emerge and are perceived as such only in that and as long as they can be transgressed" (my translation). Compartmentalization turns difference also into an epistemological means of self-recognition. As Andrea Horváth (2007: 42) argues, "Difference is no marker of outer borders, between center and peripheries, but an inevitable place right in the center" (my translation).

For this purpose, isolation is indeed achieved in the Black Christian rhetoric of the 1950s and 1960s through the dedifferentiation of ingroup varieties, i.e., the homogenization of the African American experience, through "self-aggrandizement" – much in line with what Rokeach (1960: 76) classifies as the "concern with power and status" and "moral self-righteousness". Besides these central concerns of identificatory relevance, a simultaneous, general self-depreciating characterization of past and contemporary black life effects a pointedness toward the "uncertainty of the future" (1960: 75), which facilitates an urgency of action, thus resolving the seeming contradiction between inherent greatness and post-slavery trauma.

With varying intensity, King, thus, pushes the white outgroup to the opposing side of the scale and works with this differentiation deliberately, without further stratifying the white image: as he insists along moral lines in his "Remaining Awake Through a Great Revolution," that "racial injustice is still the black man's burden and the white man's shame" (1986a: 270), or along social ones, when he refers in his "American Dream" to "twenty million of my brothers and sisters [. . .] still smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in an affluent society" (1965: par. 12). He even employs outspoken irony in maintaining self-esteem and casting a verdict about white churches, as in "Guidelines for a Constructive Church": "Now if you notice some churches, they never read this part. Some churches aren't concerned about freeing anybody. Some white churches" (1966: par. 13).

Whereas in sermons like the "American Dream" (1965), King uses history to instill a national memory in white America incorporating African Americans, in "Remaining Awake Through a Great Revolution" (1986a), one of his last sermons, delivered days before his assassination, at the National Cathedral, Washington D.C. on March 31, 1968, King, by then "a fearless revolutionary" and "dangerous menace to the political status quo" (Mieder 2010: 100), reproaches whites with their sinful historical conduct in a powerful and intense way:

They never stop to realize that no other ethnic group has been a slave on American soil. The people who say this never stop to realize that the nation made the black man's color a stigma. But beyond this they never stop to realize the debt that they

owe a people who were kept in slavery two hundred and forty-four years. [. . .] Every court of jurisprudence would rise up against this, and yet this is the very thing that our nation did to the black man. It simply said, "You're free," and it left him there penniless, illiterate, not knowing what to do. And the irony of it all is that at the same time the nation failed to do anything for the black man, though an act of Congress was giving away millions of acres of land in the West and the Midwest. Which meant that it was willing to undergird its white peasants from Europe with an economic floor. (1986a: 271)

Reminiscent of Malcolm X's constant chastising and even echoing his view of the African American case as a human rights case, the quote shows that intragroup communication often works toward strengthening group cohesion with the simultaneous result of maintaining barriers. Playing down on historical grievances does, on the one hand, congregate ingroup members in the framework of a common cultural trauma; on the other, naming the perpetrators outright on an unreconciliatory note indicates the employment of the communication practice of attacking in a co-cultural context. This is not to say, though, that King ruptures intercultural ties with white allies in this sermon, since he in fact builds on alliances with whites: as he exclaims, when greeting the congregation, he is happy to "discuss the issues involved in that struggle with concerned friends of goodwill all over our nation. And certainly it is always a deep and meaningful experience to be in a worship service" (1986a: 268). Just like in the case of a previous version of the sermon delivered as a commencement at Oberlin College in 1965, here too King speaks to a predominantly white audience of about four thousand people (Wills 2008: par. 1) – a fact which may temper his subsequent vehemence toward non-assertiveness; but more likely, the identification of the concerned as friends and their incorporation in the same sacred space acknowledges intergroup ties and shared identity.

The repeated revoking of martyrdom, often mediated through the appropriation of biblical texts, becomes a leitmotiv based on opposition and the means to construct a moral space resulting from biblical interference. As Wolfgang Mieder (2012: 40) also observes, King's sermons reflect that he often "repeats certain biblical proverbs and literary quotes as leitmotifs" as well as recurrently relies on the "combined emphasis of biblical and folk proverbs" (2012: 41; my translation). The use of leitmotifs to structure his sermons thus forms part of a communication technique meant to specify a standpoint and contextualize him in a space, on moral, ethical, and cultural grounds. Fredrik Sunnemark (2004: 90) points out that the "allusions help to build and uphold the specific moral universe that King continually refers to as a precondition of the struggle". From a somewhat modified perspective, however, the repeated articulation of martyrdom is similar to Black Muslim "self-proselytization," as the "compulsive repetition" (Rokeach 1960: 75) serves for King too to position the African American self in contrast to the whites. Functioning both as a mnemotechnique working toward ingroup cohesion, and as a rhetorical device used to display the identity of the speaker,

self-proselytization holds yet the perhaps unanticipated residue to still maintain unfavorable stereotypical images in the speeches of an integrationist. In a discourse, it amounts to perspectivation, when “speakers express their involvement in discourse and position their point of view in the discursive flux” (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 81) and may contribute to an intensifying strategy “to qualify and modify the epistemic status of a proposition” (ibidem).

The martyred self-picture also reveals a firm perspective that may in fact effect distance in Vernon Johns’s sermons, too. In close parallel with the plight of biblical Israel at the time of the Egyptian slavery, Johns identifies, in his “Prophetic Interference in Old Testament Politics”, the African American community going through similar, but righteous ordeals, which contributed to the refinement of character and to a life close to God: “These laws learned in the wilderness wanderings were vastly superior in both ethics and idealism to the contemporary laws of nations” (Johns 1977a: 27). The geographical locale of the wilderness is identified as both a place elsewhere, an other-place – a place of seclusion and thus of separation - and also a place of difference, thus one of differentiation in favour of the oppressed. Liminality allows for the possibility to walk with God and to acquire a new, rewarding identity. In this way, the inversion of the place of oppression enables the people of Israel and the African Americans to create a moral community, which per definition casts a negative verdict on the other, oppressing group. The martyrdom of African American slaves gains a powerful expression in his sermon “The Men Who Let Us Drink”:

And for more than two centuries, the great American nation soiled its fair name and jeopardized its very existence by denying to a large portion of its population the right to be free. The slaves’ thirst for freedom expressed itself in insurrections that had no chance for success. It welled up in their prayers; it broke out in their sorrow songs; it went buried and silent in their souls. (Johns 1977b: 92)

The denouncing oppositionality toward the white outgroup clearly is pushed to the foreground, while Johns does not condemn America all together -“fair” suggests accommodative objectives, as he also announces blacks to be a part of the American nation. Yet the buzz words “freedom,” the emotionally laden “sorrow,” and mutedness indicate, beyond the circumstances of enslavement, the righteousness of the black ingroup creating a distance between themselves and the white outgroup. It is not separation that Johns seeks to pursue, but isolation in the sense of differentiation and so maintaining barriers becomes here a means of self-perception, while it is also clear that he defines the African American community as an integrated part of the American nation.

3. Conclusion

Both Black Muslim and Black Christian leaders employ the communication practice of separation widely, even if in significantly different ways and to various

degrees. The underlying ideological incentive and different theological backgrounds facilitate the basic difference: the Black Muslims' communication tool of separation strives to establish separation not only rhetorically, but also in identity politics, including physical separation, based on theologically entrenched black and white opposition, and as a form of mimicry, in Bhabha's sense, meant to represent "a destabilizing force [. . .] the most evident form of resistance, bringing about the disruption of colonial authority" (Bökös 2007: 55); Black Christians rely on the tool of separation while maintaining their integrationist focus, supported by a concept of equality based on biblical understanding. The communication practice of separation becomes thus a tool reinvented for integrationist purposes. This is not to say, however, that all differences and oppositions cease to exist, since especially vehement argumentations reveal that grievances cannot be easily overridden and that distinct African American cultural identity, based also on opposition, remains intact. Communication targets both outgroup and ingroup members. The employment of the communicative means of separation serves to uphold subgroup uniformity even by apparently demolishing alliance with ingroup and subgroup members.

References

- Bökös, Borbála. 2007. "On Mimicry and Otherness in *The Island* and *A.P.*" in Kušnir, Jaroslav (ed.). *Literatures in English in the Context of Post-Colonialism, Postmodernism, and the Present*. Prešov: University of Prešov, pp. 50-60.
- Horváth, Andrea. 2007. "*Wir sind anders*": *Gender und Ethnizität in Barbara Frischmuts Romanen*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann.
- Johns, Vernon. 1977a. "Prophetic Interference in Old Testament Politics" in Gandy, Samuel Lucius (ed.). *Human Possibilities: A Vernon Johns Reader*. Washington: Hoffman, pp. 26-38.
- Johns, Vernon. 1977b. "The Men who Let Us Drink" in Gandy, Samuel Lucius (ed.). *Human Possibilities: A Vernon Johns Reader*. Washington: Hoffman, pp. 90-97.
- King, Martin Luther, Jr. 1957. "Loving Your Enemies" in *Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Global Freedom Struggle*. The King Institute. [Online]. Available: http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/documentsentry/doc_loving_your_enemies.1.html [Accessed 2015, May 19].
- King, Martin Luther, Jr. 1965. "The American Dream" in *Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Global Freedom Struggle*. The King Institute. [Online]. Available: http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/documentsentry/doc_the_american_dream/ [Accessed 2015, May 19].
- King, Martin Luther, Jr. 1966. "Guidelines for a Constructive Church" in *Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Global Freedom Struggle*. The King Institute. [Online]. Available: http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/documentsentry/doc_guidelines_for_a_constructive_church.1.html [Accessed 2015, May 19].

- King, Martin Luther, Jr. 1986a. "Remaining Awake Through a Great Revolution" in Washington, James M. (ed.). *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.* New York: HarperCollins, pp. 268-269.
- King, Martin Luther, Jr. 1986b. "The Ethical Demands for Integration" in Washington, James M. (ed.). *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.* New York: HarperCollins, pp. 117-125.
- Malcolm X. 1965. "A Message to the Grassroots" in Breitman, George (ed.). *Malcolm X Speaks: Selected Speeches and Statements.* New York: Grove Press, pp. 3-18.
- Mieder, Wolfgang. 2010. "*Making a Way out of No Way*": *Martin Luther King's Sermonic Proverbial Rhetoric.* New York: Peter Lang.
- Mieder, Wolfgang. 2012. "Einen Weg aus Keinem Weg Machen": Martin Luther King's Sprichwörtliche Rhetorik für Menschenrechte" in *Forum Artis Rhetoricae*, 4, pp. 34-63.
- Orbe, Mark P. 1998. *Constructing Co-Cultural Theory: An Explication of Culture, Power, and Communication.* Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Pabis, Eszter. 2014. "Fremde, Fremderfahrung und Verfremdung: Grundbegriffe und Probleme literaturwissenschaftlicher Fremdheitsforschung" in *Werkstatt*, 9, pp. 12-30.
- Reisigl, Martin and Ruth Wodak. 2001. *Discourse and Discrimination: Rhetorics of Racism and Antisemitism.* London and New York: Routledge.
- Rieder, Jonathan. 2008. *The Word of the Lord Is upon Me: The Righteous Performance of Martin Luther King, Jr.* Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Rokeach, Milton. 1960. *The Open and Closed Mind: Investigations into the Nature of Belief Systems and Personality Systems.* New York: Basic Books.
- Sunnemark, Fredrik. 2004. *Ring out Freedom!: The Voice of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Making of the Civil Rights Movement.* Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Wills, Denise Kersten. 2008. "'People Were Out of Control': Remembering the 1968 Riots." in *Washingtonian* (April 1). [Online]. Available: <http://www.washingtonian.com/articles/people/people-were-out-of-control-remembering-the-1968-riots/> [Accessed 2015, Jan 12].

CROSS-DRESSING AND GENDER CONSTRUCTION IN MICHÈLE ROBERTS'S *FLESH AND BLOOD*

SILVIA GARCÍA HERNÁNDEZ

University of Alcalá

Abstract: *In Flesh and Blood, Michèle Roberts deals with some of her favourite topics: food, sex, religion, mother-daughter relationships, and feminist ideas. In the series of intertwined stories that compose the novel, the women protagonists suffer and feel displaced, disempowered, marginalised, or misunderstood for different causes. In order to overcome these difficult situations, some of these women decide to cross-dress. Based on feminist theories that claim that gender is socially and culturally constructed, this article will explore the way these women cross-dress, why they do it and the outcomes they get from it.*

Keywords: *cross-dressing, cross-gendering, gender codes, Michèle Roberts*

1. Introduction

Flesh and Blood was published in 1994 and it is Michèle Roberts's more experimental novel. It consists of seven different stories, a central poem, and then other seven stories which complete the previous ones. It is because of this that many critics have been hesitant about classifying *Flesh and Blood* as a novel or as a collection of short stories. However, despite few voices to the contrary, the novel was praised by critics like Judy Cooke, who explained that "what makes this exuberance all the more attractive is the realisation that, far from being a sequence of loose episodes, this is in fact a carefully constructed novel" (1994: 39). It has therefore a circular structure, as the last story ends in a colon, which invites the reader to start again, and leaves us waiting for another narrative to follow.

As the stories develop, the reader is taken to different spaces and times, beginning in London in the 1960s, and moving then to the nineteenth century in France, or to Italy at the time of the Inquisition, only to go backwards in the second part of the novel, which ends in 1960s' London again. Each account is narrated by a different voice and has its own structure: we get stories told in the first person, another one written like a documentary film script and another like a diary; however, all the stories are linked by the fact that they deal with a mother-daughter

conflict and portray a woman suffering from the impositions of a patriarchal society, so feminism is present in this novel, as in all of Roberts's literary productions. As Roberts has several times declared, her writing comes from the feeling of loss of her mother. In this case, the separation from the mother is present in the first part of the stories and then, in the second part, we get the act of going back and the reconciliation with the maternal figure. This going away, the loss, or the metaphorical killing of the mother is linked to the search for one's identity on the part of the daughters, who, on several occasions, change and become something different, turning into, as Roberts (1998: 205) puts it, "grotesque women; oppressed women [who] are not necessarily *nice*".

There are three stories in the book which are very significant in the way the women protagonists exemplify what Roberts (1998: 204) said to be the essence of the novel, which she described as "erotic and bawdy", and where we can more clearly perceive "the idea of sex-change as a part of the narrative/technique, part of the subject of metamorphosis, part of the plot". It is in these stories that we find more evidences of Roberts's complex narrative technique, and that the reader is more involved in working out how the novel functions. The stories that best represent the main aspects of the novel are those of Fred/Freddy/Frederica, Federigo's narrative, and George/Georgina's story, the latter being the one which more clearly reflects the changes in gender identity. The aim of this essay is to look at how these characters cross-dress and use disguise as a means to get a new identity in order to change their lives and stop being marginalised because of their gender.

2. The story of George/Georgina: The search for power in a men's world

The two halves of this story take us to Georgina Mannot's life. In the first part of the novel, we meet an English painter, George, who is spending the summer in Etretat, working on his paintings of French landscapes. This character is introduced by a French couple, Albert and Félicité, who are engaged. Félicité also likes painting, and she enjoys George's company, to the point that she falls in love with him. George also likes her, and they eventually have a sexual encounter. In the second part of the book, however, we get a film director planning a documentary about the life of Georgina Mannot, a famous English painter. The fact that she signed her paintings as G. Mannot, according to the director, "indicated her ambivalence, her wish for secrecy and her love for disguises" (1995: 155), and it is at this point that the reader is taken back to George's story and discovers that Georgina, born a woman, "allowed herself two selves, two lives, or was it three? Her life as a woman in London, her life as a man in France, his/her experience at the moment of crossing over from one to the other and back again" (1955: 156). Georgina as well as Léonie, the protagonist of Roberts's *Daughters of the House*, and like Roberts herself, felt like having a double self and identity, due to their parents' origins: one from France, the other from England and, in all three cases,

Georgina, Léonie and Roberts felt like split subjects who only could find their true identity in the middle of the waters of the English Channel, when travelling from England to France or viceversa. In the case of Georgina, apart from feeling as a hyphenated subject because of her double nationality, she also felt she had “two bodies, apparently separate and different, male and female” (1995: 156). It was during the voyage through the waters of the Channel that “she married two split parts of herself”, and where “she also let each other flourish individually” (1995: 156), for the cross-dressing also took place during the travel.

Throughout both George and Georgina’s stories, we learn about the reasons which took Georgina to cross-dressing, which are actually connected with several theories and feminist studies about sex and gender. As Linda McDowell (1999: 38) points out, “feminist scholarship has been particularly influential in rethinking and retheorizing the body in the late twentieth century”; one of its most important achievements has been the separation established between sex and gender, “the former apparently natural and unchanging, the latter socially constructed and so amenable to change” (1999: 44). Many other studies agree on the question that sex is different from gender and that gender is culturally and socially constructed; as is well known, one of the first women writers who reflected on this idea was Simone de Beauvoir in her 1949 work *The Second Sex*. Forty years later and building on de Beauvoir’s work, Judith Butler published *Gender Trouble*, another key text in the analysis of the relationships between sex, gender and the body. In this book, Butler reflects on de Beauvoir’s famous sentence “one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman”. In her analysis of de Beauvoir’s work, Butler says that she

meant merely to suggest that the category of woman is a variable cultural accomplishment, a set of meanings that are taken or not taken within a cultural field, and that no one is born to a gender —gender is always acquired (...) Sex does not cause gender, and gender cannot be understood to reflect or express sex; indeed, for Beauvoir, sex is immutably factic, but gender acquired, and whereas sex cannot be changed – or so she thought – gender is the variable cultural construction of sex. (1990: 111)

In addition, Butler (1990: 111) coined the expression “performative gender”, which she explains in the following terms: if, to her, “gender is the variable cultural construction of sex”, then “the action of gender requires a performance that is repeated. This repetition is a re-enactment and re-experiencing of a set of meanings already socially established” (1990: 140). As she sees it, “the effect of gender is produced through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self” (1990: 140). Thus, “the performance is effected with the strategic aim of maintaining gender within its binary frame” (1990: 140). From this, it is therefore clear that gender is socially constructed and, in *Flesh and Blood*, it is shown how Georgina, being born female,

is able to “perform” both masculine and feminine gender, constructing both, by repeating those gestures and styles associated with each of them.

As explained in Georgina’s story, she was a woman well ahead of her time. Even though she was a member of the upper classes, she decided to become a painter, something which was not accepted by society in the nineteenth century. In the description of her self-portrait, she was defined as a person “of indeterminate gender” considering the way her hair was done and the “baggy and loose” clothes she was wearing (1995: 158). However, people in England knew she was a woman, “with all that that implied at the time in terms of her special sensibility and special, restricted place” (1995:158), and that is the reason why she decides to go to France, where nobody knew her, but dressed as a man. She wanted to get out of that “restricted place” that society put her in because she was a woman; it was not very difficult for her to go ahead with her plans of disguise, since, as the narrator explains, in England she already wore short hair and she was “a woman influenced by the movement for dress reform” (1995: 162), for she wore loose clothes, overalls and even, sometimes, trousers.

According to Vern and Bonnie Bullough (1993: viii), “dress traditionally has been a ubiquitous symbol of sexual differences, emphasizing social conceptions of masculinity and femininity. Cross-dressing, therefore, represents a symbolic incursion into territory that crosses gender boundaries”. To them, “clothing is the major symbol of gender that allows other persons to immediately identify the individual’s gender role” (1993: 312), and it is by dressing like a man that Georgina is attributed the socially constructed features and the autonomy ascribed to the male gender. When Georgina cross-dresses, she finds two important differences in the way the world functions for men and women. On the one hand, she realises that she is freer to go on her own wherever she wants and whenever she wishes: “she found that men’s clothes meant that she was not accosted when she roamed around by herself at night” (1995: 162). On the other hand, Georgina finds that, dressed as a man, “nobody felt obliged to treat her differently, put her in her place by praising her appropriately delicate touch and suitably feminine subject matter, by offering her advice and help she had not asked for” (1995:162), so she felt she was treated as an equal, given that now “she could tip back her chair, crack jokes, smoke cigarettes, eat and drink what she liked, and advance strong opinions, and nobody thought any the worse of her” (1995: 162-163). Applying Butler’s term, Georgina is “performing” what she has learnt about male gender, since, dressed as a man, “she could now become part of the masculine group of painters who met together in the evenings to drink and smoke, play cards, argue” (1995: 162). Therefore, in dressing and acting as man, she is not displaced, as she is no longer trapped in her body and therefore identified as the “other”.

Another example of how gender is constructed is that dressing as a man not only gave Georgina access to the males’ world, consequently being treated as an equal, but it also facilitated “the entrée it gave her into the masculine world she admired as superior. Perhaps she feared being pulled into a feminine world of

painting she had been taught to label inferior” (1995: 163). Thus, it was society which had constructed the idea and which had made her consider that works of art produced by women were inferior to those by men and, as a consequence, one of the main reasons why she cross-dressed was her search for power. As Elizabeth Kowaleski Wallace explains,

cross-dressing by women has not always been so linked to strictly erotic or libidinal motives. Most female transvestites experience no sexual excitement through cross-dressing, but rather seek to appropriate the masculine role in order to break out from the conventional confines of the male oppression (...) the practice became more visible in the 1890s. Women, for instance, began to associate male clothing with freedom. Cross-dressing for women became a way of socially and politically defining the inequalities existing between masculinity and femininity. Inverting the female role came to be seen by some as an attempt to invert the traditional privileged system that lends primacy to men. (2009: 572)

The case of Georgina adjusts perfectly to this description, and contrasts with the other woman protagonist of the story, Félicité. The main reason why Georgina cross-dresses as a man when she is in France is to achieve power so that her work could be taken seriously and not marginalized, as it would have been if she had not been in disguise, as Félicité’s paintings were. Félicité always carried her sketchbook and pencil with her; however, it was not possible for her to paint whenever she wanted or to do it as a way of life, since, as a woman, the role that patriarchal society had given her was a different one: she had to get married and take care of her house and husband. Actually, even though Albert did not like Félicité’s propensity for painting and mixing with other artists, when she showed her interest in painting, “Albert felt half-exasperated, half admiring” (1995: 30). On the one hand, “he liked Félicité’s spirit, her sudden moods of defiance...”; however, on the other hand, he thought that “she’d calm down once she was settled. He would stroke her into docility. A house, babies, all that would absorb her energies” (1995: 30). The reader is thus shown again how Félicité, because of her female body, is taken out of the public sphere and put into the domestic one, so as to be in the place socially considered as correct and do the things that were expected of her due to her female condition, and therefore perform again the female role constructed and imposed by society.

Owing to her love for painting and her wish for a different kind of life, Félicité loved going to the beach and watch the artists painting on the shore. It was on those occasions when she realised that because she was a woman, she could not be as free as the men painters she was watching. Moreover, she enjoyed the company of those painters, both because she could talk to them about painting and because artists “treated you as a person. They were not afraid to make friends with a woman” (1995: 36), as other men, especially Albert, did. For this reason, Félicité fell in love with George; actually, one of the last scenes of the first story is Félicité

and George having sex, although the first part of the story ends with Albert discovering Félicité naked in a room, and raping her for what she had done.

But, as Georgina had cross-dressed in her search for freedom, Félicité also tried to break with the socially imposed norms for women in her own way. However, she was actually trapped in her body, and therefore all she could do, as a woman, was to liberate herself from the dressing code which was defined as appropriate for a woman of her class:

Félicité came sauntering downstairs. She was feeling rather pleased with herself because she was not wearing a corset and could therefore move and breathe exactly as she pleased. (...) To conceal her scandalous condition from her aunt she had enveloped herself in a light mantle she normally wore only for going to church. (1995: 41)

It is when she has freed herself from her corset and has made love with George [i.e. Georgina] that Félicité tells him/her that she does not want to marry Albert, but to be free, like s/he was. In fact, the reader never finds out if they get married, for Albert does not appear in Georgina's account.

It is in the second part of the story that Georgina's gender crossing is revealed, and everybody is surprised when she gets married with a fellow painter, Clement Last. However, when Georgina went back to England, she did not get married to obey or to adjust to social rules, but because she really loved her husband, who was completely unaware of his wife's experiences with cross-dressing or her previous sexual encounters with women. We discover here Georgina's bisexuality, since, dressed as a man, she had loved Félicité, and, as a woman, she enjoyed sex with her husband, as we know from a very explicit description the narrator offers.

Like in the first part of the story, where only George appears (Georgina's identity is not revealed), in this second part it is Georgina's life which is at the centre of the narrative, and Félicité only appears as the owner of the hotel in Etretat, where Georgina goes with her husband on their honeymoon. Félicité appears in one of Clement's letters to a friend, as it was she who "made up their bed, and insisted on giving them the best linen sheets from her trousseau to sleep in. This affected Georgina very deeply, Clem wrote. She had not dreamed of receiving such kindness from Félicité" (1995: 167). Clement is surprised by his wife's reaction, but Georgina is affected by Félicité's gesture, since Félicité gives them the room where Georgina's feminine clothes were hidden in the past, and where the two women had made love years ago.

In this story, cross-dressing is therefore linked to the search for power, respect and a true identity. By dressing and acting in a way that society considered appropriate for a man, Georgina's story is an example of how gender is socially constructed, as the theories mentioned claim.

3. Other cross-dressings in *Flesh and Blood*

The ambiguity of gender caused by breaking up with the dressing codes is also present in the story of Frederica Stonehouse. This time, we need four different stories, two at the beginning (“Fred” and “Freddy”), two at the end of the novel (“Louise” and “Frederica”), to complete this account. Like Georgina in the previous story, Frederica changes not only her dressing code but also her name, shortening it to Fred to give it a masculine appearance, and then to a more ambiguous one, Freddy, in the first two parts of the story. In the second part of the book, it is Louise, her mother, who finishes Freddy’s account, and Frederica, this time using her female name, takes the story to its end. Fred is normally used as a male name, and that is what readers are compelled to believe judging by the descriptions of this character at the beginning of the narrative: Fred tells us that he has just killed his mother, he talks about blood and how he escaped from home. Immediately after the murder, he has an appointment with a friend, Martin, but before that, he goes to a shop where he tries a dress on. The description of the dress as “it would be my saviour, my disguise” (1995: 4); comments like “my large cotton handkerchief and my discarded tie, well stuffed in, did duty for breasts” (1995: 5); his actions of kicking off his shoes which were “too big and heavy” to suit the dress; and his own description of himself as “much too masculine for this soft place” (1995: 5) make the reader think he is a man who is cross-dressing as a woman, since, for him, the dress would serve “to confirm me. To give me back my new and beautiful self” (1995: 5). In addition, when the shop assistant is trying to get the dress shortened, Fred is afraid that she will discover what he describes as “my secret, my disguise” (1995: 6). However, although everything leads the readers to think that Fred is a man who is going to dress as a woman during the first story (the story is told in the first person, so there is no way we can distinguish if Fred is a “he” or a “she”), it is in the second story, “Freddy”, where we are sure that Fred is actually a woman, when she tells us about her period.

It is in this second part of the story that Frederica reconciles with her mother now that she is going to be a mother herself, and when the reader understands that the murder she had committed was only a metaphorical one. Her secret was that she was pregnant, and that was why she needed a dress, to hide her condition, and also to metaphorically cover the awful words her father had told her when he discovered her pregnancy, as, for her, “my flesh was branded with those words for everyone to see” (1995: 174). Therefore, her dressing code was already changed from the norm when she went to the shop, for, as we learn in the last story, after her “crime” and her father’s words, “I had to cover myself with a man’s clothes, then run” (1995: 174). The moment she “kills” her mother is firstly when she decides to become an artist, wear manly clothes and cut her hair, and later, when she tells her mother and father about her pregnancy. It is because of their reaction that she runs away from home, and the only way she can do it is, according to her, dressing as a man. It is not until the end of the book that we understand Fred’s

story, just like in the case of Georgina's story. It is then when we become aware of many details, as, for instance, when she wants to "talk to Martin and tell him about the blood" (1995: 2). She is not referring to her dead mother's blood, but to her lack of menstrual blood as a consequence of being pregnant; or the secret the shop assistant was going to discover when she pinned the dress to shorten it - not that she was a man, but that she was pregnant.

Like in Georgina's story, it is again manifest that gender is socially constructed: like Georgina, Freddy's desire to be an artist makes her use man's clothes and cut her hair to liberate herself from the socially established patterns for male and female behaviour she had learnt from her parents, the nuns at schools or from the magazines she found at home.

Another valuable example of cross-dressing linked to gender roles and sexual behaviour in *Flesh and Blood* is Federigo's narrative. Set in Italy in the sixteenth century, this is a story about religion, women, and disguise. Federigo tells the story of his sister Bona, who has been accused of heresy by the Inquisition. In the first part of his account, Federigo tells how Bona is made the abbess of the convent by a Contessa, whose husband was a good friend of Bona's father. Bona did not want to become a nun, but she consented in view of two reasons: first, since "it cost less than getting her a proper dowry" (1995: 85), and, secondly, because Giuditta's parents had also decided to place her in the convent. Giuditta was Bona's best friend since childhood and also her lover.

One day, the Contessa received a letter in which Bona and Giuditta were accused of heresy. According to the parish priest, Father Giovanni, they had to be imprisoned because they were "practising black arts and lewd activities with other nuns in which she played the man's part", apart from "performing abominable rites" (1995: 85). Thus, they were imprisoned while they waited for judgement; if they were found guilty, they would be burnt. Moreover, Bona was also accused of having taken a reliquary that the Contessa wanted to give to the Bishop when they had the Mass celebrating the end of the war, seeing that she did not have any money to buy anything valuable. She ordered Father Sebastiano to take the reliquary from Bona, and, thus, besides pleasing the Bishop, if the reliquary was taken out of Bona's hands, she "would lose all her authority and would have to submit to questioning" (1995: 87). When the priest told the Contessa that Bona would not let him inside the convent, the Contessa suggested that someone could play the part of a woman looking for asylum in the convent in order to enter and steal the reliquary: "The Contessa replied that Bona, if she were so fond of the company of women as Father Giovanni's letter implied, would certainly not be able to resist to a young, beautiful and ardent widow seeking asylum and asking to enter the house as a nun" (1995: 88).

The second part of the narrative reveals that Father Sebastiano did actually play the part of the widow that the Contessa had proposed and took away the reliquary from the convent. During the trial, Bona was accused by Father Giovanni of having stopped him from hearing the nun's confession, and of naming herself

the spiritual director. In addition, Bona did not let him go into the convent, so the nuns did not attend Mass or Holy Communion, she said her own Mass, celebrated feasts with the other nuns, and was fond of dressing up. According to him, “a woman should not do these things. It was a grave sin for her to usurp the authority vested in her superiors”. Moreover, “Father Giovanni said that Sister Bona Casolin also committed perverse and lewd acts with the other nuns, in which she usurped the natural functions of a man” (1995: 126).

It is by reading Federigo’s diary that his mother finds a solution to free the girls. As she saw in the diary, two Dominican priests went to the prison to pray for the two nuns’ souls every day; therefore, she decides to invite all the priests that took part in her daughter’s trial to have dinner in her house. They all drank and ate a lot, and fell asleep. The night before, in the basket used to send some food for Bona and Giuditta, Federigo’s mother put two Dominican habits that she had sewed, so that the two nuns could get out of prison without being noticed. To avoid the guards’ vigilance, she had also carried another basket with some bottles of wine, so that they got drunk and the girls could dress in the habits. When the guards changed in the afternoon, “Bonna and Giuditta, dressed in their disguise, with their hoods pulled well down over their faces, got the new guards to let them out, which of course they did, thinking they were the Dominicans come as usual to pray over the heretics and now ready to go” (1995: 140). So, Bona and Giuditta escaped from town dressed as Dominican priests.

Thus, cross-dressing happens twice in this story: first, when the priest dresses as a woman to take the reliquary with him, and second, when Bona and Giuditta dress as priests to escape. In the former, cross-dressing has awful consequences for the women. When the priest cross-dresses as a woman in order to steal a reliquary and realises how these women live inside the convent, the nuns are accused of heresy; when the women cross-dress as priests, it is to escape from being burnt. Being dressed as priests gave the girls the freedom to go where they wanted, and walk in the street unnoticed; thus, in this story gender is again depicted as constructed, and cross-dressing is used by women to liberate themselves from the oppressive patriarchal rules they had to live under. Bona and Giuditta did not want to become nuns but had to do so, for their families were poor and it was not possible for them to get married, as they could not have a proper dowry, so it was easier for everybody if the young women went into the convent. Thus, they are marginalised, firstly by a patriarchal and class-conscious society which considered them almost a burden for their families, secondly by the Catholic religion, which obliged them to stay imprisoned in a convent from where they could not get out, and which finally excluded them from a society that would not have accepted their homosexual relationship.

4. Conclusion

The analysis of these three narratives reveals how much cross-dressing and cross-gendering are key issues in the structure and development of *Flesh and*

Blood. The fact that these stories are presented as fragmented narratives could be interpreted as a metaphor for these women's fragmented lives and identities, for their split personalities, for their broken relationship with their mothers, or their feeling of otherness. Based on Butler's (1990) idea that gender is socially and culturally constructed, and following what Kowaleski (2009) points out in her study, my paper reveals that the women protagonists in these stories have access to a world where they can find freedom and power by cross-dressing, by acquiring masculine features and by performing masculine actions expected by society. It is only in their disguises as men that they feel liberated from the rules that patriarchal societies imposed on them.

References

- Bullough, Vern and Bonnie Bullough. 1993. *Cross Dressing, Sex and Gender*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Butler, Judith. 1990. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Cooke, Judy. 1994. "Tales from Paradise" Rev. of *Flesh and Blood* by Michèle Roberts. *New Stateman & Society*, 16 Sept., pp. 39-40.
- De Beauvoir, Simone. 2007. (1949). *The Second Sex*. Trans. H. M. Parshley. London: Vintage.
- Kowaleski Wallace, Elisabeth (ed.). 2009. *Encyclopedia of Feminist Literary Theory*. Oxford: Routledge.
- McDowell, L. 1999. *Gender, Identity and Place: Understanding Feminist Geographies*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Roberts, Michèle. 1993 (1992). *Daughters of the House*. London: Virago Press.
- Roberts, Michèle. 1995 (1994). *Flesh and Blood*. London: Virago Press.
- Roberts, Michèle. 1998. *Food, Sex and God: on Inspiration and Writing*. London: Virago Press.

THE CITY AND ITS FEMALE CHARACTERS IN THE LYRICS OF THE BRITPOP BAND *PULP*

RALUCA GOLEȘTEANU

Tadeusz Manteuffel Institute of History, PAN, Warsaw

Graduate School for Social Research, PAN, Warsaw

***Abstract:** This article brings into discussion a successful band of the mid-1990's, Pulp, known for its witty lyrics, daring messages, and, not least, original frontman. By its uncompromising view of British capitalist society, Pulp's music became synonymous with the criticism of the industrial city and the mockery of the people with low aspirations. The paper presents some of these instances, focusing on the categories of women that appear in the lyrics. The author is interested in the interconnection existing between women and their destitute urban environment: the former borrow features from the latter, and the other way round.*

***Keywords:** British art scene, feminism, G. Debord's society of the spectacle, industrial city, periphery, post-modernism*

“You can mythologise anything if you put your mind to it.” (Cocker 2012: 6)

1. Introduction: Social critique and eroticism

The words in the motto belong to Jarvis Cocker, who, in 1978, established the band that would be known in the 1990s, at the peak of its fame as Pulp. Cocker was referring to the simple facts of daily life in Britain, like programmes on TV or house decorations, and to their role in keeping memories alive or providing an image of a certain social category. In this case, the lyrics conceived by Cocker were meant to stop the places of his origin (e.g. his native town Sheffield) from fading away from memory, as well as to depict a type of people and their lifestyle.

Indeed, a significant part of this band's success was connected to its lyrics. Ironic, sad, sensitive, critical, allusive, cheeky, but never boring, they succeed in endowing the environment (e.g. houses, streets, city) with human qualities, and to mock the silly habits or the cheap ideals that make up the middle-class mentality of

Sheffield's workers or petty bourgeoisie. The city itself is today a relatively small settlement of about 500.000 inhabitants or so, although once it was a bustling area connected to the production of luxury goods; beside this, Sheffield was traditionally associated to heavy industry, like steel and iron production. Not only once, it faced the side-effects of modernization, resulting in soaring unemployment rates and impoverishment of a population, which many a time was neither professionally skilled nor socially privileged. The effects of these phenomena would be visible especially on youth, who would bounce between ennui and sordid love affairs in the hope of escaping one day to a bigger town and a nicer world. One of these youths was Jarvis Cocker:

After leaving school I was counting on my life just starting to 'happen' at some point. Then it struck me that the countdown might actually go on forever without me ever achieving lift-off. It was realisations such as this (...) that led to me leave Sheffield (...); I couldn't wait to get away from there (...). (Cocker 2012: 130; 5)

His state of mind, his attitude was to be found in the lyrics of the band whose name (Cocker 2012: 7) makes reference to - the rarely mentioned but ubiquitous objects and gestures that surround our lives in the present-day society, from supermarkets to the uncomfortable relations between family members. With a keen eye, Cocker investigates the remotest corners of the houses of Sheffield's worker districts, notices the idiosyncrasies of parents and teenagers alike, emphasizes the gap existing between the voiced bourgeois/ Conservative principles and the hidden sexual behaviour, picks up the real meaning behind fancy clothing and laughing faces. These themes, irrespective of how creatively they are wrapped in a metaphorical language, are tools of social critique. Beyond the nostalgic attempt of the displaced one, to re-create in a new place a familiar environment and mood, Cocker issues an indictment addressed to the society of his young age. As a side note, the issue of displacement is interesting on its own, and the next section in my paper will elaborate on the manners in which London, his city of adoption, will bear the features of Sheffield in Pulp's songs.

We may say that, in a way, Pulp represents a good lesson of contemporary history of Britain. Although in the mid 1990s, at the time when the band achieved critical acclaim with albums such as *His 'n' Hers*, *Different Class* or *This is Hardcore*, the things were advancing at a quite peaceful pace, if compared to the turmoil of the 1980s (e.g. economic unrest and social protests in the West, political revolutions in the Eastern bloc), many of the lyrics were concocted in those early years or they simply bore traces of the dissatisfaction born out of the difficult conditions experienced by British society in this decade. The 1980s were marked by the shock waves resulting from the tough economic reforms implemented under the guidance of the then PM M. Thatcher; one of the most drastic measures consisted in the massive reduction of social security financial aids. The pauperization of social classes that were dependent on state help, the lowering

down of financial assistance for students and teenagers are events reflected in the songs of Pulp as it is the case of, for instance, *Sheffield-Sex City* : “Sheffield’s City Council’s policy of providing cheap bus travel (...) came under pressure in the mid-1980s. (...) a two-tier system was introduced, making travel more expensive (...)” (Cocker 2012: 131-132).

These measures gave birth to frustration and complexes, which were in turn expressed by gang culture, racial clashes, a new stress on masculine features (e.g. tough-handed attitudes in the public space). Pulp’s music via Cocker’s lyrics viewed critically the economic context, deplored the side-effects that the impact of recession had on society, and derided the coarseness of the new male symbols. Jarvis himself, a slim figure with an intellectual look, vintage style, reserved manners, all exhaling an air of sophistication, was miles away from the dominant male culture. The sarcasm and the antitheses attached to the lyrics added to this, and contributed to Pulp becoming the epitome of a critical stance that broke with the traditional image of male as cultivated in the public realm as well as in music:

This critique of masculinity [as performed by Pulp, R.G.] should be seen in the context of lad culture in 1990s Britain. Discourses of masculinity at this time were dominated by a post ‘new-man’ return to the womanizing, football supporting stereotype, but this time under the aegis of an apparently tongue-in-cheek self-conscious awareness fuelled by media (...). In this context Pulp’s camp sensibility is in stark contrast to that of other bands (...) and to wider discourses of male sexuality at that time. (Dibben 2001: 97)

As it has been inferred so far, the lyrics and the music of this band can be read/interpreted on several levels of which the most pregnant are the criticism of society, and what we would call the personal, psychological stance in relation to the things and people described by the songs’ narratives. In the first instance, society is a character in the lyrics and it is embodied by the city, mostly at night, depicted piece by piece: its streets, meeting places, its shops, the council state buildings, the parts known only to the locals, etc. Everything in this category is on display, including the interior of the houses, and their observer is aware of this staging. The city is a *panopticon*, it belongs to the category of the spectacle, whereas the features of the show are those identified by Guy Debord in his work about the consumerist society:

Understood on its own terms, the spectacle proclaims the predominance of appearances and asserts that all human life, which is to say all social life, is mere appearance. But any critique capable of apprehending the spectacle’s essential character must expose it as a visible negation of life and as a negation of life that has invented a visual form for itself. (Debord 1994: 6)

In the second instance, the personal dynamics are, to a large extent, projected on women who become a kind of engine around which evolves any narrative. Raised

in an environment almost exclusively populated by women, as, at a young age, he and his sister were left with their mother when his father deserted his family, Jarvis Cocker ended up by having an ambiguous attitude towards women, particularly towards their eroticism. Marked by constant attraction and repulsion (Clarke, Dibben 2000: 239), sometimes on the edge of psychosis, Cocker's songs tell the story of a wide variety of women, ranging from sophisticated artists, innocent teenagers, housewives, middle-class clerks, to sex workers.

Provided that society and the human aspect are intermingled, the same applies to the city and to the female characters in Pulp's music. There is a transfer of features between the two instances. This interplay will be discussed in the next two sections of this paper.

2. The city by night

In his history of London, in which the city is seen as a human (e.g. the volume bears the suggestive title of *London, The Biography*), Peter Ackroyd (2001) elaborates on the close relation existing between the liveliness of the city and the quality of its nights. The people's hustle and bustle and the humming of the streets during the day are doubled by intense nights, full of uncanny occurrences. This is similar to the way the individual's restless day is prolonged into the night and expressed in nightmares or anxiety. Ackroyd's overview of the nights in London throughout the ages is illustrative of our topic, since it distinctively shows the interdependency existing between three factors: the city, its cultural determinants, and the human psyche.

The nights of the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries had a sense of urgency about them in the sense that the streets were abounding in sound and light coming from revellers, thieves, "rattling coaches", and promiscuous inns (Ackroyd 2001: 450). It was as if the city felt uneasy in relation to the night, seen as the auspicious time for crime and ill-deeds; in short, the city wanted to relegate the night to the periphery of its existence, transforming it into a place where the individual felt harassed physically and traumatized psychologically.

In contrast to this, the nineteenth century city witnessed a sort of symbiosis between the individual and the night (Ackroyd 2001: 451). The Victorian age, the time of Sherlock Holmes, loved the night because its absolute silence and darkness invited the scrutinizing spirits to have an attentive look around; at night, the city showed its real nature, stripped off its colourful clothes worn during the day. This was the time when solitary walks came into fashion, as a contemplative reflex, as well as an expression of psychological distress. R. Kipling's saying that "the night gets into one's head" (Ackroyd 2001: 451) can be related to the *flâneur's* restless wanderings through the city, when the night hours are tangible, like buildings, bridges or any other physical elements of the city.

The twentieth century night witnessed the birth of surveillance; the inquisitive eye of Holmes was replaced by the CCTV systems of the official

institutions and of the malls that stare intently into the night, accompanying the passage of the late-comers. The modernized streets with their multitude of signs and technical features, the intermittent and robotic sounds of antennae created an alternation of light and darkness in which the individual feels connected to the city 24/7. The burn-out resulting from this intensity is the characteristic of the contemporary *flâneur*.

Although the city nights of the other centuries expressed to varying degrees the psychological make-up of the people living in that epoch, the nowadays city represents, on an unprecedented scale, the background against which the existential dilemmas of the individual are measured. The inner life, the deepest fears of the individual, his surrounding objects are projected outside, in the identically aligned streets, in the vastness of the city, in the dark night. The city takes the shape of the human mind. When outside, the *flâneur* creates the city according to his experiences, thoughts, and moods. This is psychogeography, as expressed in Cocker's song *F.E.E.L.I.N.G.C.A.L.L.E.D.L.O.V.E.*: "And the world outside this room has also assumed a familiar shape - the same events shuffled in a slightly different order every day. Just like a modern shopping centre" (Cocker 2012: 56).

To be true, in Pulp's lyrics, the city assumes all of the stances described above. It is a riotous and noisy city during the night, when people submit to debauchery, like in the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries; similarly to the nineteenth century, it is the environment that invites to reflexive journeys at night, when the observer bounces between realism, noticing the harsh life of the people around, and subjectivity, projecting his/her states of mind regarding the surrounding objects; lastly, it is the city of temptations and unfulfilled desires showing at night their chimerical charm as reflected in the houses and shopping centres' windows alike.

Yet, most of all, the city depicted by Jarvis Cocker in his songs is a character, more than a prolongation of the individual's experiences, it is his *alter ego*. In other words, if we transfer to this particular case the functions of the city, as described in a novel of the American writer, Don DeLillo, "the city is a personified character that affects the reasoning and actions of the main character", even "inviting the protagonist for actions" (Žindžiuvienė 2007: 112-113). Accordingly, the character in Pulp's lyrics contemplates the city life from his or his lover's windows, and, as the train of thoughts reaches a paroxysmal intensity, he tries to unleash them taking to the streets, searching incessantly for the object of his untold desires in the vast and sleepless city, as it is inferred in the songs *Countdown* and *My Legendary Girlfriend*: "I had to go out and feel, but there was time to kill and so I walked my way round town" (Cocker 2012: 15). The frustrating passivity of indoors life (e.g. the character feels that he is traumatized by the world at large as embodied by his lover and by the city) is contrasted to the activity of outdoors life (e.g. the character gets out to face the world, to have the confirmation of his being betrayed), but the confrontation results in relapsing into the previous state of passivism, as the lure-the lover, the one he is running from, yet, at the same time,

the one whose company he seeks for protection against the cruel world, calls him back in the coziness of the deceiving house: “I tried to love the world, but the world just got me down and so I looked for you in every street of every town” (Cocker 2012: 15); (...) “I wander the streets calling your name, jumping walls, hoping to see a light in your window” (Cocker 2012: 12). This interplay of the city’s image and the lover’s features is resolved via the metamorphosis of the character: once so passive (e.g. “one who never leaves the ground”), he is turned into action (e.g. “the sky is crying out to leave the town”) (Cocker 2012: 15-16).

Night in the songs of Pulp takes on many metaphors. Apart from being associated with the city and with women, night may be a curtain (e.g. sometimes a synonym of the house), a sort of a sleeping bag, wrapping the characters, and sealing them from the world around, or protecting them in their scandalous actions, as it is depicted in songs like *Street Lites* and *My Legendary Girlfriend*: “pull the night-time tight around us and we can keep each other warm whilst cars drive by en route to dried-up dinners (...)” (Cocker 2012: 33); “Outside I can see all the houses-curtains shut tight against the night (...) so I woke her and we went walking through the sleeping town, down deserted streets (...) creeping slowly past cooling towers (...) looking for an adventure” (Cocker 2012: 12).

In addition, the night of the *flâneur* (e.g. “I wandered the streets the whole night” (Cocker 2012: 23) is Dickensian, as he experiences both sides of the city, the fancy as well as the destitute one. Indeed, beyond the intimacy of the room, when “he gets up and goes to the window”, there is (e.g. real or imagined) the site of “deserted factories” (Cocker 2012: 12), “entire (...) districts in old, devastated urban areas abandoned by industry” (Dziamski 2011: 155). Although the audience can easily recognize Sheffield in the urban context described in the songs, the features connected to it can very well be applied to London. The flats’s kitchens “smelling of gas and potato peelings” (Cocker 2012: 33), “the big blocks of flats with a central courtyard-where all the bedroom windows in the building opened onto this court (...)” (Cocker 2012: 20), the hidden places “behind the cinema”, “in the subway where the walls crumble and cover you in fine dust” (Cocker 2012: 33) represent as many instances of life as seen in London’s suburbia and on its council estates. More important than the already mentioned reflex of nostalgia on Cocker’s part, namely seeking to re-create in the new place the familiar environment of his home-town, is the overall criticism of the contemporary society, the gap between its pretensions and its failure to offer a decent level of life to ordinary people. Irrespective of place, Sheffield or London, people would return daily from the same boring jobs, just to wait for the next morning, when “the sun rises from behind the gasometers at 6.30 a.m., and creeps through the gaps in curtains (...)” (Cocker 2012: 20); at the end of the day, they drown their higher aspirations, as depicted in the song *Bar Italia*: “There’s only one place we can go. It’s around the corner in Soho, where other broken people go” (Cocker 2012: 63).

The twentieth century night, as evoked by the lyrics of Pulp, is constructed around three interchangeable elements: home-the city-the woman. The intimate space

of the house can become the centre of the universe, as suggested in the song *F.E.E.L.I.N.G.C.A.L.L.E.D.L.O.V.E.*: “And as I stand and cross the room I feel as if my whole life has been leading to this one moment. And as I touch your shoulder tonight this room has become the centre of the universe” (Cocker 2012: 56). The projection of the house straight into the interplanetary system (e.g. a theme evoked in some other songs, like *Space* or *Party Hard*) can very well be just a vision or a dream of the peripatetic individual, who wanders obsessively throughout the city, exploring each of its corners, from “Lina Stores” to the railways and the dockyards (Cocker 2012: 33).

Yet, even more comprehensive than the universe, is the city seen as a woman. In fact, it may be said that the city is a *meta-woman*, the epitome of all the characters that we will describe next. The city is the saint as well as the prostitute; it is an innocent girl, a school mate of Cocker’s, or it can be a character who acts in hardcore movies: “Sheffield is all encompassing, taunting cheekily, inviting us out or telling us to stay in” (Kate Jackson, ex-singer of *The Long Blondes*, qtd in Phillips 2011). Illustrative enough, in songs like *Sheffield: Sex City* and *Countdown*, “the city is a woman bigger than any other.” (Cocker 2012: 20) It (the city/the woman) satisfies the authoritarian fantasies of the male: “(...) I own this town. Yeah, I brought it to its knees-can’t you hear it crying? Can’t you hear it begging to me, ‘Please?’” (Cocker 2012: 16). Irrespective of the relation existing between the character and the city/woman, the latter represents the reason for the former’s revolt against the world, and, at the same time, his main reason to submit to the acceptance of the world around. If in the first instance, indoors, the male is dwarfed by the city/woman, in the second instance, outdoors, he takes revenge on her and has her at his feet: “On a hilltop at 4 a.m./the whole city is your jewellery box. A million twinkling yellow street lights” (Cocker 2012: 23).

3. Women and the projection of self

There has been speculation in the British press that the wife of Yannis Varoufakis, the controversial politician-member of the Syriza Party, by her name Danae Stratou, and by profession an artist, is a character of Pulp’s song *Common People* (Sheffield 2015). Indeed, she “came from Greece (...) had a thirst for knowledge, studied sculpture at St. Martin’s College” “caught the eye” (Cocker 2012: 46) of her colleagues, one of whom could have been Jarvis Cocker, himself an attendant of art courses in the very same period, in the late 1980s (Cocker 2012: 140). Most probably, this is the type of gossip that the popular press enjoys to bring to the fore. Yet, the image of the rich girl (e.g. “her dad was loaded”) who is trying to be like “common people” is, beyond the heavily politicized Greek context (e.g. the paradox of wealthy, educated-in-Britain people, who preach leftist populism), a female category often met in the world of Pulp’s lyrics.

According to the biographical references, the coming into maturity of Jarvis Cocker did not happen in the most affluent environments. His (e.g. family and city alike) was in fact quite mean, populated by bigotry and conservatism. Assuredly,

the lack of financial resources (e.g. “your house was very small with woodchip on the wall” (Cocker 2012: 58)) competed with the narrow morale of the petty bourgeois universe. One of the recurrent themes of this world was the constant care of what the other people might think of those members of community who were not walking in the footsteps of the majority. Therefore, many a time, the women portrayed in the lyrics are desperately trying to reach a status imposed by others, as well as to cultivate a glamorous lifestyle copied from magazines or seen on TV (Dibben 2001: 98). Consequently, they are tempted to achieve all this by creating a surrogate of reality, echoing a porn movie, as is the case of the heroines of *This is hardcore*: “(...) what a hell of a show, but what I want to know: What exactly do you do for an encore? ’Cos this is Hardcore” (Cocker 2012: 78); in some other instances, the life they construct proves to be just a house of cards, so they succumb emotionally on the way, like the girl presented in *Razzmatazz*:

You’re trying to look like some kind of heiress but your face is such a mess and now you’re going to a party and leaving on your own. Oh, I’m sorry, but didn’t you say, ‘Things go better with a little bit of razzmatazz’? (Cocker 2012: 26)

In the end, their attempts to hide the truth from a hypocritical society are in vain, hence their unhappiness is shown in its bare nakedness, as inferred by *Live Bed Show*: “Now every night she plays a sad game called ‘Pretending Nothing’s Going Wrong’” (Cocker 2012: 61). It follows that an outsider to this small and cruel world of *Englishness* (unlike similar bands of the time like Suede, Pulp uses lyrics that deal mostly with English characters) will only underline the poverty and sadness of the others. Cocker’s *alter ego* summons the Greek girl to live like the rest: “rent a flat above a shop/cut your hair and get a job (...) pretend you never went to school” (Cocker 2012: 46).

It might be said that the multitude of female characters that appear in the songs are the embodiment of one female, seen from teenage years up to adulthood. She is The Woman met by Cocker as he is crossing his own stages of masculinity, ranging from the weirdo dancing at concerts in the muddy fields of Hampshire (*Sorted for E’s & Wizz*) to the self-conscious man on his way to becoming a wide acclaimed star (*Cocaine Socialism*). Moreover, this *meta-woman* borrows from the rhythms and pulses of the city. Obviously, she might be as destitute as the neighbourhoods she lives in, she might be as fake and artificial as the shopping malls of the city with their glitzy atmosphere, or she might simply be the expression of the desires of the one who fancies them, similarly to the way the city might be the projection of the psychological states experienced by the traveller.

At first, there is a girl, “a lovely” one, “she’s got long black hair”, and she’s “chewing gum and [wearing a] navy dress, purple shirt” as the lyrics of *The Babysitter* and *Inside Suzan...* describe her (Cocker 2012: 30, 27). Usually, this teenager is psychologically abused by an authoritarian father, and neglected by a careless and weak mother; as the song *Babies* tells us, the fear of pregnancy is

something to be dealt with behind the doors, as it is a shameful event in the life of a girl who “had boys in her room”, [like, R.G.] “some kid called David from the garage up the road” (Cocker 2012: 18). Nevertheless, the lack of emotional support in the family, as well as the hypocrisy of her parents, who hide from her their own failed marriage and relationship, turn her into a young woman who lacks self-confidence. The environment in which she came into age, and the cheap moralistic scolding of her father lead her into thinking that she has nothing to offer apart from her body, a paradox displayed by songs like *Lipgloss* and *Live Bed Show*: “all that you live on is lipgloss and cigarettes”, but “this bed has seen it all—from the first time to the last” (Cocker 2012: 31, 61). When she does marry, generally, this feeble woman’s pick is a boring man concerned with keeping up social appearances, whether he is an architect or a worker. Like her parents in the past, she is trying to evade marriage through imagination or, more realistically, by having a lover. The lyrics of *97 Lovers* and *59, Lyndhurst Grove* are illustrative of this:

I know a woman with a picture of Roger Moore in a short towelling dressing-gown pinned to her bedroom wall. She married a man who works on a building site. Now they make love beneath Roger every Friday night. (Cocker 2012: 11)

He’s an architect and such a lovely guy, and he’ll stay with you until the day you die. And he’ll give you everything you could desire. Oh well-almost everything: everything that he can buy. So you sometimes go out in the afternoon, spend an hour with your lover in his bedroom (...) (Cocker 2012: 29)

When the heroine happens not to be married or a housewife, she usually survives until the weekend, when she lives her casual affairs. She has one of the obscure jobs that give no sense of satisfaction to a human being, like clerk, cash-desk assistant, supervisor in a public laundry, etc. Her only concern is to dress nicely and not to get pregnant, like the character Deborah of the song *Disco 2000*. In this way, she relapses into the condition of her teenage years, showing thus the futility and hopelessness of life.

The destitute world of petty people and petty values, where even eroticism is controlled (e.g. making love is a weekly task like cleaning or washing the laundry) is, as we have seen, closely related to the harsh economic context. The dreary social conditions leave their mark on people, as it does on their observer. Yet, the observer seeks to raise himself above this world via irony, lucidity, and sometimes cynicism. His personal touch is obvious when he addresses the women of his lyrics (e.g. mostly *you* is used as form of address) as if wanting to indict them. Many a times, Cocker seems to expose the promiscuity of his female characters by appealing to the narrow bourgeois, i.e. Victorian morality, which is a paradox, since this very morality made him, among others, leave his native city. Nevertheless, the point where his *self* gets the most in contact with his characters is illustrated by the theme of the lover. Cocker sees himself as the lover of these

decayed women, the replacer of their boring and silly husbands, the person that substitutes them. By using the husbands' personal objects, by taking their place, Cocker takes revenge on the neglect suffered in his teenage years, and, sardonically, turns the existing world upside down, as suggested in *I Spy*:

You see, you should take me seriously. Very seriously indeed. Because I've been sleeping with your wife for the past sixteen weeks, smoking your cigarettes, drinking your brandy, messing up the bed that you chose together-and in all that time I just wanted you to come home unexpectedly one afternoon and catch us at it in the front room. (Cocker 2012: 54)

4. Conclusion

The paper brings to attention one of the most successful bands of the 1990s, and, particularly, its lyricist, Jarvis Cocker. He is arguably the most successful of the kind, in England, nowadays. He has a show called *Sunday Service* on BBC Radio 6 Music (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00ptsjd>), and he is a well-known voice on contemporary cultural matters, being involved in projects adjacent to music production, like stirring the teenagers' interest and love for reading and musical culture.

More concretely, my paper has tried to emphasize the interdependency existing between the city and the women in the lyrics of the band *Pulp*, with a focus on those songs that made the band's success in the mid 1990s. Although the originality of Cocker's lyrics did not cease once *Pulp* stopped existing (e.g. as a solo singer, Jarvis Cocker came up with equally interesting lyrics), I consider the band *Pulp* representative of the stage when Cocker turned into a public figure, and, secondly, of the influence it had on the music of the time. Obviously, *Pulp* did not mean only Jarvis Cocker, its other members were also persons of uncommon resources, yet the focus on Cocker is closely related to his being the main author of the lyrics.

My paper evokes the city, and, specifically, the way it is constructed as a character. The city is the *alter ego* of the lyrics' author. Furthermore, the city is imbued with a social and an erotic message that often overlap. The social message, inserted in the troubled economic situation of the so-called Thatcher and post-Thatcher years, has its correspondent in the erotic message, more precisely in the sadly promiscuous affairs seen as the only entertainment available to the underprivileged people of the peripheries. In his songs, Cocker comes up with a sort of erotic cartography of the city: "imagining a blue plaque above the place I first ever touched a girl's chest (...)" (Cocker 2012: 54).

Just as the city is the projection of social issues, women seem to be the projections of Cocker's obsessions. They are sweet, innocent, devilish, tormented; in short, they express his erotic crises, his lack of self-confidence as a teenager, and his later desire to climb the social ladder, accompanied by his metamorphosis from an "unmanly" man to an attractive albeit slightly weird man, yet a distinguished public figure.

Finally, Pulp's lyrics represent a sample of British life in the twentieth century, featuring social unrest, leftist values, media control, mass consumption, commercial values. Pulp introduces us to *the society of the spectacle*.

References

- Ackroyd, Peter. 2001 (2000). *London. The Biography*. 2nd edition. London: Vintage.
- Clarke, Eric F. and Nicola Dibben. 2000. "Sex, Pulp and Critique" in *Popular Music*, 19 (2), pp. 231-241.
- Cocker, Jarvis. 2012 (2011). *Mother, Brother, Lover. Selected Lyrics*, paperback edition. London: Faber and Faber.
- Debord, Guy. 1994 (1967). *The Society of the Spectacle*. 3rd edition. New York: Zone Books.
- Dibben, Nicola. 2001. "Pulp, Pornography and Spectatorship. Subject Matter and Subject Position in Pulp's 'This is Hardcore'" in *Journal of Royal Musical Association*, 126 (1), pp. 83-106.
- Dziamski, Grzegorz. 2011. "The Place of Art. Where? In a Supermarket" in *Art Inquiry*, 13, pp. 147-157.
- Phillips, Sarah. 2011. "What are Your Favourite Pulp Lyrics? Musicians and Poets Pick Their Favourite Lines from Pulp Songs" in *The Guardian*, October 14. [Online]. Available: <https://www.theguardian.com/music/musicblog/2011/oct/14/pulp-favourite-lyrics> [Accessed 2016, September 20].
- Sheffield, Hazel. 2015. "Is the Mystery Woman in Pulp's 'Common People' Really Greek Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis' Wife?" in *The Independent*, May 7. [Online]. Available: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/news/is-the-mystery-woman-in-pulps-common-people-really-the-greek-finance-ministers-wife-10232324.html> [Accessed 2016, September 26].
- Žindžiuvienė, Ingrida. 2007. "The Role of Masculine Urban Landscape in Don DeLillo's Novel 'Cosmopolis'" in *B.A.S. British and American Studies*, 13, pp. 109-117.

Online resources

- <https://www.pulpwiki.net/>, the most comprehensive site dedicated to the band, its history, songs, live concerts, press [Accessed 2016, July 15].
- <http://www.localhistories.org/sheffield.html>, A History of Sheffield, Yorkshire [Accessed 2016, September 27].
- Krugman, Michael, 1998. "Deconstructing Jarvis" (Interview taken from *Ray Gun*, April 1998) in *Acrylic Afternoons-Press*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.acrylicafternoons.com/raygun98.html> [Accessed 2016, September 28].
- Simpson, Dave, 2016, February 10. "Jarvis Cocker: 'I Have a Terrible Temper on Me'" in *The Guardian*. [Online]. Available: <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2016/feb/10/jarvis-cocker-i-have-a-terrible-temper-on-me> [Accessed 2016, February 25].

THE POWER OF WORDS

LINGUISTIC SIGN, NOMINAL SIGN: ENGLISH COMMERCIAL NAMES IN ROMANIA

ALINA BUGHEȘIU

Technical University of Cluj-Napoca,
North University Centre of Baia Mare

***Abstract:** The present paper revisits Ferdinand de Saussure's theory of the linguistic sign in relation to onomastics, in general, and commercial names, in particular. The aim is to highlight the extent to which the configuration and characteristics of the linguistic sign, as established by Saussure, can be applied to explain the behaviour of proper names as an arch-class of words and of trade names as one of its nonprototypical subcategories. The study pairs and interprets Saussure's analyses with several semiotic-semantic views on onomastics, applying the theoretical aspects to examples of English trade names in the Romanian public space.*

***Keywords:** commercial name, linguistic sign, proper name, semantics, semiotics*

1. Introduction

The pervasiveness of Ferdinand de Saussure's work in all linguistic trends is an undeniable fact, verging on becoming a truism qualitatively as a result of quantitative exploitation. In an almost *ur-religious* manner, his ideas have been taken over with piety (e.g., Juignet 2003) or, on the contrary, with a twist (e.g., Newmeyer 2013: 234), so much so that the famous dichotomies (*langue – parole, substance – form, paradigmatic – syntagmatic* and *synchronic – diachronic*, cf. Lyons 2010: 238-245) and the dyad *signifiant – signifié* (Joseph 2004: 60) currently constitute self-sufficient arguments with which we believe we are, more often than not, already familiar by the time we read Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* (2011). Moreover, we have grown accustomed to take them for granted in linguistic analysis and beyond, in other fields of research.

This paper aims at returning to Ferdinand de Saussure's seminal work in the context of onomastics. To be more precise, it provides a close reading of the Saussurean linguistic sign in relation to proper names, in general, and trade names, in particular. The study underlines to what extent the characteristics of the linguistic

sign apply to nominal signs as a separate class of words and commercial names as one of its nonprototypical subclasses. To this end, the methodological framework employed herein consists of precepts and concepts borrowed from semantics (Lyons 2010, Oltean 2013), semiotics (Saussure 2011, Sebeok 1994, Smith 2006) and psychoanalysis (Lacan *cf.* Juignet 2003). The illustrative material comprises English names of shops, eating/drinking establishments, companies and accommodation locations in contemporary Romanian public space. The reason behind the choice of these examples lies in the wish to show how Saussure's principles of the linguistic sign can be interpreted with respect to onomastic behaviour in commerce, a field that is substantially affected by globalisation. Despite the particular sociolinguistic and sociocultural background in which the quoted examples are used, the approach is overall theoretical and thereby widely pertinent.

2. Linguistic sign: Structure and characteristics

Saussure's linguistic sign is a complex reality, a two-dimensional psychologically-bound construct, which, together with other constructs of the same kind, makes up the language system (*la langue*) and whose particular employment constitutes the individual manifestation of the code of communication (*la parole*). As an artificial, fabricated structure, the linguistic sign results from the (usually) *ad-hoc* conjunction of two elements, each displaying a psychological nature:

[...] the linguistic sign is a double entity, one formed by the associating of two terms. [...] The linguistic sign unites, not a thing and a name, but a concept and a sound-image. The latter is not the material sound, a purely physical thing, but the psychological imprint of the sound, the impression that it makes on our sense. The sound-image is sensory, and if I happen to call it 'material,' it is only in that sense, and by way of opposing it to the other term of the association, the concept, which is generally more abstract. (Saussure 2011: 65-66)

Two main principles are generally used to describe the linguistic sign: (1) *arbitrariness* and (2) *linearity*. In the first case, the two dimensions of the linguistic sign are assessed as being interdependent: they are "intimately united" (Saussure 2011: 66), implying one another's existence. In other words, the sound image, called *signifiant* (*signifier*) by Saussure, cannot exist in the absence of the mental concept to which it is linked, that is, the *signifié* (*signified*). Nevertheless, this *sine qua non* connection is not to be construed as motivated, but on the contrary, as essentially arbitrary (especially as regards linguistic signs; with other types of signs, i.e., the symbol, Saussure admits to the underlying of some degree of motivation – see Saussure 2011: 68). There is no "inner relationship" (Saussure 2011: 67) or "natural connection" (Saussure 2011: 69) legitimising the use of a *specific* signifier in connection with a *specific* signified.

The second principle proposes the notion of *linearity*, which is related to the aural quality of the signifier. This characteristic of the linguistic sign delineates it among other signs (visual ones) from the perspective of actualisation and apprehension. Thus, Saussure (2011: 70) claims that

The signifier, being auditory, is unfolded solely in time from which it gets the following characteristics: (a) it represents a span, and (b) the span is measurable in a single dimension; it is a line. [...] auditory signifiers have at their command only the dimension of time. Their elements are presented in succession; they form a chain. This feature becomes readily apparent when they are represented in writing and the spatial line of graphic marks is substituted for succession in time.

3. Contextualising Saussure in onomastics

3.1. Signifier and signified in proper names

Saussure's elementary semiotic theory (*semiology*, in the words of the Genevan linguist) has been applied to onomastics repeatedly. It was particularly adopted as a basis for accounting for the treatment of proper names as linguistic signs (although not necessarily with the acceptance put forward by Saussure). Nevertheless, onomasticians have also turned to Saussure to describe names as other semiotic types, as icons, indexes and symbols (Smith 2006: 18) or as name signs, making up a distinct semiotic class in themselves (Sebeok 1994: 37).

The starting point in the current theoretical analysis is overall the most complex multidisciplinary definition of proper names, as coined by Van Langendonck (2007: 6-7):

A proper name is a noun that denotes a unique entity at the level of "established linguistic convention" to make it psychosocially salient within a given basic level category [pragmatic]. The meaning of the name, if any, does not (or not any longer) determine its denotation [semantics]. [...] Proper names do not have asserted lexical meaning but do display presuppositional meanings of several kinds: categorical (basic level), associative senses (introduced either via the name bearer or via the name form), emotive senses and grammatical meanings. [...] In prototypical cases like personal or place names, a so-called proprial (or possibly other) lemma (lexeme) is assigned to an *ad hoc* referent in an *ad hoc* name-giving act, resulting in a "proper name".

Van Langendonck's thesis does not contradict Saussure's theory of the linguistic sign: "I also agree with the theses that all signs have meaning (cf. Saussure), that there is no direct connection between the name and object and that no artificial distinction should be made between semantic features and conceptual knowledge" (Van Langendonck 2007: 59). Nevertheless, Saussure's semiology pertains little to naught to pragmatics, as it does not basically relate to language in

use, but language as a system – the *I-language* (‘internalised language’) in Chomsky’s terms, namely “‘some element of the mind of the person who knows the language, acquired by the learner, and used by the speaker-hearer’” (Chomsky 1986 qtd. in Newmeyer 2013: 234).

At the same time, Saussure’s differentiation between signifier and signified within the linguistic sign is not built on a referring relationship, but rather on a psychological one, although in the context of proper names it is more appropriate to talk about logical relationships. Thus, the connection Van Langendonck establishes between name and object can be equated, in Saussure’s terms, with the link between sound image and concept. Both proper names and linguistic signs are mental constructs based on objects and allowing for materialisation by virtue of conceptualisation, the reobjectification of the components in a different key, once the sign becomes entrenched in the collective linguistic memory of a community.

3.2. Proper names as elements of *langue/parole*

In what concerns commercial names, by which one understands names of various types of businesses, names of products and brand names, the appurtenance is clearly to language in use rather than the system. In the case of the examples quoted in this paper, English trade names in contemporary Romanian space, a comment should be made, due to their growing number: some names in English consist of words and phrases that are employed regularly in colloquial Romanian: *beauty, fashion, outlet, pub, shop* and others. In this case, the English constructions are seen lexically, morphologically and syntactically as samples of Romanian *parole* rather than English *langue*. In the colloquial language used by various social groups in Romania, the aforementioned terms are less and less perceived as English. Nonetheless, the prestige they sometimes carry is favoured by the fact that the link with the English *langue* is not entirely broken.

The appurtenance of trade names to *parole* rather than *langue* is determined based on their semantic-pragmatic behaviour. A slight paradox can be noticed. As opposed to personal names like *John* and *Mary*, which are prototypical proper names and, therefore, do not have any intrinsic meaning (as common nouns do), trade names are nonprototypical onyms. When they consist of nonproprietary phrases used with their primary (literal) meaning, trade names will mainly serve a practical purpose (i.e., the consumer’s facile identification of the specific nature of the trade) and will be closer to the language system in functionality: e.g., *Bike Shop, Board Shop* (a shop selling skateboards and snowboards), *Music Center, Neon Lighting, Power Tools, Spartan Security* and *Tuning Shop*. The lower the degree of semantic transparency in a name regarding the referential category of the business/product designated (caused either by a very restricted or a highly generous meaning range), the more prone is one to consider that name a salient instance of *parole*: e.g., *Crowns, Daytona, Deea For You, Emily, Fantasy, Happy, Ice Flame, look4luck, Sally, Stargate, The Home* and *Twin Peaks* (pubs). Names of this kind attract attention due

to the peculiar semantic association(s) established by the name giver between the identifying construction and the object of naming.

3.3. Arbitrariness in names and naming

The absence of a direct connection between name and object noted by Van Langendonck is in agreement with Saussure's arbitrariness. However, it should be stated that, while Saussure considers arbitrariness to be the same as conventionality (Lyons 2010: 100), Van Langendonck, as most post-Saussurean linguists (Lyons 2010: 101), does not find the two concepts to be synonymous. In Van Langendonck's theory of proper names, arbitrariness refers to the quality of the relationship between name and object, whereas conventionality refers to a type of societal behaviour, i.e., the validation of a sign by the community in which it is employed.

Arbitrariness and conventionality make proper names correspond semantically to what Kripke (2001: 96) states about rigid designators: names *mean* their referents. In this case, the connection established between the name and its object by means of baptism (generally speaking) "is not a consequence of the features of the individual and is not affected by the individual's life history" (Oltean 2013: 57). While this may be accurate with prototypical proper names, commercial names, as nonprototypical items, function differently. The link between name and name bearer is more often than not motivated, which may be clear in the case of semantically transparent names (e.g., *Fashion Outlet*, *Mr Decoration*, *Outlet*) or hidden in the case of semantically opaque names (i.e., names for which the associative meanings are brought to the foreground of the semiosis): e.g., *Full Monty* (second-hand store), *My Lady Angel* (accommodation location).

Based on the principle of arbitrariness, Saussure (2011: 69) points out that "the choice of the signifier is left entirely to the speaker". However, this does not imply that the speaker has the ability/authority to change any of the two components of a sign according to his/her free will, once the sign becomes entrenched in a certain linguistic community or if the aim is to secure a position of the sign in the linguistic system. The sign may change in time, upon the reconfiguration (brought about by language use) of the relationship between signified and signifier (Joseph 2004: 60). Thus, the semantics of linguistic signs can be reduced to the fact that the signifier essentially *is* the signified, just as a sign (a word) *means* its denotatum in a logically necessary way, singling out that entity within a sea of named or nameable objects (see Kripke 2001: 55 on *rigid designators*). At the level of semiotic functionality, linguistic signs are tag-like abstractions (see Mill 2009: 41).

A similar idea about proper names is advanced by Smith (2006). Due to their potential interpretation as indexes, onyms are likened to labels (Smith 2006: 18). The indexical behaviour of proper names is grounded in previous contiguity or correlation between a language sequence and a given mental representation, which Smith (2006: 17) calls "re-presentation". This one-to-one relationship develops, as a result of usage, into symbolic reference, a complex link built on an "implicit or

explicit social agreement or convention” (Smith 2006: 18), not on an intrinsic, natural tie. This is not in disagreement with Saussure, although the Genevan linguist treats the term *symbol* as a synonym for *signifier* and sees its relationship with the signified to be natural rather than conventional. In Saussure’s words (2011: 68), “One characteristic of the symbol is that it is never wholly arbitrary; it is not empty, for there is a rudiment of a natural bond between the signifier and the signified.”

In linguistic signs, the initial indexical foundation noted by Smith (2006) is generally obscure and remains so throughout a word’s existence. According to Saussurean optics, onomatopoeia and interjections are exceptions in this respect, but they are not “organic elements in a linguistic system” (Saussure 2011: 69) and their behaviour in use is not semiotically and semantically standard to begin with. In the case of proper names, the aforementioned *ur-indexicality* is indistinct in prototypical first names, family names and toponyms (see Van Langendonck 2007: 186) of *langue* and, in most instances, of *parole*. This situation is salient particularly as regards first names: a signifier like *Mary*₀ is arbitrarily, conventionally attached to its signified, the complex concept ‘*Mary*₀ (human female individual)’, without there being a clearly definable motivation behind the establishment of the link. It is precisely this quality of the sign *Mary* that allows one to use it in relation to countless and various “re-presentations” (Smith 2006: 17) of the basic concept. The set of features constituting the initial concept ([+human], [+female], [+individual], as opposed to [+group], which appears in family names) are reiterated with each separate actualisation of the sign (*Mary*₁, *Mary*₂ etc.), so that the signifier *Mary* is always employed in relation to the signified ‘*Mary*₀’, albeit expanded. In language use, the concept develops associative meanings in context, based on the existence of distinct individuals bearing the first name *Mary*. This semantic expansion enables one to apply the signifier *Mary* in connection with different representations of different entities that are defined conceptually by the aforementioned characteristics of the *genus proximum* and therefore need to be distinguished from one another. As a result, several signs occur. In these, ‘*Mary*’ is the basic level concept and the associative meanings make up the lower level, specialised concept:

- (1) *Mary*₁ = ‘*Mary*₀’ + ‘mother of Jesus Christ’
*Mary*₂ = ‘*Mary*₀’ + ‘the Queen of Scots’
*Mary*₃ = ‘*Mary*₀’ + ‘Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley’

At the same time, context and a language user’s knowledge about an entity help one employ the signifier *Mary* to discriminate between the different roles of this single entity. In such instances, the core concept is enriched with two levels of associative meanings, which shift the balance of categorisation. In the paradigm below, elaborated on the above-mentioned example *Mary*₃, ‘*Mary*’ becomes the supercategory for ‘Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley’, the first level of associative meanings, which functions as the basic level concept. The second level of associative

meanings is the lower level concept, as can be seen in the following categorial catenae:

- (2) $Mary_{3a}$ = ‘Mary₀’ + ‘Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley’ + ‘author of *Frankenstein: or, The Modern Prometheus*’
 $Mary_{3b}$ = ‘Mary₀’ + ‘Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley’ + ‘daughter of William Goodwin and Mary Wollstonecraft’
 $Mary_{3c}$ = ‘Mary₀’ + ‘Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley’ + ‘wife of Percy Bysshe Shelley’
 $Mary_{3d}$ = ‘Mary₀’ + ‘Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley’ + ‘friend of Lord Byron’ etc.

As regards commercial names, a nonprototypical onomastic class, the indexicality relationship is more obvious in the case of famous international and national brands. For instance, with certain categorially distinct name bearers, the link between the signifier and signified is too conspicuous to be overlooked. From the point of view of linguistic sign theory, due to the connection between the name bearers, one can claim the same signifier is attached to several concepts representing entities pertaining to different categories:

- (3) $Cadbury_1$ = ‘Cadbury₁ (John Cadbury, founder of the Cadbury confectionery company)’
 $Cadbury_2$ = ‘Cadbury₂ (confectionery company)’
 $Cadbury_3$ = ‘Cadbury₃ (confectionery brand)’
 $Cadbury_4$ = ‘Cadbury₄ (confectionery product)’

It must be noted that ‘commerce’ is the umbrella supercategory that facilitates the identification of the connection between the signifier $Cadbury_{2-4}$ and any of the three corresponding concepts, i.e., between the onym *Cadbury* and the three name bearers. Moreover, the legal framework of trademark registration narrows down the range of interrelated possible entities designated by the name *Cadbury*. Contiguity is clear between all the concepts of the signifier *Cadbury* and thus between the signifier and concepts as well, although one does not need to have knowledge of ‘Cadbury₁’ to be able to identify the relationship between signifiers $Cadbury_{2-4}$ and the signifieds ‘Cadbury₂₋₄’ or to use the three signs correctly. Nevertheless, while motivated and symbolic, the link between signifier and signified in instances 2-4 is not natural. The only case in which the correlation between signifier and signified could be described as natural is that of $Cadbury_1$ = ‘Cadbury₁ (John Cadbury, founder of the Cadbury confectionery company)’, because the entity represented by the concept is the member of a group of individuals identified collectively through the name *Cadbury* (the Cadbury family). However, contiguity is obscure as regards the signifier $Cadbury_0$ and the signified ‘Cadbury₀ (family)’.

The issue of indexicality is more complex in the case of commercial names that are not recurrent with connected entities. The complexity deepens under the

influence of sociolinguistic and sociocultural factors, such as official language vs language choice in names, lexical meaning of original lexemes that make up a name vs associative meanings developed by those lexemes as part of a trade name and local/national vs international target consumership, etc.

In Romania, the noticeable presence of English names in commerce mostly occurs with shops, pubs, clubs, cafés and various types of companies. The employment of English in these names aims at conveying certain positive associative meanings that business owners wish their entities to have in the eyes (and minds) of potential customers. In a public space that only a little over a quarter of a century ago was built on monolingual and monocultural policies even at the level of commercial onomastics, the turn to English is also an effect of globalisation, a way of showing the recipient (Romanian) society's support of internationalisation. English trade names stand out in this field of onomastics in contemporary Romanian public space and communicate a certain degree of prestige through their very etymology.

As regards commercial names, in general, the correlation between signifier and signified depends on the semantic transparency of the lexemes contained in the trade names. At least three types of lexemic configurations of English commercial names can be identified in Romania:

- (A) Proper names, such as anthroponyms (*Emilly, Sally*), toponyms (*Daytona*) and film names (*Full Monty, Stargate, Twin Peaks*);
- (B) Proper names and nonproprietary items: *Alaska Outdoor Shop* (toponym + compound categorial term), *M@trix xtreme computers* (film name + compound categorial term).
- (C) Nonproprietary items:
 - one-word structures consisting of
 - (a) nouns denoting or indicating the type of business (*Boneshaker, Outlet*);
 - (b) nouns (*Crowns, Fantasy*) and adjectives (*Happy*) creating salient favourable associations that double the aforementioned positive effect of the language choice;
 - compound structures with
 - (a) nouns denoting the type of business (*Bike Shop, Board Shop, Fashion Outlet, Music Center, Tuning Shop*) or suggestive of the nature of a business (e.g., the products that certain shops sell or the services that the companies identified provide: *Blue Jeans, Lotus Jeans, Mr Decoration, Neon Lighting, Power Tools, Spartan Security*);
 - (b) definite articles (*The Home*);
 - (c) nominal premodifiers (*Ice Flame, My Lady Angel*);
 - (d) verb-based nouns (*Crash Landing*);
 - (e) prepositions (*Deea For You, For Sport*) and numbers used instead of prepositions (*4 You, look4luck*).

For the examples listed above, which are only a small fragment of the numerous instances of English names in Romanian commercial onomastics, the saliency of the link between signifier and signified increases in a directly proportional manner to the degree of semantic transparency of the language items in the names in relation to the business. Thus, for a sign like *Outlet*, the correlation between signifier and signified is clear and motivated by the contiguity that exists between the original concept 'outlet₁ (an outlet kind of store)' and the expanded concept 'Outlet₂ (the outlet store called *Outlet*)'. Actually, the concept 'Outlet₂' is a derivative of the concept 'Outlet₁' and, in the absence of this knowledge, a potential customer could not trace the symbolic connection between the name and its bearer, nor that between signifier and signified. Being oblivious or ignorant of the initial concept, however, does not interfere with a speaker's using the name *Outlet* as an indexical sign, as a mere tag, to refer to the shop in question without delimiting it categorially. In this case, the signifier *Outlet* is attached to the signified 'the store called Outlet' and the specialised categorisation is eliminated/skipped.

The correlation between signified and signifier is more visible in the case of a name like *Fashion Outlet* (likewise with *Bike Shop*, *Board Shop*, *Music Center* and *Tuning Shop*). The addition of the lexeme *fashion* expands the representational scheme, by supplementing the number of concepts that need to be actualised and implying that a relationship is to be established between them on the semantic and logical levels. The connection between signifier and signified, on the one hand, and between name and business, on the other, is defined in a similar way. The situation of commercial names consisting of lexemes that are indicative of the type of business (e.g., *Boneshaker*, *Blue Jeans*, *Power Tools*, *Spartan Security*) is also the same, but the conceptual categorisation is implicit. One should bear in mind that there are designations in which the literal semantic association between name constituents and name referent is misleading if one implies the existence of a natural bond. Thus, although *For Sport* is the name of a pub, it could be associated with a specialised shop in the absence of the speakers' knowledge of the business. Nevertheless, the link between signifier and signified, as well as that between name and business, are completely acceptable from the viewpoint of Saussure's arbitrariness theory.

The signifier-signified contiguity is less perceptible with designations that contain proper names alongside categorial terms, as a result of the range of associative meanings that the proper names may develop: e.g., *Alaska Outdoor Shop*, *M@trix xtreme computers*. The clarity of the link weakens even more with commercial names consisting solely of proper names, due to conceptual disparity. For instance, the signifier *Twin Peaks* is attached by convention (the reasons accounting for the name giver's onomastic option) to a signified ('the shop called *Twin Peaks*') that is dissimilar to the concept of the same signifier in the film name *Twin Peaks*. This explanation holds for other trade names derived from names of films (*Full Monty* and *Stargate*), toponyms (*Daytona*) or anthroponyms (*Emilly*, *Sally*).

The relation between signifier and signified is also markedly conventional, symbolic, yet not necessarily salient in the case of trade names consisting of lexemes that are meant to trigger certain positive psycho-emotional associations, such as adventure (*Crash Landing*), comfort (*The Home*), devotion (*Deea For You, 4 You*), hope and peace of mind (*My Lady Angel*), optimism (*Happy*), prestige (*Crowns*), wonder (*Fantasy, Ice Flame, look4luck*), and so forth.

3.4. Names, changeability and (im)mutability

The arbitrariness of the linguistic sign favours the discussion of two other aspects. On the one hand, the resistance to change of the linguistic sign derives from the society's linguistic inertia across time. As Saussure (2011: 74) put it, "At every moment solidarity with the past checks freedom of choice. We say *man* and *dog* [...]" out of our social conservatism to preserve what is firmly established and operational under the trivial auspices of the saying *If it is not broken, why fix it?*, an attitude that can be accounted for through the need to feel a part of an interconnected, hyperlinked world. Some degree of social conservatism is behind the entrenchment of trade names in social mentalities. With linguistic signs in general, this behaviour is possible thanks to arbitrariness: as it is unmotivated, the linguistic sign appeals more easily to the entire society. In a way, then, arbitrariness obeys tradition to the same extent to which tradition begets arbitrariness. The forces of arbitrariness and time are not disjointed, but conjoint: "Because the sign is arbitrary, it follows no law other than that of tradition, and because it is based on tradition, it is arbitrary" (Saussure 2011: 74). In the case of trade names, numerous (semantic, phonetic, semiotic, pragmatic and legal) factors concur to turn a certain onomastic item into a cultural landmark.

Semiotic transformations in relation to language must also be discussed, from the viewpoint of Saussure's theory, in matters of mutability/immutability. Interdependence defines the functionality of these two socially- and historically-minded poles (Joseph 2004: 72) of language alteration: "[...] the sign is exposed to alteration because it perpetuates itself. What predominates in all change is the persistence of the old substance; disregard for the past is only relative. That is why the principle of change is based on the principle of continuity" (Saussure 2011: 74). Regardless of the nature and number of the factors triggering alteration or of their being manifested concurrently *vs* successively, they always result in the same type of effect, "*a shift in the relationship between the signified and the signifier*" (Saussure 2011: 75, italics in the original). It is precisely in this way that trade names function: they evolve by developing new associations on the conceptual level. The reinvention of the image of famous brands, such as Coca Cola, Ford, Google and McDonald's, to name just a few, with the preservation of the essential values promoted by the brands, is evidence enough in this respect. With linguistic signs, however, the two components of a sign suffer changes to different extents, depending

on the level on which alteration parameters are activated. By extrapolation, the shift is eventually salient and grows fixed within the language system (*la langue*), via language use (*la parole*).

4. Conclusion

The meaningful semiotic behaviour of language items, proper names in particular, is an aspect endorsed by Saussure and Van Langendonck alike, although with slight acceptance differences. To Saussure, as underlined by Lyons (2010: 99), “Meaning is therefore a reciprocal relation between A and B, which enables them to call up one another.” For Van Langendonck, meaning levels and conceptual information should not be separated. They depend on one another to the same extent to which a signifier depends on the signified. Nevertheless, according to Lacan, meaning can be construed as “the result of the play of signifiers apart from any synchronic correlation to fixed signified contents” (*Concept and Form*). This perspective tallies with the semantic and semiotic behaviour of trade names. As nonprototypical constructions, they greatly rely on semantic artifices triggered by the unrestricted use of signifiers. Semiotically, then, trade names can be apprehended following Smith’s (2006: 18) description of proper names: “in an act of interpretation, a name may simultaneously function *iconically*, *indexically*, and *symbolically*”. It is precisely this behaviour that enables one to look at trade names as calligrams. In the words of Foucault (2004: 16, my translation), “As a sign, the letter allows for the establishment of words; as a line, it allows for the representation of objects”; as a proper name and a trade name, it allows for the “re-presentation” (Smith 2006: 17) of objects and their values in the collective mentality.

References

- Concept and Form: The Cahiers pour l’Analyse and Contemporary French Thought*. N.d. “Signifier/Le signifiant”. Available: <http://cahiers.kingston.ac.uk/concepts/signifier.html> [Accessed 2016, May 8].
- Foucault, Michel. 2004. *Ce este un autor? Studii și conferințe* [What is an author? Studies and conferences]. Trans. Bogdan Ghiu and Ciprian Mihali. Cluj-Napoca: Idea Design & Print.
- Joseph, John E. 2004. “The Linguistic Sign” in Sanders, Carol (ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to Saussure*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 59-75.
- Juignet, Patrick. 2003. “Lacan, le symbolique et le signifiant” in *Clinique méditerranéennes 2 (Psychanalyse et langage)*, pp. 131-144. Available: <http://www.cairn.info/revue-cliniques-mediterraneennes-2003-2-page-131.htm> [Accessed 2016, May 8].
- Kripke, Saul A. 2001 (1980). *Naming and Necessity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Lyons, John. 2010 (1977). *Semantics*, vol. 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Mill, John Stuart. 2009 (1882). *A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive*, 8th edition. New York: Harper & Brothers. Available: http://www.gutenberg.org/files/27942/27942_pdf.pdf?session_id=316c42590622eae034e68ec8eab79eceb35782f8 [Accessed 2016, May 5].
- Newmeyer, Frederick J. 2013. "Some Remarks on Chomsky's Reading of Saussure" in Anderson, Stephen R., Jacques Moeschler and Fabienne Reboul (eds.). *L'interface langage-cognition / The Language-Cognition Interface. Actes du 19^e Congrès International des Linguistes, Genève, 22-27 juillet 2013*. Genève: Librairie Droz, pp. 233-252.
- Oltean, Ștefan. 2013. "On the Semantics of Proper Names" in Felecan, Oliviu and Alina Bugheșiu (eds.). *Onomastics in Contemporary Romanian Public Space*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. 50-65.
- Saussure, Ferdinand de. 2011 (1959). *Course in General Linguistics*. Trans. Wade Baskin. Meisel, Perry and Haun Saussy (eds.). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Sebeok, Thomas A. 1994. *An Introduction to Semiotics*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Smith, Grant W. 2006. "A Semiotic Theory of Names" in *Onoma*, 41, pp. 15-26.
- Van Langendonck, Willy. 2007. *Theory and Typology of Proper Names*. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

AMORE PIE AND OTHER NAMES IN MIA MARCH'S FINDING COLIN FIRTH

MIHAELA-IOANA TOPAN

Technical University of Cluj-Napoca

North University Centre of Baia Mare

***Abstract:** The paper deals with the proper names in Mia March's novel Finding Colin Firth and focuses on their classification and functions in this novel. While designating its three main characters, the names of Bea Crane, Veronica Russo and Gemma Hendricks are also the titles of three chapters. The names of the elixir pies (such as Amore Pie, for instance) baked by Veronica Russo are semantically transparent and also act as connectors.*

***Keywords:** functions of literary names, literary onomastics, semantically transparent names*

1. Introduction

Whether people read to escape reality, to learn new things, to grow as individuals or merely because they love doing it, they project their way of thinking and beliefs onto the text at hand and use what they know to interpret and relate to what they read. This is one of the things that makes interpreting literature challenging, to say the least. When dealing with a work of fiction, people use everything the text offers in order to guide their reading and understanding. Among the landmarks that help them find their way in the imaginary world and make sense of its events are, of course, the literary names – be they of characters, places or the like. However, proper names in fiction fulfil many different functions. This study deals mainly with the functions that names have in Mia March's novel *Finding Colin Firth* and it follows Ines Sobanski's view of literary names, as quoted by Nicolaisen (2011: 54):

every name found in a literary text is to be understood to be a literary name, irrespective of whether it (a) refers to people, places or material objects, (b) has been extracted from the real name inventory of a speech community or created by the writer, (c) denotes fictive characters, locations or objects, or refers to an actually existing name bearer.

Mia March is a contemporary American author, who published *The Meryl Street Movie Club* in 2012 and *Finding Colin Firth* in 2013. The latter novel makes the object of this paper. It tells the story of how the lives of three women (Bea Crane, Veronica Russo, and Gemma Hendricks) intersect and intertwine one summer in Boothbay Harbor, which just happens to be the location where a new movie, starring Colin Firth, is being shot. *Colin Firth* is to be understood as the name of a fictional character – the fictional version of the famous actor; the author herself makes it clear that the real-life actor does not feature in the book.

Bea Crane is a young woman who discovers that she was an adopted child. She learns the truth in a deathbed confession letter sent by her adoptive mother via a law firm a year after her death. Confused and shocked, Bea leaves Boston and her job in search of her birth mother and finds much more than expected.

Veronica Russo spends her days in Boothbay Harbor working at a diner, making elixir pies – which are famous for solving any problems –, teaching people how to bake pies and thinking about the baby girl she gave up for adoption when she was only 16. Her life changes when she learns how to open her heart again, but also when she gets a voice message from the daughter she had held in her arms for only two minutes before giving her up.

Gemma Hendricks is a career-oriented reporter who has lost her job and fights with her husband constantly about his wish to leave New York City, to start a family and to move in the suburbs next door to his parents. As if that were not enough, she finds out that she is pregnant. She struggles to get back on track with the career she wants, to accept that she is going to be a mother and to embrace this new stage in her life.

Captivating and easy to read, *Finding Colin Firth* is a book that deals with such matters as adoption, teen pregnancy, motherhood, career vs. motherhood, love, and offers more than one point of view on these topics. For example, Veronica Russo became pregnant as a teenager. Her then-boyfriend denied being the father and left her, whereas her parents disowned her and placed her in a home for pregnant teenage girls, severing all ties. Alone in the world and with no money or job, her only option was to give the baby up for adoption. Nevertheless, there are several other cases of teen pregnancy presented in the novel that give different perspectives on the matter and have other outcomes: e.g., a woman, who had given up her baby, had a career and then a family, and now was exceedingly unhappy; a pregnant girl who wants to have a rich family adopt her baby and give it everything she did not have; a teenager who plans to keep her baby and do everything in her power to make things work.

2. Literary names and *Finding Colin Firth*

As Sharon Black and Brad Wilcox (2011: 153) put it, “readers generally orient themselves subconsciously, but writers are very conscious and deliberate about how they provide that orientation.” Few things, if any, are left to chance when a writer develops a work of fiction. When this is taken into consideration, everything in that

text – literary names included – deserves to be looked at in detail and understood in order to grasp the full meaning of the book in question.

Nilsen and Nilsen (2007: 104) point out that

In real life, people's names are lexically packed, meaning that they usually carry information about one's gender and in more subtle ways about one's racial ethnicity, the era in which a person was born, the attitudes and aspirations of the person's parents, and, if the person has a nickname, what kind of friends he or she has. In fiction, this is even more likely to be true because authors purposely design their characters' names to reveal such matters.

Likewise, Anna Fornalczyk (2013: 426) believes that

literary proper names are treated as labels, based on the assumption that writers may have particular reasons to choose names for their characters. Thus, the relationship between names and name bearers is often meaningful, especially when the lexical layer of the name, its phonetic properties or the connotations and associations it stimulates add new meanings to the characteristics of a protagonist.

One might add that when authors create their characters, they take into consideration many factors before they can decide that a certain name is suitable for some given character or other.

The conclusion reached by Black and Wilcox (2011: 162) in their study on fictional naming practices is that, for most of the authors whose naming techniques they analysed,

the most important criterion for name choice is that the name be well suited to the individual character, that it represent aspects including personality, values, general conduct, specific actions, motivations, relationships, etc., in addition to appearance, mannerisms, and effects on other characters. Besides fitting the characters individually, names need to be appropriate for the time period and geographic location of the book – realistic, futuristic, or imaginary.

This seems to be valid in the present case as well. Mia March (in a personal online conversation I had with her on May 9th, 2016) said in relation to the names she used in *Finding Colin Firth* that she chose them because she liked those names and how they sounded. She pointed out that Veronica had always struck her as a strong name, Bea seemed to her a sweeter name, and that she considered Gemma to be a pretty name. March added that if a name did not sound right once she was developing the character, then she would change it, but these names of the three main characters stayed from the beginning.

3. Naming in *Finding Colin Firth*

Considering adoption and motherhood to be central themes in this novel, it is not a surprise that names and the act of naming get much attention from the characters themselves. When Bea Crane finds out that she was adopted as a baby,

her world shatters: “She felt caged and absolutely free at the same time. So this week she’d stalked around Boston, thinking of her parents with one breath, and this nameless, faceless birth mother with the next” (March 2013: 13). She eventually decides to call the adoption agency in order to get information about her birthparents, uncertain and fearful: “Bea sucked in a breath and explained the situation and that she just wanted to know if there were names. [...] Bea held her breath. Make this difficult, Bea thought. No names. She wasn’t ready for a name” (March 2013: 14). She was not ready for her birth mother to become real, yet she does: “Veronica Russo. Her birth mother had a name. She was a real person, living and breathing, and she’d updated the file” (March 2013: 15).

Bea’s life changes completely. First, she cannot believe she was adopted; for her, her nameless birth mother is an abstract, unreal being, a bodiless figment of her imagination, as long as she does not have a name or a face. Once she learns that her birth mother has a name, *Veronica Russo*, everything becomes true; the name turns this far-fetched adoption story into her reality. However, until they meet, Veronica remains for Bea a bodiless, faceless person. Eventually, Bea accepts to have Veronica in her life, even though she keeps saying that she does not know what they are supposed to be to each other.

3.1. Main types of literary names in *Finding Colin Firth*

This novel contains a great variety of names, including:

(1) Anthroponyms: *Cora Crane* (March 2013: 3), *CeCe Allwood* (26), *Penelope Von Blun* (26), *Nick DeMarco* (27), *Leigh DeMarco* (28), *Annabeth Buckman* (30), *Henry Books* (49), *Tyler Echols* (65), *Patrick Ool* (123), *Timothy Macintosh* (321), etc.

(2) Toponyms: *Twelve State Street* (2), *Boothbay Harbor* (14), *Sea Road* (19), *New Mexico* (20), *Westchester County* (33), *Manhattan* (34), *New York City* (37), *Frog Marsh* (48), *Berlin* (62), *Banyon Road* (209), *Seagull Lane* (275), *Meadow Lane* (343), etc.

(3) Names of dishes and pies: *Mt Vesuvius* (1), *Feel-Better Pie* (21), *Happiness Pie* (23), *Spirit Pie* (30), *Cast-Out Pie* (80), etc.

(4) Names of films: *Pride and Prejudice* [the 1995 miniseries] (18), *A Single Man* (52), *Love Actually* (77), *The King’s Speech* (117), *How to Train Your Dragon* (269), *The Importance of Being Earnest* (295), etc.

(5) Names of books: *To Kill a Mockingbird* (66), *Break into Acting!* and *How to Make It in Hollywood* (179 - italics in the original), *Your Pregnancy This Week* (215), etc.

(6) Names of characters from other books or films: the *Bennet* sisters, *Elizabeth* and *Jane* (22), *Fitzwilliam Darcy* (26), *Bridget Jones* (53), etc.

(7) Names of eating and drinking establishments: *Boston’s Crazy Burger* (1), *Poe’s Pizzeria* (8), *Harbor View Coffee* (62), *The Best Little Diner in Boothbay* (68), *O’Donald’s Pub* (222), etc.

(8) Names of accommodation locations, institutions, and businesses: *the Helping Hands Adoption Agency* (4), *the Little White Wedding Chapel* (25), *Hope Home* (31), *the Three Captains' Inn* (41), *the Moon Tea Emporium* (90), *Books Brothers* (90), etc.

(9) Names of real-life actors, musicians, and painters: *Meryl Streep* (47), *Hugh Grant* (51), *Jennifer Ehle* (52), *Emma Thompson* (151), *Adele* (155), *Pink* (155), *Matthew Broderick* (260), *Bette Midler* (260), *Johannes Vermeer* (374), etc.

In this maze of literary names and unexpected connections that bring characters together, the reader needs to keep track of the onomastic material in order to grasp what goes on in the book.

3. 2. The functions of the literary names in *Finding Colin Firth*

Fernandes (2006: 45) points out that “names are viewed as mono-referential – they refer to a single entity – but not as mono-functional, since they may function as carriers, for instance, of semantic, semiotic, and/or sound symbolic meanings in literary works”. In *Finding Colin Firth*, literary names play many roles, other than designating fictional individual entities (be they characters, locations, businesses, and the like). However, it must be taken into consideration that, at the same time, names function both within the work of fiction where they appear, and on the “above-text level” (Fernandes 2006: 46) that connects the author and the reader. This comes to emphasise the great significance names actually have in fictional texts and the way these texts are understood.

The functions of the literary names in March’s novel are discussed below.

3.2.1. Names of characters used as chapter titles

Each chapter of the novel, except the last one, “Epilogue” (March 2013: 378), focuses on the events belonging to the life of one of the three main characters (*Bea Crane*, *Veronica Russo*, and *Gemma Hendricks*) and bears the name of that particular character. Each of the first three chapters has as title the full name of the character whose life is presented, but after that, only first names (Bea, Veronica and Gemma) are used. This brings the reader closer to the characters: s/he gets the impression that s/he meets the characters for the first time when full names are used; then they become friends and get on a first-name basis. At the same time, this technique helps the reader to keep track of the different plot lines.

3.2.2. Names used to create humour

In literature, names can be funny in themselves or in the context or manner in which they are used (including the situations where certain names are used as a basis for humorous nicknames). Here are some examples from the novel in question. In

the beginning, Bea Crane works at *Boston's Crazy Burger* (March 2013: 1), for a boss she nicknamed *Crazy Barbara* (2), and she cooks *Mt Vesuvius* burgers (3) that have to be one foot tall.

One of the characters – a teenage girl that is not very fond of studying – has to read *To Kill a Mockingbird*, but she is so displeased with the book at first, that she refers to it by altering its title: *To Kill a Loser Bird* (263).

3.2.3. Names used as connectors

There are quite a number of names in this book that link the plot lines and even the characters with one another. Toponyms are obvious in this respect, because they map the geography of the fictional world in which the characters live and interact, hence connecting them to each other and to the imaginary world of the book. The most important toponym in *Finding Colin Firth* is *Boothbay Harbor*, a name taken from the non-fictional world. In the book, it belongs to the small town where fate takes the three main characters and where they end up meeting and changing each other's lives: this is where Veronica was born and now resides; Bea is there in search of her birth parents, and Gemma came there to attend a friend's wedding, but stays longer in order to find a way of dealing with everything that is going on in her life.

The names of the elixir pies add something special and magical to this work of fiction. Veronica Russo, one of the three main characters, is famous in the small town where she lives for the delicious pies that she bakes and for the “elixir” ones that many people in Boothbay Harbor believe can solve any problems they might have. The names of these special pies are semantically transparent to the characters in the book and to the reader. These are: *Amore Pie* (18), *Feel-Better Pie* (21), *Confidence Pie* (21), *Colin Firth Pie* (21), *Healing Pie* (23), *Happiness Pie* (23), *Spirit Pie* (30), *Cast-Out Pie* (80), and *Hope Pie* (141). The pies and, therefore, their names as well connect Veronica to the other characters that live in town and to the other two main characters:

She loved baking pies. And her pies felt so special to her that when she made them for friends, she'd name them for the reason she was sharing them in the first place. For a heartbroken friend, Healing Pie. For a sick friend, Feel-Better Pie. For a down-in-the-dumps friend, a Happiness Pie. For the lovelorn, Amore Pie. For the worried, Confidence Pie. Her Hope Pies were popular too. One friend had wished that her boyfriend, on his second tour of combat duty, would come home from Afghanistan in one piece, and Veronica had baked her a salted-caramel cheesecake pie that she put all her hope into and then told her friend to do the same while cutting the first slice. The boyfriend had returned with only a broken leg. Her pies had worked their sweet magic on so many people that Veronica had developed quite a clientele. How did it work, they wanted to know. Either Veronica had a little bit of magic in her or it was all about prayer. Or luck. Maybe some of each. (March 2013: 23)

The name *Colin Firth* is present in the title of this novel and everywhere in the text; it also appears in various combinations. There are phrases such as “HAPPINESS IS COLIN FIRTH T-shirts with his image on them” (51), “a Colin Firth wall calendar” (62), “a Colin Firth fan club” (48) and “the Colin Firth movie” (168), as well as new names, for example, “Colinmania” (179), “Colin Firth Pie” (21).

While it is clearly specified on the cover that “This is a work of fiction, in no way endorsed by Colin Firth and where Colin Firth himself does not feature” (March 2013: front cover), a character with this name is referred to throughout the book and he even appears in the final chapter:

She gasped as Colin Firth himself, wearing jeans and green wellingtons, briefly smiled at her with that irresistible smile she’d seen a thousand times in movies and on TV, and then quickly disappeared into a huge trailer parked in a wide alleyway a few feet from where they stood (March 2013: 379).

Another way in which this particular name brings characters together is through its use when real movies, starring the real Colin Firth, are mentioned and watched by the characters. For example, “Only an idiot would attempt to make a pie – a special-ordered chocolate-caramel cream Amore Pie – while watching *Pride and Prejudice*. Had she put in the vanilla? What about the salt? Damn Colin Firth and his pond-soaked white shirt” (March 2013: 18). While these movies are exceedingly important for one of the main characters, they matter greatly throughout the text to other characters as well, especially when they spark conversations and debates.

4. Conclusion

Mia March’s *Finding Colin Firth* is centred on names, obviously one name in particular, as it is exceedingly clear even in the title of the book. The literary names found in this novel are extremely numerous and they cover a wide range of name types. The purposes for which they are used are also diverse, but these names remain crucial for text understanding.

References

- Black, Sharon and Brad Wilcox. 2011. “Sense and Serendipity: Some Ways Fiction Writers Choose Character Names” in *Names*, 59(3), pp. 152-63.
- Fernandes, Lincoln. 2006. “Translation of Names in Children’s Fantasy Literature: Bringing the Young Reader into Play” in *New Voices in Translation Studies*, 2, pp. 44-57.
- Fornalczyk, Anna. 2013. “The Carnivalistic Aspect of Character Names in Literature” in Bugheşiu, Alina and Oliviu Felecan (eds.). *Onomastics in Contemporary Public Space*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. 424-434.
- March, Mia. 2013. *Finding Colin Firth*. London: Pan Books.

- Nicolaisen, Wilhelm Fritz H. 2011. "Eve's Neighborhood: Fictionalized Factual Place Names in an Off-Campus Novel" in *Journal of Literary Onomastics*, 1(1), pp. 53-59.
- Nilsen, Alleen Pace and Don L.F. Nilsen. 2007. *Names and Naming in Young Adult Literature*. Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press.

REFUGEE CRISIS IN TERMS OF LANGUAGE: FROM EMPATHY TO INTOLERANCE

VESNA LAZOVIĆ

University of Novi Sad

***Abstract:** By analyzing language use in online newspaper articles, this paper focuses first on the heated discussion regarding the appropriate term to be used in order to refer to these people, in particular, whether they are migrants or refugees and whether that issue matters at all. Further, it speculates about the importance of specific wording in these texts, since the language itself often influences our attitudes and the way of thinking, but also evokes mixed feelings, in this case empathy and intolerance. Finally, the paper concludes with recurrent metaphors used to describe refugees and their influence on our perception of the crisis.*

***Keywords:** language use, metaphor, newspaper article, refugee crisis, wording*

1. Introduction

With the influx of more than a million refugees, who have been moving towards ‘the promised land’ of Europe, the problem of their depiction and treatment in the press has immediately arisen. Readers were eager to find out who these people were, where they came from and where they were heading, what their social and educational background was, and, finally, what their reasons were for taking this strenuous and dangerous journey.

By analyzing the language use in online newspaper articles, this paper, first, focuses on the heated discussion regarding the appropriate term to be used to refer to these people, in particular, whether they are migrants or refugees and whether that issue matters at all. Further, it speculates about the importance of specific wording in these texts, since the language itself often influences our attitude and way of thinking, and also stirs mixed feelings, in this case empathy or intolerance. Finally, the paper concludes with recurrent metaphors used to describe refugees and the implications these might have for our perception of the crisis.

2. Theoretical background

In order to examine the role of discourse in creating the attitudes and beliefs of society, the language used in online newspaper articles is analyzed within critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 1995; van Dijk 1997; Wodak and Mayer 2009).

This approach asserts the fact that significant social changes and manifestations of these changes are embedded and maintained in the discourse. In other words, the role of discourse and mass media is crucial both in disseminating potentially prejudiced ideologies and in re/constructing and re/creating the attitudes and 'knowledges' in the minds of people (van Dijk 2003). More importantly, media play an important ideological role, since certain topics about public problems are deliberately foregrounded and addressed as relevant. The language hence produces, maintains and changes social relations of power through media discourse with the aim to construct stereotyped assumptions, legitimate dominance and introduce inequality (Fairclough 1989).

Critical discourse studies therefore underline discursive mechanisms adopted in the realisation of such an ideology and investigate how societal power relations are established and reinforced through language use in the media. The roles of social, cultural and cognitive contexts of linguistic usage are in that way revealed. The choice of different linguistic forms are directly linked to the process of producing the systems of ideology and power hierarchy since the language itself can manipulate public opinion. Both the study of Hartman and Husband (1974) and of van Dijk (1987) confirm that mass media are a major source of prejudice knowledge among people who have not yet created their beliefs and attitudes towards certain groups.

2.1. Previous research studies on the media representation of refugees

In the previous decade the authors focused on two recurrent linguistic aspects of the representation of refugees in the media: (a) the commonly used words and phrases in the media text, and (b) the use of water metaphors to refer to these people.

Baker et al. (2008), for example, based their research on the analysis of a 140-million-word corpus of British news articles about refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants and migrants (collectively RASIM) in the UK press, from 1996 to 2006. They carried out collocation and concordance analyses and identified common categories of representation of these people (e.g. destination, number, residence, legality). They noticed that

...about one in five references to refugees are accompanied by quantification (the Number category). A common strategy was to quantify RAS in terms of water metaphors (pour, flood, stream), which tend to dehumanize RAS, constructing them as an out-of-control, agentless, unwanted natural disaster. (Baker et al 2008: 287)

Their research was part of the ESRC-funded project *Discourses of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the UK Press 1996-2006* (the RAS project), which combined corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis. Some of the quantitative findings are discussed in Gabrielatos and Baker (2008), whereas the qualitative results are reported in KhosraviNik (2010).

Moreover, media reports about refugees and asylum seekers frequently use water metaphors (floods, tides, etc.). For instance, Lee (2007) investigated the media representation of Chinese refugees arriving in California (1850-1890) and recurrent elements of language. The common theme he found in the news of the time was the 'trope of inundation', because

unwanted immigrants were described as 'pouring in', 'swamping', 'flooding in', or as coming in 'tides' and 'waves.'(...) The metaphor alludes to an allied and recurrent image typical of this racist discourse, that of the fear of contamination, the terror of being made unclean by the filthy and sick. (Lee 2007)

Parker (2015) also analyzed the representation of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK and Australian print media (2001-2010). He found out that metaphors of criminals and water were commonly used in both media, but they were used in different ways in each country. In Australia, the focus was on border protection, while in the UK, the focus was on repatriation of refugees from the country.

Recently, Prytz (2016) has explored the difference between the terms *refugee* and *migrant* in the British National Corpus and the change in their use in the corpus during the European migrant crisis, which is directly linked to the aim of this paper.

3. Research methodology

This paper aims to understand how language was used to describe the worst European refugee crisis since World War II and how the media in the UK created new perceptions of migrants and refugees. In particular, it focuses on the use of language and specific wording in online British newspapers to describe the refugee crisis.

Although the UK was perceived as a promised land especially in the media, it was far from being a major magnet for refugees, mainly because of strenuous and lengthy process of application assessments for asylum. There was a constant fear of the influx of refugees, which later even triggered the Brexit referendum in June 2016, but statistically, refugees were mostly heading towards Germany and Sweden.

For the purpose of this research, data were collected from three British online quality newspapers: *The Guardian*, *The Telegraph*, and *The Independent* from 1 through 15 September 2015. The 45 newspaper articles related to the refugee crisis were randomly selected from all three newspapers equally (15 articles each). The resulting corpus comprised approximately 40,000 words. The first half of September was chosen because of two tragic events which had previously occurred (the drowning of the three-year-old boy on the Turkish coast and the suffocation of more

than 70 refugees in a truck in Austria). These appalling events immediately triggered media chain reactions and shifted the discourse from a hostile to a more compassionate tone. The shocking images published in the newspapers transformed refugees from anonymous masses and pure numbers into human beings.

Data were then analyzed using *AntConc 3.2.1*, a corpus analysis toolkit, which carried out both a frequency analysis and a collocation and concordance analysis. Concordances of the terms *refugee/s* and *migrant/s* were examined and grouped in order to reveal linguistic traits of the discourse. These micro-level results were then compared with the already discussed macro-level results from the BNC (Prytz 2016).

4. Summary of findings

Lexical choice in the media is considered to be essential for creating and maintaining attitudes towards a particular subject, in this case, refugees. This part, first, focuses on the terminology problem and discusses the appropriate term to be used in order to refer to these people, in particular, whether they are *migrants* or *refugees*. Then, it switches to recurrent metaphors used to describe refugees and the implications these might have for our perception of the crisis.

4.1. Terminology problem: *refugees* and/or *migrants*?

When the refugee crisis began in 2015, an increasing number of people, who had started a dangerous journey towards Europe, were referred to as *migrants*, *refugees*, *asylum seekers*, *immigrants*, even *illegals* and *boat people*.

At the beginning, both terms *refugees* and *migrants* were interchangeably used. However, the latter has slowly undergone semantic deterioration and has acquired a pejorative connotation, denoting economic migrants, especially after the Home Secretary Theresa May described migration into Europe from Africa by saying that a lot of people coming are *economic migrants* who pay criminal gangs to transport them across Africa (Prince 2015).

On the other hand, Alexander Betts, director of the Refugee Studies Centre at Oxford University, warns that the term *economic migrant* is primarily used to imply choice rather than coercion and implies voluntary rather than forced movement (Ruz 2015). For that reason, several media organizations opted for the term *refugee*, claiming that it is a more accurate and humanizing term for people who have been forced to leave their homes in order to escape horrific life conditions (e.g. Al Jazeera, cf. Malone 2015). On the other hand, BBC used the term *migrant* as a neutral term, but introduced the note on terminology, stating that

The BBC uses the term migrant to refer to (...) people fleeing war-torn countries such as Syria, who are likely to be granted refugee status, as well as people who are seeking jobs and better lives, who governments are likely to rule are economic migrants. (BBC News, 2016)

Anyhow, the readership soon reacted and raised a petition requesting BBC to use the correct term *refugee crisis* instead of *migrant crisis*.

It is therefore of crucial importance how people are labelled, since the words the media choose subsequently affect shaping the readers' attitudes towards these people. If used pejoratively, people will take a negative and prejudiced stance towards them.

4.2. Frequency analysis and collocation analysis

On a macro level, following the corpus analysis of 100-million-word corpus BNC encompassing texts mostly from 1985-1993, Prytz (2016) compared the two similar words and revealed that the term *refugee* is more frequently used, with 27 occurrences per million words, compared to 6.8 occurrences pmw for the term *migrant* (Table 1):

	MIGRANT	REFUGEE	%MIGRANT
Singular	274 (40%)	834 (31%)	25%
Plural	407 (60%)	1889 (69%)	18%
Total	681 (6.8pmw)	2723 (27pmw)	20%

Table 1. Frequencies and proportions of MIGRANT and REFUGEE in the BNC

On the micro level, in the collected 40-thousand-word corpus, the term *refugee* is also used more often, with 14 occurrences per 1,000 words, compared to 3 occurrences per 1,000 words for the term *migrant* (Table 2):

	MIGRANT	REFUGEE	%MIGRANT
Singular	22 (18%)	139 (25%)	14%
Plural	99 (82%)	428 (75%)	19%
Total	121	567 (pmw)	18%
	3w per 1,000	14w per 1,000	

Table 2. Frequencies and proportions of MIGRANT and REFUGEE in the collected corpus

Table 3 shows the immediate left and right collocates of the terms, in singular and plural form.

	1L	1R		1L	1R
REFUGEE	<i>Syrian</i>	<i>Crisis agency camp(s) families quotas council</i>	MIGRANT		<i>crisis problem</i>
REFUGEES	<i>Syrian more many million unregistered help accepting</i>	<i>welcome fleeing seeking</i>	MIGRANTS	<i>economic</i>	

Table 3. Left and right collocates of the terms *refugee/s* and *migrant/s*

Regarding the immediate collocates, the singular forms of both terms are mostly used as pre-modifiers to nouns. The most frequent nouns are *crisis*, *camp/camps* and *agency* (Examples 1-3). It should be noted that the term *refugee crisis* (53 instances) prevailed over the term *migrant crisis* (6 instances).

- (1) European leaders are preparing to create a powerful EU-wide border protection force to deal with the refugee crisis engulfing the continent.
- (2) People coming from Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Sudan are fleeing ongoing civil wars, brutal dictatorships and famine in refugee camps.
- (3) The UN refugee agency later said Britain will take 4,000 more Syrian refugees from Middle East camps.

The plural form of *migrant* is most frequently preceded by the adjective *economic* (99 instances). This frequent collocation implies that these people are regarded by the media as fortune-seekers, in pursuit of a better life standard (Example 4).

- (4) It would be able to arrange the deportation of people deemed to be economic migrants from across the EU...

On the other hand, the plural instances of *refugee* are accompanied by an adjective denoting the prevailing nationality – *Syrian* (Example 5). They are also premodified by quantifiers, which may result in the switch of focus away from individuals and their life stories, where people become just numbers (Examples 6-7).

- (5) David Cameron has pledged that the UK would welcome “thousands” of Syrian refugees under a separate scheme.
- (6) ...the Commission suggests that Germany should take 31,443 more refugees...
- (7) More than 4 million refugees have fled Syria since the war there began in 2011.

Lexical verbs accompanying the term *refugees* include the forms of *flee*, *help*, *accept*, *seek* and *welcome*. Interestingly enough, the slogan ‘refugees welcome’, which went viral during one football match, was found only 12 times in a small-scale corpus, while the slogan ‘refugees not welcome’ was found only 3 times. Given the time frame and recurrent topics in September 2015, it comes as no surprise that this matter was partly shadowed by more prominent issues which surfaced in the media.

4.3. Metaphors

Metaphors have the power to structure our perceptions and understanding, and their repeated use in media discourse can establish prejudiced opinions of the readership towards the subject in question, in this case, refugees and asylum seekers.

Since the beginning of the refugee crisis, the most outrageous examples found in the media included the metaphors MIGRANTS ARE INSECTS (Examples 8-9) and MIGRANTS ARE INVADING HORDES (Example 10):

- (8) *Make no mistake, these migrants are like cockroaches.*
(Katie Hopkins in *The Sun* on 17 April 2015)
- (9) *...a swarm of people coming across the Mediterranean, seeking a better life...*
(David Cameron on the BBC news on 30 July 2015)
- (10) *... large numbers of pretty desperate migrants marauding around the area...*
(Philip Hammond on the BBC news on 9 August 2015)

The examples given were much criticized because they overtly reinforced negative stereotypes of refugees. At the same time, they proved once again how powerful words and metaphors can be in constructing the discursive image of these people. It is especially noticeable when politicians and famous people refer to them in a negative way, by implying that refugees can be criminals who will pose a threat to the security of the country and drain resources from its social welfare.

Another frequent metaphor in media discourse on migration is the metaphor of water. One of the well-known examples of this metaphor, with dehumanizing effects, is the term *anchor baby* for children born to undocumented parents in the United States (cf. Lederer 2013). This term was not present in the corpus, because the right of gaining citizenship has been abolished in the EU countries. Numerous studies addressed the use of water metaphors (floods, tides, swamped etc.) in media reports about refugees and asylum seekers worldwide. For example, El Refaie (2001) found them in Austrian newspaper reports about Kurdish asylum seekers in Italy; Pickering (2001) identified the metaphor in the Australian media reports about

refugees entering the country; Baker and McEnery (2005) discussed the metaphorical expressions referring to refugees in British news reports; Lee (2007) investigated the media representation of Chinese refugees arriving in California in the 19th century, and so on.

In most cases, as suggested by Parker (2015: 7), the metaphor of water is used as a warning about the increasing number of asylum seekers in the country. Baker et al. (2008: 287) underline that these metaphors tend to dehumanize refugees and construct them as an out-of-control, agentless, unwanted natural disaster. By deliberately using liquid metaphors (e.g. People *flood / flow / stream / pour into* a country) instead of neutral phrases (e.g. People *travel / migrate / move / arrive to/in* a country), these people are transformed into a mindless, overwhelming and potentially unstoppable mass (Bleasdale 2008).

In the present study, the most frequent water metaphors included the words *flow, wave, flood* and *influx* (Examples 11-14):

- (11) ...only in 2015 has Europe woken up to the flow of Syrian refugees.
- (12) ...as a wave of migrants, many of them Syrian, pushes north through Europe in the hope of refuge.
- (13) ...the United Nations warned that the flood of refugees into Europe from the Middle East and Africa has only just begun...
- (14) ...the country's military would be deployed to help police deal with the influx of migrants on the border with Hungary if needed.

The water features, such as lack of shape and colour, are hence attributed to humans, which leads to metaphorical dehumanization of refugees (Kainz 2016).

To sum up, all of these metaphors could be grouped under an umbrella metaphor MIGRANTS ARE A THREAT/ DANGER, since floods destroy property, insects destroy crops and invading armies destroy whole towns or countries. This, unfortunately, reaffirms the inhumane media treatment of refugees and deeply roots negative implications and negative attitudes towards these people.

5. Conclusion

As shown in this mini-scale research, words definitely matter, as they can cause a shift in the public mood towards the refugees from the Middle East. The analysis has shown that the media tendencies to address a particular issue seem not to change, regardless of the time frame and the size of the corpus. The death of an innocent toddler only temporarily switched the focus from refugees being seen as nothing more than 'unwanted invaders' and perceived as a problem. The media, hence, use a similar repertoire in constructing accounts of refugees both on a macro and micro level.

Further work could be done in terms of comparing discourses in relation to different political decisions and social events in longer time spans. In addition, it would be interesting to investigate different ways used in the newspaper reports to differentiate ‘them’ from ‘us’, especially by using numerous examples of negative and dehumanizing language.

To conclude, the powerful impact of media on the readers’ perception and opinion cannot be denied. With the careful use of linguistic tools, the media can develop empathetic and sympathetic as well as fearful and xenophobic feelings in the readership. In other words, it can dehumanize one group while sympathizing with others, by simply choosing one set of words and phrases over others. We should be well aware of this manipulating media weapon.

References

- Baker, Paul and Tony McEnergy. 2005. “A Corpus-based Approach to Discourses of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in UN and Newspaper Texts” in *Journal of Language and Politics*, 4 (2), pp. 197-226.
- Baker, Paul, Costas Gabrielatos, Majid KhosraviNik, Michal Krzyzanowski, Tony McEnergy, Ruth Wodak. 2008. “A Useful Methodological Synergy? Combining Critical Discourse Analysis and Corpus Linguistics to Examine Discourses of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the UK Press” in *Discourse & Society*, 19 (3), pp. 273-306.
- BBC News. 2016. *Migrant Crisis: Migration to Europe Explained in Seven Charts*. (March 4). [Online]. Available: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34131911> [Accessed 2016, May 15].
- Bleasdale-Hill, Lydia K. 2008. “Under Attack: The Metaphoric Threat of Asylum Seekers in Public-Political Discourses” in *Web JCLI*, 14.1. [Online]. Available: <http://www.bailii.org/uk/other/journals/WebJCLI/2008/issue1/bleasdale1.html> [Accessed 2016, December 15].
- El Refaie, Elisabeth. 2001. “Metaphors We Discriminate By: Naturalized Themes in Austrian Newspaper Articles about Asylum Seekers” in *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 5 (3), pp. 352-371.
- Fairclough, Norman. 1989. *Language and Power*. London: Longman.
- Fairclough, Norman. 1995. *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*. London: Routledge.
- Gabrielatos, Costas and Paul Baker. 2008. “Fleeing, Sneaking, Flooding: A Corpus Analysis of Discursive Constructions of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the UK Press 1996-2005” in *Journal of English Linguistics*, 36 (1), pp. 5-38.
- Hartmann, Paul and Charles Husband. 1974. *Racism and the Mass Media*. London: Davis-Poynter.
- Kainz, Lena. 2016. “People Can’t Flood, Flow or Stream: Diverting Dominant Media Discourses on Migration”. [Online]. Available: <https://www.law.ox.ac.uk/research-subject-groups/centre-criminology/centreborder-criminologies/blog/2016/02/people-can't> [Accessed 2016, December 20].

- KhosraviNik, Majid. 2010. "The Representation of Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Immigrants in British Newspapers: A Critical Discourse Analysis" in *Journal of Language and Politics*, 9 (1), pp. 1-28.
- Lederer, Jenny. 2013. "'Anchor Baby': A Conceptual Explanation for Pejoration" in *Journal of Pragmatics*, 57, pp. 248-266.
- Lee, Gregory B. 2007. "Chinese Migrants and the 'Inundation' Metaphor. Risk, Representation, Repression: Constructing and Manipulating Fear of the Chinese Other" in *East-Asia Net Workshop: Framing Risk: Hazard Perceptions as a Crucial Factor in Imagining East Asia*. [Online]. Available: <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-00188544/document> [Accessed 2016, November 30].
- Malone, Barry. 2015. "Why Al Jazeera will not Say Mediterranean 'Migrants'". [Online]. Available: <http://www.aljazeera.com/blogs/editors-blog/2015/08/al-jazeera-mediterranean-migrants-150820082226309.html> [Accessed 2016, December 10].
- Parker, Samuel. 2015. "'Unwanted Invaders': The Representation of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the UK and Australian Print Media" in *eSharp 23: Myth and Nation*. [Online]. Available: https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_404384_en.pdf [Accessed 2016, December 20].
- Pickering, Sharon. 2001. "Common Sense and Original Deviancy: News Discourses and Asylum Seekers in Australia" in *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 14 (2), pp. 169-186.
- Prince, Rosa. 2015. "Theresa May: Economic Migrants Fleeing across Mediterranean Should be Returned to Africa" in *The Telegraph*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/conservative/11601628/Theresa-May-economic-migrants-fleeing-across-Mediterranean-should-be-returned-to-Africa.html> [Accessed 2016, December 10].
- Prytz, Ylva Berglund. 2016. "Refugee or Migrant? What Corpora Can Tell" in *Nordic Journal of English Studies*, 15 (2), pp. 47-61.
- Ruz, Camila. 2015. "The Battle Over the Words Used to Describe Migrants." in *BBC News Magazine*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-34061097> [Accessed 2016, December 10].
- Van Dijk, Teun A. 1987. *Communicating Racism. Ethnic Prejudice in Thought and Talk*. Newbury CA: Sage.
- Van Dijk, Teun A. (ed.). 1997. *Discourse as Structure and Process. Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction. Volume I*. London: Sage.
- Van Dijk, Teun A. 2003. "The Discourse and Knowledge Interface" in Weiss, Gilbert and Ruth Wodak. (eds.). *Critical Discourse Analysis. Theory and Interdisciplinarity*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, Macmillan, pp. 85-109.
- Wodak, Ruth and Michael Meyer (eds.). 2009. *Methods for Critical Discourse Analysis*, 2nd revised edition. London: Sage.

Online resources

<https://www.theguardian.com/>
<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/>
<https://www.independent.co.uk/>

METAPHORICAL ELEMENTS IN GENDERED SLURS

KATJA PLEMENITAŠ

University of Maribor

***Abstract:** The article explores derogatory language targeting people and based on their gender. It focuses on the metaphorical meaning of gendered slurs in English. As a background to the analysis, the general nature of sexist discourse is discussed. The analysis of the metaphorical component of gendered slurs and labels is based on the cognitive concept of metaphor as the blending of two different conceptual spaces. The analysis reveals that there are some general differences in the schematic mappings of metaphorical slurs targeting women and those targeting men. These differences reflect the different social expectations for women and men. At the same time, it can be observed that conceptual correspondences in both types of slurs reveal judgements about social normativity and morality.*

***Key words:** gender, language, sexism, slur, metaphor, conceptual blends*

1. Introduction

This paper considers the metaphorical nature of gendered slurs by examining some of the common derogatory gendered labels used in English, which have a metaphorical origin. The metaphorical features of common sexist labels are described using the theoretical model of metaphor proposed by cognitive linguistics. Visual metaphors of the analyzed slurs are also invoked in order to illustrate the extent to which the conceptual features of the target and the source are intertwined. As a background to the analysis, the general purpose and characteristics of sexist discourse are discussed and the usefulness of exposing its origins is evaluated.

The paper is structured as follows: first some background to the sphere of sexist discourse and its consequences are provided. The usefulness of the explicit deconstruction of derogatory discourse is demonstrated, as it generates public awareness of the importance of language used for the perpetuation of people's subordination and marginalization based on gender. Then a list of commonly used sexist slurs based on metaphorical extension is presented, specifically targeting men and women. Following that, a descriptive model of metaphor in the framework of cognitive functional linguistics is introduced. I use this framework to analyze the interplay of metaphorical features of some frequent derogatory slurs foregrounding gender. It is argued here that there are some general differences in the conceptualization of metaphorical labels for women and

for men. The paper concludes by pointing out the extent to which the principles of subordination and marginalization based on derogatory gendered labels are perpetuated and reinforced through the use of metaphor.

2. Sexism in language: reflection and construction of beliefs

Gendered slurs are often discussed in the general context of sexist language that degrades women. As Cameron (1992) observed, an interest in the use of the English language as an essential part of sexist practice was revived in the second wave of feminism and linguistic issues were made central to the struggle against gender-based discrimination.

The concept of linguistic sexism has long played an important part in discussions about the general nature of sexism. Most of the debate about sexism in language uses the English language as the implicit norm for the discussion. Discussions focusing on linguistic sexism are often based on implicit assumptions about what linguistic sexism means and how it should be fought. The concepts of linguistic sexism and non-sexist language, however, are not stable, but culturally diverse and shaped by a variety of factors (Mills 2008). Mills (2008: 4), for example, argues for a “more localized model of sexism” and does not assume “an inherent sexism to words, but.....a much more fluid and pragmatic, context-dependent view of sexism.” Plemenitaš (2014) shows, through a comparison of reactions to linguistic sexism in English and Slovene, that conceptions of what is non-sexist language are far from culturally neutral and universally applicable. Rather, they are influenced by different factors, such as the specific cultural context, the relevant research paradigms, as well as the typological morpho-syntactic structure of a particular language (e.g., the fact that English does not have grammatical gender). The main principles of the underlying social practice, on the other hand, are largely universal, and usually focus on the discrimination of women. Sexism can be conceptualized as the traditional beliefs and practices that foreground the difference between the sexes, whereby women are in some way inferior to men (e.g. Freeman 1971). Linguistically expressed sexism always stems from “larger societal forces, wider institutionalized inequalities of power and ultimately, therefore, conflict of who has rights to certain positions and resources” (Mills, 2008: 1). This can be reflected in language overtly, through direct attitudinal language, or indirectly, through more subtle forms of contextualized sexism.

The gendered slurs for women discussed in the next chapter belong to the direct, overt expressions of sexism through language. Gendered slurs for men are also discussed, but their aim and impact is seen as generally different from those used for women. All the examples are taken from the English language and have the Anglo-American cultural background.

3. Sexist language and gendered slurs

Accounts of offensive language in linguistics often revolve around the semantics vs. pragmatics debate. However, as Anderson (2016) notes, an adequate

and comprehensive analysis of offensive language requires more than semantic and pragmatic theorizing, as derogatory terms gain their expressive power partly through relations of dominance they help establish, as well as those they help maintain. From this perspective, gendered pejoratives should be included in the debate about hate speech. According to The Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers Recommendation, hate speech can be defined as "all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including: intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility against minorities, migrants and people of immigrant origin." (qtd in Weber, 2009: 3) Interestingly, this definition does not mention gender as one of the risk factors for discrimination and hostility. It is, however, possible that women are thought of as a minority. Not all sexist speech targeting women belongs to hate speech, as sexism is often expressed more subtly: it can use seemingly positive words for desirable feminine traits, such as *sassy*, *bubbly*, *ladylike*, *super-mum*, *mumpreneur*, *sweet*. However, these indirect expressions can be considered as part of a wider discriminatory framework which gives rise to overt gendered slurs expressing anger, hate and intimidation, such as *bitch*, *slut* and *feminazi*.

Ashwell (2016) notes that gendered pejoratives present a certain problem for traditional semantic or pragmatic analyses of slurs, as they have no attitudinally neutral correlates (*slut*, for example, is a woman who has more sex than it is socially acceptable, which is not a neutral observation). Gendered slurs seem to differ from demographic slurs in that they primarily concern behaviour or disposition to behaviour and lack an associated demographic category. Ashwell argues that the gendered pejoratives should not be excluded from being considered as slurs, as they resemble personal slurs, which are directed at individuals in virtue of non-group characteristics and which also have no neutral correlate (e.g. *dweeb*, *punk*).

In the analysis below (section 5), I shall attempt to show the ways in which metaphorical gendered slurs intertwine the neutral meaning with the derogatory meaning into conceptual blends.

4. Understanding of linguistic sexism and language change

Debates about sexist language often revolve around the question whether we can change beliefs and behaviour by drawing attention to the nature of derogatory words and by exposing patterns underlying discriminatory expressions. Some form of linguistic relativity is usually taken for granted in the studies of language and gender, based on the presupposition that language both reflects and constructs reality and has the power to reinforce values (e.g., Cameron 1992, Leskošek 2000). Cameron (1998: 12) argues that "even if the assumptions that inform sexist language are not created by language, (...) the sexism of language must constantly re-enact and reinforce the commonsense 'normality' of sexist assumptions". According to Robin Lakoff (1975), language has a limiting function for women, by imposing

boundaries for them and perpetuating their subordination. Therefore it is vital to engage critically with discriminatory linguistic practices. Attempts to change derogatory linguistic labels challenge social prejudices and help to fulfill the desire of targeted groups for labels, linguistic forms and self-descriptions that they can readily identify with (Cameron and Culick 2003: 25). Mills (2008: 7) argues that “discourses can be seen as ‘rules’ and ‘guidelines’ which we produce and which are produced for us in order to construct ourselves as individuals and to interact with others”.

In section 5, attention will be paid to how some of these “rules” and “guidelines” are produced by gendered slurs constructed as conceptual blends.

5. Gendered slurs as metaphorical expressions

5.1. A cognitive view of metaphor

In cognitive accounts of metaphor, there is special emphasis on the conceptual nature of metaphors and the social role metaphors play in transmitting coded messages.

Cognitive linguistics (e.g. Langacker 1999) proposes a conceptual theory of metaphor according to which metaphor is not a special kind of meaning, but rather the result of a special process for construing a meaning (Croft and Cruse 2004: 194). The main tenet of Lakoff and Johnson’s theory (1980) is that metaphor results from the metaphorical mappings between domains, which guide human reasoning and behaviour. According to Lakoff and Johnson’s theory, metaphor is thus a property of conceptual domains – the source domain, i.e. the domain underlying the literal meaning of the expression, and the target domain, i.e. the domain the sentence is really about. These two domains are blended according to the formula “target domain is source domain”, e.g. ‘He is boiling with anger’ is based on the formula ‘anger is heat of a fluid’.

The resulting metaphors can be novel expressions or conventionalized linguistic expressions. It is important to note that the mapping is asymmetrical – the metaphorical expression denotes a conceptual structure in the target domain, not the source domain (Croft and Cruse 2004: 196). The blending between two domains consists of correspondences between them, which are ontological and epistemic. Ontological correspondences hold between elements of one domain and the elements of the other domain, while epistemic correspondences are correspondences between relations holding between elements in one domain and relations between elements in the other domain (Croft and Cruse 2004: 196-197). The correspondences between the two domains are heavily dependent on the whole context of the utterance and they create what Fauconnier and Turner (2002) call conceptual blending.

The life history of a metaphor spans from its beginning as a fresh novel metaphor to its end as a fully conventionalized metaphor. In the beginning, speakers are conscious of the metaphorical status of an expression, i.e. the evocation of the

mental image of the source domain is still very rich and prominent (e.g. Kövecses, 2002: 2). At a later stage, the pendulum moves more towards the target domain and the conventionalized metaphorical expression can become the literal domain for new metaphorical extensions.

The power of metaphor also resides in its ability to create similarities between otherwise independent conceptual domains (Croft and Cruse 2004: 202). As Croft and Cruse (2004: 209) point out, there is a certain openness between the source and the target domains, i.e. the correspondences in the blended space of a novel metaphor are context-sensitive and created by the metaphor rather than preexisting.

In 5.2., this model of metaphor approach will be applied to the examination of some common gendered slurs, focusing on the typical correspondences created in their blended conceptual spaces.

5.2. Gendered slurs as conceptual blends

There are many common slurs with metaphorical origin targeting women or men specifically (cf. *The Online Slang Dictionary*). The following list contains some common slurs and derogative expressions in English, used specifically for women: *bitch, chick, bird, bat, cougar, slut, hooker, gold-digger, witch, cheesecake, battleaxe, feminazi, bridezilla, cunt*. These common slurs fall into several categories, based on the schematic metaphorical mappings of their target and source domains. It should be noted that *cunt* is included in this list, as it is considered as a metaphorical mapping on top of metonymy. Tables 1 and 2 thus show only the schematic metaphorical mappings, which can be further specified (e.g. a woman who has a lot of sex is a *slut*). It should also be noted that the more specific target domain for *feminazi* is *feminist*, but this slur is often directed at women in general, so it is included in the general formula ‘A woman is...’.

Table 1 shows the schematic metaphorical links between the two domains for the above-mentioned slurs.

Target domain	Source domain
a woman is	an animal ((<i>bitch, bat, chick, bird, cougar</i>))
a woman is	a prostitute (<i>slut, whore, hooker, wench</i>)
a woman is	a treasure hunter (<i>gold-digger</i>)
a woman is	a fantastical being (<i>witch, dragon, godzilla</i>)
a woman is	a dessert (<i>cheesecake, cookie, tart, piece of...</i>) (cf. Hines 2000)
a woman is	a weapon (<i>battleaxe</i>)
a woman is	a female genital (<i>cunt</i>)
a woman is	a Nazi (<i>feminazi</i>)

Table 1. Schematic metaphorical mappings for gendered slurs targeting women

There are also several gendered slurs for men of metaphorical origin; some of the more common are the following: *sissy, girly, like a girl, lady, effeminate, dick, prick, penis, scumbag, douche, douchebag, gay, fag, male chauvinist pig, wolf, jackass, shrimp, tomcat*. Several of masculine slurs have a metonymic origin (e.g. *dick, prick, penis*), but they also involve some conceptual blending (cf. Table 6). According to their schematic metaphorical mapping, masculine slurs fall into several categories, as shown in Table 2.

Target domain	Source domain
a man is	a woman (<i>sissy, girly, like a girl, lady, effeminate</i>)
a man is	a male sexual organ (<i>dick, prick, penis</i>)
a man is	an object related to genitalia (<i>scumbag, douche, douchebag</i>)
a man is	a homosexual (<i>gay, fag</i>)
a man is	an animal (<i>male chauvinist pig, wolf, jackass, shrimp, tomcat</i>)

Table 2. Schematic metaphorical mappings for gendered slurs targeting men

A comparison between feminine and masculine slurs shows that their schematic metaphorical mappings differ in several aspects. The only schematic metaphorical mapping they have in common is ‘woman/man is an animal’ and ‘woman/man is a sexual organ’. The metaphorical mappings for women are more varied and reflect a wider variety of social expectations for acceptable behaviour and social position (e.g. *bitch, gold-digger, battleaxe*). Masculine slurs, on the other hand, are mostly connected to some aspect of deficiency with regard to ideal masculinity and heteronormativity or to some aspect of failed behaviour towards women. The mappings based on heteronormativity and ideal masculinity are thus typically reflected in slurs used by men for other men (e.g. *sissy, gay*), while the mappings based on failed behaviour towards women are typically used by women for men, but can also be used by men for other men (e.g. *male chauvinist pig, jackass, dick, prick*).

The source domains for the feminine slurs come from very different conceptual spaces, such as animals, food, weapons, treasure hunting, body parts, activity and ideology, thus reflecting a much wider range of social expectations for women than for men.

The source domains for the masculine slurs, on the other hand, are less varied and they are mostly gendered (e.g. *lady, dick, gay, tomcat*), which reinforces the view that social importance for men depends to a large extent on ideal masculinity and heteronormativity. Sexist language targeted against men is thus typically based on stereotypes of heterosexual masculinity and is commonly used by men targeting other men (e.g. *sissy, to throw like a girl, come on, ladies, don't be a pussy*).

5.3. Analysis of selected slurs as conceptual blends

As mentioned above, metaphors involve the mapping between source and target domains, which creates correspondences between elements in the two domains, and between relations that hold between elements in one domain and in the other domain. The analysis of slurs has shown that both types of correspondences appear in the conceptual blends for gendered slurs. An example of an ontological correspondence for the slur *bitch* would be the correspondence between ‘a female of humans’ and ‘a female of dogs’, while an example of epistemic correspondence for *feminazi* would be the correspondence between ‘hates men’ and ‘hates Jews’.

In what follows, I shall illustrate the conceptual blending in four slurs, two for each gender: *bitch* and *feminazi* for women, and *dick* and *male chauvinist pig* for men.

While *bitch* has long been used as an offensive expression targeting women, the term *feminazi* is a more recent coinage from the 1990s (first used by the conservative radio host Rush Limbaugh (1992: 194-195)). In the life history of a metaphor, *bitch* is now an entrenched metaphor and has become conventionalized and widespread, while *feminazi* can be considered as a relatively novel metaphor.

The conceptual blend for *bitch* is ‘A woman (target) is a female dog (source)’. Table 3 shows typical conceptual correspondences between the two domains for this slur.

woman	bitch (female dog)
female of humans	female of dogs
sexually mature	sexually mature
aggressive in social behaviour, trying too hard	aggressive in physical behaviour, biting
unpredictable, irrational	unpredictable, instinctual
controlling (in conversation, career)	controlling (over her young)
overly vulgar, sexually available	ready to mate, in heat

Table 3. Conceptual correspondences for the slur *bitch*

In more recent times, there has been a reclaiming of the term as a positive label:

socially assertive	physically aggressive, biting
socially independent	independent (in taking care of her young)
enjoying sexuality	ready to mate, in heat

Table 4. Conceptual correspondences for the reclaimed label *bitch*

An example of the positive reclaiming of the use of the term *bitch* is illustrated by the title of an article in the New York Times about Hillary Clinton: *The Bitch*

America Needs (The New York Times, September 10, 2016). In the reclaiming, the negative traits are reinterpreted as positive (e.g. aggressive as assertive; overly vulgar/sexual as enjoying sexuality).

Visual memes of the slur *bitch* illustrate the asymmetrical nature of its conceptual blend and its entrenched nature, as they show a complete visual dominance of the target: the memes for *bitch* predominantly show women without any of the visual characteristics of dogs.

The conceptual formula for the slur *feminazi* is ‘A woman (target) is a Nazi (source)’. It should be noted, however, that the formula here could also be presented in a more complex form as ‘A woman (target) is a feminist (target) who is a Nazi (source)’.

In the life history of a metaphor, *feminazi* is a rather novel, fresh metaphor. From a word-formation perspective, it is not just a conceptual blend, but also a formal linguistic blend, combining the clipping of *feminist* (*femi-*), as an aspect of the target, and the morpheme (*-nazi*), as the representation of the source. The formal composition of the word itself thus exposes correspondences between the target and the source.

woman	Nazi
follower of feminist ideology	follower of Nazi ideology
violently seeking social dominance over men	violently seeking social dominance over Jews and other marginalized groups
imposing feminist views on others	imposing fascist ideology on others
claiming total control of the discussion	claiming total control of the state
taking away spiritual freedom	taking away physical life
blaming men for everything	blaming Jews for everything
having abortions/killing babies	killing Jews
humorless, serious in appearance	strict, military in appearance

Table 5. Conceptual correspondences for the slur *feminazi*

Here, the blending of the two domains is much stronger than in the example of the slur *bitch*. This is reflected in the visual memes of the slur, which frequently show Nazis in typical military uniforms, with some exaggerated stereotypical feminine traits added (e.g. lipstick, lashes). This is probably due to the fact that this is a novel metaphor, but also due to the historically rich negative mental image of Nazis. It also explains why the word *feminazi* has not yet been reclaimed as a positive term – the source (a Nazi) cannot be reevaluated as positive and its conceptual influence on the target is much too strong.

The conceptual formula for the slur *dick* is ‘A man (target) is a male sexual organ (source)’. The basis for this metaphor is actually metonymy – dick is an informal label for the male sexual organ. Conceptual correspondences in Table 6 show that there is also another metaphorical layer to the meaning of this slur.

man	dick
a male human	a male genital
unpredictable in social behaviour	unpredictable in biological reaction
uncontrollable in social behaviour	uncontrollable in biological reaction
embarrassing social behaviour	embarrassing biological functions

Table 6. Conceptual correspondences for the slur *dick*

Table 6 shows that the metaphorical mappings for this slur are not very rich, but the existing correspondences indicate that this slur reinforces negative traits ascribed to men, which is why it is often used by women targeting men for their stereotypically masculine behaviour. Visual mappings lean heavily towards the target, almost exclusively depicting men, which suggests that this slur has become an entrenched metaphor.

The conceptual formula for the slur *male chauvinist pig* is ‘A man (target) is a pig (source)’. As in the case of *feminazi*, its mapping can be presented in a more complex form as *A man (target) is a male chauvinist (target) who is a pig (source)*. Formally the slur is actually a compound, consisting of two modifiers and the headword: *male chauvinist pig*. As in the case of *feminazi*, its formal structure reveals correspondences between features of the target (male, chauvinist) and the source (pig).

Compared to some other masculine slurs, this is a relatively novel metaphor which originated in the late 1960s, based on the already existing slur for policemen (cf. Women’s History).

man	pig
male human	male pig
greedy for power and control over women	greedy for food
suppressing, ‘trampling’ women’s rights	trampling the field, other pigs
amoral ‘dirty’ behaviour	dirty in appearance
satisfying needs without concern for the well-being of women	satisfying needs without concern for other pigs

Table 7. Conceptual correspondences for the slur *male chauvinist pig*

Table 7 shows that metaphorical mappings for this slur are more varied than those for *dick*. They invoke the negative image of pigs as greedy, unruly and dirty, rather than highly intelligent domestic animals. In visual memes of the slur, both sides of the mapping, the target and the source, are invoked. Some memes contain the visual of pigs with some stereotypical male characteristics (e.g. smoking a cigarette), while others only depict men behaving badly to women. This indicates that the metaphor is somewhere in the middle of its life cycle – it is not novel anymore, but it is not completely conventionalized yet.

The above examples illustrate that source domains for women come from a variety of different conceptual spaces, illustrating many different ways in which women can “fail”, while those for men are less varied, concentrating mostly on men’s failed heteronormative masculinity, or, as in the case above, their discriminatory behaviour against women.

6. Conclusion

Metaphors are a creative force of language and can tell us a lot about ourselves and in what kind of society we live. A comparison of the metaphorical nature of feminine and masculine slurs reveals that there are some general differences in their schematic conceptual mappings. Metaphorical mappings occurring in slurs for women are much more varied than those for men. One possible explanation for this is that metaphorical mappings of common feminine slurs reflect a wider range of social expectations for acceptable behaviour and social position of women (e.g. sexuality, ambition, work, ideology, disposition), while common masculine slurs basically fall into two categories: those that are based on some aspect of deficiency with regard to ideal masculinity and heteronormativity and those that are based on some aspect of discriminatory behaviour towards women. At the same time, the analysis shows that the offensiveness of both types of slurs is created through conceptual correspondences between the target and the source. These mappings reflect and reinforce judgments about social normativity or morality and offer a unique insight into the changing social expectations.

References

- Anderson, Luveell. 2016. “When Reporting Others Backfires” in Capone, Alessandro, Ferenc Kiefer and Franco Lo Piparo (eds.). *Indirect Reports and Pragmatics: Interdisciplinary Studies*. Cham, Heidelberg, New York: Springer International Publishing, pp. 253-264.
- Ashwell, Lauren. 2016. “Gendered Slurs” in *Social Theory and Practice*, 41 (2), pp. 228- 239.
- Cameron, Deborah. 1992. *Feminism and Linguistic Theory*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cameron, Deborah. 1998. *The Feminist Critique of Language: A Reader. Introduction*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Cameron, Deborah and Don Kulick. 2003. *Language and Sexuality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Croft, William and D. Alan Cruse. 2004. *Cognitive Linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fauconnier, Gilles and Mark Turner. 2002. *Conceptual Blending and the Mind’s Hidden Complexities*. New York: Basic Books.
- Freeman, Jo. 1971. *The Women’s Liberation Movement: Its Origin, Structures and Ideals*. Pittsburgh: Know, Inc.

- Hines, Caitlin. 2000. "Rebaking the Pie: The 'woman as dessert' Metaphor" in Liang, Mary, Anita Sutton and Laurel Bucholtz (eds.). *Reinventing Identities: The Gendered Self in Discourse*. Oxford, New-York: Oxford University Press, pp. 145-162.
- Kövecses, Zoltán. 2002. *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson. 1980. *Metaphors We Live by*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Lakoff, Robin. 1975. *Language and Woman's Place*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Langacker, Ronald W. 1999. *Grammar and Conceptualization*. Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Leskošek, Vesna 2000. "Med nevtralnostjo in univerzalnostjo uporabe moškega spola" in *Časopis za kritiko znanosti*, 28 (200-201), pp. 409-426.
- Limbaugh, Rush. 1992. *The Way Things Ought to Be*. New York: Pocket Books.
- Mills, Sara. 2008. *Language and Sexism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Plemenitaš, Katja. 2014. "Gender Ideologies in English and Slovene: A Contrastive View" in *Elope*, 11 (1), pp. 17-29.
- The Online Slang Dictionary*. [Online]. Available: Onlineslangdictionary.com [Accessed 2017, Jan. 5].
- Weber, Anne. 2009. *Manual on Hate Speech*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.
- Women's History*. [Online]. Available: Womenshistory.about.com [Accessed 2017, Jan. 8].

THE PROMOTION OF ROMANIAN LANDMARKS IN ENGLISH: AN INTERPERSONAL APPROACH

CLAUDIA E. STOIAN

“Politehnica” University of Timișoara

***Abstract:** Tourism could not exist without promotion, which has become vital in our powerfully globalized present-day world. Language plays an important part in promoting destinations and landmarks. The present study focuses particularly on the way tourism promotional discourse is organized as an interactive event involving language users. It aims to look contrastively at two types of texts, non-commercial and commercial, from a Systemic Functional perspective, namely, that of interpersonal metafunction.*

***Keywords:** interpersonal metafunction, Systemic Functional linguistics, tourism promotional discourse*

1. Introduction

Post-communist Romania is considered a relatively new country on the tourism market (Stoian 2015: 4). The number of tourists visiting Romania is quite low compared to top-visited countries like Spain or the United Kingdom (OMT 2014: 8), but has grown in these years and is expected to keep growing (OMT 2013: 2; Light et al. 2009: 234). It seems that tourism campaigns try to leave behind the connotations implied by the communist regime (Light et al. 2009: 242). For the past years, they have intended to construct a distinctive brand and get known worldwide (OMT 2005: 32).

Both the public and the private sectors contribute to the promotion of a country. The public sector, by means of national, regional and local institutions and entities, carries out promotional activity in order to configure the tourist image of a place, pointing out its attractiveness (Calvi 2006: 22). The private sector, in turn, through travel agencies, tour operators and/or other types of service producers, does commercial advertising with the purpose of selling directly the tourist products and services (ibid.).

Promotion is carried out mainly by discourse. One of its elements, language, plays an important part in promoting destinations and landmarks. The choice of

English as the language of promotion ensures a better distribution and a wider audience to the promotional message, as this is the lingua franca of tourism (Meyer 2009: 22).

This paper looks, on a small-scale, at both types of promotion, institutional/non-commercial and commercial, in order to provide a more comprehensive overview of how different stakeholders on the tourism market promote particular destinations. It aims to analyse contrastively the two types of promotion mentioned, paying particular attention to the way tourism promotional discourse is organized as an interactive event involving language users. Within the Systemic Functional Linguistics framework (Halliday 1994; Halliday and Matthiessen 2004), the non-commercial and commercial types of promotion are studied from an interpersonal perspective. Then, the findings are compared, pointing out the similarities and differences found.

2. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework adopted for this study is Systemic Functional Linguistics, which postulates that language fulfils simultaneously three communicative functions: ideational (the construction of reality through language), interpersonal (the way people enact their relations) and textual (the internal organization of a text) (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004: 29-30).

The metafunction considered here is the interpersonal one. From an interpersonal perspective, language is organized as an interactive event involving language users. In other words, the interpersonal metafunction is concerned with the social relationships between the participants represented within, and interacting through the text, and their attitudes regarding its subject matter (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004: 29). While communicating, language users can adopt different basic speech roles (Halliday 1994: 68), such as giving information, by statements; demanding information, by questions; giving goods and services by means of offers; and demanding goods and services through commands.

The main grammatical system of the interpersonal function is called mood. This refers to the overall structure of the clause, which has two functional constituents: Mood and Residue. The Mood component carries the argument of the clause and is composed by Subject and Finite. The Subject, expressed by a nominal group, realises the thing by reference to which the clause can be affirmed or denied, providing the person or thing responsible for the success or failure of the proposition. The Finite, realized by a verbal group, represents something that can be argued about, bringing the proposition down to earth by means of Primary tense, Modality and Polarity. Primary tense can be present, past or future, anchoring, thus, the proposition in time. Modality, refers to probabilities and/or obligations as judged by the speaker and is classified into Modalization (which expresses probability and/or usuality and refers to the speakers' attitudes towards what they are saying) and Modulation (which expresses obligation and/or inclination and refers to the

speakers' judgements or attitudes about actions and events). Finally, Polarity divides the verbal groups into positive or negative (Eggs 2004: 151-154, 174-183; Halliday and Matthiessen 2004: 111-121, 143-151; Stoian 2015: 50).

As for the Residue, i.e. the component of the mood structure which can be left out or elided, this is constituted of Predicator, Complement and/or Adjunct. Realized by a verbal group minus the temporal or modal operator, the Predicator specifies the actual event, action or process being discussed. It also adds time meaning other than that of the speech event and indicates different aspects or phases and the voice of the clause. The Complement is the non-essential element of the clause and is usually expressed by a nominal group. It represents the participant somehow affected by the main argument of the proposition. Regarding the Adjunct, this is usually realized by an adverbial group or prepositional phrase and is considered to bring some additional, but non-essential, information in the clause. Adjuncts can be further classified into Circumstantial, Modal and Conjunctive, but only the Circumstantial ones are part of the Residue of a clause. Circumstantial Adjuncts add ideational content to the clause by expressing some circumstances related to the process represented, the Modal ones add interpersonal meaning to the clause, being connected to the creation and maintenance of the dialogue, whereas Conjunctive Adjuncts contextualise relationships with some other portion of the text, adding textual meaning (Eggs 2004: 155-172; Halliday and Matthiessen 2004: 21-133; Stoian 2015: 50-51).

The present study looks at the texts chosen and analyses their mood choices and speech roles, their Mood component, i.e. Subject, Finite, Modality and Polarity, and their Residue component, in this case, the Adjunct. The findings may indicate the interpersonal relationships between interactants and the text producers' relation with the content of the text.

3. Data selection and methodology

The study focuses on two websites, one non-commercial, belonging to the Romanian Tourist Board, i.e. *Romania Tourism* (www.romaniatourism.com), and the other, commercial, held by the tour operator called *Ciao Romania* (<http://www.ciaoromania.co.uk/>). Both of them are in English and have no version in Romanian, which may indicate direct writing in English, without a prior translation from Romanian. The study analyses the texts of three webpages from each website. The landmarks chosen, the same in both sets, are the following: the Monastery of Horezu, the Dacian Fortresses of the Orăştie Mountains and Sighişoara. These are considered World Heritage Sites, in other words, sites said to be some of "the world's most visited and heavily marketed tourism attractions" (OMT 2009: 5).

The texts of the webpages mentioned, belonging to two different types of websites and ranging in length from 45 to 255 words, have been analysed contrastively within the Systemic Functional Linguistics framework (Halliday 1994;

Halliday and Matthiessen 2004), paying particular attention to the interpersonal metafunction and its mood structure. The analysis has been carried out only on independent clauses, as it is considered that dependent clauses usually have the same mood as the clause they depend on (Thompson 2004: 48).

4. Analysis and results

The results of the interpersonal analysis are presented as follows: first, the non-commercial website; then, the commercial website; and, finally, the comparison between the two. The analysis provides examples in which the texts are numbered A1, A2 and A3, for the non-commercial set, and B1, B2 and B3, for the commercial set. The order of the landmarks is 1) the Monastery of Horezu, 2) the Dacian Fortresses of the Orăştie Mountains and 3) Sighișoara. The entire texts are included in the Appendix, where a rough analysis of the interpersonal metafunction is presented.

4.1. The non-commercial website

The landmarks focused on by the analysis appear on the same webpage, as the tourist board gathers all the World Heritage Sites in Romania on the same page. The texts presenting the three landmarks are medium long (115-255 words) and are organised in several paragraphs. They describe various aspects considered to be of interest to the audience. It is important to highlight that the website does not offer the possibility to book a tour, as this is not its purpose; it only informs, aiming to persuade, as all promotion does.

As far as the interpersonal analysis is concerned, all the texts are in the declarative mood, always building their clauses as statements, e.g.

- (1) The monastery of Horezu is a masterpiece of the 'Brâncovești' style (A1);
- (2) The Dacian and Roman fortresses are an archeologist's delight (A2);
- (3) Sighișoara is a fine example of a small, fortified medieval town (A3).

Statements are considered to present information as it is, as factual (Mocini 2011: 160). This can imply that the data are to be considered and interpreted as such, with no room for negotiation. Since it is emitted by an official tourist entity, information becomes also reliable.

The Mood component of the clause is mainly represented by Subject and Finite, except for very few cases of Subject ellipsis, e.g.

- (4) their extensive and well-preserved remains stand in spectacular natural surroundings and [ø] give a dramatic picture of a vigorous and innovative civilization (A2).

The place of the Subject is usually occupied by the particular landmarks described; this can be observed in the first three examples provided before, and by their main attractions, like for example:

- (5) The monastery museum features masterpieces of Brâncovești art: icons, books, embroideries, silver collections and an interesting library of old books (A1);
- (6) the area (cf Retezat National Park) was designated as a UNESCO Biosphere Reservation (A2);
- (7) His house (cf Dracula's house) is just one of the many attractions here (A3).

This indicates that attention is drawn to the topic of the text, which is rather expected, as the texts are descriptions of landmarks. The possible visitor and the tourist board do not appear in Subject position, except on two occasions in the entire set. This can construct a rather impersonal message.

Regarding the Finite, this is usually fused and present, e.g. “is”, “are” or “features”, as included in the examples (1), (2) and (5) above. It seems, thus, that the characteristics of the promoted landmarks are presented as generic and timeless (Banks 2002: 6). This is sometimes counterbalanced by past tense and expressed Finites. The past is rarely used in the texts, e.g.:

- (8) The Hurezi School of mural and icon painting had a profound influence on religious art and architecture in the Balkan region (A1);
- (9) The six defensive sites, the nucleus of the Dacian Kingdom, were conquered by the Romans at the beginning of the 2nd century A.D. (A2);
- (10) The fortification walls were up to 50-feet high (A3).

The text on Sighișoara is an exception to this. The main clauses do not seem to focus on the past, but on the present. The message describes the universal present, whereas the past is included as an aside, in subordinated or relative clauses. The preference seems to be for what the landmark has to offer today and not for a previous situation and past fame. The text about Sighișoara may refer more to the past because most of the things it describes do not exist anymore in the present. As for the expressed Finites, these appear rarely and relate to passivization and modalization. Passivization, see examples (6) and (9) above, draws attention to the Subject, whereas modalization mitigates the assertive message of the texts, e.g.:

- (11) Most of the old structure and 9 of the defence towers can still be admired today (A3).

The modal *can* seems to address the reader, providing indirect information on the preservation of several towers, i.e. the information is presented as a possibility or offer, not as a certainty. In other words, the reader is simply given the opportunity to admire the past. The little amount, almost lack of modality, together with the absence of negation, emphasise the presentation of information as statements of fact,

conferring to the message the feature of straightforward evidence (Mocini 2011: 160; Stoian 2015).

The other component of the mood structure, the Residue, is complex and usually contains a Predicator, a Complement and/or an Adjunct, for example:

- (12) the monastery houses (Predicator) precious collections of frescos and icons (Complement) (A1);
- (13) The six defensive sites, the nucleus of the Dacian Kingdom, were conquered (Predicator) by the Romans (Adjunct) at the beginning of the 2nd century A.D. (Adjunct) (A2);
- (14) His house is (Predicator) just (Adjunct) one of the many attractions (Complement) here (Adjunct) (A3).

Complexity indicates a detailed message. This is also pointed out by the frequency of Circumstantial Adjuncts, such as “at the beginning of the 2nd century A.D.” and “here” included in examples (13) and (14) above, as they contribute to the complexity of the text by making the phrase longer (Banks 2002:7). They also add ideational meaning, situating the landmark in a circumstantial background. Circumstantial Adjuncts predominate the text, with very few exception of Mood Adjuncts, such as “just” in (14), and Conjunctive Adjuncts, e.g.:

- (15) This medieval town was also the birthplace of Vlad Dracula, ruler of Walachia from 1456 to 1462 (A3).

The Mood Adjuncts can indicate the rare intrusion of the voice of the copywriter in the text, whereas, the Conjunctive ones add cohesion to the text and link the pieces of information. These two types of Adjuncts are not, however, part of the Residue.

The results discussed so far are summarised in Table 1.

Texts	Mood structure	Speech role	Mood		Residue
			Subject	Finite	
The Monastery of Horezu	only declarative	only statements	+ landmark	only fused + present - modality - negation	+ complex only Circumstantial Adjuncts
The Dacian Fortresses of the Orăştie Mountains	only declarative	only statements	+ landmark	almost = fused & expressed + present only modalization - negation	only complex +Circumstantial Adjuncts

Sighișoara	only declarative	only statements	+ landmark	+ fused almost = present & past only modalization - negation	only complex +Circumstantial Adjuncts
------------	------------------	-----------------	------------	--	---------------------------------------

Table 1. Interpersonal analysis of the non-commercial website

The non-commercial message seems, then, to be presented as assertive, reliable, impersonal and detailed. It focuses on the promoted landmarks and their attractions, describing them as general and timeless. This is sometimes mitigated by passivization and modality.

4.2. The commercial website

In the commercial website, as in the non-commercial one, the landmarks appear on the same webpage. In this case, the page is dedicated to the UNESCO tour offered by the tour operator that visits the Romanian World Heritage Sites. The texts are rather short (45-65 words) and contain few clauses, organized in one single paragraph. They present the tour and mention several important aspects of the landmarks promoted. The page offers the possibility to book and buy the tour.

The mood in the commercial webpages analysed is also declarative and the clauses function as statements, presenting information as fact, as can be observed in the examples below:

- (16) Alternatively you can visit the Horezu Monastery (B1);
- (17) Alternatively you can visit the six Dacian fortresses from the Orăștie Mountains (B2);
- (18) We continue to Sighișoara (B3).

The Subject preferred by the commercial set is no more the landmark promoted, but the possible visitor/client. As indicated in examples (16) and (17), the pronoun “you” is used as Subject, the client being addressed personally and directly. This makes communication immediate and personal. The pronoun sets the ground for a dialogue with the reader and involves her/him personally into the message as an individual and not as a member of a mass audience (Garcia Álvarez 2006: 83; Mongkholjuck 2008: 27). The text on Sighișoara is still personal, but uses “we” instead of “you” (see (18)). The inclusive pronoun includes the user into the virtual tour (Yui Ling Ip 2008: 8) and presents the client and the agency as a team visiting the landmark, creating a sort of bond between them. This instance is the only time when the tour operator is evident in the set analysed. Even so, it does not appear overtly expressed or by itself, but implied and in the company of the client. The landmark occupies the position of Subject only few times, particularly in the text on the Dacian fortresses, e.g.:

(19) The six fortresses form the defensive system of Decebalus (B2).

In other words, the analysis of the Subject can indicate that the commercial message focuses on the possible clients, the users of the website. Neither the landmarks nor their particular attractions are expressed as Subject in the main clauses analysed. They just develop as an aside message, along with the description of the tour.

Turning to the Finite, this is both expressed, e.g. (16) and (17), and fused, e.g. (18) and (19), with a slight preference for the expressed type. This is directly related to modalization, as can be observed in (16) and (17), and passivization, e.g.:

(20) and [*the fortresses*] were declared World Heritage by UNESCO (B2).

Modalization presents users with the possibility to visit alternative landmarks, others than those established in the itinerary of the UNESCO tour. Its presence seems to mitigate the assertiveness of the message, determined by the use of statements and lack of negation, and the communicative directness, indicated by the personal pronouns. The tense preferred is the present, e.g. (16) and (18), as if the message were timeless (Banks 2002: 6). The past is seldom used, as indicated in (20). It seems the present refers to the tour and the past to the landmark and its history.

The other component of the mood structure, the Residue, is complex, containing Predicators, Complements and/or Adjuncts, e.g.:

(21) The six fortresses form (Predicator) the defensive system of Decebalus (Complement) (B2);

(22) Here (Adjunct) was also (Adjunct) born (Predicator) Vlad the Impaler (B3);

(23) and [*the fortresses*] were declared (Predicator) World Heritage (Complement) by 'Unesco (Adjunct) (B2).

The Adjuncts used are both Circumstantial and Conjunctive. The number of Circumstantial Adjuncts is not very high for the length of the texts, indicating either that the background is not focused or that it is developed in secondary clauses. This can be related to the lack of Subjects expressed by landmarks. The Conjunctive Adjuncts, in turn, even if they are not part of the mood structure, are worth mentioning, as they go together with the modals presenting the tours as alternatives, as if marking the offer (see (16) and (17)). They also contribute to the mitigation of the assertive message, together with the modal "can". There are no instances of Mood Adjuncts, as probably the copywriter did not want to be present at all in the texts, aiming to create an impersonal and objective message.

The results found in the commercial set of webpages, as far as the interpersonal analysis is concerned, are summarised in Table 2.

Texts	Mood structure	Speech role	Mood		Residue
			Subject	Finite	
The Monastery of Horezu	only declarative	only statements	only client	only expressed only present only modalization - negation	only complex only Conjunctive Adjuncts
The Dacian Fortresses of the Orăștie Mountains	only declarative	only statements	= client & landmark	+ expressed + present only modalization - negation	only complex = Conjunctive & Circumstantial Adjuncts
Sighișoara	only declarative	only statements	only team	+ fused + present - modality - negation	only complex + Circumstantial Adjuncts

Table 2. Interpersonal analysis of the commercial website

The message of the commercial texts analysed seems, thus, assertive and centred on the client, either alone or in the company of the tour operator. It addresses the reader in a personal and immediate manner. It is less detailed and more compact. The general, timeless and direct message is frequently mitigated by offers and alternatives.

4.3. Summary of results

The results of the two sets analysed are summarised in Table 3.

Mood structure in the non-commercial website	Mood structure in the commercial Website
medium long	short
only declarative Mood	only declarative Mood
only statements as speech role	only statements as speech role
+ landmark in the role of Subject	+ client in the role of Subject
+ fused, + present Finite	slightly + expressed, + present Finite
little modalization	frequent modalization
- negation	- negation
+ complex Residue	+ complex Residue
+ Circumstantial Adjuncts	= Circumstantial & Conjunctive Adjuncts

Table 3. Summary of results

The non-commercial and commercial sets share certain characteristics regarding the interpersonal metafunction, as indicated in Table 3. They both prefer the declarative Mood expressed by statements, the present Finites, the absence of

negation and a complex Residue. These characteristics present the promotional message as assertive, reliable, factual, timeless and complex.

The sets are, however, different in terms of length, Subject, type of Finite, modalization and Adjuncts. The non-commercial texts are medium long and informative, developing on the landmarks promoted. The commercial texts, in turn, are short and telegraphic, addressing the reader directly and describing the landmarks as asides. The non-commercial set places the landmark as Subject, while the commercial one prefers the client. The former set looks, then, more focused on the topic of the text and more impersonal, whereas, the latter seems more personal and direct. As for the Finite, the non-commercial message is more general, as indicated by the fused Finites. The commercial one uses many expressed Finites, mitigating, thus, universality and assertiveness. The expressed Finites are linked to the use of modalization – more frequent in the commercial set – which offers the client different alternative tours. This can be further linked to the amount of Conjunctive Adjuncts in the commercial set, which function at the textual level by marking the offer expressed by the modal. The lower frequency of Circumstantial Adjuncts in the commercial set can be due to the short length of the texts.

5. Conclusion

The present paper has presented the analysis and comparison of two types of websites. The study has looked at non-commercial and commercial promotional tourism websites. It has focused on the webpages they use to promote the World Heritage Sites in Romania, particularly on their texts. The analysis, carried out from an interpersonal perspective within the framework proposed by Systemic Functional Linguistics and following Halliday's model (1994 (1985); Halliday and Matthiessen 2004), has shown that certain aspects of the sets are similar, while others are different. Both sets express an assertive, reliable, factual, timeless and complex message. Nevertheless, the non-commercial set is longer, more general, impersonal and centred on the landmark, whereas the commercial set is shorter, more direct and compact, being presented as an offer to the directly addressed client.

To conclude, it can be said that the tourism promotional message is assertive, universal, timeless, factual and complex. This may be due to the type of discourse (specialized) and its general purpose (promotion). The differences may be explained by the emitter of the text (public vs. private), the immediate purpose of the website (inform vs. sell), the medium of communication (the Internet) and/or the situational and cultural contexts (Romanian copywriters writing in English for an international audience). Finally, it should be emphasised that the interpersonal metafunction needs to be considered in the construction of a promotional tourism message, as it facilitates the relation between interlocutors and the presentation of information. This can help the linguistic message to highlight the destination's best assets and identify them in "a highly competitive global marketplace, in which people's

awareness of different destinations is limited, their attention span short and the competitive ‘noise’ very loud” (WTO and ETC 2009: 11; Stoian 2015: 35).

References

- Banks, David. 2002. “Systemic Functional Linguistics as a Model for Text Analysis” in *ASp Varia*, 35-36, pp. 23-34.
- Calvi, Maria Vittoria. 2006. *Lengua y Comunicación en el Español del Turismo*. Madrid: Arco Libros.
- Eggs, Suzanne. 2004 (1994). *An Introduction to Systemic Functional Linguistics*. London: Pinter.
- García Álvarez, Lara. 2006. “The Discourse of Turespaña’s New Advertising Campaign ‘Spain Marks’” in Ramallo, Fernando, Anxo M. Lorenzo and Xoán Paulo Rodríguez-Yañez (eds.). *Discourse and Enterprise. Communication, Business, Management and Other Professional Fields*. Munich: Lincom Europa, pp. 71-85.
- Halliday, Michael A.K. 1994 (1985). *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. London: Hodder Arnold.
- Halliday, Michael A.K. and Christian Matthiessen. 2004. *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, 3rd edition. London: Hodder Arnold.
- Light, Duncan, Craig Young and Mariusz Czepczyński. 2009. “Heritage Tourism in Central and Eastern Europe” in Dullen, Timothy J. and Guyan P. Nyaupane (eds.). *Cultural Heritage and Tourism in the Developing World. A Regional Perspective*. London: Routledge, pp. 224-245.
- Meyer, Charles F. 2009. *Introducing English Linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mocini, Renzo. 2011. *La Comunicazione Turistica: Strategie Promozionali e Traduttive*. Viterbo: Sette Città.
- Mongkholjuck, Chinanard. 2008. “A Genre Analysis of Tourist Attraction Leaflet Produced and Distributed in Thailand in 2004”. PhD thesis, Kasetsart University. [Online]. Available: <https://www.scribd.com/document/185375664/LEAFLETS-pdf> [Accessed 2016, Jan. 10].
- OMT. 2005. *Tendencias de los Mercados Turísticos 2005 - Panorama Mundial y Actualidad del Turismo*. Madrid: OMT.
- OMT. 2009. *Sustainable Tourism Management at World Heritage Sites - Enhancing Interagency and Stakeholder Coordination for Joint Action*. Madrid: OMT.
- OMT. 2013. *Panorama OMT del Turismo Internacional, edición 2013*. Madrid: OMT.
- OMT. 2014. *Panorama OMT del Turismo Internacional, edición 2014*. Madrid: OMT.
- Stoian, Claudia E. 2015. *The Discourse of Tourism and National Heritage*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Thompson, Geoff. 2004 (1996). *Introducing Functional Grammar*. London: Arnold.
- WTO and ETC. 2009. *Handbook on Tourism Destinations Branding*. Madrid: WTO.
- Yui Ling Ip, Janice. 2008. “Analyzing Tourism Discourse: A Case Study of a Hong Kong Travel Brochure” in *LCOM Papers*, 1, pp. 1-19.

Appendix

Legend:

// = dependent clauses, not considered for the interpersonal analysis

[] = embedded clauses, not considered for the interpersonal analysis

<<>> = interpolated clauses

DEC = declarative; STAT = statement; S = Subject; F = Finite; F/P = Fused Finite and Predicate; EF = Expressed Finite; Pr = Present; Pa = Past; Fmz = modalized; Fml = modulated; P = Predicate; C = Complement; A = Adjunct; Ac = Conjunctive Adjunct; Am = Mood Adjunct; Aj = Conjunctive Adjunct

Appendix A – Non-commercial website

A.1. The Monastery of Horezu

(DEC, STAT) //Founded in 1690 by Prince Constantine Brâncoveanu, // the monastery of Horezu (S) is (PrF/P) a masterpiece of the 'Brâncovenesti' style (C). (DEC, STAT) //Renown for the richness of its sculptural detail, the treatment of its religious compositions and its painted decorative works, // the monastery (S) houses (PrF/P) precious collections of frescos and icons [[dating from the end of the 17th century and beginning of the 18th century]] (C). (DEC, STAT) The Hurezi School of mural and icon painting << // established at the monastery in the 18th century // >> (S) had (PaF/P) a profound (Ac) influence (P) on religious art and architecture (C) in the Balkan region (Ac). (DEC, STAT) The monastery museum, << // housed in the princely residence // >> (S) features (PrF/P) masterpieces of Brâncovenesti art: icons, books, embroideries, silver collections and an interesting library of old books // containing approximately 4,000 volumes // (C).

A.2. The Dacian Fortresses of the Orăștie Mountains

(DEC, STAT) //Dating from the 1st centuries B.C. and A.D. // and strewn from Orăștie to Retezat Mountains, // the Dacian and Roman fortresses << // recognized by UNESCO as World Heritage Sites // >> (S) are (PrF/P) an archeologist's delight (C). (DEC, STAT) //Built as a defense ring around the capital of the Dacian kingdom, Sarmizegetusa, // they (S) include (PrF/P) the ruins of the fortresses at Bănița, Căpâlna, Costești - Blidaru, Costești - Cetățuie, Luncani - Piatra Roșie, as well as preRoman Dacian capital (Sarmisegetuza) (C). (DEC, STAT) The fortresses (S) show (PrF/P) an unusual fusion of military and religious architectural techniques and concepts from the classical world and the late European Iron Age (C). (DEC, STAT) The six defensive sites, the nucleus of the Dacian Kingdom (S), were (PaEF) conquered (P) by the Romans (Ac) at the beginning of the 2nd century A.D. (Ac); (DEC, STAT) their extensive and well-preserved remains (S) stand (PrF/P) in spectacular natural surroundings (C) (DEC, STAT) and give (PrF/P) a dramatic picture of a vigorous and innovative civilization (C). (DEC, STAT) At Sarmisegetuza (Ac) you (S) can (PrEFmz) still (Am) see (P) the remains of the forum and the elliptical brick and stone amphitheatre [[where gladiator shows were held]] (C). (DEC, STAT) Hiking enthusiasts (S) can (PrEFmz) enjoy (P) the trails (C) in the nearby Retezat National Park, the oldest in Romania // (established 1935) // (Ac). (DEC, STAT) //Covering 95,000 acres of pristine forests, alpine meadows, peaks, and some 80 glacial lakes, // the area (S) was (PaEF) designated (P) as a UNESCO Biosphere Reservation (C) (DEC, STAT) and provides (PrF/P) unforgettable hiking experiences (C) among its peaks, valleys, rivers and gorges (Ac). (DEC, STAT) The area (S)

is (PrEF) best (Ac) explored (P) during the summer season (Ac) with proper hiking equipment and directions (Ac).

A.3. Sighișoara

(DEC, STAT) //Founded by German craftsmen and merchants [[known as the Saxons of Transylvania]],// Sighișoara (S) is (PrF/P) a fine example of a small, fortified medieval town [[which played an important strategic and commercial role on the fringes of central Europe for several centuries]] (C). (DEC, STAT) Sighișoara, one of the most beautiful towns in the heart of Transylvania, (S) looks (PrF/P) today (Ac) [[much as it did 500 years ago]] (C). (DEC, STAT) This medieval town (S) was (PaF/P) also (Aj) the birthplace of Vlad Dracula, ruler of Walachia from 1456 to 1462 // - nicknamed Vlad Țepeș (Vlad the Impaler) -// (C). (DEC, STAT) It (S) was (PaF/P) he (C) [[who inspired Bram Stoker's fictional creation, Count Dracula]] (S). (DEC, STAT) His house (S) is (PrF/P) just (Am) one of the many attractions (C) here (Ac). (DEC, STAT) Others (S) include (PrF/P) the Church on the Hill, with its 500-year old frescos; the Church of the Dominican Monastery, and the Venetian House, //renown for its Renaissance carved altarpiece, baroque painted pulpit, Oriental carpets and 17th-century organ;// //built in the 13th century// (C). (DEC, STAT) Among the most striking attractions (S) is (PrF/P) the 210-foot high Clock Tower (Council Tower), //built in the 14th century// //where each day a different wooden figure emerges from the belfry on the stroke of midnight// (C). (DEC, STAT) The tower (S) was (PaEF) raised (P) in the 13th and 14th centuries //when Sighișoara became a free town controlled by craft guilds, //each of which had to finance the construction of a bastion// //and defend it during wartime// (Ac). (DEC, STAT) The fortification walls, << //built in the 14th and 15th centuries, //>> (S) were (PaF/P) up to 50-foot high (C) (DEC, STAT) and featured (PaF/P) 14 defense towers (C). (DEC, STAT) Most of the old structure and 9 of the defense towers (S) can (PrEFmz) still (Am) be admired (P) today (Ac).

Appendix B – Commercial website

B.1. The Monastery of Horezu

(DEC, STAT) Alternatively (Aj) you (S) can (PrEFmz) visit (P) the Horezu Monastery – UNESCO monument (C) //founded in 1690 by the Prince Constantin Brâncoveanu//, //considered one of the best examples of “Brâncovean” style//, //known for the purity of architectural details and richness of details, for its religious composition, ex – voto portraits and ornamental painting//.

B.2. The Dacian Fortresses of the Orăștie Mountains

(DEC, STAT) Alternatively (Aj) you (S) can (PrEFmz) visit (P) the six Dacian fortresses from the Orăștie Mountains (C), //built in the style of murus dacicus, in the period from the first century BC to the first century AD as protection from the conquering Romans//. (DEC, STAT) The six fortresses (S) form (PrF/P) the defensive system of Decebalus (C) (DEC, STAT) and were (PaEF) declared (P) World Heritage (C) by UNESCO (Ac).

B.3. Sighișoara

(DEC, STAT) We (S) continue (PrF/P) to Sighișoara, the "fortified city" among the very few in Europe (Ac), //which retains its medieval centre on the top of the hill//. (DEC, STAT) Here (Ac) was (PaEF) also (Aj) born (P) Vlad the Impaler (S), //better known as Count Dracula//.

(DEC, STAT) There (S) are (PrF/P) several defensive towers [[that surround the city]] (C),
//named after the trades of their builders: the Tailors' Tower, the Shoemakers' Tower, the
Rope Makers' Tower, the Clock Tower etc//.

THE IMPLIED LANGUAGE OF IRAQI POLITICIANS: DO THE IRAQI EVER APOLOGIZE?

AHMAD KAREEM SALEM AL-WUHAILI

University of Craiova

Abstract: *As a common speech act in everyday language, apology has become frequent in every field: in law, medicine, agriculture, in politics, etc. The present study focuses on the way Iraqi politicians use the speech act of apology in one of the varieties of language, namely in the language of politics, and on how this variety influences society. The hypothesis behind this research project is that in the Iraqi politicians' speech one can identify apology, but, despite Glassé's (1989) assertion that the Arabic language maintains a fresh directness, their political apology is expressed indirectly rather than directly. For the purpose of this study, several apologies expressed by presidents, ministers, representatives of political institutions have been selected; they will be analysed on the basis of Fraser's (1981) approach.*

Keywords: *Iraqi political apology, political discourse and apology, political language, pragmatics analysis*

1. Introduction

There is no doubt that all governments have been making mistakes along history, which can justify the increase in the number of political apologies. Apologies are speech acts whose use in political discourse may have different manifestations, triggered by its various aims. According to Leech's (1983: 84) idea, certain manifestations of politeness may be related to one particular culture or language community. Schiffman (1996: 68-70) states that in the Arabic linguistic culture, some myths and beliefs seem to emphasize the society's way of acting and expressing; they refer to (1) the superiority of Arabic, (2) the classical-colloquial diglossia, (3) thoughts about the ranking of various dialects, (4) the future of Arabic, (5) the sacredness of Arabic. According to Glassé (1989: 46), this specificity of the Arabic language and the myths created around it can be justified by the role given to the Koran, where, he argues,

language itself is sacred, because of its miraculous power to communicate and to externalize thought (...) man externalizes what is within his mind by formulating words with the breath, by giving breath form in sound.

He also stresses the fact that

Arabic, though originally a desert nomadic dialect, has maintained a fresh directness that makes it a more suitable vehicle than many others.

But are there any reflections of these myths on the Iraqi politicians' way of apologizing? Furthermore, are the Iraqi politicians ever apologizing? The hypothesis behind this research is that, in the Iraqi politicians' speech, one can identify apology, but, despite Glassé's assertion that the Arabic language maintains a fresh directness, their political apology is expressed indirectly rather than directly.

2. Political discourse and apology

Political discourse can be defined as the discourse held by politicians (actors or authors) or by representatives of political institutions. Van Dijk (1997: 15) states that in order to define the political discourse we have to take into consideration the context, more precisely its functions, its aims, and its goals. But the idea of political discourse is not confined to political institutions in the shape of political speeches, parliamentary discourse, election campaigns, etc. (Zheng, 2000: 1). In fact, political discourse may also refer to all linguistic manifestations that are considered to be political (ibid). The discourse is often influenced by the socio-political context and it might be changed by it. Ruth Wodak (2009: 38-39) suggests four layers through which one can explore how genre, discourse, and text can be influenced by socio-political contexts. The four layers are:

- (1) The intertextual and interdiscursive relationships between utterances, texts, genres and discourses;
- (2) The extra-linguistic social/sociological variables;
- (3) The history and archaeology of texts and organizations; and
- (4) The institutional frames of the specific context of a situation.

We communicate with others through a medium and that medium is language, therefore communication is the function of the language we use. However, language is related to politics, power and control (Oliver, 1994: 4). Understanding the symbolic system and the codes of a language will be insufficient. One must take into account its use in a discourse, in this particular case, in political discourse. In order to understand it along with the speech act of apology in the political field, we need to understand the language of politics. Politics can be seen percolating almost each and every aspect of human thought and activity to a vast extent. Politics is a human

activity, which reflects itself in language (Newmark 19886: 44). Various kinds of purposes may dictate the features of political language, such as ordering, persuading voters, influencing the audience, or making people adopt certain general political or social attitudes and so on (Woods, 2006: 50-51). There is a distinct relation between language and politics, remarkably discussed by O'Bar and O'Bar (1976: 353). The use of language as an effective, multipurpose tool can bring about various political and social aims. The relationship between language and politics is discussed by O'Bar and O'Bar (1976: 10), who point out that:

- (1) The relationship refers to those situations in which governments get involved in an attempt to control the system of communication (e.g. the setting of language policies by governments which impose what language is to be used, by whom, when, and why). In this case language is used in the exercise of political power, a fact which was confirmed by Spolsky (2004: 58). A government can attempt to control its minority groups by banning their language, like Turkey bans the use of the Kurdish language, spoken by one of its larger minorities.
- (2) The relationship refers to those situations in which language features intervene and affect the practices of political institutions (e.g. the situations in which language is a resource in the political procedure, whether in the hands of individual performers or governments, and is used to manipulate, control, and gain political ends).
- (3) The relation between language and politics refers to those situations in which both language and politics are in joint interaction, feeding back upon each other, i.e. this relation refers to the entire situation whereby language policies are set by governments or where language communities are deliberately utilized for political aims.

Language and politics cannot be easily separated from each other, since they are interrelated noticeably. The field of politics can be seen in every aspect of life and thus, it comes to be inseparable from language itself. Van Dijk (1997: 206) refers to the fact that language and politics go together. Politics is dependent on language, and any use of language within the social groups leads to what is called politics in its wide sense. The functions of political language are multiple and their variety extends to cover many of the human affairs with many different senses. It is worth remembering the huge potential of language as a multi-purpose instrument: varied implications in varied situations can be conveyed by the same figure of speech. Politicians and all those who practice or are interested in the field of politics employ or manipulate politics as a tool to achieve their aims, namely to create a desired effect on their audience; the connection between language and politics can be perceived in the sense that language and the way it is used is considered as a tool of politics.

In political discourses, whether national or international, written or spoken, apologies are used by one or more political actors, be they presidents, prime-

ministers, members of parliaments, ministers, political institutions, etc. They are used for certain past or present offence, and represent those acts

whose coherence lies in the distinctly political quality of the wrongs committed, with their having been systematically committed under the mantle of the nation. (Celermajer 2008: 14)

The speech act of apology is particularly important in the political arena. Taft (2000: 1142) considers apologies as acts which can be served morally. As a moral act, using apologies helps one to acknowledge the norms of social behaviour, to know that a certain social behaviour (the right one) has been violated (ibid). For an apology to be genuine, Taft (2000) mentions that it should contain two main elements: 1) repentance for the wrong committed; 2) an acknowledgment of the offence committed and its identification. Like apologies in general, political apologies present special features. Leech (2014: 131-132) identifies four necessary features, the first one being that a political apology, whether spoken or written, should take place in the mass media. The second feature is that a political apology does not necessarily engage only two persons (an offender (the speaker) and the offended (the hearer)), but it may engage a large number or groups of people. The third feature refers to the fact that the person who performs the act of apology may be a representative of the political institutions and not the offender himself/herself. The fourth feature is related to the situation when some consequences considered severe, like resignations, trials, or criminal persecution determine the expression of the political apology as a response to some public complaints, in order to ease the public offence.

Such political texts are often manipulated in order to express different types of meaning (e.g., knowledge, belief, truth, facts, logical necessity, probabilities, etc.), and they must explicitly and implicitly indicate the exploitation of apology meaning. Pragmatically speaking, the speech act of apology can frequently be found, even if it may occur in various syntactic forms. The speech act of apology in the political field may not be perceived, even when using the performative verb that expresses the psychological state of the speaker (*to apologize*). In many cases, the apologizer manipulates the tool (language) to achieve his/her goals. In political apologies, politicians easily equivocate and use various forms of apologies in order not to admit that offence has been given or to release themselves from any responsibility.

3. Methodology: The analysis framework – Fraser’s approach

In order to analyze the way in which Iraqi politicians use the speech act of apology, five excerpts from political speeches held by Iraqi politicians have been collected and studied: they are apologies offered by Saddam Hussein (previous president of Iraq, 1979-2003), Watban Al-Tikriti (previous Iraqi Minister of the

Interior, 1991-1995), Hadi Al-Ameri (Iraqi Transportation Minister, 2010-2014) and the representative of the Ministry of the Interior.

My analysis is based on Fraser's (1981: 262-263) approach, which will help to identify apologies according to different criteria. Fraser establishes four direct semantic strategies and five indirect semantic strategies. Each of these strategies must meet, semantically and pragmatically, a particular criterion.

Direct Strategies	Indirect Strategies
1- Announcing that you are apologizing, e.g. "I (hereby) apologize for..."	1- Expressing regret for the offence, e.g. "I'm (truly/very/so/terribly) sorry for..."
2- Stating one's obligation to apologize, e.g. "I must apologize for..."	2- Requesting forgiveness for offence, e.g. "please excuse me for..."
3- Offering to apologize, e.g. "I (hereby) offer my apology for..."	3- Acknowledging responsibility from a similar offending act, e.g. "That was my fault"
4- Requesting the hearer to accept an apology, e.g. "please accept my apology for..."	4- Promising forbearance from a similar offending act, e.g. "I promise you that this will never happen again"
	5- Offering regret, e.g. "Please let me pay for the damage I've done"

Table 1. Apology strategies

Besides Fraser's strategies of apologizing, I shall consider any other way of expressing apology to be an indirect strategy.

4. Iraqi political apologies analysis

4.1. Text 1

Saddam Hussein, president of the Republic of Iraq, apologizes to Ronald Regan.

I would like to express to you my deepest regret over the painful incident that has happened to the U.S. frigate Stark and to the victims lost in it.
(http://articles.latimes.com/1987-05-19/news/mn-1203_1_security-council)

Saddam opens his sentence expressing regret with the modal *would* and this creates two possibilities of analysis. Deutschmann (2003) states that an offender may

sometimes use verbs of apology without truly apologizing, such as non-performative verbs, e.g. modal verbs expressing will or duty. By employing the modal *would*, Saddam tries to undermine the performativity of his utterance. In other words, Saddam uses a non-performative apology to avoid an explicit apology for the action carried out by the Iraqi F-1 Mirage Jet. Semantically, Saddam's speech is affected by the modal verb used, expressing his will or duty to apologize. In this sentence, he violates the maxim of manner, and the result is the avoidance of the negative consequences normally attached to the realization of a felicitous apology. Pragmatically, this is an indirect way of apologizing, as already mentioned earlier (which stands outside the strategies mentioned above) and the modal *would* clarifies the idea. The other possibility of analysis is that, by using *would + like + to*, Saddam formulates a polite request for expressing his apology. Both ways lead us to consider the speech as indirect apology. In this first example, we could notice one of the myths and beliefs mentioned by Glassé (1989), concerning the superiority of Arabic. However, we could also perceive the lack of directness in apologizing, mentioned by Glassé.

4.2. Text 2

The previous Iraqi Minister of Interior, Watban Al-Tikriti, Saddam Hussein's brother, apologizes to the Iraqi people.

I will confess what I wrote about the history of the previous regime, which I considered as being divided between the tyrant and the innocent. We lived in poverty, and deprivation from the basic things of life - food and safety, etc. My brother Saddam was the only swivel between the Al-Baath party and myself, and after his death I am released from my chains and I dare to say whatever I like. We have to apologize to the glorious Iraqi people who supported the party, and I (hereby) apologize to them. (my translation) (<http://www.alriyadh.com/587189>)

In this excerpt, Al-Tikriti starts with some justifications for the wrong acts committed during the previous government, specifically under his brother's presidency. It is clear that these justifications are acceptable especially because the speech was given in the court, while he and other members of the previous Iraqi government were judged for the acts committed against the Iraqi people. Before offering his apology, Al-Tikriti asserts the necessity to apologize to the Iraqi people and says "we have to apologize", which in turn represents an external obligation to apologize, expressed by the modal verb *have to*. However, the way he ends his speech is direct and in this way, he accepts responsibility for his deeds and the accusations which were brought to him. Syntactically, semantically and pragmatically, this speech carries an apology and by applying Fraser's strategies, one can see that Al-Tikriti announces that he is apologizing to the Iraqi people (I + (herby) apologize). The directness of his way of apologizing confirms the sacredness of Arabic language as stated by Glassé.

4.3. Text 3

Here is Saddam's apology to the Kuwaitis:

We apologize to God for any act that has angered Him in the past and that has been held against us, and we apologize to you (the Kuwaitis) on the same basis. (<http3://www.cbc.ca/news/world/saddam-apologizes-to-kuwait-1.340943>)

This is perhaps the most distinct way of apologizing identified in Saddam's speech. Saddam's way of expressing his apology is interesting, because he first addresses his apology to God for any act that has angered Him. The approach used by Saddam in his speech can be considered as a tactic used in order to minimize the offence he gave to the Kuwaitis. Saddam's way of apologizing can be defined as direct. As an offender, Saddam offers an apology to the offended Kuwaitis at the end of the cited text, after he first gives an apology to God at the very beginning. This manner of constructing the apology by placing the really offended at the end of his speech represents a way of minimizing his responsibility.

The second apology offered ("we apologize to you (Kuwaitis)") is connected with the first direct apology ("we apologize to God") by the conjunction *and*. In other words, when Saddam offers his regret and apology to God, he continues by expressing his regret to the Kuwaitis, therefore he uses a direct way of apologizing. Syntactically, semantically and pragmatically this is a direct sincere apology.

The apparent sacredness of the Arabic language (by direct reference to God) is clear as a consequence of the directness of this speech act, because, according to Glassé, the sacredness of the Arabic language is given by its fresh directness.

4.4. Text 4

The representative of the Iraqi Ministry of Interior apologizes to the Iraqis for acts committed during the era of the late dictator Saddam Hussein:

The security forces apologize for getting implicated in the practices of the former regime," the ministry said in a statement on Sunday. (<http4://www.dw.com/en/iraq-makes-first-apology-for-atrocities-under-saddam-hussein/a-15653579>)

Here the representative of the Iraqi Ministry of Interior apologizes to the Iraqi people by using the verb of apology *to apologize*. Pragmatically, syntactically, and semantically, this is a direct apology and by producing this utterance, the offender accepts responsibility for the committed offence. This is a complete and sincere apology: the act of apologizing is completed and the offence is assumed.

4.5. Text 5

Iraqi Transportation Minister, Hadi Al-Ameri, apologizes to some airplane passengers:

For what had happened, please excuse me. We will definitely deliver justice. (my translation) (<http://archive.almanar.com.lb/article.php?id=774365>)

In (5), after preventing a Lebanese airplane from landing on the runway of Iraqi International Airport because the son of the minister was not on board, Hadi Al-Ameri offers his apology to the passengers. Before examining the speech act of apology by using the strategies given in Table 1, it is worth pointing out that if one applies Deutschmann's theory of insincerity, this text may be said to also contain an insincere apology, because the minister neither admits his offence nor apologizes for the act itself. If one applies Fraser's strategies, this is an indirect speech act of apologizing, of the second type (requesting forgiveness for an offence). Syntactically, the utterance does not contain a real verb of apology (e.g., to apologize), but semantically and pragmatically it is an apology. The apparent sacredness of the Arabic language is lost as a consequence of the absence of the directness of the speech act.

5. Conclusion

My analysis reveals that Iraqi politicians do apologize. However, it also shows that the way in which they apologize is sometimes indirect, as they use various indirect formal means indicating the illocutionary force of apology.

While Glassé states that the Arabic language is characterized by directness, which gives the language a sacred character, I have pointed out that, at least in the political speech act, apology is sometimes made in an indirect way. Going further and recalling Schiffman's observation that

modern languages have, on the whole, lost their sacred quality; the identity of the word and the object named is no longer direct, it has become obscure (1996:69),

my opinion is that indirectness is now becoming one of the characteristics of the language spoken in Iraq, which is modern Arabic, at least in political discourse. Indirectness has brought about the loss of its sacred character, confirming at the same time Glassé's observation regarding the inter-dependency between directness and sacredness.

The analysis of the texts has revealed various lexical and syntactic strategies used by Iraqi politicians in order to express apology, ranging from direct to indirect ones. My analysis has shown that, besides using a direct way of apologizing, politicians also offer their apology indirectly, which often lacks sincerity, trying perhaps to minimize the responsibility for their deeds.

However, I can affirm that these findings cannot be generalized; they just represent a step further in a more elaborate research aimed at comparing them with political apologies in various other cultures, from a pragmatic point of view. The

problem definitely needs further linguistic investigation, which should allow the identification of the real meaning hidden behind this speech act.

References

- Celermajer, Danielle. 2008. "Apologies and the Possibilities of Ethical Politics" in *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory*, 9(1), pp. 14-34.
- Deutschmann, Mats. 2003. *Apologizing in British English*. Umea: Umea University Press.
- Fraser, Bruce. 1981. "On Apologizing" in Coulmas, Florian (ed.). *Conversational Routine: Explorations in Standardized Communication Situations and Prepatterned Speech*. New York: Mouton, pp. 259-271.
- Glassé, Cyril (ed.). 1989. *A Concise Encyclopedia of Islam*. London: Stacey International.
- Lakoff, Robin. 2001. "Nine Ways of Looking at Apologies: the Necessity for Interdisciplinary Theory and Method in Discourse Analysis" in Schiffrin, Deborah, Deborah Tannen and Heidi Hamilton (eds.). *Handbook of Discourse Analysis*. London: Blackwell, pp. 199-214.
- Leech, Geoffrey. 1983. *Principles of Pragmatics*. London: Longman.
- Leech, Geoffrey. 2014. *The Pragmatics of Politeness*. New York: Oxford University Press
- Newmark, Peter. 1986. "The Translation of Political Language" in *Dimensioni linguistiche e distanze culturali nell'interazione sociale e politica, atti del convegno*, Trieste, 28-29 ottobre 1983. Trieste: EUT Edizioni Università di Trieste, pp. 43-64.
- O'Barr, William. M. and Jean F. O'Barr (eds.). 1976. *Language and Politics*. The Hague: Mouton.
- Oliver, Mike. 1994. *Politics and Language: Understanding the Disability Discourse*. [Online]. Available : <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/disability-studies/archiveuk/Oliver/pol%2094-pdf> [Accessed 2016, March 20].
- Schiffman, Harold F. 1996. *Linguistic Culture and Language Policy*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Spolsky, Bernard. 2004. *Sociolinguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Taft, Lee. 2000. "Apology Subverted: the Commodification of Apology" in *Yale Law Journal*, 109, pp. 1135-1160.
- Van Dijk, Teun A. 1997. *Political Discourse and Political Cognition*. Available: <http://www.hum.uva.nl/teun/astonhtm> [Accessed 2016, March 22].
- Wodak, Ruth. 2009. *The Discourse of Politics in Action*. Chippenham and Eastbourne: CPI Antony Rowe.
- Woods, Nicola. 2006. *Describing Discourse*. New York: Hodder Arnold.
- Zheng, Tongtao. 2000. "Characteristics of Australian Political Language Rhetoric: Tactics of Gaining Public Support and Shrinking Responsibility" in *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, 4. [Online]. Available: <http://www.immi.se/intercultural/nr4/zheng.htm> [Accessed 2016, March 20].

Online resources

Saddam Apologizes to Kuwait. Available: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/saddam-apologizes-to-kuwait-1.340943> [Accessed 2016, March 20].

Iraq Makes First Apology for Atrocities under Saddam Hussein. Available: <http://www.dw.com/en/iraq-makes-first-apology-for-atrocities-under-saddam-hussein/a-15653579> [Accessed 2016, March 20].

وطبان التكريتي معتذرا للعراقيين: نظام صدام تصرف بأرواح واموال العراقيين كانها ملكه (Watban Al-Tikriti Apologizes to Iraqis: Saddam Regime Empowered Iraqi People's Minds, Souls and Money). Available: <http://www.alriyadh.com/587189> [Accessed 2016, March 20].

وزير النقل العراقي يعتذر عن تسبب ابنه باعادة رحلة آتية من بيروت (Iraqi Minister of Transportation Apologizes for the Flight Delay Caused by His Son). Available: <http://archive.almanar.com.lb/article.php?id=774365> [Accessed 2016, March 20].

Iraq Leader's Letter to Reagan: 'Deepest Regret'. Available: http://articles.latimes.com/1987-05-19/news/mn-1203_1_security-council [Accessed 2016, March 20].

TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD FIFTY YEARS ON: TRANSLATING MIND STYLE INTO SLOVENE

TADEJA TEMENT

University of Maribor

Abstract: *This paper examines the mind style of the first-person narrator in Harper Lee's monumental novel To Kill a Mockingbird and its two Slovene translations. The narrator's lexical choices, such as her wide range of adjectives, adverbs and verbs, constitute her mind style, i.e. her perception of the fictional world. The present paper attempts to study the effects of translation shifts (omissions and generalisations) on the mind style of the narrator in the translations, and, in turn, to explore the implications of such shifts for the target readers' perception of the literary character.*
Keywords: *literary translation, mind style, stylistics, To Kill a Mockingbird, translation shifts*

1. Introduction

To Kill a Mockingbird may be considered as one of the most influential novels of all time. It has been highly praised particularly for its enduring story. Some of the most prominent reviews refer to the novel as an “engrossing first novel of rare excellence” (Sullivan 2001), a “towering achievement” (Cohen 2015) and “one of the three books ‘most often cited as making a difference’ in people’s lives” (Durst Johnson 1994: xi). Set in the fictional town of Maycomb in the Deep South of the United States in the 1930s, the story is a first-person narration of Jean Louise Finch-Scout. While she recounts the seemingly innocent everyday events of her childhood, she also touches upon a pressing issue: the town is infected with racial prejudice, which makes her life difficult because her father Atticus, a respectable lawyer, decides to defend a black man charged with raping a white woman; an act deemed unfathomable in that time.

The novel's immediate impact was felt the year following its publication, when the author, Harper Lee, received the Pulitzer Prize for fiction (1961), and in the next year, when the book was turned into a highly successful movie, receiving three Academy Awards. By 2016, more than forty million copies of the novel had been sold and the book has been translated into over forty languages (Woo and Nelson 2016). Despite being referred to as “one of the most widely read and widely

taught novels of all time” (Evans 2010), it has paradoxically received scarce literary criticism. Evans (2010) claims that the lack of academic study is due to some people’s assumptions that the book is more valuable in terms of its social and moral lessons, while its artistry and craft are rather insignificant.

Contrary to such opinions, some reviews particularly highlighted the narrator’s style, as a hint for potential literary studies. Lyell (1960) marked her style as “expository” and Sullivan (2001) claimed that

the style is bright and straightforward; the unaffected young narrator uses adult language to render the matter she deals with, but the point of view is cunningly restricted to that of a perceptive, independent child, who doesn’t always understand fully what’s happening.

Chappell (1989: 36) also comments indirectly on Scout’s style by arguing that “a young girl’s elemental perceptions [are] presented in the more sophisticated language of a grown woman”. He goes on to say that Scout recreates “in painstaking and revealing detail the ways in which she thought, spoke, and acted when she was a girl”.

Despite these early notes on the narrator’s style, the issue has not been further researched by any literary study up to date. In addition, little attention has been paid to the translations of *To Kill a Mockingbird* and even less to the analysis of style in translations. Considering the novel’s immense popularity, the references to style in early reviews and the translations of the novel into numerous languages, it is odd that few scholars have dealt with the topic. For this reason, the present paper aims to partly fill the gap in the study of style in *To Kill a Mockingbird* and its two Slovene translations. For a better understanding of my analysis, I shall first explore the notions of style and mind style.

2. Stylistics and mind style

In literary fiction and in literary translation, the role of style is highly significant. Many scholars (for instance, Landers 2001: 7) agree that in literary translation, form prevails over content, which suggests that it is more important *how* one says something than *what* one says. The *how* or the *way* one says something could be loosely equalled to style. Landers (2001: 7) considers style of the utmost importance in a literary translation, as he claims that the difference between a skilful translation and an artificial translation lies in its style, which constitutes “the soul” of the text.

This is a general notion of style; however, since style is a broad and elusive concept, there have been many attempts at a comprehensive definition (see Gutt 1991; Toolan 1990; Boase-Beier 2012). The most prominent work in this field is Leech and Short’s *Style in fiction* (2007: 9), in which style is defined as “the way in which language is used in a given context, by a given person, for a given purpose”. Key importance is also placed on the notion of choice in stylistics. In the narrower sense, style can be understood as stylistic variation or the linguistic choices one

makes to describe the same subject matter (Leech and Short 2007: 31, 32). In this respect, it is not the linguistic choices in isolation that matter, but rather a pattern of choices. Should we wish to analyse the style of a text, we must pay attention to features of style that appear frequently and consistently throughout the text (Leech and Short 2007: 35).

For the purpose of this paper, I will focus on one aspect or subcategory of style: the notion of mind style. Similar to style, mind style is also a nebulous concept. It is a relatively new concept, coined by Roger Fowler, who defined it as follows:

Cumulatively, consistent structural options, agreeing in cutting the presented world to one pattern or another, give rise to an impression of a world-view, what I shall call a 'mind-style' (Fowler 1977: 76).

Fowler (1977: 103) continues by saying that the term mind style could also be used "to refer to any distinctive linguistic representation of an individual mental self". Leech and Short (2007: 150, 151) used Fowler's term to further develop the concept within stylistics. They argue that mind style is concerned with how the fictional world is conceptualised. The readers of a particular literary work can perceive the fictional world through the mind of, for example, a character in the novel; therefore, they define mind style as "a realisation of a narrative point of view".

In general, mind style has to do with how one perceives the fictional world and his or her attitude towards it. Mind style can also be described in plain terms such as simple/complex mind style and subjective/objective mind style.

Most authors agree that mind style is a distinguishable feature in all texts, they even consider it as an "inherent property" of every text, but most of them also claim that it is worth studying mind styles that are particularly striking or deviant (see, for example, the analysis of mind style in William Golding's *The Inheritors*); however, they are sceptical about the "practical usefulness" of studying "normal" mind style (Semino and Swindlehurst 1996: 145). Nevertheless, it is to be noted that most studies in mind style are monolingual; they examine only the original text. If I am to compare the original and its translation with regard to mind style, I could argue that even normal mind styles are worth exploring, because they might have been subject to change in translation. Bearing this in mind, I can claim that my analysis of mind style in Harper Lee's novel is particularly interesting in connection with the Slovene translations.

Mind style exists on the level of semantics, but it can only be observed and studied through linguistic categories, such as grammar and lexis (Leech and Short 2007: 151). Therefore, it is possible to describe a character's mind style based on how they use language.

3. Mind style in Slovene translations of *To Kill a Mockingbird*

In this paper, I shall concentrate on the first-person narrator's lexical choices, which reflect her way of thinking and her attitude towards the fictional world. First,

I will analyse the features of mind style in individual sentences in the original and then compare them to two Slovene translations. The first translation by Janez Sivec was published in 1964 under the title *Ne ubijaj slavca*. The novel was re-translated in 2015 by Polona Glavan, who entitled it *Če ubiješ oponašalca*. The focus will be on the older translation, but the newer translation is of great interest to us as well, because it serves to illustrate different translation solutions and to demonstrate how the role of stylistics in translation has changed over the course of fifty years.

In the analysis of the translations, I will make use of Leuven-Zwart's concept of translation shifts on the micro- and macrostructural levels (Leuven-Zwart 1989). First, I will present individual sentences along with their translations and comment on the narrator's lexical choices. The shifts occurring at this level, i.e. the level of the sentence, are microstructural shifts. In the conclusion, I will try to assess how the microstructural shifts affect the level of meaning, i.e. the macrostructural level, which is, in this case, the narrator's mind style.

One of the main features of Scout's style and mind style is her love for details, which is reflected in a wide vocabulary range, particularly in the use of numerous different adjectives, adverbs and verbs. Scout's narrative is also marked by a high degree of subjectivity, which is also reflected in her lexical choices, as she uses many evaluative adjectives and adverbs, with which she expresses her personal opinions and attitudes towards the fictional world. The following subchapters include some of the most prominent examples of translation shifts with regard to adjectives, adverbs and verbs. Back translations are provided for the Slovene excerpts unless deemed unnecessary because the translation is equivalent to the original.

3.1. Lexis: Adjectives

In the following passage, the narrator, Scout, reports that children in school used to tease her and her brother Jem because their father Atticus was defending a black man in court. The parents seemed to have forbidden their children to be mean to Scout; otherwise, she claims, she would have solved these problems by fighting them (Lee 2010: 268):

The children would never have thought that up for themselves: had our classmates been left to their own devices, Jem and I would have had several swift, satisfying fist-fights apiece and ended the matter for good.

Throughout the novel, the readers can realise that Scout is a tomboy; both by the portrayal of her physical appearance and by her actions. She feels comfortable behaving the way she does, and her use of language reveals her way of thinking: her attitude towards physical fighting is clearly seen, because of the adjective *satisfying* she uses to describe fist-fights. It is an evaluative adjective and it is subjective, as it presents her own opinion on fighting. It also shows the peculiarity of her way of

thinking, because physical fighting is not normally considered as something positive or something that makes one feel good; this is especially true for girls.

In the first Slovene translation (Lee 1964: 285), we encounter some changes in the translation of this sentence:

Otroci sami od sebe gotovo niso prišli do te misli: če bi jih vodila njihova zloba, bi morala z Jemom dobojevati mnogo naglih dvobojev s pestmi in dognati zadevo.

(Back translation: The children had certainly not thought that up for themselves: had they been guided by their malice, Jem and I would have had to have several swift fist-fights and end the matter for good.)

As can be noticed at first glance, the evaluative adjective was omitted, so the readers can no longer see the oddness in Scout's way of thinking. The Slovene translation seems to suggest that fighting would not be a choice for Scout. This attitude is reinforced by the introduction of the modal verb *bi morala*, which translates as *we would have to*. It is a modal verb of obligation, so it emphasizes that she would be forced to fight. Since the evaluative adjective was lost in the translation, the passage bears no proof of her positive attitude towards physical fighting and her point of view on this topic. Through these translation shifts, it is easy to observe how Scout's perception and view of the world are changed in the Slovene translation.

The second Slovene translation (Lee 2015: 263) sets a completely different tone than the first one:

Otroci se sami tega ne bi nikoli domislili: če bi bili najini sošolci prepuščeni samim sebi, bi z Jemom izvedla vsak po nekaj hitrih, zadovoljujočih borb s pestmi in za vedno zaključila s tem.

The adjective *satisfying* is maintained and translated as *zadovoljujoč*, which carries the same meaning as the original. The translation does not add the modal verb of obligation, as does the first translation, so it remains more faithful to the original meaning and the narrator's thinking.

The next excerpt illustrates another use of an evaluative adjective to voice a personal opinion. Scout's aunt Alexandra has just moved in with them, which makes Scout feel uneasy, because they have never got along (Lee 2010: 141):

I could think of nothing else to say to her. In fact I could never think of anything to say to her, and I sat thinking of past painful conversations between us: How are you, Jean Louise? Fine, thank you ma'am, how are you? Very well, thank you, what have you been doing with yourself? Nothin'. Don't you do anything? Nome. Certainly you have friends? Yessum. Well what do you all do? Nothin'.

The narrator refers to her previous conversations with her aunt as *painful*. As she continues, she provides an example of such a conversation in order to corroborate just how uncomfortable the situation was. Neither of them could think of anything substantial to say to one another; aunt Alexandra disapproved of Scout, and Scout was aware of her disapproval, so they could not find a common topic. Because of these reasons, Scout does not only feel uncomfortable in her company, but, in her mind, this feeling is heightened to such an extent that it is painful to her. According to the *Corpus of Contemporary American English*, a *painful conversation* is not a common collocation in English, as it appears only three times. Also, *conversation* as an abstract noun does not usually take a concrete adjective such as *painful* as modifier. One can infer, therefore, that her way of thinking and her perception of their conversation are a bit uncommon.

The Slovene translation offers a slightly different view of the situation (Lee 1964: 151, 152):

Ničesar drugega se nisem spomnila, kar bi ji še rekla. Pravzaprav nikoli nisem vedela, kaj naj bi se z njo pogovarjala. Sedela sem in se spominjala najinih prejšnjih nevšečnih razgovorov. Kako ti je, Jean Louise? Hvala, dobro, tetka. Kako je tebi? Kar dobro, hvala. Kaj pa delaš? Nič. Nič ne delaš? Nič. Gotovo imaš prijatelje? Da. No, kaj pa delate vsi skupaj? Nič.

Back translation: I could think of nothing else to say to her. In fact I could never think of anything to say to her. I sat thinking of past unpleasant conversations between us. How are you, Jean Louise? Fine, thank you ma'am. How are you? Quite well, thank you. What have you been doing with yourself? Nothing. Don't you do anything? No. Certainly you have friends? Yes. Well what do you all do? Nothing.)

The original adjective *painful* is rendered as *nevšečen*, which means *unpleasant* in English. With regard to its semantic characteristics, it basically holds the same idea, because it is used to refer to something uncomfortable and unpleasant or something that causes problems. The target readers can figure out that Scout does not like conversing with her aunt; nonetheless, they seem to miss just how great of a nuisance these conversations are to Scout. In the original, they cause sheer pain to her, but in the translation, they only seem to annoy her slightly. Her perception of her communication with her aunt is altered because the evaluative adjective is generalised in the translation. This choice on the part of the translator seems unfounded, because he could have used a literal translation of the adjective *painful*, which is *boleč* (as in the second translation, Lee 2015: 140). Thus, the translator could have preserved the original uncommon collocation and, its stylistic effect.

3.2. Lexis: Adverbs

The following passage paints a representative picture of Scout's focus on details throughout the entire narration. The town's sheriff is testifying about the rape

case in court, Atticus is questioning him and the court reporter is jotting the information down by hand (Lee 2010: 186):

Atticus walked to the court reporter's desk and bent down to the furiously scribbling hand. It stopped, flipped back the shorthand pad, and the court reporter said, "Mr. Finch. I remember now she was bunged up on that side of the face."

Scout was only eight years old at the time, so her mind was probably still not mature enough to fully comprehend all the terms used in court and the possible ramifications of the trial. Despite her constant assurances to Jem and to the reader that she is old enough to understand everything, she gives clues in her narrative that it might not be the case. One clue lies in her description of the speed with which the court reporter was taking notes: she uses the adverb *furiously* to refer to his scribbling hand. The dialogue between Atticus and the sheriff probably seems extremely quick to Scout. She projects the rapidity of conversation to the court reporter's note-taking by using the adverb *furiously*, thus indicating that the conversation is developing too quickly for her. Scout uses an evaluative adverb, which helps her express her perception of the court reporter's writing as well as her perception of the entire process. Her view of the situation is reflected in her language, in this case, by a specific adverb for describing speed.

With regard to the adverb in question, the first Slovene translation is altered (Lee 1964: 198):

Atticus je stopil k sodnemu pisarju in zaustavil njegovo hitro pišočo roko. Pisar je dvignil stenogram in bral: »Gospod, Finch, spominjam se sedaj, udarjena je bila v ta del obraza ...«

(Back translation: Atticus walked to the court reporter and stopped his fast-writing hand. The court reporter raised the shorthand pad and read, "Mr. Finch, I remember now she was hit on that side of the face...")

The translator opted for the Slovene adverb *hitro* to translate the original adverb. Technically, it is not semantically different from the adverb *furiously* because they both denote speed and they both refer to the hand's movement. However, the stylistic effect of the Slovene adverb does not reach its intended effect, because it does not correctly reflect the degree of speed. If something is done furiously, it is done extremely quickly and with as much effort as possible. *Hitro*, on the other hand, simply means quickly, so this is a generalisation and a neutralisation. At this point, we should reflect on the element of choice in stylistics. One must bear in mind that Scout has a variety of options for describing the speed of the court reporter's writing in the original, so she could have used other adverbs as well. Nevertheless, she selected the expression *furiously* because, in her mind, it is the one expression that describes the movement exactly the way she perceived it.

The second translator was mindful of the stylistic importance of this passage and therefore rendered it much more accurately (Lee 2015: 183):

Atticus je odšel k zapisnikarjevi mizi in se sklonil nad roko, ki je poblaznelo čečkala. Obstala je, polistala malo nazaj in zapisnikar je rekel: »Gospod Finch. Se že spomnim, potolčena je bila po tej strani obraza.

The adverb *poblaznelo* describes the exaggeratedly fast way the reporter was taking notes, so the translation retains the indicators of what is happening in Scout's mind. In addition, Scout's capability to use complex vocabulary is also maintained more successfully in the second translation. *Hitro* is a common expression in Slovene, but *furiously* is not used so often, at least not in this sense, just like *poblaznelo* is not used so frequently in Slovene. While preserving the narrator's naïve point of view, the translation nevertheless retains her adult-like, wide vocabulary range.

3.3. Lexis: Verbs

In the following excerpt, Scout describes the night setting. She is left alone in her room in the middle of the night, worrying about her brother, who went out to retrieve his trousers, which he had lost when they were snooping around their mysterious neighbour's house and were chased away by a gunshot (Lee 2010: 63):

The night-crawlers had retired, but ripe chinaberries drummed on the roof when the wind stirred, and the darkness was desolate with the barking of distant dogs.

Scout's internal unrest and uneasiness are reflected in her description of the night. The choice of the verb *drummed* to describe the sound of the fruit falling on the roof creates an eerie, tense atmosphere, especially when one tries to imagine this sound in a still night. Scout's choice of verb is specific, because she wishes to present accurately how she perceived the sound. She takes the specific description of the sound a step further: in a way, the chinaberries are personified as they are assigned human characteristics. It is possible to infer from this example that the narrator's view of the world is specific, always minding the details.

The translation undergoes some changes in this respect (Lee 1964: 71):

Nočni postopači so utihnili, toda zrelo sadje je padalo na streho, kadar je potegnil veter. Noč je bila samotna; samo lajež psov v daljavi jo je motil.

(Back translation: The night-crawlers had fallen silent, but ripe fruit was falling on the roof when the wind stirred. The night was desolate; it was disturbed only by the barking of dogs in the distance.)

The back translation of the part between the two commas would be *but ripe fruit was falling on the roof*. The verb *drummed* is rendered as *je padalo* (*was falling*). By and large, the original and the translation describe the same event, namely the fruit falling from the tree onto the roof. Nevertheless, the translation is largely generalized. First, the personification of the fruit disappears, because the Slovene sentence is a mere description stating that the fruit *fell*, not that the fruit *did* something on its own, i.e. produced sounds like drumbeats. The personification in the original is crucial for building an image of Scout's views of the world. Because of the personification, I could claim that she perceives the fictional world differently than most people; however, the Slovene translation does not disclose anything odd in her portrayal of the world. Secondly, the reference to sound disappears from the translation, so the readers are deprived of one detail that might change the tone of the entire passage. Scout builds up the tension of her lonely late-night waiting by describing the peculiar sounds of the chinaberries in the otherwise calm night. As usual, Scout provides a detailed description of the fictional world, through which the readers become familiar with her perceptions and understanding of the fictional world. By repeatedly producing such shifts as the one in the example above, the translator changes the narrator's perceptions.

The second translation illustrates how such shifts can be avoided. The verb *so bobnali* carries the same semantic and stylistic properties as the verb *drummed*, so it is a more accurate translation solution than the first one (Lee 2015: 65):

Nočni postopači so odšli spat, zreli sadeži indijskih lipovk pa so bobnali po strehi, kadar se je zganil veter, in iz temne daljave so se malodušno oglašali psi.

The second example in the category of verbs demonstrates the narrator's skilful and humorous use of language. Scout and her family were visiting her aunt for Christmas. Scout has always felt excluded by her aunt, who seemed to have disapproved of her character and behaviour, which was obvious from the seating order at dinner (Lee 2010: 90):

At Christmas dinner, I sat at the little table in the diningroom; Jem and Francis sat with the adults at the dining table. Aunty had continued to isolate me long after Jem and Francis graduated to the big table.

Even though Scout resents the fact that she must sit alone during dinner, she manages to retain humour and good-spiritedness in her narrative with the use of the verb *graduated*. She wishes to convey that she understands being allowed to sit with the adults as a promotion, as being allowed to do something more important than before. Since she is narrating from a child's perspective, the seating arrangement has great significance to her. She feels inferior and offended, so she wishes to highlight the meaning of sitting at the big table. In her mind, it is a sort of a graduation.

The older Slovene translation is far more general in terms of the verb choice (Lee 1964: 99):

Za božič sem obedovala pri majhni mizi v jedilnici. Jem in Francis sta sedela s starejšimi. Tetka Alexandra me je odstranjevala od mize že prej, preden sta Jem in Francis smela k starejšim.

(Back translation: At Christmas, I had dinner at the little table in the diningroom. Jem and Francis sat with the adults. Aunty Alexandra used to remove me from the table even before Jem and Francis were allowed to sit with the adults.)

The passage has undergone several shifts in the process of translation; however, I shall focus only on the verb *sta smela* as a translation for the verb *graduated*. *Smeti* is a modal verb in Slovene, meaning *can* or *be allowed to*. The translator preserved the original meaning that the boys were allowed to sit at the big table, while Scout was not. Nonetheless, the narrative loses its humorous and light-hearted tone created by the verb *graduated*. The translation also plays down the importance Scout ascribes to sitting together with the adults, because in Slovene she only presents a fact and does not reveal her attitude towards it. If the narrator in the original had wanted to use a modal verb to describe the situation, she could have done so; instead, she opted for a lexical verb, which also discloses her way of perceiving the event.

The newer translation follows the original more closely than the older version (Lee 2015: 91):

Pri božični večerji sem sedela za mizico v jedilnici; Jem in Francis sta z odraslimi sedela pri veliki mizi. Teta me je pošiljala sedet posebej še dolgo potem, ko sta Jem in Francis že napredovala k veliki mizi.

The translation retains the stylistic element of humour of the original, because the verb *sta napredovala* means that they have been “moved up” in importance or that they have been promoted. Although not identical to the original, the Slovene verb is a good equivalent to the original verb because it provides the readers with Scout’s viewing of the situation and her manner of thinking.

4. Conclusion

Omitting and generalizing the meaning of adjectives, adverbs and verbs may seem only a minor shift on the microstructural level – the level of the sentence. However, it carries significant implications for the macrostructural level or the level of meaning, which, in my study, is the narrator’s mind style. One must bear in mind that the paper has presented only some illustrative examples from the novel. The shifts do not occur sporadically, but rather frequently and consistently throughout

the entire text. The cumulative effect of the translation shifts on the lexical level makes the narrator's mind style in the first translation much more objective, neutral, simpler and less detailed than the mind style of the "same" narrator in the original. This means that the narrator in the translation perceives the fictional world differently and, in turn, the target readers also perceive the narrator in a different way. I could also claim that the mind style in the first Slovene translation occasionally resembles the mind style of a child, whereas in the original, it is clear that the mind style pertains to an educated adult.

In most examples, the second Slovene translation has proved to be much more faithful to the original in terms of rendering stylistic features, particularly the lexical choices contributing to the narrator's mind style. This was something to be expected, since there is a fifty-year gap between the two translations. At the time of the novel's first translation into Slovene, the translator did not have the modern translation resources at his disposal. Moreover, stylistics as a discipline had not yet been fully developed, especially not in the field of translation, and the concept of mind style had not been studied yet. As research in translation progressed, translators have become more aware of the significance of style in literary translation. These are all factors that could have contributed to the second translation being more faithful to the original than the first translation.

References

- Boase-Beier, Jean. 2012. "Stylistics and Translation" in Malmkjær, Kirsten and Kevin Windle (eds.). *The Oxford Handbook of Translation Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Chappell, Charles M. 1989. "The Unity of *To Kill a Mockingbird*" in *The Alabama Review: A Quarterly Journal of Alabama History*, 42 (1), pp. 32-48.
- Cohen, Richard. 2015, July 14. "Harper Leaves the Club" in *Commonweal* [Online]. Available: <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/harper-lee-leaves-club> [Accessed 2016, September 28].
- Durst Johnson, Claudia. 1994. *Understanding To Kill a Mockingbird: A Student Casebook to Issues, Sources, and Historic Documents*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press.
- Evans, Robert C. 2010. "Unlikely Duos: Paired Characters in *To Kill a Mockingbird*" in Meyer, Michael J. (ed.). *Harper Lee's 'To Kill a Mockingbird'*. Blue Ridge Summit, US: Scarecrow Press, n. p. [Online]. Available: <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/universvaln/reader.action?docID=10434979> [Accessed 2016, October 12].
- Fowler, Roger. 1977. *Linguistics and the Novel*. London, New York: Routledge.
- Gutt, Ernst August. 1991. *Translation and Relevance: Cognition and Context*. Oxford (UK), Cambridge (MA): Basil Blackwell.
- Landers, Clifford E. 2001. *Literary Translation: A Practical Guide*. Clevedon (U.K.): Multilingual Matters.

- Lee, Harper. 1964. *Ne ubijaj slavca*. Translated by Janez. Sivec. Murska Sobota: Pomurska založba.
- Lee, Harper. 2010. *To Kill a Mockingbird*. London: Arrow Books.
- Lee, Harper. 2015. *Če ubiješ oponašalca*. Translated by Polona Glavan. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga.
- Leech, Geoffrey and Mick Short. 2007 (1981). *Style in Fiction: A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose*, 2nd edition. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.
- Leuven-Zwart, Kitty M. van. 1989. "Translation and Original: Similarities and Dissimilarities, P" in *Target*, 1 (2), pp. 151-181.
- Lyell, Frank H. 1960, July 10. "One-Taxi Town" in *The New York Times* [Online]. Available: <http://www.nytimes.com/learning/teachers/archival/19600710tkamreview.pdf> [Accessed 2016, October 2].
- Semino, Elena and Kate Swindlehurst. 1996. "Metaphor and Mind Style in Ken Kesey's One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" in *Style*, 30 (1), pp. 143-166.
- Sullivan, Richard. 2001, August 6. "Early on it Was Recognized as a Novel of 'Rare Excellence'" in *Chicago Tribune* [Online]. Available: <http://www.chicagotribune.com/lifestyles/chi-0108060223aug06-story.html> [Accessed 2016, October 2].
- Toolan, Michael J. 1990. *The Stylistics of Fiction: A Literary-linguistic Approach*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Woo, Elaine and Valerie J. Nelson. 2016, February 19. "Harper Lee, Author of Classic Novel 'To Kill a Mockingbird', Dies at 89" in *Los Angeles Times* [Online]. Available: <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/music/la-me-harper-lee-dies-20160219-story.html> [Accessed 2016, October 7].

Online resources

<http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/>. *Corpus of Contemporary American English* [Accessed 2016, October 12].

DIFFICULTIES OF TRANSLATING ENGLISH COLLOCATIONS INTO ROMANIAN

LOREDANA PUNGĂ
HORTENSIA PÂRLOG
West University of Timișoara

Abstract: *As no two languages are perfectly alike, translation above word level may sometimes prove to be no easy task. The authors' aim is to highlight some difficulties encountered by a number of Romanian BA students when translating English collocations into their mother tongue. Special attention is devoted to lexical-semantic, grammatical and cultural differences between the two languages, as potential sources of these difficulties.*

Keywords: *collocation, cultural approach, grammatical approach, lexical-semantic approach, meaning, translation*

1. Introduction

In any language, words have the tendency to co-occur in combinations that sound natural to its native speakers, as conventionally accepted ways of saying something in that language. Such combinations are called, by terms commonly attributed to Firth (1957, 1968), *collocations* (if seen from a lexical perspective, i.e. as combinations of vocabulary items with specific meanings) and *colligations* (if seen from a grammatical perspective, i.e. as combinations of or with specific grammatical categories).

Collocational tendency, i.e. the “syntagmatic attraction” (Lehecka 2015: 2) between the node and its collocate(s), is more powerful in some cases (fixed/unique/restricted collocations, e.g., *auburn/ curly hair*) and weaker in others (multiple/common/unrestricted collocations, e.g., *careful/ close/ worried/ pleading/lingering/ long*, etc. *look*), strongly dictated by the propositional content of the words involved (e.g., *bank cheque, pay a cheque, write a cheque*) and less so in numerous other cases. Baker (2002: 47) explains that, “meaning cannot always account for collocational pattern. If it did, we might expect *carry out, undertake* or even *perform* to collocate with *visit*. Yet, English speakers typically *pay a visit*, less typically *make a visit*, and are unlikely to *perform a visit*. [...] Moreover, words

which we might think of as synonyms or near-synonyms will often have quite different sets of collocates. English speakers typically *break rules* but they do not *break regulations*; they typically talk of *wasting time* but not of *squandering time*". Therefore, irrespective of their strength, one should be aware that collocations exist, and, that they are language-specific, and that one should take them into consideration when translating from one language into another.

As for the grammatical form of collocations, Baker (2002) points out that, in some cases, the relation between the members of the collocation holds regardless of the form they take (e.g., *achieving aims*, *achievable aims*, *achievement of an aim*, *an aim has been achieved*). Yet, "words will collocate with other words in some of their forms but not in others" (2002: 48): English people *bend rules*, but rules are unlikely to be described as *unbendable*, they would rather be referred to as *inflexible*. Adjectives such as *ajar*, *alive*, *ablaze* may function syntactically as predicatives, but not as attributes: *The door is ajar*, *The child is alive*, *The house is ablaze* are perfectly grammatical sentences in English, but an **ajar door*, **an alive child* and **an ablaze house* are incorrect phrases in English.

The few examples above suffice to illustrate the considerable degree of mismatch that may occur between English words when used in collocations. As one would expect, the possibility of mismatch increases even more when equivalents in other languages are sought.

These observations constitute the background of our analysis, which aims at highlighting possible asymmetries between English collocations and their Romanian counterparts, from a lexical-semantic, grammatical and culture-related perspective. At the same time, the paper seeks to bring to the fore possible translation difficulties that may arise from these asymmetries, by referring to some errors twenty-five first year BA students, majoring in Applied Modern Languages, made in their translations into Romanian of 50 English sentences, containing collocations built on some of the patterns that will be discussed in what follows.

2. English collocations and their Romanian equivalents

2.1. Meaning in isolation and contextualized meaning

The same words may have different meanings when used in isolation and when contextualized, i.e. combined with other words in the structure of various collocations. Translation difficulties may arise and awkward, inappropriate or incorrect equivalents may be suggested as a consequence of one's not being aware of such differences in meaning.

Thus, the meaning of the same node may change each time it is accompanied by a different collocate (therefore translation should be adjusted accordingly): *to run a program* means to execute a computer program ("a rula un program"), *to run a company* refers to the activity of managing it ("a conduce o companie"), *to run a rope* signifies to stretch it ("a întinde o sfoară"), while *to run water* means to cause

water to flow (“a da drumul la apă”). Similarly, the meaning of the verbal noun *run* changes when it collocates with different verbs: *to break into a run* means to suddenly start running (“a o rupe la fugă”), *to operate on a run* signifies to go/function on a particular route (“a merge/ funcționa pe o anumită rută”), while *to score a run* is used in basketball and cricket for scoring a point (“a marca un punct”).

2.2. Common and specialized meaning

Specialized terminology in various domains builds on everyday words which are employed with a different meaning (usually metaphorical) in professional contexts. In many cases, the common, everyday meaning provides hints at the specialized sense, but care should be taken by translators when suggesting equivalent terms, since, on the one hand, field-specific vocabulary is fixed and, consequently, translating it does not allow the freedom of choice sometimes possible when translating non-professional, general texts. On the other, extension of meaning of the words that are transferred from common to specialized vocabulary does not manifest uniformly in all languages. For example, *ceiling* and *floor* no longer refer to parts of a room, but, by analogy, to the highest and, respectively, the lowest price limits when used in business as collocates of *price*: *price ceiling*, *price floor* (“limita inferioară a prețului”, “limita superioară a prețului”). Similarly, *blanket* loses its every day meaning “piece of soft fabric used as bed cover” in favour of the specialized, descriptive one – “that covers all risks”, in *blanket insurance*. Such extension of meaning is, however, characteristic of the three English words only; the senses of their Romanian equivalents *tavan*, *podea* and *pătură* have not evolved in the same way (which makes word-for-word translation impossible).

2.3. Condensed and explicitated meaning

In some cases, the propositional meaning of English collocations is rendered into Romanian by equivalents with a dissimilar structure. Dissimilarities often manifest themselves in the greater length of the Romanian lexical units, caused by some semes inherent in the English collocations elements (either the node or the collocate) that need explicitation. Explicitation in these cases is obligatory (neither optional, nor pragmatic or translation-inherent), i.e. it is imposed by differences between the lexico-grammatical specific parameters of the source and the target languages (Klaudy 2008). The explicitated semes may refer to:

- the object of the action expressed by the node: *to apply in writing* – *a face o cerere în scris* (lit. *to make a request in writing*);
- the manner of the action expressed by the node: *to argue calmly* – *a discuta în contradictoriu cu calm* (lit. *to discuss in disagreement, with calm*);

- the duration of the state expressed by the node: *to fall into abeyance* – *a fi suspendat pentru un timp/ temporar* (lit. *to be suspended for some time/ temporarily*);
- the cause of the state expressed by the node: *false labour* – *false dureri ale nașterii* (lit. *false pains of birth giving*);
- the place of the action expressed by the collocate: *to roast beef* – *a frige la cuptor carne de vită* (lit. *to roast beef in the oven*); *to barbecue/ grill meat* – *a frige carne pe grătar* (lit. *to cook meat on a grill*);
- the instrument of the action expressed by the collocate: *to nod one's approval* – *a încuviința cu capul, a da din cap în semn de încuviințare* (lit. *to agree with one's head, to move one's head to suggest agreement*); *to bat a ball* – *a lovi mingea cu bâta de baseball/ cricket* (lit. *to hit the ball with the baseball/ cricket bat*);
- the manner of the action expressed by the collocate: *to apply thinly* – *a aplica în strat subțire* (lit. *to apply in a thin layer*);
- the quality of the node, as expressed by the collocate: *contributory negligence* – *neglijență care a contribuit la provocarea unui accident* (lit. *negligence that contributed to causing an accident*); *cash discount* – *reducere pentru plata cu numerar* (lit. *discount for payments made in cash*), etc.

The implicit meaning components of both elements (the node and the collocate) of an English collocation may be rendered explicit at the same time, the result being an extended Romanian equivalent: *to chant a blessing* – *a spune pe un ton monoton o rugăciune de mulțumire* (lit. *to utter a prayer of thankfulness in a monotonous voice*).

Sometimes, the collocation element which is formally extended in the translation is the collocate. However, the extension may consist of making explicit a sense component that belongs to it, but refers to the whole collocation as a unit rather than just to the collocate: e.g., *striking distance* – *distanța dintre locul în care se produce un fulger și locul în care acesta lovește* (lit. *the distance between the place where a lightning is produced and the place where it strikes*).

A translation technique based on explicitation, at the semantic level, and on extension, at the formal level, is the paraphrase, which is resorted to when rendering the condensed meaning of idiomatic collocations into non-idiomatic, explanatory Romanian equivalents. The holistic meaning of the entire word combination is made clear (such paraphrases are lexical gap fillers, in fact): e.g., *nest egg* – *bani puși de o parte pentru viitor, cu un anumit scop* (lit. *money put by for the future, with a certain purpose*); *spring chicken* – *nou angajați într-un domeniu, încă lipsiți de experiență* (lit. *new employees, still lacking experience*).

The reverse of the general situation detailed so far in this section also stands proof of the existence of structural dissimilarities between English collocations and

their Romanian counterparts. If, as seen above, explicitation may lead to expanding condensed meaning when transferring a collocation from English into Romanian, making the explicit implicit and, consequently, reducing the length of the original in the target language may also be the appropriate translation choice in some cases. Instances when the meaning of the whole English collocation is condensed into one Romanian word (in the case of verbs, sometimes accompanied by a reflexive pronoun, as the mark of the reflexive voice) concern word combinations such as the following:

- collocations containing delexical verbs as their nodes or collocates (*do, get give, go, have, make, take, etc.*): e.g., **to do the hair** – *a se coafa*; **to get sick** – *a se îmbolnăvi*; **to get wind** – *a auzi*; **to give a start** – *a tresări*; **to go wild** – *a se sălbătici*; **to have an abortion** – *a avorta*; **to make friends** – *a-și face prieteni*; **to take aim** – *a ochi, a ținti*; **to take an approach** – *a aborda*;
- collocations containing other verbs: **to commit blasphemy** – *a huli, a blasfemia*; **to join the army** – *a se înrola*; **to put to bed** – *a culca*;
- collocations made up of pre-modifier+noun: **gold nugget** – *pepită*; **crane operator** – *macaragiu*; **buzzing noise** – *zumzăit*; **first/ opening night** – *premieră*.

2.4. Modulated and transposed equivalent meaning

Apart from extension by explicitation and reduction by implicitation, English collocations may be rendered into Romanian as formally similar structures, obtained, however, via modulation or equivalence: e.g., **to brush one's teeth** – *a se spăla pe dinți* (lit. **to wash one's teeth**); **to slam the door into one's face** – *a trânti ușa în nas* (lit. **to slam the door into one's nose**); **to fight tooth and nail** – *a se lupta pe viață și pe moarte* (lit. **to fight for life or death**). Structure shift/ recasting and/or class shift accompany modulation, to obtain naturally-sounding Romanian collocations in cases like: **reigning champion** – *campion actual* (lit. **current champion**); **loud tie** – *cravată stridentă* (lit. **strident tie**); **blood orange** – *portocală roșie* (lit. **red orange**); **business day** – *zi lucrătoare* (lit. **work(ing) day**).

Romanian formally different structures may also be the equivalents of some English collocations. Modulation and structure as well as class shifts are at work in these cases, too: **naturally curious** – *curios din naștere* (lit. **curious since birth**); **live frugally** – *a trăi de azi pe mâine* (lit. **live from today to tomorrow**), etc.

a) A grammatical perspective

From a grammatical point of view, English collocations are only sometimes translatable directly, by applying the word-for-word technique. Perfect lexico-grammatical equivalents such as *a row of chairs* – *un rând de scaune*; *an engine functions* – *un motor funcționează*; *to decrease dramatically* – *a descrește dramatic*; *to*

consume news – *a consuma știri* (a calque of the English phrase) are rather the exception than the rule, if one considers the frequency of the word-for-word translation option. The change of word order (or structure shift/ recasting) is much more often the appropriate translation technique, especially in the case of noun phrases, even if the target language words are perfect semantic equivalents of the source language ones. This is the consequence of obeying word order rules in Romanian, where, unlike in English, the modifier follows the noun in non-emphatic noun phrases (if it precedes it, the construction has an emphatic value: e.g., *interesting idea* – *interesantă idee*): e.g., *total obscurity* – *obscuritate totală*; *partial agreement* – *acord parțial*.

Like structure shift, transposition (rank-bound or rank-unbound) is frequently employed to translate English collocations into Romanian. Thus, rank-bound transposition may be the basis of transformations in:

- a noun pre-modifier in the common case turns into a prepositional noun-phrase post-modifier in the accusative case (structure shift + intra-system shift): *life/safety net* – *plasă de siguranță* (lit. *net of safety*); *hair net* – *plasă pentru păr* (lit. *net for hair*); *cheese omelette* – *omletă cu brânză* (lit. *omelette with cheese*);
- a noun pre-modifier in the common case turns into a post-modifier in the genitive case (structure shift + intra-system shift): *child neglect* – *neglijarea copilului* (lit. *neglect of the child*); *body organs* – *organe ale corpului* (lit. *organs of the body*);
- a noun pre-modifier in the genitive case turns into a prepositional noun-phrase post-modifier in the accusative case (structure shift + intra-system shift): *lawyer's office* – *birou de avocatură* (lit. *office of law*);
- a noun pre-modifier in the common or the genitive case turns into an adjective post-modifier in the accusative case (structure shift + class shift): *extension ladder* – *scară extensibilă* (lit. *ladder extensible*); *doctor's office* – *cabinet medical* (lit. *office medical*);
- a pre-modifying adjective turns into a post-modifying prepositional noun-phrase (structure shift + class shift): *unprecedented occurrence* – *întâmplare fără precedent* (lit. *occurrence without precedent*); *naval officer* – *ofițer de marină* (lit. *officer of marine*); *undercover mission* – *misiune sub acoperire* (lit. *mission under cover*);
- a verb modifying adverb turns into a prepositional noun-phrase (class shift): *to applaud heartily* – *a aplauda din toată inima/ din tot sufletul* (lit. *to applaud with the whole heart soul*); *to avoid cleverly* – *a evita cu dibăcie* (lit. *to avoid with skill*).

Transposition may also be rank-unbound in situations when, for example:

- a noun-phrase pre-modifier turns into a relative clause: *aspiring/ budding musician* – *muzician care promite* (lit. *musician who 'promises'*).

Modulation, understood as a difference in the point of view taken on something, operates not only at the lexical level (as seen in section 2.4.), but also at the grammatical one. Thus, in some cases:

- an affirmative node may turn into a negative one: *to keep an appointment* – *a nu lipsi de la o întâlnire* (lit. *not be absent from a meeting/ not miss an appointment*); *to hold/ stand one's ground* – *a nu da înapoi/ a nu ceda* (lit. *not step back/ not give up*);
- a negative node may turn into a negative collocate (the node is expanded by explicitation): *to intend/ mean no harm* – *a nu intenționa/ a nu avea de gând să facă rău* (lit. *not intend to do harm/ not think about doing harm*);
- an active voice collocation (verb + prepositional object) may turn into a passive voice verb): *to meet with approval* – *a fi aprobat* (lit. *to be approved*).

b) A cultural perspective

The cultural perspective taken on English collocations and their Romanian equivalents is doublefold here: on the one hand, cultural specificity is understood in connection with the encoded realities, i.e. as aspects of the surrounding world that exist in the source culture but are either non-existent in the target culture or have been imported into it, but are still perceived as “foreign” by the great majority of the target language speakers; on the other hand, it is seen as being linked to different ways of linguistically encoding realities that are shared between the two cultures.

English collocations that are culture-specific in the former sense include examples like: *public-health nurse*, *old boy network*, *terraced/ row house*, *anchor baby*, etc. Their Romanian equivalents, obtained by paraphrase or descriptive equivalence, are: *asistentă medicală care vizitează la domiciliu lăuze sau persoane recent externate* (*nurse who visits at their homes women after childbirth or recently discharged patients*), *rețea de foști elevi ai unei școli particulare, care se ajută între ei* (*network of a private school former students who help each other*), *una dintr-un dintr-un șir de case care au pereții laterali comuni* (*one of a row of similar houses that are joined together by their side walls*; not a house with a terrace!), *un copil născut în USA, al unei mame care nu are, legal, reședință permanentă în SUA* (“*a child born in the U.S. to a foreign national mother who is not lawfully admitted for permanent residence*; the term is generally used as a derogatory reference to the supposed role of the child, who automatically qualifies as an American citizen under ‘jus soli’ and the rights guaranteed in the 14th Amendment and can thus act as a sponsor for other family members upon reaching the age of majority”, Wikipedia online). *Happy hour*, *video-clip*, *supermarket*, *fast food* have referents that have been imported into Romanian culture together with their names, which have not been so far replaced by target language words. Consequently, they continue to be used as

loans in the target culture. Other source-culture specific collocations whose referents have been transferred into the Romanian culture may be translated by (near)calques of the original. Some such collocations are: *charity shop* – *magazin caritabil*; *bank holiday* – *vacanță bancară*; *shepard's pie* – *plăcinta ciobanului*, etc.

Source culture-specific collocations that refer to concepts common to the target culture as well may be translated by modulation/ equivalence, either into structurally similar or into structurally dissimilar phrases: *old as the hills* – *bătrân ca munții* (lit. *old as the mountains*); *poor as a church mouse* – *sărac lipit pământului* (lit. *poor as if stuck to the earth*); *easy as pie* – *simplu ca "Bună ziua"* (lit. *easy as "Good day"*); *happy as a lark* – *fericit de nu-și mai încape în piele* (lit. *so happy that he no longer fits his own skin*); *back of beyond* – *unde a zis dracu "Noapte bună"* (lit. *where the devil said "Good night"*).

2.5. Old and new meaning

It is widely agreed that vocabulary is the most dynamic segment of a language. Changes of various kinds (extension, narrowing, elevation, degradation of meaning, a change of referent, etc.) frequently occur in its evolution. Such changes, if unknown, may be the source of wrong translations.

Shakespeare's plays, for instance, are a good example in this sense: although well known to the modern readers and theater goers in terms of plots and characters, their vocabulary may often be a challenge for the translator. Thus, the word *ancient* should not be translated as if it meant "very old", but "most experienced person" in *King Lear*:

Albany: Let's then determine with the *ancient* of war
On our proceedings. (*King Lear*, V.1.32) (David and Ben Crystal 2015: 19)

At the time, the meaning of the verb *to baffle* used to be "to treat shamefully" and not "to puzzle" or "to confuse" as today. Consequently, providing Romanian equivalents for the latter would not be appropriate in the context of the Shakespearean plays:

Olivia (to Malvolio): Alas, poor fool, how *have they baffled* thee! (*Thwelfth Night*, V.1.357) (David and Ben Crystal 2015: 25)

Thomas Mowbray: I am disgraced, impeach'd and *baffled* here. (*Richard II*, I.1.174)

3. Difficulties of translating English collocations into Romanian

This section of the article contains some comments on the students' translation into Romanian of the 50 English sentences mentioned in the Introduction as well as plausible (we hope) explanations of their choices.

3.1. Meaning in isolation and contextualized meaning

Four of the sentences suggested for translation to test whether the students were able to grasp and render into their mother tongue the difference between the meaning of certain words used in isolation and in specific contexts were:

- (1) He bought the book, thus *making an addition* to his collection of 21st century authors. Does this program help you *do addition* faster?

and

- (2) After I discussed my problems with a friend, my life *took a new turn*. Seeing her begging on street corners *gave me a turn*.

In most cases, the students proved awareness of the difference we were interested in and were able to apply translation techniques accordingly. In some cases, however, faulty translations were produced, and several aspects worth discussing arise, though not all of them related to the isolated or contextualized meaning difference. The most frequent improper translations were based on the word-for-word choice: *a face o adiție*, for both collocations in sentences (1) and *a da o întorsătură* for *give somebody a turn*. If *a face o adiție* sounds unnatural in Romanian, but manages to render the meaning of both *make an addition* and *do an addition*, the quasi-literal equivalent *a da o întorsătură* (the pronoun referring to the experiencer is missing) suggested for *give somebody a turn* proves that the student ignored the change of meaning of *turn* in the phrase and the idiomatic character of the collocation it is part of and failed to translate it correctly – therefore, the meaning of the source language collocation was not carried over into the target language. The source of this error may have been the student's familiarity with the Romanian collocation he suggested, but he, however, misused it in this context: *a da o întorsătură* is perfect Romanian when employed in constructions with an ergative sense, in which the action expressed by the verb is reflected on a [-human] entity – *Decizia lui a dat o altă întorsătură concursului*. (lit. *His decision gave a different turn to the competition*.) *A face cale îtoarsă* (lit. *to turn back*) and *a face pe cineva să se întoarcă* (lit. *to make somebody turn*), both quite frequent in Romanian, were also among the students' wrong translation variants (the latter, by taking into account the pronoun in the English original this time). These wrong choices may have been rooted in a similar type of mismatch, prompted by the students' employment of well-known Romanian collocations in a context where the English collocation, closely similar in form, was used with a completely different meaning from that approximated by the students.

The desire to preserve the structure of the English collocation, by resorting to modulation instead of word-for-word translation, sometimes also resulted in awkward Romanian constructions. Superficial knowledge of the target language

collocational patterns rather than of the contextualized meaning of certain source language words must have led to the use of the verb+noun collocation *a calcula adunări* – *to calculate additions* as the equivalent of *do addition*. *A calcula adunări*, just like *a face o adiție*, may be semantically equivalent to the original, but it lacks naturalness in Romanian. The phrase that sounds natural in Romanian is a combination of the two – *a face adunări* (which many of the students opted for, alongside the contracted form *a aduna* – *to add*).

The same tendency to stick to the form of the original may be identified in the translation of *give (somebody) a turn* as *a da de gândit* (lit. *to set somebody thinking*). Like the contracted translations rendered in the form of single verbs (e.g., *a impresiona*, *a emoționa*, *a uimi*), *a da de gândit* could be accepted as a close equivalent of the English collocation, but not as a perfect one. This lack of perfect equivalence is not the consequence of the translators' inability to distinguish between meaning in isolation and contextualized meaning (our intended focus when we suggested sentences (1) and (2) for translation), but by their inability to render the connotation of the original, more exactly, the intensity of the emotion stirred. Both the Romanian collocation and the single verbs are unsuccessful translation options in this respect. As partial synonyms of *give somebody a turn*, they refer to less intense reactions than those the English collocation suggests.

As expected, in order to translate the sentences in (1) and (2), the choice our students made most often was the word-for-word technique. This led to both acceptable, though not always naturally sounding target language solutions, and also to improper ones. Romanian phrases which are formally very close to the English originals were also suggested, as a consequence of the students' overlooking the fact that closeness in form is not automatically equivalent to similarity of meaning. Solutions with different connotations from those of the source language combination were put forth as well.

3.2. Common and specialized meaning

The students' familiarity with and ability to translate specialized terminology based on words that are transferred from everyday vocabulary into professional jargon, with an obvious change of meaning, was tested with the help of the sentences in (3):

- (3) The accused must agree to his arrest in the event he *jumps bail*.
The Romanian *air arm* had two days of training last month.
Price ceilings for products are usually set by law.

As pointed out in section 2.2, translating field-specific vocabulary does not offer the translator the liberty to choose from among variants that are sometimes available when translating non-professional texts. S/he is either familiar with the specialized terminology and uses its target language equivalents correctly, or s/he is not and fails to translate appropriately. Those of our students who proved insufficient knowledge of specialized terminology, and therefore mistranslated the collocations

in the sentences grouped under (3), suggested equivalents which were approximations of the originals, obtained by activating their knowledge of the everyday senses of the words the collocations were made up of.

With one exception, the approximated translations of *air arm* were the closest to what should have been acceptable: *aviația armatei* (lit. *the army aviation*), *armata aeriană* (lit. *the air army*), *armata forțelor aeriene* (lit. *the air force army*) for *forțele aeriene/ aviația militară* (lit. *the air force/ military aviation*). The exception was quite interesting in terms of the underlying reasoning in which it may have been rooted: *arma cu aer* (lit. *the gun with air*) may have been prompted by the primary, isolated meaning of *air* (“mixture of gases that we breathe”) and the closeness in form of the English noun *arm* and the Romanian noun *armă* (gun).

The equivalents provided for *jump bail* and *price ceilings* were, on the other hand, futile attempts at guessing the specialized meaning by starting from the common meaning. Thus, knowledge that the Romanian equivalent of **jump over** – *a sări peste* has a non-literal sense as well, i.e. “to skip”, “to elude”, must have been wrongly applied, together with recognition of *bail* as part of the juridical jargon, when equivalents such as *a nu plăti cauțiunea* (lit. *not to pay bail*), *a scăpa de închisoare* (lit. *to skip prison time, to elude prison*) were suggested for *jump bail* (*a nu se prezenta la proces după plata cauțiunii* - “fail to appear for a court appearance after depositing bail, with the intention of avoiding prosecution, sentencing or going to jail”).

Ceiling, in its common sense of “the surface that is above one in a room”, must have been the word which prompted the wrong (and nonsensical) translation of *price ceilings* as *prețuri pentru produsele de cameră* (lit. *prices for room products!*). Its “one of the limits of a room” sense (and, therefore, in our context, that which puts a limit to prices) must have triggered the truncated translation *limita prețurilor* (lit. *the prices limit*), which was, however, closer to the original. Most probably, *produse cu prețuri mici* (lit. *products with small prices*) was based on the same kind of analogy.

What follows from here is that, when students are not familiar with specialized terminology in the source language (and, most probably, neither in the target language), in trying to make sense of what a term means, they often resort to their knowledge of the everyday sense of the words that have been transferred from the common to the professional vocabulary. In many instances, as demonstrated, this does not lead to felicitous results.

3.3. Condensed and explicitated meaning

Some sentences given for translation meant to test whether our students were able to produce naturally sounding and semantically equivalent Romanian collocations by either explaining or condensing the meaning of the English originals were the following:

- (4) The Allied Forces *stormed the beaches* of Normandy.
He looked up into her *glaring eyes*, wondering what to do.

- (5) The documentary *did homage* to our literary heritage.
He *drove a hard bargain* and in the end made a profitable sale.

The students' attempts at rendering the meaning of the verb *storm* in the collocation *storm the beaches* by explicitation resulted in both correct and incorrect/inappropriate Romanian equivalents. In the latter category, *a crea o furtună* (lit. *to create a storm*), for example, is misleading, as a native speaker of Romanian would most probably take it to be part of the longer and quite well known phrase *a crea o furtună într-un pahar cu apă* (lit. *to create a storm in a glass of water*), i.e. "to blow a small event out of proportion" ('a tempest in a teapot', 'a storm in a teacup'). Even if detached from this predictable context, the meaning of the Romanian *a crea o furtună* does not correspond to that of *storm* in the collocation mentioned; though connected to chaos and turbulence, it does not refer to taking a place by assault (potentially, in a war or fight) as the original does.

In the case of *glaring eyes*, omission rather than explicitation was resorted to by some of our students. On many occasions, the English collocation was reduced to the general term *ochi* (*eyes*) or, even more frequently, to a more specific collocation, which still does not cover all the senses of the original meaning, *ochi strălucitori/sclipitori* (lit. *brilliant/shiny eyes*). None of the respondents chose a variant that should make explicit the cause of the eyes' state – rage (*ochi care privesc cu mânie/ strălucesc de mânie* (lit. *eyes that watch with rage/shine with rage*)).

Most often than not, the collocations in sentences (5) that could have been translated by condensation were not rendered into Romanian by using this technique (which, however, does not mean that all the target language solutions given were not acceptable). For *did homage*, the word-for-word, but unnatural in Romanian, *a face un omagiu* was the choice in most cases of non-reductive translation, the Romanian accepted collocation being *a aduce un omagiu* (lit. *to bring an homage*). *A arăta compasiune* (lit. *to show compassion*) is a choice that may have also been connected to the students' familiarity with the connotational rather than direct meaning of a phrase peculiar to their own linguistic culture – *a aduce un (ultim) omagiu* (lit. *to pay a (last) homage*) used as a pragmatic idiom to show respect for a deceased person, on his/ her funeral (by paying homage to the departed, one indeed shows not only respect for him/ her, but also, indirectly, compassion for the members of his/ her family).

The word-for-word technique was the translation choice in most instances when the students attempted to preserve the verb+noun structure of the English collocation *to drive a bargain*, instead of condensing its meaning into a single verb. Of these, the phrase *a duce o negociere* (lit. *to carry on a negotiation*) is an appropriate variant, but many others are not, due to various reasons: *a duce la îndeplinire o negociere* (lit. *to carry on a negotiation to completion*), for example, is an unnatural over-extension of *a duce o negociere*; *a conduce o afacere* (lit. *to lead a business*) and *a pierde mulți bani* (lit. *to lose much money*) are part of the Romanian vocabulary, but have completely different meanings from the original (both may

have been prompted by insufficient knowledge of English vocabulary and, consequently, in an attempt to guess the meaning, by wrongly selecting elements that are semantically associated with negotiating – business and money); *a duce o povară grea* (lit. *to carry a heavy burden*), also the consequence of deficient lexical knowledge, must have been triggered by the student's mistaking *bargain* for *burden*.

Thus, our initial expectations concerning the translation of the collocations by explicitation or, as the case may have been, by condensation were confirmed only in few cases. Most often, other techniques, such as omission or word-for-word translation, were chosen, the result being that the meaning of the source language collocations was not always appropriately conveyed in the target language.

3.4. Modulated and transposed equivalent meaning

In general, the collocations whose correct Romanian equivalents can be obtained via modulation or equivalence did not pose major problems to the students tested. Among the sentences containing this type of collocations were:

- (6) Everything turned out *wonderfully well*, so we were *deliriously happy*.
 The shawl added *a splash of colour* to her outfit.
 She *washes her hair* every weekend.
 When one tries to lose weight, it is not uncommon to suffer *pangs of hunger*.
 The *skilled occupation* list can be accessed here by all those interested.
A catalogue of terrorist *crimes* has bloodied the world in recent years.
 The company has received *an explosion of customer complaints*.

Most of the students' translations were successful (*wonderfully well*, *deliriously happy* and *a splash of colour* were translated faultlessly in all cases). Those which were not, however, were rather inadequate than semantically incorrect, mostly due to lack of naturalness (and subsequent infrequency) in the target language: *a-și spăla părul*, a word-for-word translation for *wash one's hair* (the Romanian widely circulating phrase is *a se spăla pe cap* (lit. *wash one's head*)); *crize de înfometare* (lit. *crises of being hungry*) for *pangs of hunger* (*chinurile foamei* (lit. *the torments of hunger*)) is the collocation most likely to be used in Romanian); or *locuri de muncă ce necesită competențe* (lit. *jobs that require competences*), a paraphrase of the English *skilled occupations* (the collocation most likely to occur as its Romanian equivalent is *munci calificate* (lit. *qualified jobs/ occupations*)).

Inappropriate translation solutions were suggested for a smaller number of collocations that should have been translated by equivalence. *A catalogue of crimes* and *an explosion of complaints* are cases in point. The idea of "multitude" conveyed by *catalogue* was grasped by the students, but the Romanian words used to render it were often ill-chosen, though, with the exception of the first, possible in other contexts: *varietate* (*variety*), *listă* (*list*). *Catalog de crime* (lit. *catalogue of murders*), which many of the students considered a word-for-word equivalent of *catalogue of*

crimes, sounds unfortunate in Romanian (*o serie de acțiuni teroriste – a series of terrorist actions* would have been the equivalent most readily available). The same idea of “multitude” was contained in *explosion of complaints*; its frequently word-for-word suggested equivalent – *explozie de plângeri* is as unfortunate in Romanian as *catalog de crime* (a number of other choices could have been made to convey the meaning of the original in an acceptable Romanian lexical form: *avalanșă/ potop/ puhoi/ sumedenie/ mulțime de plângeri/ reclamații* (lit. *avalanche/ flood/ multitude of complaints*)).

a) A grammatical perspective

As seen in section 2.4., if looked at from a grammatical perspective, English collocations may be most often rendered into Romanian by recasting, transposition or grammatical modulation. Sentences (7) to (10) below are some of those we chose to assess our students’ ability to apply these techniques correctly:

- (7) She used *rancid butter* for baking.
He was *saving his strength* for the last part of the race.
The painter has *a whiff of genius* about him.
- (8) The *law office* administrator job description is given below.
She looked elegant in a stunning black *low neck dress*.
The problem was discussed in a *hastily arranged* meeting.
- (9) Please *kindly allow* me to introduce myself.
He enjoys *a questionable reputation*.
- (10) He told her *to save her breath* because he would not listen to her.
I mean no disrespect to John, but his performance tonight was not his best.

The results obtained were mixed. Though, most of the times, accurate translations were provided, errors of various kinds were also made.

Rancid butter and *save one’s strength* were translated correctly without exception, as *unt ranced* and *a-și păstra puterile/ forțele*, respectively. The former equivalent was obtained by recasting, prompted by the Romanian specific syntactic peculiarities (as already stated, the modifier follows the noun in Romanian unemphatic word order). The latter presupposed the minor change from the original singular *strength* to the target language plural *puterile/ forțele*. *A whiff of genius* was, however, not as unproblematic as the above two. The majority of the flawed translations given, instead of the correct *un pic/ o urmă de geniu*, demonstrated that the students interpreted the collocation to refer to one’s being evidently a person with genius intelligence and not to one’s having just an “air”, a slight indication of

exceptional intellect about him/ her. As a consequence, the translations they suggested ranged from word-for-word *aer de geniu* (lit. *air of a genius*) and modulated *sclipire de geniu* (lit. *glitter of a genius*) to the paraphrased variant *foarte talentat* (lit. *very talented*).

Transposition, also imposed by the specific Romanian syntax, was applied where needed. Of the collocations in sentences (8), *law office*, a noun premodifier+noun phrase, was translated correctly as the structure noun+prepositional noun phrase in post-modification position, *birou de avocatură*. *Low neck dress* (*rochie cu decolteu adânc*) was also most frequently transferred into Romanian as a noun post-modified by a prepositional noun phrase, but the meaning of the original collocation was not always conveyed in full or accurately. *Rochie cu decolteu* (lit. *décolleté dress*) and its variant noun+adjective *rochie decoltată* (lit. *decollete dress*) are cases when it was transferred only partially, while *rochie pe gât* (lit. *dress with a high neck*) and *rochie cu gulerul jos* (lit. *dress with a down neck*) are illustrations of inaccurate translations (the latter of the last two is non-sensical in Romanian and was produced most probably as the consequence of the student's intention to follow the English collocation as closely as possible). Partial transfer and inaccurate rendering of the meaning of the source language collocation also occurred in the case of *hastily arranged*. When it was translated into Romanian as (*întâlnire*) *aranjată* (lit. (*arranged* (*meeting*))), the reference to the manner of the action expressed by the verb was ignored. *Aranjată rapid* (lit. *rapidly arranged*), on the other hand, a solution provided by another student, may be considered inaccurate due to its ambivalent connotation – depending on the context, it may carry a positive connotation (rapidly and therefore successfully arranged) or a negative one (rapidly and therefore unsuccessfully arranged).

Rank unbound transposition occurs when the source and the target structures belong to different levels of the language. *Kindly allow* and *questionable reputation* in (9) were among our choices to test whether our students were aware of the necessity to translate them by applying this technique. The results proved that the technique was used in the case of the former collocation, but not in the case of the latter. Most often, they turned the adverb *kindly* into a suitable clause – *vă rog* (*frumos*) (lit. *I ask you* (*kindly*)). Nevertheless, their choice of clause was not always appropriate: *Vă rog frumos să mă lăsați*, which may seem a correct translation choice for *kindly allow* (*me*), is actually not its perfect equivalent in the context given. In Romanian, the verb *a lăsa* for *allow* is used to produce a felicitous request for permission, while here, *allow* is employed with a phatic function and, simultaneously, as a means of showing politeness; no permission is genuinely asked for. As for *questionable reputation*, the majority of the students translated the modifier *questionable*, literally, as *îndoielnică*, a word that could have been extended under the form of an attributive clause (which is what we had in mind when suggesting it for translation) – *care poate fi pusă sub semnul întrebării* (lit. *that can be placed under the question mark*). However, disregarding the node *reputation*, some also mistook the meaning of the collocate here for one that could have been

activated should the node have been a different one: *întrebător (oare)* (lit. *that asks questions*, both literally and figuratively) may be paired with *privire (look)* and *zâmbet (smile)* for example, but not with *reputation; chestionabil(ă)*, a calque of the English *questionable*, not yet recorded in dictionaries of Romanian, is present in online texts, for example, in collocations such as *viitor/ text/ transfer, etc. chestionabil* (lit. *questionable future/ text/ transfer, etc.*). *Reputație chestionabilă* does not sound acceptable in Romanian.

Save one's breath and *mean no disrespect* in (10) were translated by various techniques, grammatical modulation (which we were interested in) included. For the former, the grammatically modulated forms suggested in Romanian were *a nu vorbi degeaba* (lit. *not to talk in vain*) and *a nu-și bate gura* (lit. *not to talk*), both implying the change of a positive node into a negative one. A more suggestive variant than *a nu vorbi degeaba* would have been *a nu-și răci gura de pomană* (lit. *not to cool one's mouth in vain*); it would have also been clearer in meaning than *a nu-și bate gura*, which may be ambiguous outside a larger context, since, apart from “not talking”, it may also mean “not disclose secrets”. *Mean no disrespect* was translated by changing the negative node into a negative collocate in, for example, *a nu vrea/ a nu intenționa să jignească, a nu vrea să fie lipsit de respect/ nepoliticos* (lit. *not want/ intend to offend, not want to be lacking respect/ to be impolite*), all of them acceptable in Romanian.

b) A cultural perspective

The students' understanding of the cultural dimension of some English collocations and their ability to appropriately deal with them in translation were also tested. Some of the sentences we used to this end were:

- (11) The best *charity shops* in town can be found in a side street, not far from you.
A penny board is a type of hard plastic board on which you can skate around.
 She has always been rude to me, but talking like that to my mother was *the last straw*.
 Her spectacular success makes me *green with envy*.

Charity shops – shops in which a charitable organization sells, at low prices, used and new goods donated by people in order to make money to support their declared charitable mission – have appeared in Romania as well, their appellative name being transferred under the form of two lexical-semantic calques: *magazine caritabile/ de caritate* (lit. *charitable shops/ shops of charity*). Our students demonstrated familiarity with them and used them in the great majority of cases. Yet, some of the students, possibly as a consequence of their awareness that charity shops were something alien to their own culture felt the need to clarify what they stood for and rendered the English collocation into Romanian by explicitation, in phrases such as *magazine pentru acte de caritate* (lit. *shops for acts of charity*) or

magazine pentru făcut donații (lit. *shops for making donations*), both unnatural in the target language.

Penny board seems to have been perceived as being even more tightly connected to a foreign culture, since the greatest majority of the students tested did not attempt to translate it into Romanian. The few exceptions from choosing direct transfer of the source language collocation into the target language include instances such as the partial translation *placă penny*, where the node was translated literally into Romanian, while the collocate was preserved in its original form.

Source culture-specific collocations referring to concepts that are shared with the target culture may, in some cases, be translated by modulation/ equivalence. As our students demonstrated, choices of how these concepts may be expressed in the target language may vary widely. *The last straw* is most often translated into Romanian as *picătura care a umplut paharul* (lit. *the drop that filled the glass*); this was our students' main translation option, but other correct versions were also suggested – some, in keeping with the adjective+noun structure of the English collocation: *ultimul strop/ ultima picătură* (lit. *the last drop*), others, rephrasing the original *to be the last straw*: *a nu mai putea îngădui* (lit. *not to be able to bear/ allow anymore*), *a pune capac* (lit. *to put a lid*). *(Make somebody) green with envy* was also translated into Romanian in various acceptable ways, mostly by modulation: *(a face pe cineva) mort de invidie* (lit. *(to make somebody) dead of envy*), *(a umple pe cineva de) invidie* (lit. *(to fill somebody with) envy*), in whose case the intensity of the emotion suggested by the English collocation is covered by the adjective *mort* (*dead*) and by the verb *a umple* (*to fill*), respectively. *(A face pe cineva) foarte invidios* (lit. *(to make somebody) very envious*) is less intense (though it has a superlative value as well) and, therefore, less appropriate as a translation alternative. On the other hand, *verde/ negru de invidie* (lit. *green/ black with envy*) may be successful in conveying the superlative meaning of *green with envy*, but the choice of words results in collocations that sound atypical in Romanian: *verde de invidie* (lit. *green with envy*) is obviously a lexical-semantic calque of the original, while *negru de invidie* (lit. *black with envy*) seems to contain a mismatch of the node and its collocate – in the target language, *negru* (*black*) is usually associated with one's being upset, not envious: *negru de supărare* (lit. *black because of being upset*).

As our analysis in this section has demonstrated, the types of errors our students made when translating collocations for which (grammatical) modulation and (cultural) equivalence would have been the choices we had in mind range from providing unnatural to partial and inaccurate Romanian equivalents.

3.5. Old and new meaning

The following examples from Shakespearean plays were chosen to test our students' knowledge of the difference between the meaning of the words *weird*, *unthrifty* and *stand on* in the 16th century and today and their ability to translate them correctly:

- (12) Oh, much I fear some ill *unthrifty thing*. (*Romeo and Juliet*, V.3.136)
 I dreamt last night of the three *weird sisters*. (*Macbeth*, II.1.20)
 Caesar, I never *stood on ceremonies*/ Yet now they fright me. (*Julius Caesar*,
 II.2.13-14)

The negative meaning of *unthrifty thing* was approximated by our students, who used equivalents like *lucru rău/ oribil/ nefast/ necurat* (lit. *bad/ horrible/ ill-fated/ devilish thing*), without any of them, however, providing the closest equivalent of the English collocation in the particular context of the Shakespearean play – *nenorocire* (lit. *misfortune*). *Weird sisters*, on the other hand, was given, without exception, a word-for-word translation, which contained the Romanian equivalent of the present-day meaning of *weird*: “strange, unusual” – *surori ciudate* (lit. *strange sisters*); the old meaning was obviously not known to them – “that makes prophecies”. The translation of *stand on ceremonies* – “to believe in prophecies”, in the context given – followed track, so that the Romanian equivalents offered were mostly based on current meanings of the verb *stand* and the noun *ceremonies*: *a sta la ceremonii* (lit. *to keep an upright position at ceremonies*), *a suporta ceremoniile* (lit. *to be willing to accept ceremonies*), *a rămâne la ceremonii* (lit. *to remain at ceremonies*). A number of other translation suggestions were incorrect extensions of the basic meanings: *a sta – a asista/ a participa la ceremonii* (lit. *to witness/ take part in ceremonies*), *a suporta – a-i plăcea ceremoniile* (lit. *to like ceremonies*).

All in all, our suspicion that our students may hardly be familiar with the meaning of the words used in Shakespeare’s time was confirmed by their erroneous translations, which were based on the current meaning of these words.

4. Conclusion

The analysis of the errors made by our students when translating the English collocations into Romanian validates our initial claim that the process does not always run smoothly. The errors that affected the quality of the target language solutions they proposed may be placed on a scale, from those with unwanted consequences at the lexical level only to those negatively influencing the semantic level as a whole.

The former category is represented by the choices of phrases that manage to convey the meaning of the source language segments, but would be perceived as lexically unnatural by any native speaker of Romanian (e.g. *crize de înfometare* (lit. *crises of being hungry*) instead of *chinurile foamei* (lit. *the torture of hunger*) for *pangs of hunger*; *magazin pentru acte de caritate* (lit. *shop for acts of charity*) instead of *magazin caritabil* (lit. *charitable shop*) for *charity shop*); *explozie de plângeri*, a word-for-word translation of *explosion of complaints*, etc.).

In the latter category, the equivalents the students provided for certain English word combinations may also be placed on a scale, by taking into consideration how much of the original meaning they managed to render: part of it to none. The

following translation alternatives resulted in a partial transfer into Romanian of the meaning of the English collocations:

- the choice of a target language phrase that differs in connotation from the original, for example, by referring to emotions which are less intense than those expressed by the English collocation (e.g. *(a face pe cineva) foarte gelos* (lit. *(make somebody) very envious* for *(make somebody) green with envy*; *a da de gândit* (lit. *to set somebody thinking*) for *give somebody a turn*, etc.);
- the provision of partial translations of the original (e.g. *ochi strălucitori/ sclipitori* (lit. *brilliant/ shiny eyes*) instead of *(ochi care privesc cu mânie/ strălucesc de mânie* (lit. *eyes that watch with rage/ shine with rage*) for *glaring eyes*; *rochie decoltată* (lit. *décolleté dress*) instead of *rochie cu decolteu adânc* (lit. *dress with a low décolletage*), etc.);
- the choice of ambiguous target language wording (e.g. *aranjată rapid* (lit. *rapidly arranged*) instead of *aranjată în grabă* (lit. *arranged in a hurry*) for *hastily arranged*; *a nu-și bate gura* (lit. *not to talk*) instead of *a nu-și răci gura de pomană* (lit. *not to cool one's mouth in vain*) for *save one's breath*, etc.).

Instances when the meaning of the English collocations was not carried over into the target language include:

- the translation of a specialized word borrowed from the common vocabulary by resorting to its non-specialized, everyday meaning (e.g. *a nu plăti cauțiunea* (lit. *not to pay the bail*) for *jump bail*, etc.);
- the incorrect translation of an English collocation by analogy with a target language phrase the students were familiar with (e.g. *a arăta compasiune* (lit. *to show compassion*) for *do homage* (translation under the influence of the Romanian phrase *a aduce un (ultim) omagiu*), etc.);
- the incorrect translation of false friends (e.g. *catalog de crime* (lit. *catalogue of murders*) for *catalogue of crimes*, etc.);
- the translation of a source language word by a target language word that is close to it in form (e.g. *arma cu aer* (lit. *the gun with air*) for *air arm*, etc.);
- the translation of the English collocation by making wrong selections from the larger semantic field to which one of its terms belongs (e.g. *a conduce o afacere* (lit. *to lead a business*) and *a pierde mulți bani* (lit. *to lose much money*) instead of *a purta o negociere* (lit. *to carry on a negotiation*) for *drive a bargain*, etc.);
- the translation of a word with its present day meaning where its older meaning should have been considered (e.g. *surori ciudate* (lit. *strange sisters*) instead of *sisters who make prophecies* for *weird sisters*; *a asista*

la ceremonii (lit. *to witness ceremonies*) instead of *believe in prophecies* for *stand on ceremonies*.

Our analysis is a small-scale case study, and the difficulties of translating English collocations into Romanian, highlighted by the errors we have summarized above, are no doubt more numerous and diverse than those we have come across. However, what our research has revealed is hopefully a useful starting point for making Romanian teachers and learners of English as well as translators working with the two languages aware of these difficulties and the challenging problems that they may encounter.

References

- Baker, Mona. 2002. *In Other Words. A Coursebook on Translation*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Crystal, David and Ben. 2015. *Oxford Illustrated Shakespeare Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Firth, John R. 1957. *Papers in Linguistics 1934-1951*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Firth, John R. 1968. *Selected Papers of J.R. Firth 1952-1959*. London: Longman.
- Klaudy, Kinga. 2008. "Explicitation" in Baker, Mona and Gabriela Saldanha (eds.). *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, 2nd edition. London and New York: Routledge.
- Lehecka, Tomas. 2015. "Collocation and Colligation" in Jan-Ola Östman and Jef Verschueren (eds.). *Handbook of Pragmatics*, vol. 19, pp. 1-23. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

THE INTERPRETER'S DO'S AND DON'TS

SIMONA ŞIMON

Politehnica University of Timișoara

Abstract: *The globalised society, in which we are now living, favours the personal and professional encounters between communication partners with various linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Nevertheless, the communication partners engaged in oral exchanges often do not share a common language and therefore they need an interpreter to transmit the message from one party to the other. The present paper draws the attention to the interpreter's code of conduct meant to facilitate and not to hinder the communication process.*

Keywords: *communication, communication partners, interpreter, message*

1. Introduction

Communication among people existed since the beginning of mankind. At the outset, there was the sign and only then the word that helped people communicate with each other. Due to the socio-economic and technological progress that appeared once the communities evolved, people started to move around, to discover and conquer new territories, to get into contact with peoples that spoke different languages and had different cultures. That was the moment when the need for a person who knew both languages and cultures, and could facilitate communication became obvious. Such a person was named an interpreter, that is a person able to convert “an oral message into another oral message” (Seleskovitch, 1989: 2), from the source language into the target language.

Although interpreters have been used as mediators of communication since ancient times, it was only in the 20th century that they were officially accepted as professionals whose knowledge was of paramount importance for the furtherance of communication in multi-lingual settings. The professional status was strengthened by the emergence of professional associations which aimed at helping interpreters cope with the problems they encountered in their professional life. Such associations drew up codes of ethics and of conduct which regulated the interpreters' professional activity (Phelan 2001, Pöchhacker 2016), and which are taken into consideration in the present article in order to highlight the interpreter's most relevant professional do's and don'ts.

2. The emergence of a profession

The exact moment when the first interpreters were used is hard to track mainly because of the oral character of the interpreter's professional activity. The existence of a hieroglyphic in Ancient Egypt that signified "interpreter" is the first recorded evidence pointing to the origins of the profession. In ancient Middle and Far East, interpreters were used not only for their ability to further verbal and nonverbal communication, but also for their trade, transport and administrative connections which would support business relations. In ancient Rome and Greece, slaves and prisoners were coerced to learn Latin or Greek in order to facilitate communication between the conquered peoples, and the Romans or the Greeks. Later on, in the Middle Ages, Latin was the official language used both by scientists and writers to promote their work, and by the Catholic church and royal courts to establish diplomatic relations. In 16th century Spain, laws regulating the interpreting practices in the empire were in force; this fact proves the important role played by the interpreters and acknowledged by society (see Phelan 2001, Pöchhacker 2016, Takeda and Baigorri-Jalón, 2016, Thieme et al. 1956, http://lrc.wfu.edu/community_interpreting/pages/history.htm, <http://linkterpreting.uvigo.es/que-es-la-interpretacion/historia/?lang=en>).

In the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century, French was the official language of diplomacy and culture. During the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, English as well as French were officially used for negotiations. The working mode was the following: the speaker delivered a speech either in French or in English, and the interpreter conveyed the message into the other official language. At that stage, consecutive interpreting was mainly used, i.e. the interpreter listened to the spoken discourse in the source language, took notes and then rendered the speech into the target language. In 1927, the International Labour Conference in Geneva, Switzerland, took place, and that was the first time when, besides English and French, other languages were officially used during the conference. That was the moment when simultaneous interpreting was resorted to for the first time. By simultaneous interpreting one understands that a message is conveyed from a source language into a target language almost simultaneously, usually with the help of some technical equipment. Although very costly, simultaneous interpreting was used on a large scale during the Nüremberg war crime trials that started in 1945. Two years later, the United Nations' Resolution 152 established simultaneous interpreting as a permanent service for the UN (see Phelan 2001, Pöchhacker 2016, Takeda and Baigorri-Jalón, 2016, Thieme et al. 1956, http://lrc.wfu.edu/community_interpreting/pages/history.htm, <http://linkterpreting.uvigo.es/que-es-la-interpretacion/historia/?lang=en>).

3. The interpreter's dos and don'ts

Once the role of the interpreter was officially and socially acknowledged, the first professional associations were founded in order to create the framework within

which the interpreters could carry out their work efficiently with the obvious purpose of gaining professional recognition and dignity on a large scale (see Phelan 2001, Pöchhacker 2016, *** 2007a, b, <http://aiic.net/page/6724>, https://www.atanet.org/governance/code_of_ethics.php, http://ausit.org/AUSIT/About/Ethics_Conduct/Code_of_Ethics/AUSIT/About/Code_of_Ethics.aspx, <http://www.fit-europe.org/en/what-we-do/completed-projects/codes-ethics>).

The first professional association, *The International Association of Conference Interpreters* (AIIC, standing for Association Internationale des Interprètes de Conférence) was formed in 1953, and four years later its code of ethics was adopted. In 1959, the *American Translators Association (ATA)* was created, which also came up with its own *Code of Ethics for Translators and Interpreters*. Little by little, it became obvious that interpreters were needed at conferences, as well as in various other social settings, particularly in countries or/and on continents with a high rate of immigrant population like USA, Canada, Australia, and Europe. So, the need for even more professional associations and organisations that tailored the interpreter's professional activity to the requirements of the country or continent in question was felt. Some other associations and organisations that devised their own codes of ethics and professional standards, and were taken into account for the present study are: the Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators Incorporated (AUSIT), the Language Industry Association (Association de l'industrie de la langue, in short AILIA) in Canada, the European Association for Legal Interpreters and Translators (EULITA), and the International Federation of Translators (FIT). The issues approached in the above mentioned codes of ethics and conduct are very deep and extensive. One notices however that they can be grouped under the following three main headings:

- professional business relationships;
- working conditions;
- the interpreter's competence;
- the quality of the interpretation.

3.1. Professional relationships

The development of professional relationships refers both to the business relationship existing between the organisation that hires interpreters and the interpreters, and to the relationship among the interpreters. Any relationship is doomed to failure if it is not based on sincerity and mutual respect. As such, the interpreter should assess the assignment before accepting it and be truthful about his/her professional qualifications. In other words, s/he should not accept any interpreting job if s/he is not qualified for it. Moreover, the interpreter should disclose any professional limitations and/or conflict of interest. If a situation like the aforementioned one appears, the quality of the interpretation could be affected,

therefore the interpreter should expose it and recommend another colleague that is qualified for the assignment. The interpreter should never recommend someone else for a fee or other personal gains, or make any injurious comments on the reputation of a colleague. Such behaviour would tell a lot about the character of the person in question.

Additionally, in order to avoid any misunderstandings and false expectations, a contract should be signed between the parties, in which both the interpreter's role and the agreed fees should be stipulated. It follows obviously that the interpreter should not accept any reward other than the agreed fees or expenses.

During the assignment, the interpreter should always be polite, punctual and should observe the dress code. No matter what information s/he learns while interpreting, this should be rendered impartially and remain confidential; otherwise the mutual trust is broken. Furthermore, the interpreter should not go beyond his/her role and express his/her opinions or give advice on the topic that is being discussed. His/her role is merely to render the message faithfully and impartially from the source into the target language. In contexts where more than one interpreter is needed, the interpreters should help each other when the situation requires it. In this way, they show professional solidarity, a concept present in most of the codes of ethics and conduct conceived by the professional associations mentioned above. In order to be aware of the professional standards and to safeguard them, the interpreters should join professional associations which promote certain professional values in accordance with the social development and needs.

3.2. Working conditions

Adequate working conditions are the first step towards fulfilling an assignment successfully. Sometimes technical equipment (telephone, video, internet, booth interpreting equipment) is needed for the accomplishment of the interpreting task. In such a context, the interpreter has to make sure that s/he is familiar with the technology used. Moreover, before the interpreting session, s/he has to check whether the equipment is in working order. Besides the functional technical equipment, other working conditions contribute to the success of the interpretation, for example audibility, sight, seating. The interpreter should be seated so that s/he can hear and see the speaker clearly, because both the verbal and the nonverbal message help him/her render the discourse correctly from one language into the other.

In the case of conferences, the interpreter should ask for the working documents or the papers that are to be read to be provided in advance. This is particularly important, because it helps the interpreter get familiar with the topic and the terminology used. In dialogues or meetings, the interpreter should encourage the parties to address each other directly, as the message can, in this way, preserve its illocutionary force both in the source, and in the target language (Şimon, 2015; Şimon and Dejica-Cartiş, 2015a, 2015b).

3.3. The interpreter's competence

Great emphasis is laid on the interpreter's competence to facilitate communication. In order to do so, s/he has to master the working languages very well. This means s/he should have a vast general and specialised vocabulary, and a deep knowledge of the grammar and culture in question (Şimon and Suci, 2015; Cozma and Dejica-Carţiş, 2013). One of the interpreter's professional duties is to constantly study the evolution of languages and cultures in order to increase his/her professional skills.

There are several factors that ensure the success of the interpretation, one of them being the preparation for the assignment, which should take place in advance and target both the specialized terminology and the research on the topic itself. During the assignment, the interpreter should be faithful to the original message, taking into account the audience and the intended purpose of the discourse. The message should be relayed completely (even the derogatory or vulgar language, the incoherence, hesitations or unclear statements, the obvious untruths, the side-comments), with no omissions, embellishment or alterations (no softening/strengthening of the message). To be more precise, the interpreter should use the same grammatical pronouns, unit of measurement or monetary units and register as the speaker. S/he should resort to idiomatic language to render idioms, and to proverbs to render proverbs (or at least interpret them literally if s/he lacks inspiration). The repetitions, fillers and false starts in the original message should be preserved, as well as the speaker's emotions, without recourse to dramatics or mimicry, which could cause a burst of laughter among the audience.

3.4. The quality of the interpretation

The quality of the interpretation depends on the interpreter's correct understanding of the message, which in turn is influenced by a number of different factors: incoherent and/or inaudible speech due to the speaker's voice quality or some technical problems, to unknown terminology and/or cultural issues, and to tiredness. In such contexts, in order to do his/her job efficiently, the interpreter needs to interrupt the speaker in order to have a short conversation on how to remove all the negative factors affecting the interpreting process. Sometimes the quality of the interpretation might be influenced by the speed at which a speech is delivered and then the interpreter might want to make recourse to summary interpretation, which is acceptable only if the parties agree and if they are notified in advance that what follows is a summary.

Moreover, in order to carry out the assignment in a professional manner, whenever the interpreter feels tired, s/he should not hesitate to ask for a break. In

case of long interpreting sessions when two interpreters usually do the interpretation, they should alternate every half hour otherwise there is a great chance of being unable to relay the message accurately due to fatigue.

Finally, an interpreter that wishes to improve his/her professional performance should evaluate it, considering the satisfactory and unsatisfactory elements, as well as seek support when needed. The interpreter should be aware of the fact that s/he is not responsible for the speaker's mistakes, but for his/her own inability to convey the message accurately from one language into the other.

4. Conclusion

The need for interpreters to facilitate communication among persons with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds arose in ancient times, but it was only in the 20th century that their work was recognised on a large scale, gradually gaining professional status. That was the moment when professional associations also appeared in order to establish an official framework within which the interpreters could act in a professional and dignified manner in the settings in which their professional expertise was needed. The associations devised codes of ethics and conduct derived from the interpreters' work experience. The codes of ethics and conduct taken into account for the present study focus on four main issues: professional business relationships, working conditions, the interpreter's competence and the quality of the interpretation.

Taking all this into consideration, the study highlights the interpreter's most important dos and don'ts, some of them being summarized below. In a nutshell, the interpreter should: sign a contract, prepare for the interpreting situation, relay the message using the form of address used by the speaker, make every effort to relay the message entirely and accurately, interrupt the speaker only if s/he needs clarification or if the speaker is speaking inaudibly, be impartial and confidential, maintain polite and good business relationships both outside and within the profession, seek evaluation and professional development. At the same time, it is important that the interpreter should mainly not: give personal advice or opinions, omit parts of the message, add anything to the message, make injurious comments to the reputation of a colleague, recommend an interpreter for a fee or other personal gains, accept any reward other than the agreed fees or expenses.

In other words, the interpreter should do everything s/he needs to do in order to facilitate communication among the communication partners. S/he should simply be "an interpreting machine", working within the boundaries that had been set by the codes of ethics and conduct drawn by the national and international professional associations.

References

- Cozma, Mihaela and Daniel Dejica-Carțiș. 2013. "A Psychological Approach to Professional Translator Education" in Uzunboylu, Huseyin and Mukaddes Demirok (eds.). *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 84, pp. 895-899. [Online]. Available: <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877042813017436> [Accessed 2016, September 30].
- Phelan, Mary. 2001. *The Interpreter's Resource*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- Pöchhacker, Franz. 2016 (2004). *Introducing Interpreting Studies*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Seleskovitch, Danica. 1989. *The Interpreter*. Paris: Didier.
- Șimon, Simona. 2015. "An Overview of Speech Acts in English" in *Scientific Bulletin of the Politehnica University of Timișoara - Transactions on Modern Languages*, 14 (1), pp. 5-12.
- Șimon, Simona and Daniel Dejica-Carțiș. 2015a. "Speech Acts in Written Advertisements: Identification, Classification and Analysis" in Rahimi, Ali (ed.). *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences. The Proceedings of 2nd Global Conference on Conference on Linguistics and Foreign Language Teaching*, 192, pp. 234-239. Available: <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877042815035041> [Accessed 2016, September 30].
- Șimon, Simona and Daniel Dejica-Carțiș. 2015b. "Analysis and Classification of Directions in Written Advertisements" in Ali Rahimi, (ed.). *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 192. Elsevier Ltd. pp. 240-243. [Online]. Available: <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877042815035053> [Accessed 2016, September 30].
- Șimon, Simona and Lavinia Suci. 2015. "Raising Cultural Awareness in Interpreting Students" in Alevriadou, Anastasia (ed.). *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 197, pp. 1242-1245. [Online]. Available: <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877042815043918> [Accessed 2016, September 30].
- Takeda, Kayoko and Jesús Baigorri-Jalón (eds.). 2016. *New Insights into the History of Interpreting*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Thieme, Karl, Alfred Hermann and Edgar Glässer. 1956. *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Dolmetschens*. Munich: Isar.

Online resources

- ***. 2007a. *National Standard Guide for Community Interpreting Services*. Toronto: Healthcare Interpretation Network – HIN.
- ***. 2007b. *AIIC: Code of Professional Ethics*. [Online]. Available: <http://aiic.net/page/6724> [Accessed 2016, May 6].
- ***. *American Translators Association Code of Ethics and Professional Practice*. [Online]. Available: https://www.atanet.org/governance/code_of_ethics.php [Accessed 2016, May 6].

- ***. *AUSIT Code of Ethics*. [Online]. Available: http://ausit.org/AUSIT/About/Ethics___Conduct/Code_of_Ethics/AUSIT/About/Code_of_Ethics.aspx [Accessed 2016, May 06].
- ***. *EULITA Code of Ethics*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.eulita.eu/code-ethics> [Accessed 2016, May 06].
- ***. *FIT European Code of Professional Practice*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.fit-europe.org/en/what-we-do/completed-projects/codes-ethics> [Accessed 2016, May 06].
- ***. *Interpreting for the Community. A Brief History of Interpreting*. [Online]. Available: http://irc.wfu.edu/community_interpreting/pages/history.htm [Accessed 2016, February 20].
- ***. *Professional Standards and Ethics for California Court Interpreters*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.courts.ca.gov/2693.htm> [Accessed 2016, May 5].
- ***. *What is Interpreting? History*. [Online]. Available: <http://linkinterpreting.uvigo.es/ques-la-interpretacion/historia/?lang=en> [Accessed 2016, February 20].

NOTES ON THE AUTHORS

Ahmad Kareem Salem Al-Wuhaili is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Craiova, Romania. He holds a BA in English from the University of Baghdad, Iraq, and an MA degree in linguistics from Bharati Vidyapeeth Deemed University, India. His special interests lie in the field of pragmatics, especially in the apology speech act. He approaches the subject mainly in a comparative manner.

E-mail address: ahmad.alsalim3434@yahoo.com

Aycan Akçamete is a PhD student at Boğaziçi University, Istanbul. She completed her B.A. and M.A. degrees at Hacettepe University, focusing in her thesis on post-war British drama and feminist playwrights. She is a theater critic and a jury member for a national theater award in Turkey.

E-mail address: akcamete.aycan@gmail.com

Diana Benea is a junior lecturer in the Department of English at the University of Bucharest, Romania, where she teaches 20th and 21st century American literature and cultural studies methodologies. She earned her PhD in American literature at the University of Bucharest, with a dissertation on Thomas Pynchon's later novels. Her main research interests include (post-) postmodernist American fiction; contemporary American drama; theories and methodologies in American Studies.

E-mail address: dbenea@gmail.com

Alexandru Budac teaches comparative literature and aesthetics at the West University of Timișoara, Romania. He is the author of *Byron în rețea sau Cum a rămas liberă canapeaua doctorului Freud* (București: Humanitas, 2009) – a study on Thomas Pynchon's fiction and cognitive science. His main research interests are literary criticism, the philosophy of mind, American Literature, and aesthetics.

E-mail address: alex_budac@yahoo.com

Alina Bugheșiu, PhD, is a senior lecturer 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

Martina della Casa, Ph.D, is an ATER at the University of Haute-Alsace, France, and a member of the Institute of European Literatures and Languages. Her PhD dissertation was entitled *Experiences of the sacred and (de)figurations of Christ. Artaud, Beckett and Pasolini*. Her research concentrates mainly on the presence of the Bible and of Christianity

in contemporary European literature, on the circulation of text and ideas in Europe, on the literary construction of a European identity and on translation and self-translation.

E-mail address: martina.della-casa@uha.fr

Péter Gaál-Szabó is an associate college professor at the Foreign Languages Department of the Debrecen Reformed Theological University, Hungary. His research focuses on African American culture, cultural spaces, religio-cultural identity, and intercultural communication. He is author of *“Ah done been tuh de horizon and back”*: Zora Neale Hurston’s Cultural Spaces in *“Their Eyes Were Watching God”* and *“Jonah’s Gourd Vine”* (Peter Lang, 2011).
E-mail address: dszabop@yahoo.com

Silvia García Hernández holds a PhD in Modern Languages, Literature and Translation from the University of Alcalá, Spain, where she teaches several courses in two degrees: English Studies and Modern Languages and Translation. Her main field of research is contemporary women writers, with a special focus on the narratives of Hilary Mantel and Michèle Roberts.
E-mail address: silvia.garciah@uah.es

Raluca Goleşteanu teaches foreign languages in Bucharest, Romania. She specializes in the social and cultural history of Central and Eastern Europe in the modern and contemporary age. Her main areas of interest are related to the urban landscape, gender emancipation, theories of center-periphery, as well as pop culture.
E-mail address: rgolesta@gmail.com

Kağan Kaya holds a PhD from Atatürk University. He teaches British Drama courses at Cumhuriyet University, Turkey. His academic essays and papers deal with the work of some contemporary British playwrights such as Ayckbourn, Hare, Stoppard and Brenton. In 2017 he will give academic support to British playwright Robin Soans in a drama project.
E-mail address: kkaya@cumhuriyet.edu.tr

Vesna Lazović is a senior lecturer at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Novi Sad, Serbia. She holds a PhD in linguistics from the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. Her main research interests include sociolinguistics, translation, contrastive linguistics, discourse analysis, intercultural communication and ELT methodology.
E-mail address: lazovicvesna@ff.uns.ac.rs

Elisabetta Marino is a tenured assistant professor of English literature at the University of Rome “Tor Vergata”, Italy. She has written three monographs (a fourth one is forthcoming), published a translation into Italian with an introduction, and edited and co-edited eight collections of essays (two more are forthcoming). She has published extensively on travel literature, Asian American and Asian British literature, Italian American literature, and on the English Romantic writers.
E-mail address: emarin@hurricane.it

Alexandru Oraviţan is pursuing a PhD degree in Philology at the West University of Timişoara, Romania, with a project regarding the foreground-background dialectic in post-

9/11 literature. His research has focused on contemporary American literature and culture, and the literary theme of melancholy. He has published numerous book reviews in *Orizont*, a literary magazine of the Romanian Writers' Union.

E-mail address: alexandru.oravitan91@e-uvv.ro

Hortensia Pârlog is professor emerita of English language at the West University of Timișoara, Romania. Her publications include numerous books and studies on phonetics, the English noun and verb phrase, translation studies, collocations, lexical borrowings into Romanian, as well as dictionaries of collocations.

She is the founder and editor of the *B.A.S./British and American Studies* journal. She served two terms as Secretary of ESSE (European Society for the Study of English) (2002 – 2008), and one term as editor of *The European English Messenger* (2013 – 2015).

E-mail address: abaparlog@gmail.com

Katja Plemenitaš is an assistant professor in the Department of English and American Studies at the University of Maribor, Slovenia. Her academic interests include all aspects of discourse analysis and cognitive linguistics, and she also takes a keen interest in topics related to language and gender. She has conducted research in cross-cultural characteristics of linguistic sexism and political discourse. Her recent academic interests focus on cross-cultural characteristics of linguistic appraisal and the application of cognitive linguistics to the analysis of political discourse.

E-mail address: katja.plemenitas@um.si

Mihaela-Elisabeta Popuța holds an M.A. in American Studies from the West University of Timișoara, and is currently enrolled in the Philology PhD program at this university. She has published essays on the American legal and health systems, and several articles on the life and status of Romanians in Voevodina, Serbia. Her main area of interest is the 20th century American literature, while presently focusing on Paul Auster's work.

E-mail address: mihap04@yahoo.com

Loredana Pungă is a reader in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures at the West University of Timișoara, Romania. Her domains of expertise are English lexicology, applied and cognitive linguistics and translation studies. She holds an MA in British and American Studies and a PhD in Philology from the university where she currently teaches. Her publications include books (e.g. *On Language and Ecology*, 2006, and *Words about Words: An Introduction to English Lexicology*, 2011) and book chapters in thematic volumes. She is (co)-editor of three volumes published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing and a member of the editorial board of two academic journals. She has published over thirty-five articles in her areas of research, both in Romania and abroad.

E-mail address: loredana.punga@e-uvv.ro

Javier Rodríguez Doñate holds a degree in English Studies granted by the University of Zaragoza, Spain, and is currently working on his MA Dissertation at the same university. His research interests include postmodern, working-class fiction and ideology, with a special focus on Martin Amis, James Kelman or Pat Barker.

E-mail address: jrrodriguez_d@hotmail.com

Claudia Elena Stoian is a graduate in English Philology from the University *Autónoma* of Madrid, Spain. She holds a PhD. in Applied Linguistics from the same university. At present, she teaches Translation, Discourse Analysis and English as a Foreign Language at the *Politehnica* University of Timișoara, Romania, and works as a translator of English, Spanish and Romanian. She has published a book on the discourse of tourism websites, several papers on discourse analysis and cultural differences, and some translations. Claudia Stoian is also an assistant editor of the proceedings of the international conference *Professional Communication and Translation Studies* and the editorial secretary of the *Scientific Bulletin of the Politehnica University of Timișoara*.

E-mail address: claudia.stoian@upt.ro

Simona Șimon is a lecturer at the “Politehnica” University of Timișoara. She holds a doctoral degree from the University of the West, Timișoara. Her research interests are in the field of applied linguistics, genre studies, advertising and teaching.

E-mail address: simon_cristina@hotmail.com

Tadeja Tement is an MA student in Translation and Interpreting – English at the University of Maribor, Slovenia. She also holds a BA degree in Interlingual Studies and Pedagogy. Her research interests include stylistics, translation studies as well as simultaneous and consecutive interpreting. She currently works as a freelance translator for English, Slovene and Spanish.

E-mail address: tadeja.tement@student.um.si

Mihaela-Ioana Topan is a doctoral student, whose main interests are literary onomastics, forensic linguistics, psychology, literature in general, and science fiction.

E-mail address: elatopan@gmail.com

Anca-Luisa Viusenco is a teaching assistant at the Faculty of Geography and Geology of the “Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, University of Iași, Romania. Her doctoral research focused on fictional representations of women suffering from mental disturbances in autobiographical works by American female authors, and their corresponding filmic adaptations. Apart from gender studies and film, her interests include ethnic literature and American art.

E-mail address: anca.viusenco@yahoo.com

Anna Walczuk teaches English literature at the Institute of English Philology of the Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Poland. Her doctoral dissertation was a comparative study of G.K. Chesterton and C.S. Lewis. She has also published a book on irony in the novels of Muriel Spark. Her academic interests focus upon various modes of using the potential of language to portray social and cultural reality as well as to communicate transcendence. At present, her main area of research covers the dialogue between literature and theology, concentrating on Christian themes and religious motifs, especially in the poetry of T.S. Eliot and Elizabeth Jennings.

E-mail address: anna.walczuk@uj.edu.pl

Milan D. Živković, PhD, is an assistant professor in the English Department of the Faculty of Law and Business Studies ‘Dr Lazar Vrkatić’ in Novi Sad, Serbia. His professional fields of interests include English Literature and Anglophone Culture, British Cultural

Studies, and English for Specific Purposes (Business English). He has given papers at various national and international conferences and has published in various professional academic journals.

E-mail address: mzivkovic@useens.net

Jadranka Zlomislić is an assistant professor of English at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Osijek, Croatia. She teaches British and American Culture and Civilization as well as English language courses. Her research interests include American and British cultural studies, American academic fiction, cultural studies in language teaching and the role of culture in translation.

E-mail address: jadranka.zlomislic@gmail.com