

# **ROMANIAN JOURNAL OF ENGLISH STUDIES**

**Editura Universității de Vest Timișoara**

**2012**

A journal of *The Romanian Society of English and American Studies*

This journal is published with the support of

**Universitatea de Vest, Timișoara**

Cover Design:

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© Romanian Journal of English Studies, no.9, 2012  
ISSN 1584-3734

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**I**

**LANGUAGE STUDIES**

# FROM CANDIDATE TO PRESIDENT: OBAMA'S DISCOURSE TWO YEARS LATER

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**Abstract:** *The article explores Barack Obama's most notable speeches after becoming president. The authors intend to write a sequel to their 2009 paper *Yes We Can: A New American Identity in the Speeches of Barack Obama*, which looked at Obama's campaign discourse, and investigate if his rhetoric has changed in the first half of his mandate.*

**Keywords:** *American Dream, core values, political discourse, rhetoric*

## 1. Introduction

The charismatic American president has been highly acclaimed for his well-crafted speeches. This article explores Barack Obama's discourse coming in office and it is intended as a sequel to our 2009 paper entitled *Yes We Can: A New American Identity in the Speeches of Barack Obama*, which looked at Obama's campaign discourse. We will focus on five of Obama's most recent speeches, namely the two official *State of the Union Addresses* (2010, 2011b), the *Memorial Service Speech* (2011a), commemorating the January 2011 attack in Tucson, the Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech (2009b), and his first speech to the joint Chambers of Congress (2009a).

Our aim is to investigate if his rhetoric has changed in the first half of his mandate and if, to quote Mario Cuomo, one truly campaigns in poetry but ends up governing in prose (Waldman 2010, online). In other words, we would like to see if, after a candidate is successfully elected, his/her speeches maintain their campaign-time soaring idealism or they become bogged down by the realities of the presidential job.

We will try to establish whether Obama and his team of speech writers still draw inspiration from the same sources as before the election: the fundamental American documents and certain emblematic Democratic leaders, like Franklin D. Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy. Simultaneously, we will also analyze his speeches in search for the core American symbols and values on which his electoral speeches greatly relied. For instance, in the past he structured his discourses around the "American Dream" and tenets such as patriotism, faith and family values.

The success of Barack Obama's discourse, beyond the chord that he strikes with the American collective consciousness, also stems from what analysts agree is skilful use of rhetorical devices that originate from the Roman tradition of public speaking. Thus, in this paper, we will also look at some of the most important rhetorical devices he employs. Finally, we will consider some criticism and draw our conclusions.



## **2. Role Models and Fundamental Documents**

Obama's election was "greeted with a wave of ideological euphoria not seen since the days of Kennedy. Once again, America could show its true face-purposeful but peaceful; firm but generous; humane, respectful, multicultural to the world" (Ali 2010:37).

It has often been argued that Obama has the makings of a Lincoln or Roosevelt of our times, and he himself repeatedly alluded to these illustrious predecessors. What is more, Obama also frequently mentioned John Fitzgerald Kennedy and Martin Luther King in his electoral speeches, and he continues to do so in his post-electoral discourse. For instance, in his Nobel Peace Prize speech he refers to Kennedy's vision of peace, "based not on a sudden revolution in human nature but on a gradual evolution in human institutions" (Obama 2009b, online).

In the same speech Obama recalls Martin Luther King, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964, in four separate paragraphs. He praises King's use of non-violence and indirectly criticizes violence as a means of solving problems, despite the fact that the US was still embroiled in Iraq and Afghanistan at the time.

True to his tactics, Obama takes this statement further and embeds Martin Luther King's fight into his own life story, presenting himself and his success as a result of the civil rights movement:

As someone who stands here as direct consequence of Dr. King's life work, I am living testimony to the moral force of non-violence. I know there is nothing weak, nothing passive, nothing naive in the creed and lives of Ghandi and King. (Obama 2009b, online)

Yet, as the president of a country at war, Obama is not a pure idealist, and he insists that violence is sometimes a necessary evil, when, for example, the American people are under threat. Tellingly, for the first time in his speeches, he also praises Ronald Reagan for his "efforts on arms control" and for the way in which he managed to improve relations with the former Soviet Union.

As for the forefathers of the United States, so often remembered in his electoral speeches, they are not forgotten in the post-electoral ones either. Thus, during the Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, the current American president points out that:

We are the heirs of the fortitude and foresight of generations past, and it is a legacy for which my own country is rightfully proud. (Obama 2009b, online)

Indeed, Americans remember the past while building the future; they are grateful to their predecessors, but also have the responsibility of taking their work further. And their president makes sure they do not forget the fact that the greatness of America lies in the principles expressed by its "founding fathers".

### **3. American Dream and Core Values**

Throughout his electoral campaign Obama has inserted his life story into his political discourse, frequently stressing the fact that he was living the “American Dream”, and that, indeed in America anything was possible if one worked hard enough in order to achieve one’s goals. This theme seems to have faded in his post-electoral discourse, in the sense that the president does not refer to his biography all that often anymore, but he still obsessively hints at American ideals of hard work, unity, patriotism, democracy and faith.

For instance, in the 2011 State of the Union Address he blends his success story with that of ordinary Americans, all of whom have done extraordinary things:

That dream is why I can stand here before you tonight. That dream is why a working-class kid from Scranton can sit behind me. That dream is why someone who began by sweeping the floors of his father’s Cincinnati bar can preside as Speaker of the House in the greatest nation on Earth.

In the 2010 State of the Union Address, Obama links the American Dream to a very stringent concern of his, namely creating jobs. What is more, in the final sentences of this particular speech he returns to this idea and points out that Americans are not quitters. Nevertheless, he always underlines that none of this is possible without hard work, an idea that is a constant in his pre- and post-electoral discourse.

Another core American value is patriotism and upon accepting the Nobel Peace Prize Obama insists on the American soldiers’ courage to sacrifice, as an expression of “devotion to country, to cause, to comrades in arms” (Obama 2009b, online). He praises the American troops once more in the 2011 State of the Union Address, when he thanks them for their patriotism and willingness to support democracy worldwide. Democracy is, of course, an American landmark and in the same speech Obama ties it to patriotism and American exceptionalism: “I know there isn’t a person here who would trade places with any other nation on Earth” (Obama 2011b, online).

To end this section of our paper, it is important to notice that Obama is consistent in his use of certain ethical principles that are considered defining for and by the American people. He adopts the same nondiscriminatory standpoint as before, celebrating diversity, equal opportunity and fair treatment.

### **4. Politics of Hope and Change**

A 2009 editorial in the British newspaper *The Guardian* draws a parallel between the discourse of another American Democratic President in crisis, Jimmy Carter, and that of Barack Obama. It emphasizes how, at a time of unrest and insecurity, there are two important currencies that politicians can rely on: one is money and the other is hope (*The Springs of Hope*, 2009).

When it comes to money, Barack Obama found himself embattled, with the USA facing an unprecedented economic turmoil, Congress being now divided between Republicans and Democrats and vocal rows igniting around the yearly federal budget. Hope, on the other hand, was one of the steadfast elements of Obama's discourse all throughout his presidential campaign, starting with the now famous 2004 speech, dubbed by the press *The Audacity of Hope* (Bran and Pele 2009:227).

Hope has long been an intrinsic part of American society and a driving force behind its founding principles, embedded in their psyche as part of their mystique. It is part of the American Dream and it underpins the rhetoric of change. It is also invisibly inscribed in the pursuit of happiness. It is the driving force behind Obama's famous "Yes, we can" slogan. These reasons alone make hope a profitable commodity in terms of political discourse.

The same *Guardian* editorial speaks about the way in which Obama projects the 2009 economic crisis as an opportunity for Americans (*The Springs of Hope*, 2009). He appeals to the American nation's "can-do" spirit with the message that resurgence is not enough, what the country needs to do is reinvent itself, in other words, change. This is strongest in the 2009 speech before Congress and the State of the Union Addresses (2010, 2011b) we have taken into consideration.

Nevertheless, while change remains on the surface of Obama's speeches, hope, it seems, takes a back seat, away from the limelight. It appears that the President's discourse is indeed less idealistic and more prosaic than before, focusing, among other things, on roads, taxes, energy resources, jobs, and healthcare.

It is probably not a coincidence that hope makes a soaring comeback in the *Memorial Service* speech, also known as *Together We Thrive*, that Obama delivered in Tucson at a ceremony commemorating the victims of the January 2011 shooting. It is this speech with its emotional background that allows the American President to recapture some of his pre-election rhetorical impetus. For once his task was not to rehash the problems that the country faces on a variety of fronts but to focus on the stories of regular Americans, which are an inherent part of his discourse.

In the speech he spends time on each of those whose lives were taken away and on those whom they left behind, while at the same time, tying all of that in with American ideals, such as work, protection, family, and activism. The build-up finally touches on the most tragic of the losses, that of nine-year-old Christina Taylor Green, whose age, innocence and interest in politics turned her into a vehicle for a larger point: what American society can do to live up to the innocent ideals and hopes of a child at a time of vitriol and cynicism.

What makes Christina Taylor Green's story even more poignant and connected to hope is that she was born on 11 September 2001, another day of tragedy in American memory. She, together with other children born that day, had been featured in a photography book, called *Faces of Hope*. Next to her picture there were wishes for this child born on that fateful day, wishes that Obama mentions at the end of his Tucson speech, making it even more emotional:

“I hope you help those in need,” read one. “I hope you know all the words to the National Anthem and sing it with your hand over your heart.” “I hope” – “I hope you jump in rain puddles” (Obama 2010a, online).

Obama and his team seem to use all these coincidences to their own advantage yet commentators agree that this is one of the president’s better speeches. Indeed, what makes this speech stand out of the group we have analyzed is the fact that the message can be more closely associated with Barack Obama’s campaign idealism. Joking about salmon, the most memorable moment of his 2010 State of the Union (Shear 2011, online), does not compare to the poetry that hope and change bring to one’s discourse. Unfettered by facts, *Together We Thrive* is an exception in Obama’s post-election rhetoric, and, at the same time, another argument in favour of our premise that one does in fact govern in prose.

On the other hand, one of Obama’s critics, Tariq Ali (2010:78) stresses in his book *The Obama Syndrome*, that rhetoric is not enough, that Obama’s rhetoric was impressive, but no alternative plan was mapped for the electorate. He promised little but insisted that only the Democrats could pull the economy out of the recession (Ali 2010: 83).

## 5. Unity

Another important element in Barack Obama’s presidential campaign discourse was unity (Bran and Pele 2009:228), the unity of a very diverse country where he himself was seen as belonging to a minority. Therefore, it is no surprise that during his election campaign, Obama presented himself as a politician who could unite the country. He made of himself an embodiment of American diversity pursuing traditional American ideals. It is the reason why so many of his critics accused him of creating a brand out of his own image and past. He was determined to come across as a consensual president, one who could please both Democrats and Republicans alike. Nevertheless, writer Tariq Ali (2010:78) suggests that “he ended up annoying most of them.”

The idea of unity remains a focal point of Barack Obama’s discourse, especially at the present moment when America’s diversity seems to be more divisive than ever.

We believe that in a country where every race and faith and point of view can be found, we are still bound together as one people; that we share common hopes and a common creed. (Obama 2011b, online)

Obama’s discourse however never stops referring to unity in connection with Americans and American society. It is present in all the five speeches we have analysed and, again, it is interwoven with the greater American ideals and values.

## 6. New Themes

What our study of Obama's post-election discourse has yielded is that necessity has bred a wealth of new themes in the American President's speeches. However, unlike the constants of Obama's pre-election discourse it is interesting to notice that these themes are decidedly more run-of-the-mill.

One of the most visible ones is unsurprisingly jobs. Obama speaks about creating new jobs in all the three speeches before Congress. Another perennial is taxes, which feature prominently in the 2009 and 2010 speeches to Congress. In the former he promised to cut taxes and in the latter he underscores how he and his government delivered on that promise.

The 2010 and 2011 State of the Union Addresses feature another theme, which is somewhat more surprising than jobs and taxes: infrastructure. Whether it is roads or technology, Obama insists on the importance of rebuilding these bridges of communication.

Education is another concern reflected in the State of the Union Addresses. It is closely connected to other tangent themes, such as family, parenthood and children. Interestingly, the President repeatedly urges parents to turn off the TV and read to their children, presumably signalling the sociological and psychological problems related to excessive media consumption and alienation. What Obama is trying to achieve is a return to the steadfast American ideal of good parenthood instilling American values in their children and thus engendering a cohesive American society.

Other themes Obama mentions concern new sources of energy, innovation, the war effort, immigration, civil rights, gay rights, security and healthcare.

New themes bring new catchphrases to replace the old and arguably the more famous ones, such *Yes We Can*. There are no rallying calls anymore in Barack Obama's post-election discourse but we do come across a few that are reminiscent of his campaign fervour. And just like in his *Acceptance Speech*, these sound bites are attached to another staple of Obama's discourse, namely the human stories.

"We are not quitters" is one such example. It is present only in the 2009 speech to Congress, which Obama delivered shortly after being sworn in and it is closely connected to the story of a young girl, her derelict school in South Carolina and her determination not to let these obstacles deprive her of an education. A similar sounding message appears in the 2011 State of the Union, "We do big things", in connection to the story of Brandon Fisher whose drilling machine helped rescue the 33 Chilean miners trapped underground.

In both speeches, Obama quotes the two people whose stories he tells in order to give even more strength to these short-lived catchphrases. The idea behind them is simple and effective: to provide encouragement to Americans in crisis, to simply show that they can. These stories and quotes may very well be a subtle embodiment of Obama's campaign message of *Yes, we can*.

## **7. Rhetorical devices**

Being “the most literate president in recent memory” (Ali 2010:111), Obama’s discourse has remained catchy and coherent after his election. Even though there have been changes in the themes of Obama’s speeches, he and his writing team remain faithful to the Ciceronian devices that have brought him so much praise. Two of the most evident rhetorical devices that still buttress his speeches are the anaphora and the tricolon.

### **7.1. The Anaphora**

It is a rhetorical device based on the repetition of a word or set of words at the beginning of a sentence. It is the prevalent figure of style employed by Obama in all his speeches, evidently used for emphasis:

We cut taxes for 95% of working families. We cut taxes for small businesses. We cut taxes for first-time homebuyers. We cut taxes for parents trying to care for their children. We cut taxes for eight million Americans paying for college. (Obama 2010, online)

### **7.2. The Tricolon**

It is also based on repetition, consisting of a succession of three phrases, words or even whole sentences, grouped around the same idea. Obama also uses a variant of this device called the tetracolon, which is a series of four phrases, words or sentences.

Now is the time to jumpstart job creation, re-start lending, and invest in areas like energy, health care, and education. (Obama 2009a, online)

## **8. Criticism**

Critics have claimed that Obama’s 2008 campaign was built around a cult of personality, and that Obama was the focal point of his own electoral discourse. Certainly, he has embedded his own life story, or his version of it, into his electoral speeches (see Bran and Pele 2009). One particular observer remarked that the then candidate was the embodiment of his own message (Corsi 2008: 213) because it appeared that he was living the American Dream. Moreover, he always presented himself as adhering to the work ethic and values advanced in his discourse.

Others have noticed that Obama’s presidential campaign as a whole was conducted as a well oiled and costly advertising campaign, and that after he came into office he failed to deliver his campaign promises. Thus, Tariq Ali claims in his book *The Obama Syndrome* (2010) that slogans such as “Change we can believe in” or the ultra-famous “Yes, we can” were used in order “to win support without

offering anything in return except fine words, and on that level the new chief is a master” (Ali 2010:8). He goes on to argue that:

Little of what Obama actually said in a combination of blandishments, special pleading and specious arguments justified much optimism, but the manner of his speaking, the color of his skin and the constant invocation of the word “change” helped create a new spirit in the country – Obamania – that propelled him to the White House (2010:8).

Ali (2010:78) believes that Obama is nothing more than a “skillful and gifted machine politician”, one who is “unable and unwilling to deliver any serious reforms”. “Temperamentally, he is not a renovator but a conciliator” (Ali 2010:88), and this further undermines his “rhetoric of change” and dismisses it as empty words spoken by an opportunist.

Finally, Obama’s speeches recycle American principles that have been rehashed by many other campaigners and presidents. These are, however, sound bites that the voters and the public at large are familiar with and what they respond best to: the American Dream, freedom, rights, American exceptionalism, etc.

In point of fact, journalist M. Novak (2009, online) considers that for all this talk of change and “revolution”, what Obama’s speeches actually embody is a “re-revolution”, a return to the point of departure, a repetition of the same age-old ideals. In other words, what he says is nothing new. This may also stem from the fact that, due to his “otherness” in the eyes of a part of his electorate, he needed to reconfirm those familiar principles even more strongly.

## **9. Conclusion**

The tone and content of Obama’s speeches have ironically fallen victim to the president’s own mantra: they have changed.

Barack Obama’s speeches have lost their campaign utopianism, starting as early as the *Inaugural* (Bran and Pele 2009, Novak 2009), while gaining heavily in realism. They focus on real-life issues (jobs, taxes, the budget, roads, healthcare, etc.) while striving to blend them with what were the major themes of Obama’s campaign (change, hope, unity).

This time, rhetoric is measured up against facts and deeds, giving commentators, supporters, detractors and the public at large the opportunity to scrutinize his words against his government’s achievements. So far his delivery has been deemed lacklustre (Kennedy 2010, online). His post-election speeches have been described as “bland” and “inoffensive” at best and graded as mostly “B-” (idem). It is a marked change from the reaction stirred by his campaign discourse. In fact out of all the five speeches we have analysed in this paper, only the one delivered in Tucson appears to have struck the same resonant chord with listeners that his earlier speeches had.

It also goes to show that indeed the soaring idealism of his campaign has been bogged down by the realities of the job, that prose has in fact replaced poetry.

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# *I'M LOVIN' IT*

ANCA CEHAN

“Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași

**Abstract:** *The paper presents the special meanings and many-sided implications that can be conjectured from the use of a stative verb in the progressive, and the linguistic difficulties encountered in analysing McDonald's slogan. It reviews the behaviour of **to love** when tested for stativeness and concludes that as a “progressive stative” verb it can be cleverly exploited for fresh emotional implications.*

**Keywords:** *emotional implications, progressive aspect, progressive stative, stative verb.*

## 1. Introduction

The paper is an answer to the puzzlement of the EFL student who, after being taught that English state verbs cannot be used in the progressive aspect, goes to McDonald's and reads their slogan (which has not been translated into Romanian): *I'm lovin' it*. This has been the slogan of McDonald's Corporation's international branding campaign since 2003, and is meant to stress, according to McDonald's Canada's corporate website, that the campaign is focused on the “overall McDonald's experience”.

In order to see how innovative and consequently, impactful, the slogan may be, the paper investigates similar uses of *to love* in the following corpora: Lancaster – Oslo/Bergen Corpus, Freiburg Lancaster – Oslo/Bergen Corpus, London – Lund Corpus of Spoken English, The Brown University Standard Corpus of Present-Day American English, International Corpus of English and The Freiburg – Brown Corpus of American English, using AntConc 3.2.1 from Washeda University. The results of the corpora search were limited to five returns:

1. *He obviously is loving every minute of it.* [WhiteH4.txt]
2. *She was loving it to bits.* [Rock bands.txt]
3. *She is doing chemistry and loving it.* [Present.txt]
4. *I'd get sick of spicy food all the time but I 'm loving it more and more.* [W1B-011 India letters.txt]
5. *I'm loving it, so I don't know about that part.* [FacCM1.txt]

To explain why the number of examples found is limited and in order to understand fully the meaning and the impact of the slogan, the paper looks first at what a stative verb is, at how states can be distinguished from non-states, and at how *to love* is classified in a few well-known grammars of English. It also looks at the features of the progressive aspect and at the special meanings that the combination stative verb in the progressive aspect may yield. The conclusion is that

*to love* may be considered a “progressive stative” whose fresh and many-sided implications are cleverly exploited in McDonald’s slogan.

## 2. Situations and Verb Classification

Verbs are difficult to classify as they represent situations (or events) and the latter are not always clearly individuated in space or time. Linguists are not consistent in making or maintaining a distinction between situations and their linguistic encodings; these can be rendered either by verbs, by more complex constituents or by sentences. Binnik (1991) explains that the individuation of situations is the cognitive process of isolating a fragment of the chain and naming it with a verb.

According to Davidson (1980), situations (which he calls “events”) are essentially associated with change by either changing themselves or bringing about changes in the entities involved in the situation. Change in its turn is associated with time as it becomes evident over time, and this makes both temporality and change influence the classification of situations. Time is then essential in defining situations and in accounting for the semantic motivation of verbs and their syntactic behaviour. However, many linguists and philosophers (Aristotle 1970, 1976, Kenny 1963, Ryle 1949, Vendler 1967) make the remark that actions and states characterise a broad and clear distinction between situations, and that other important characteristics of actions must be recognised according to their internal structure.

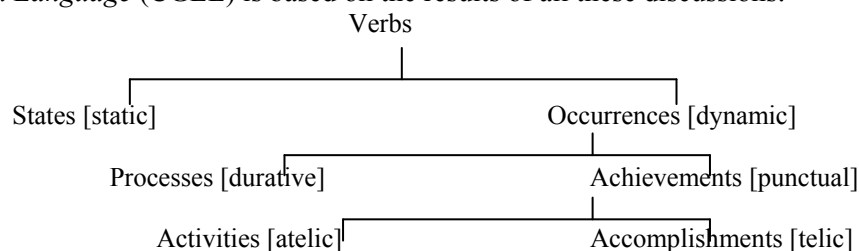
Vendler (1967) distinguishes four categories of verbs: activities, accomplishments, achievements and states. The linguistic criteria by which Vendler distinguishes these four classes consist of: co-occurrence with progressive aspect; appropriateness of various kinds of temporal questions; appropriateness of various kinds of temporal adverbials; and implications between sentences. According to Vendler, the occurrence or non-occurrence of the progressive aspect with a verb separates accomplishments and activity verbs from state and achievement verbs. States, which may endure or persist over stretches of time, do not combine with the progressive aspect or adverbials such as *deliberately* or *carefully*.

According to Comrie (1976), an event is an occurrence of some kind, a situation in which something happens, that is, some change takes place. Therefore, events involve change: they have internal temporal structure, beginnings and endings and something going on in between. States, on the other hand, are homogeneous, stable situations which lack internal structure and consist of undifferentiated moments. Neither beginnings nor endings are integral to states.

Langacker (1987) points out other conceptual differences between states and non-states. He shows that states are internally uniform, in contrast to activities which appear to be heterogeneous and internally structured. Activities are associated with temporal change and dynamism, while states typically do not unfold over time and have no internal dynamics. Thus, states and non-states differ

in degree of temporal sensitivity. Consequently, certain features of tense and aspect are associated with each type.

Reminding one of Vendler's categories, Huddleston and Pullum's (2002:118 - 25) verb classification presented in *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language* (CGEL) is based on the results of all these discussions:



They establish the fundamental contrast between states and occurrences based on the absence or presence of change. As states do not show change, they have no internal temporal structure or distinguishable phases. The distinction between states and occurrences is reflected linguistically in a number of ways, including the use of the progressive aspect. However, Huddleston and Pullum (2002:118) warn that “the categories apply in the first instance to meanings and then derivatively to the forms that express them – but it must be emphasized that a single expression can often be interpreted as applying to situations of different types.”

### 3. Diagnostic Tests for States and Non-States

A variety of semantic and syntactic features that can be used in the examination of the structure of the states/statives and non-states/active verbs are discussed by Gruber (1976), Miller and Johnson-Laird (1976), Dowty (1979), Mourelatos (1981) such as: internal structure, homogeneity, continuousness, sub-processes and sub-states, distribution over a time interval, extension, and incrementation. Together with the clarification of various semantic categories and features, a number of diagnostic tests for the difference between states and non-states were formulated.

#### a) The Progressive Test

The most important test which distinguishes between states and non-states is occurrence with the progressive: while actives generally allow the progressive, states disallow it. As the progressive marks extension in time, a verb can represent a large time interval into which smaller time intervals can be inserted (e.g. *I was running when it started raining*). States are generally inherently extended and homogeneous (*He believes in universal coverage* – [WhiteH1.txt]).

However, verbs like *love* and *like* can be found in the progressive:

*They're liking the charge.* [FacCM2.txt]  
*He's not liking the way this contest is going in terms of...* [S2A-005Boxing Las Vegas.txt]  
*You've got so involved and are liking it all.* [LLC.TXT]

#### **b) The Pseudo-Cleft Constructions Test**

Only non-states appear in pseudo-cleft constructions: *What he's doing is simply repeating what his wife said* [CGEL, 1422] vs. *\*What he's doing is loving it.*

#### **c) The “What Happened?” Test**

Another structural reflex of the stative vs. active distinction is the verbs' sensitivity to the question “What happened?”. States always fail this test: *What happened? \*He was loving it.*

#### **d) The Imperative Test**

The same verbs that fail the “What happened?” test also fail the imperative test: *Run a mile!* vs. *\*Like the story!*

However, *Love me!* is not an uncommon request and *Love the Lord!* is a common commandment.

#### **e) The Force and Persuade Test**

Named by Quirk *et al.* (1972:94) the “causative construction” test, this test shows that only non-states can appear as object complements of the causative verbs *force* and *persuade*: *John persuaded/forced Harry to run* vs. *\*John persuaded/forced Harry to love it.*

#### **f) The Carefully and Deliberately Test**

Quirk *et al.* (1972:94) name this the “manner adverb requiring an animate subject” test. It shows that states cannot co-occur with *carefully* and *deliberately* as they are not executed by an agent: *John walked carefully* vs. *\*John was loving it carefully.*

#### **g) The for ... sake Construction Test**

Quirk *et al.* (1972:94) introduce this seventh test that stative verbs fail while dynamic verbs can easily co-occur with *for ... sake* (e.g. *act for action's sake...* [FROWN\_N.TXT]). As far as loving is concerned, we find it hard (but not impossible!) to imagine somebody loving for love's sake.

To conclude, when run through tests, not all the non-states meet all the active tests and not all the states meet all the stative tests. Some verbs are more consistently stative while others are more consistently active, and there are many cases of verbs that satisfy only some of the diagnostic tests and fail others. What kind of verb is *to love*? Can we consider it stative?

#### 4. Is *to Love* a Stative Verb?

*To love* fails the pseudo-cleft construction test, the “What happened?” test and barely passes the imperative test with *Love the Lord!* It also fails the “*force* and *persuade*” test and cannot stand the “*carefully* and *deliberately*” one. It doesn’t stand the “*for ... sake* construction” test either, although *loving for love’s sake* is not completely impossible. After applying these tests, we can conclude that *to love* is a stative verb, with a few peculiarities of behaviour. Downing and Locke (2006:139-43), include *to love* in the category of “mental processes” with an experiencer or conscious but non-volitional participant.

Quirk *et al.* (1972:96) classify *to love* among “verbs of inert perception and cognition”, which is a sub-category of stative verbs.

Marianne Celce-Murcia and Diane Larsen Freeman (1999:120 - 22) include it among “verbs of emotions, attitudes, and opinions”. They go on to say that it has been observed that the progressive can occur with stative verbs to achieve certain effects, and that the progressive turns states into events.

Downing and Locke (2006:139-43) include *loving* in the general category of “mental processes of experiencing or sensing: affective and desiderative”. They explain that such affective mental processes as *liking*, *loving*, *admiring*, *missing* and *hating* always involve a conscious participant, the experiencer, and usually a second participant, the phenomenon – that which is perceived, liked, loved, admired, etc. The experiencer, they explain, is not doing anything and the phenomenon is not affected in any way. They add that mental processes are typically stative and non-volitional, that in the present they “typically take the simple, rather than the progressive form” and that they do not easily occur in the imperative, and offer the following examples: *\*Jill is liking the present.* and *\*Like the present, Jill!* The phenomenon is the object of the verb and can be expressed as a nominal grOxford University Press but also realised by a clause representing an event or situation. An *–ing* clause represents the situation as actual or habitual, where a *to*-infinitive clause represents it as potential:

- phenomenon expressed by an *–ing* clause:

*I know Matthew just loves getting homework* [ReadCM6A.txt]

*She gets lyrical about this place and she loves being in the theatrical environment.*  
[FLOB\_P.TXT]

*The Szolds, like the Marches, enjoyed and loved living together*  
[. . .] [BROWN1\_G.TXT]

- phenomenon expressed by a *to*-infinitive clause:

*Matty loves to collect stories about these people.* [FLOB\_P.TXT]  
*Dad loves to fish.* [FROWN\_E.TXT]

- phenomenon expressed by an NP:

*[... ] no one any longer loves him.* [BROWN1\_C.TXT]  
*Mrs Coolidge so obviously loved dogs [ . . . ]* [BROWN1\_G.TXT]  
*They too loved their families, [ . . . ]* [BROWN1\_G.TXT]  
*Both loved the out-of-doors...* [BROWN1\_F.TXT]  
*He loved the stage and all those unseen people out there.*  
 [BROWN1\_K.TXT]  
*The audience, as usual, loved it.* [BROWN1\_K.TXT]

A remark concerning syntax that we can make at this point is that the NPs that follow the simple tense forms of *to love* can often be extended, but the NP which typically follows the progressive *loving* is the pronoun *it*. As the five corpora examples and McDonald's slogan show, *it* does not refer to an entity but to a process that extends over a period of time: 1 (*every minute of it*), 2 (*it to bits*), 3 (*loving doing chemistry*), 4 (*loving it more and more*) and 5 (*that part of it*).

Huddleston and Pullum (2002:170) include *to love* among "verbs of cognition, emotion, and attitude" and warn that none of these verbs excludes completely the progressive and give the example *They're loving every minute of it* and explain that *to love* in such examples is the equivalent of the dynamic *to enjoy*. This kind of approach helps us interpret sentences like *I'm loving it* and *Love the Lord!* or *Love thy neighbour (as thyself)*. A first appreciation of such examples would be that they do not indicate a purely stative verb since the verb allows forms with non-stative meanings. If we apply the tests *a)* to *f)* to the verb *to love*, we can see that it qualifies as a stative verb only according to the criteria: *b)* (*\*What he's doing is loving it*); *c)* (*"What happened? \*He loved it*), *e)* (*\*John persuaded/forced Harry to love it*), and *f)* (*\*John was loving it carefully*).

Why does the progressive combine with *to love*? What meaning features of the verb make this combination possible?

## 5. To Love and the Progressive

While Comrie (1976), Leech (1971), Richards (1981), Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1983) focus on the notion of "incompleteness" and its manifestations as the semantic contribution of the progressive, Huddleston and Pullum (2002:163) consider that the progressive aspect expresses basically progressive aspectuality (with two of the features being implicatures rather than pertaining to meaning proper):

- i. Situation in progress at/throughout a time referred to
- ii. Imperfectivity
- iii. The mid-interval (within time of situation) implicature

- iv. Duration
- v. Waxing
- vi. Dynamicity
- vii. The limited duration implicature

In this section we look at the features of the progressive as described by Huddleston and Pullum in *CGEL*, both in relation to the examples found in the corpora analysed and in relation to the progressive uses suggested by Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman's *Grammar Book*.

#### **a) *To Love* and the *CGEL* Features of the Progressive**

When we apply Huddleston and Pullum's features of the progressive to the specific examples containing *to love* used in the progressive, we can notice a few more peculiarities:

i. With the exception of example 1: [...] *he obviously is loving every minute of it*, the examples analysed contain no time specification apart from the time suggested by the use of the present or past tense. The absence of temporal specifications confers such situations an atemporal quality which is ideal for the commercial slogan whose implication is "You will always love it." *Loving every minute of it*, far from suggesting a gapped, non-homogeneous state with an internal temporal structure can be seen rather as a sequence of continuous moments with the implications that "it" is a "consumable", a product that needs to be ordered again and again after consumption and which offers omnipresent pleasure and satisfaction.

ii. The examples analysed present the situation as seen from within, without focus on the internal temporal structure. Their deictic times are included in a permanent (atemporal) time of situation. That is why a possible implication for McDonald's slogan can be that the company provides an occurrence in progress that lasts for ever.

iii. The "mid-interval" implicature refers mainly to accomplishments and is not relevant for our purposes.

iv. *To love* is stative and consequently shows duration.

v. *To love* can combine with incremental change – waxing, to show dynamicity as in example 4: *I'd get sick of spicy food all the time but I 'm loving it more and more*.

vi. The dynamicity of *to love* in the examples analysed does not suggest state temporariness but its opposite.

vii. The implicature of limited duration or temporariness is not relevant for our analysis.

#### **b) *To Love* as a Progressive Stative**

*To love* qualifies as a "progressive stative" as it appears in six of the eight uses presented by Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman.

a. It can show an intensification of the emotion expressed by the verb: *he obviously is loving every minute of it* (example 1); *I'm loving it more and more* (example 4). Such progressive statives are often found with various kinds of modifiers to further emphasize the immediacy and intensity of the situation: *I'm really/just loving it* (Kesner Bland, 1988:60). This use makes *I'm lovin' it* an excellent choice for a commercial slogan.

b. It can indicate current behaviour as opposed to general description: *I love it* would miss the thrill and excitement of a (permanently) new experience suggested by example 2: *She was loving it to bits* or *I'm lovin' it*. Moreover, as an expression of emotion, desire, and attitude, it is probably no coincidence that the slogan uses the first person singular subject as the first person is more conducive to expressive feelings.

c. It can introduce change in the state by focusing on differences in degree across time, as in example 4: *I'd get sick of spicy food all the time but I'm loving it more and more* even if the slogan lacks the “more and more” phrase, an incremental evolution (in other words, Huddleston and Pullum’s “waxing”) is not excluded.

d. It can show vividness: *I'm lovin' it* must have been perceived as being very fresh and vivid when the slogan was launched. It is still a cause of puzzlement for foreign learners of English.

e. *I'm loving it* sounds like a natural answer to the polite question *Are you liking it?*

f. It can be used to mitigate criticism as in the example 5: *I'm loving it, so I don't know about that part*.

## 6. Conclusions

Together with Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) and Susan Kesner Bland (1988), we consider *to love* a “progressive stative”. As a verb, *to love* satisfies most of the stative verb tests, although it shows peculiarities of behaviour in the imperative and in the “for ... sake” test. On the other hand, most of the features of the progressive found in Huddleston and Pullum are applicable to instances of use of *to love* in the progressive. Generally speaking, what happens in the case of a progressive stative such as *to love* is that speakers endow a state with features of event verbs. The state is presented as an event in the sense that its progressive forms convey the dynamism of actions or processes. It conveys change by suggesting that something is going on. Thus, interesting shades of meaning can be conjectured from the combination state and progressive that appears in McDonald’s slogan:

- It may suggest a constantly renewed state of satisfaction or enjoyment;
- While still homogeneous, the state suggested can also be seen as a sequence of continuous moments which imply that the process rendered by *it* ensures permanent enjoyment. Therefore, eating at McDonald’s can be seen as an occurrence in progress that lasts for ever;



- The slogan suggests incremental change – increasing pleasure and satisfaction;
- It suggests an intensification of the emotion expressed by the verb;
- It suggests an exceptional state which combines with the thrill and excitement of a (permanently) new experience.

All these implications make *I'm lovin' it* a successful slogan, which has managed to remain fresh over the last seven years.

The progressive gives more strength to the predication: the sentence is intense, emotional, and vivid.

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# LEXICAL GAPS IN ROMANIAN FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ENGLISH: THE CASE OF CULINARY VERBS

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**Abstract:** *This paper aims at presenting the lexical gaps which occur when translating a text from English into Romanian. In the first part of the paper causes for and types of lexical gaps, common strategies for dealing with lexical gaps in the process of translating are investigated and illustrated. The analysis made in the second part of the paper focuses on English verbs expressing the technique of cooking in water. The verbs which lead to lexical gaps in Romanian are insisted upon and the appropriate solutions to fill in these gaps are offered.*

**Keywords:** *culinary verbs, troponymy, lexical gaps, translation difficulties, translation techniques*

## 1. Introduction

The problem of *lexical gaps* is mainly approached from two perspectives: that of Structural Semantics or that of Translation Studies. Structural Semantics analyses the *lexical gaps* which occur in lexical fields represented as matrixes that divide the conceptual fields in a certain language; that is why *lexical gaps* are sometimes called *matrix gaps* by semanticists (Lehrer 1974, Lyons 1984 etc.)

Translation theorists, although not always disregarding the theories of semantic fields, focus on instances where there is no word-for-word equivalence between the two languages in question. They sometimes provide typologies of *lexical gaps* (or *lacunae*) and methods of dealing with such instances of non-equivalence (Baker 2003, Newmark 1988 etc.).

In this paper *lexical gaps* are analyzed from the perspective of translation. Thus, a *lexical gap* occurs whenever

...there is no one-to-one correspondence between words across language boundaries. (Warren, 1999)

...a language expresses a concept with a lexical unit whereas the other language expresses the same concept with a free combination of words. (Bentivogli and Pianta, 2000)

English linguists and translation theorists also use the term *lacuna* to mean *lexical gap*; many definitions actually include both terms ("A *lexical gap* or *lacuna* is..."). Although these two terms may be used interchangeably, only *lexical gap* will be used throughout the paper.

Some other researchers consider *lexical gaps* as part of the larger issue of non-equivalence (at word level), without even mentioning the term, such as Mona

Baker, in her book *In Other Words. A coursebook on translation* (2003). She analyses the issue of equivalence in translation at several levels, starting at the simplest possible level: that of the word.

Baker discusses here the common types of non-equivalence, providing examples from various languages. The first type is represented by *culture-specific concepts*. This, we may add, causes a *cultural gap*, and occurs when

...the source-language word may express a concept which is totally unknown in the target culture (Baker, 2003: 21)

English words which create such gaps in most languages are: *privacy*, *Speaker* (of the House of Commons), *airing cupboard*.

A second type arises when *the source-language concept is not lexicalized in the target language*, i.e. the target language does not lack the concept, it only does not lexicalize it by a single word. This is the general case when a *linguistic gap* occurs. Baker mentions here the word *savoury*, which expresses a concept that most languages have, but do not name it by a single word.

The third type refers to situations when *the source-language word is semantically complex*. That is, the source language expresses a complex set of meanings (sometimes more complex than a whole sentence) by a single word. This usually creates a *cultural gap* that is filled by long paraphrases in the target language; this is the case of the Brazilian word *arruacao* which means, according to Baker “clearing the ground under coffee trees of rubbish and piling it in the middle of the row in order to aid in the recovery of beans dropped during harvesting” (2003:22).

The fourth and the fifth types of non-equivalence problems can be grouped, as they bring semantic fields into the question. Thus, *the target language may lack either a superordinate or a hyponym*. English, for instance, lacks a common superordinate for *finger* and *toe*, while Romanian has it (*deget*). As to hyponyms, English has hyponyms for *meat*, while Romanian does not.

Finally, the *use of loan words in the source text* may lead to *lexical gaps* in the target text. Although some loan words may have the same (or approximately the same) form and meaning in both languages involved in translation, or the meaning is rendered in the target language by another (similar) loan word, there are cases when a loan word in the source language creates a *lexical gap* in the target language.

In order to deal with these problems, Baker offers some strategies or techniques. Yet, she warns against relating specific problems to specific strategies.

The first strategy mentioned by Baker is *translation by a more general word (superordinate)* when a hyponym is missing from the target language semantic field. This implies that the translator must be familiar with the source language semantic field to which the word belongs and especially with the target language semantic field, which is to be checked carefully, as there might be a word to avoid the gap.

*Translation by a more neutral/ less expressive word* is a strategy which, in a way, may include the previous one. However, what Baker means by “more neutral/ less expressive word” is actually a (near) synonym which may come from a different semantic field or belongs to the same semantic field as the source language word, but is not an equivalent of the source language superordinate. What is important is the fact that the target language word loses the connotations the source language word displays.

Many source language culture-specific items, modern concepts or new coinages can be rendered into the target language by applying the strategy of *Translation using a loan word or loan word plus explanation*. The explanation may be intratextual if not very long; once it is explained, the loan word can then be used on its own in the same text.

The commonest strategy appears to be *Translation by paraphrase*; the paraphrase may include a word related to the source language item or not. Paraphrases which do not include a related word may be based on modifying a subordinate or simply on unpacking the meaning of the source language item.

## 2. Analysis

In order to analyze the *lexical gaps* that occur in Romanian from the perspective of English I have chosen the field of verbs which express a specific culinary/ cooking technique: *cooking in water*.

*Cooking* is the act of preparing food for eating. It encompasses a rather vast range of methods or techniques which can be divided into two large classes, according to a crucial criterion: *the use of heat*. Thus, one may speak of *hot cooking techniques* (which require the application of heat) and *cool cooking techniques* (which do not imply the use of heat). All these techniques may be expressed by one-word verbs or by verb expressions; I will analyze only those techniques which are named by a one-word (be it simple or compound) verb in English.

The verbs which express *hot cooking techniques* can be divided into several groups which, in their turn, can be sub-divided into a few other groups. The main division implies the following verbs: *boil*, *bake*, *fry*, *broil*, and *roast*.

*Boil* is the superordinate verb for the technique of cooking in/ by means of water. It is defined as “to subject to heat in water” and “to cause (a liquid) to bubble with heat: esp. said of food, wholly or partly liquid, in the process of cooking” (*Oxford English Dictionary*; from now on: *OED*). Thus, there are two main meanings attached to the verb *boil*. The meaning “cooking in heated water or water-based liquid (milk, wine, stock)” is named by the lexical unit *boil*<sub>1</sub>; it is the superordinate of the class. The second meaning, named by the lexical unit *boil*<sub>2</sub>, is, as circular as the definition may look, “cooking in boiling water, i.e. in a liquid bubbling with heat”; it is a hyponym of *boil*<sub>1</sub>, alongside *simmer*, etc.

The most comprehensive English – Romanian dictionary, *Dicționar Englez – Român* (DER, Levițchi and Bantaș 2000), provides the following translations for the culinary meanings of the transitive verb *boil* in Romanian: “a fierbe; a pune la fiert”. The authors of the dictionary mention that a comma separates synonyms

while a semicolon separates words and expressions which render the same source language meaning but are “too dissimilar to be taken as synonyms” (Levițchi and Bantaș, 2000: 8; my translation). Thus, we seem to have two ways of rendering the meaning of the verb *boil* in Romanian, one of which represents an instance of *lexical gap*, filled by a paraphrase which includes a related word (it may be considered a collocation). One can notice that both Romanian translation equivalents render the meaning of *boil*<sub>1</sub>, e.g.: *She is boiling some eggs.* – *Fierbe/ A pus la fiert niște ouă.* The Romanian gap is caused by the wish to specify the initiation of the action of boiling.

*Boil*<sub>2</sub> is not much used independently; it is usually accompanied by a modifier such as *over high heat* (Romanian: “la foc mare/ puternic”). It is rendered into Romanian by the same equivalents as *boil*<sub>1</sub> (perhaps the paraphrase is not so much used), e.g.: *Boil apple juice over high heat.* – *Fierbeți/ Puneți la fiert suc de mere la foc mare/ puternic.*

*Seethe* is a synonym of the verb *boil*, but it is now obsolete. If encountered in a text in its culinary meanings, it is to be rendered into Romanian the same way as *boil* is, e.g.: *Seethe the meat immediately.* – *Puneți imediat carnea la fiert;* *Seethe the meat until the fat is boiled off.* – *Fierbeți carnea până se topește grăsimea.*

The phrasal verb *boil down* means “to lessen the bulk of food by boiling” (OED). This verb creates a *lexical gap* in Romanian, filled in by the expression “a lăsa să scadă la foc” (DER), e.g.: *Boil down the soup* – *Lăsați supa să scadă la foc.*

*Simmer* is the main troponym of *boil*<sub>1</sub>; It implies “keeping in a heated condition just below boiling-point” (OED); “just below boiling point” implies that tiny bubbles should slowly float to the surface. The equivalents provided by DER are “a fierbe la foc mic; a tine (supa etc.) sub punctul de fierbere”. We are dealing here with a culture-neutral *lexical gap* which is filled by either one of the two paraphrases, both including a related word (the Romanian superordinate *fierbe* and the nominalisation *fierbere*). Both paraphrases can be taken as expressions which display a certain internal cohesion; they may be considered collocations. They are synonymous, with the difference that the latter is more technical than the former. Thus, *Simmer the soup for another ten minutes* can be rendered as either *Fierbeți supa la foc mic încă zece minute* or *Țineți supa sub punctul de fierbere încă zece minute.*

There are several troponyms to *simmer*, e.g.: *poach, stew, braise, coddle*. The verb *poach* may be defined as “to cook (fish, fruit, etc.) by simmering in water or another liquid” (OED); a better definition can be made up from the many electronic glossaries (listed in the *References* section) which include the verb: “to simmer food (such as unshelled eggs, fish or chicken) carefully so that the shape is preserved; the food being poached is no more than slightly covered by the liquid”. This time the DER translation equivalents are not satisfactory: “a fierbe (ouă, fără coajă), a face ochiuri”; the definition tries to fill the *lexical gap* by mentioning the food that is commonly poached in the Romanian culture: eggs. Fortunately, the only available Romanian gastronomical dictionary (Gal 2003) comes with a much better solution to fill this gap; the author mentions the verb *poșă*, an

orthographically-adapted loan word from French. It is the best solution, but the word has not yet gained enough currency; that is why, perhaps, one should also consider the translation by superordinate/ by paraphrase provided by *DER* (when eggs are poached) or translation by the approximately the same paraphrases as *simmer*. Thus, a sentence such as *Poach the eggs, then make the sauce* may be translated as *Poşaţi ouăle, apoi faceţi sosul*; *Faceţi/ Fierbeţi ochiurile de ou (la foc mic) apoi faceţi sosul*. A sentence such as *Poach the chicken breast in wine* may be rendered as *Poşaţi pieptul de pui în vin* or *Faceţi/ Fierbeţi pieptul de pui (la foc mic) în vin*.

The verb *stew* is defined as “to boil slowly in a close vessel; to cook (meat, fruit, etc.) in a liquid kept at the simmering-point”; “to simmer slowly in a small amount of liquid in a covered pot for a long time”. (*OED*) The *DER* provides the following translation equivalents: “1. a fierbe sau a frige sau a găti înăbuşit; a stufa 2. a face un compot de (fructe)”. Since *stewing* is a type of *simmering*, “a frige înăbuşit” is not a good Romanian equivalent; “a găti înăbuşit” is too general; “a stufa” is mostly applied to lamb. That is why *stew* should be translated as “a fierbe înăbuşit; a stufa (carne de miel); a face un compot de (fructe)”. Thus, there are two *lexical gaps* which can be filled in by a collocation (*a fierbe înăbuşit*) or by a paraphrase including unrelated words (*a face un compot de (fructe)*). A sentence such as *Stew the pork for 30 minutes* may be rendered as *Fierbeţi înăbuşit carnea de porc timp de 30 de minute*. The sentence *Stew the apples till they are very soft* should be also translated as *Fierbeţi înăbuşit merele până când devin foarte moi* while *She was stewing apples* is to be translated as either *Făcea un compot de mere* or, maybe, *?Fierbea mere înăbuşit*.

*Braise* is a verb which includes the meaning of *stew* but displays some other meaning components; it is defined as “to first sear food in oil or fat using an open pan and then slowly boil it in a small quantity of liquid in a tightly-covered pan”. The *DER* provides the equivalent “a fierbe înăbuşit (carne etc.)”; it is indeed difficult to render the complex meaning of the English verb in order to fill the resulting *lexical gap* in Romanian, but one must specify that the food is first seared/ browned. Thus, a better translation would be the explanatory paraphrase “a rumeni/ căli (în grăsimi/ ulei) şi apoi a fierbe înăbuşit (carne etc.)”, e.g.: *Braise the veal until tender* – *Rumeniţi/ Căliţi carnea de viţel şi apoi fierbeţi-o înăbuşit până se frăgezeşte*. It is strange that Romanian displays this *lexical gap*, since Romanian cuisine makes frequent use of the technique expressed by *braise*. There is a recent verb provided by Gal (2003), i.e. *a breza*, an orthographically-adapted loan from French, which is obviously the best solution to fill in the gap; unfortunately, it is too technical to use in order to translate a recipe for the general public.

A verb that has a very specific meaning is *hard-boil*, i.e. “to boil (an egg) until hard-boiled” (*OED*). The concept is obviously present in Romanian, but there occurs a *lexical gap* caused by the English compound form. The *DER* does not include the verb, but one can easily translate it by the expressions “a fierbe (ouăle) tari”, “a face ouă răscapte”, which include the specific object. Thus, *Mother hard-boiled the eggs* is rendered as *Mama a fiert ouăle tari* or *Mama a făcut ouă răscapte*.

The verb *coddle* has a very complex meaning. The *OED* defines it as “to boil gently, parboil, stew (*esp.* fruit)” which is rendered by the *DER* as “1. a fierbe înăbușit. 2. a opări”. Nowadays, however, it is eggs that are usually coddled. One technique implies boiling eggs for a short period of time, so that they stay rather soft; this creates a gap in Romanian, easily filled in by the expressions “a fierbe ouăle moi”, “a face ouă moi”. The other technique refers to putting unshelled eggs in an *egg coddler* (a porcelain or pottery cup with a lid) which is partially immersed in boiling water for a few minutes. This leads to a *cultural gap* in Romanian, gap that may be filled by the paraphrase “a fierbe (ouă) bain-marie” which includes a superordinate and a loan word. Thus, a sentence such as *He coddled the peaches* may be rendered as *A fiert piersicile înăbușit/ A opărit piersicle*, while *He coddled the eggs* may be rendered, according to the context, as *A fiert ouăle moi/ A făcut ouă moi* or *A fiert ouăle bain-marie*.

The verbs *parboil* and *blanch* refer to immersing food in boiling water for a very short time. *Parboil* does not lead to a gap (“a opări”, *DER*), but *blanch*, which implies the additional meaning of immersing the food in ice cold water or frozen storage to stop the cooking process, does. One could fill in the gap by the technical “a blanșa” or by the paraphrase “a opări și apoi a răci brusc”, e.g.: *She blanched the peas – A blanșat mazărea/ A opărit mazărea și apoi a răcit-o brusc*. The verb *scald* is a synonym of *parboil* in one of its meanings, but, whenever it refers to heating a liquid to a point just short of boiling point, it leads to a *lexical gap* in Romanian, filled by the lengthy “a încălzi până aproape de fierbere” (*DER*).

The verb *steam* refers to cooking food by means of steam. Romanian seems to display here a *cultural gap*, which is pointed out by the absence of an equivalent in the *DER*. However, the gap can be easily filled in by a short paraphrase, “a fierbe în aburi” (Gal, 2003), e.g.: *Steam the fish for 10 minutes – Fierbeți peștele în aburi timp de 10 minute*. There are other lengthier or more general paraphrases in common use: “a fierbe/ găti/ face într-o baie de aburi”, “a fierbe/ găti/ face pe aburi”.

The verb *pressure-cook* obviously refers to cooking in a pressure-cooker. The English compound (which actually fills in an English gap) leads to a gap in Romanian, filled by the definition-like paraphrase “a găti/ face în oală sub presiune”; since one could either *boil* or *fry* food in a pressure-cooker, the Romanian equivalent may sometimes be “a fierbe/ prăji în oală sub presiune”.

### 3. Conclusions

By considering all the above English verbs which express techniques of cooking in water, one may notice that most of the Romanian *lexical gaps* are culture-neutral; there are, however, some culture-bound gaps (*cultural gaps*) such as those apparent in the case of *coddle* (eggs) or *steam*. Some gaps are created by *register* and *dialect*, e.g. *blanch*, *poach*, which are usually rendered by paraphrases in colloquial or regional Romanian and by one-word verbs at formal or technical/ specialized levels of language.

The strategies used in order to fill in the *lexical gaps* created in Romanian by the English verbs expressing cooking in water may be classified into two categories, i.e. *Translation by loan word* and *Translation by paraphrase*. The former is applied in the case of very few verbs such as *braise* – *a breza*, or *poach* – *a poșa*, where the equivalents are actually orthographically-adapted loan words from French; we would not be talking of *lexical gaps* here if these terms were widely used.

The other type, *Translation by paraphrase*, is by far the commonest one. Many of the paraphrases include *a superordinate modified by an explanatory phrase*. The superordinate may be either *immediate* or *mediate*; the commonest *immediate superordinates* are naturally the ones that name the basic cooking techniques, e.g.: *simmer* – *a fierbe la foc mic*. The most frequent *mediate superordinate* is the field superordinate, *a găti*, e.g.: *pressure-cook* – *a găti în oala sub presiune*, etc. Alongside *a găti*, one can notice the use of the neutral verb *a face*, which is, in its turn, a superordinate of the verb *a găti*, e.g.: *steam* – *a face pe aburi*.

The modifying explanatory phrases may refer to the *place/ recipient* where the cooking action takes place, e.g.: *pressure-cook* – *a găti în oala sub presiune*. The type of *heat* and the *medium* are often referred to, e.g.: *simmer* – *a fierbe la foc mic*. Finally, the *ingredient(s)* or the *resulting dish* may be mentioned, e.g.: *poach* – 2. *a fierbe (ouă, fără coajă)*, *a face ochiuri*.

Some paraphrases imply *two modified verbs* in Romanian, out of which at least one is a superordinate, e.g.: *braise* – *a rumeni/ căli (în grăsime/ ulei) și apoi a fierbe înăbușit (carne etc.)*. There are very few instances where a *paraphrase including no superordinate* is used, e.g.: *boil/ seethe* – *a pune la fiert*; *simmer* – *a ține (supa etc.) sub punctul de fierbere*; *scald* – *a încălzi până aproape de fierbere*; *boil down* – *a lăsa să scadă la foc*.

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# VERBAL FORMS IN SPECIALIZED WRITTEN DISCOURSE

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**Abstract:** The frequency and the distribution of verbal forms are analyzed in eleven professional texts for six fields of transport and traffic engineering, in a corpus of 7,215 lexemes. The analysis shows that passive forms, for example, occur far less than active forms. Certain functions and meanings of the most frequently used verbal forms are then discussed.

**Keywords:** transport and traffic engineering settings, verb forms

## 1. Introduction

Swales (1997:131-2) provides us with a list of scientists who have examined, among other linguistic phenomena, tenses, modal verbs, voices and aspects in English research articles (RAs) in various specialized areas. His survey shows that the fields of transport and traffic engineering have rarely been investigated. I therefore consider this analysis justifiable on both practical and theoretical grounds.

This article is, in a way, a continuation of the author's paper published in *Romanian Journal of English Studies* (2008:113-123), and it reports on some results obtained from a more comprehensive analysis (for details see Dimković-Telebaković 2003:252-309).

## 2. Aims and Corpus

Verbal forms are explored in specialized written discourse in order to reveal how often certain forms occur and what functions and meanings they may have when used in specialist texts in the fields of transport and traffic engineering.

The corpus is built from eleven specialized texts, issued in British and American journals, magazines and books (see Annex I and Dimković-Telebaković 2003, 2009). The corpus comprises 7,215 lexemes distributed in the analyzed texts as follows: postal and telecommunications traffic (PTT) – 960 words, air traffic (AT) – 1,354 lexical units, road and urban transport (RUT) – 1,303 lexemes, railway transport (RT) – 1,145 words, waterways transport (WT) – 814 lexical units, and intermodal transport (IT) – 1,639 words.

The following verbal forms are looked at: voice, aspect, tense, mood; both finite and non-finite forms are discussed. Modal verbs are paid special attention.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. The Frequency and Distribution of Verbal Forms in Eleven Texts Analyzed

After the frequency and distribution of verbal forms have been examined, the achieved results are presented in *Table 1* and *Table 2*. The tables illustrate that verbal forms are very often used in English, i.e. 2,208 lexemes make up verbal forms out of 7,215 lexical units analyzed. In other words, the ratio between nonverbal and verbal forms in the texts is 69.4% versus 30.6%, as shown in *Diagram 1*.

*Table 1 Verbal forms in six fields of transport and traffic engineering (according to frequency criterion)*

Verbal forms	PTT	AT	RUT	RT	WT	IT	Total	%
<b>Number</b>								
Actives	73	130	10	82	79	133	603	27.3%
Passives	35	36	52	25	30	30	208	9.4%
Present Simple	33	42	56	47	39	91	308	13.9%
Present Continuous	3	3	3	2	-	9	20	0.9%
Present Perfect	4	6	3	6	3	9	31	1.4%
Past Simple	2	24	27	6	5	21	85	3.8%
Past Continuous	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	0.05%
Past Perfect	-	1	1	-	-	-	2	0.1%
<b>Past Perfect</b>								
Continuous	-	-	2	-	-	-	2	0.1%
Future Simple	1	10	5	14	4	5	39	1.8%
Present Infinitives	33	73	59	32	28	38	263	12.0%
Perfect Infinitives	3	1	-	13	3	6	26	1.2%
Present Participles	16	15	23	23	16	38	131	5.9%
Perfect Participles	-	-	3	-	-	-	3	0.15%
Past Participles	36	43	62	43	29	58	271	12.3%
Gerunds	4	14	12	12	8	28	78	3.5%
Imperatives	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	0.05%
Subjunctives	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	0.05%
Modals	13	29	20	14	9	11	96	4.3%
Conditionals	1	18	13	2	-	5	39	1.8%
							-----	
							2,208	100.0%

*Table 1*, *Table 2* and *Diagram 2* demonstrate that active forms are more often used than passive forms (27.3%: 9.4%, i.e. a ration of nearly 3 : 1). The relation between actives and passives, as used in various fields of traffic and transport engineering, is presented in *Diagram 4* and *Diagram 5*. Tarone et al. (1981) claim that active or passive forms are chosen based on rhetorical purposes.

Bazerman (1984:177) maintains that verbal forms are used to convey certain meanings in written discourse.

Tense usage also proves that this is true (see Dimković-Telebaković 2008:120-1). Eight English tenses are looked at here, which is illustrated in *Table 1* and *Table 2*. The former table demonstrates verbal form frequency, and the latter their distribution. The most frequently used tense in the texts is the Present Simple (13.9%). Past participles (12.3%) and present infinitives (12.0%) are also often used in the analyzed texts, whereas the present participle (5.9%) occurs considerably less. Quirk et al. (1985, ch. 3) state that neutral terms (i.e. “-ing forms” and “-ed/-en forms”) are more often employed in the relevant literature than the terms “present” and “past participles”, but I use the latter to differentiate present participles from gerunds. *Diagram 3* shows how frequently these forms occur in the texts.

*Table 2 Verbal forms in six fields of transport and traffic engineering (according to verbal form distribution)*

[illegible]

Modals (4.3%), the Past Simple (3.8%), gerunds (3.5%), the Future Simple (1.8%), conditionals (1.8%), the Present Perfect (1.4%) and perfect infinitives (1.2%) are less frequently used. The Present Continuous (0.9%), perfect participles (0.15%), the Past Perfect (0.1%), the Past Perfect Continuous (0.1%) and the Past Continuous (0.05%) are rarely used, as well as imperatives (0.05%) and subjunctives (0.05%). Barber (1962) and Wingard (1981) also claim that continuous verbal forms are very seldom in use in professional and scientific written discourse.

Diagram 1 Verbal forms related to other lexical units in specialized texts in transport and traffic fields

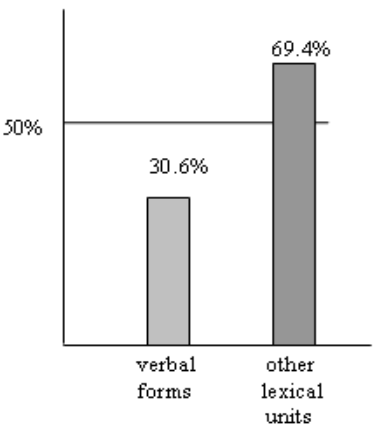


Diagram 2 The relation between active and passive verbal forms in specialized texts in transport and traffic fields

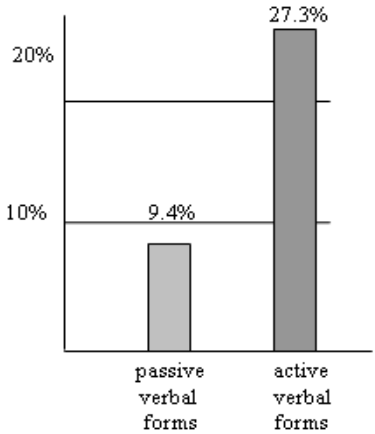
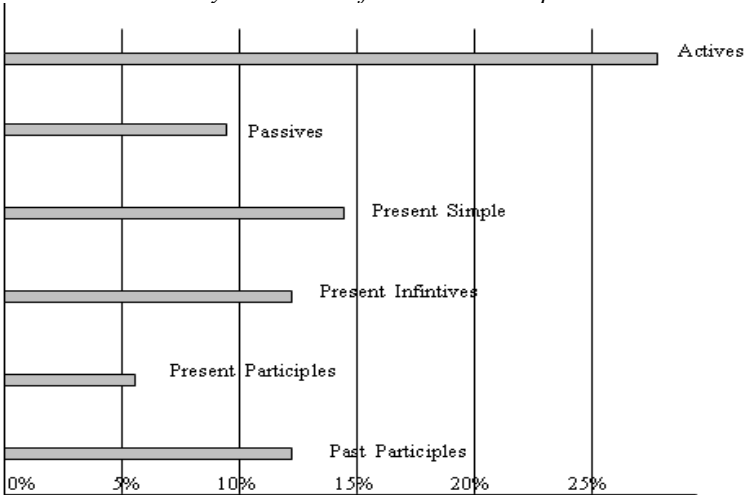


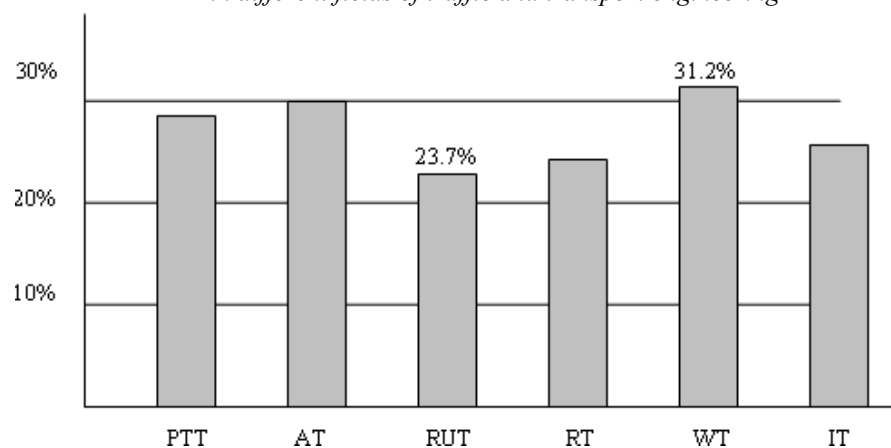
Diagram 3 The most commonly used verbal forms in eleven specialized texts in traffic fields



As far as verbal form distribution is concerned, the highest percentage of active forms (31.2%) is identified in waterways transport texts, while the lowest

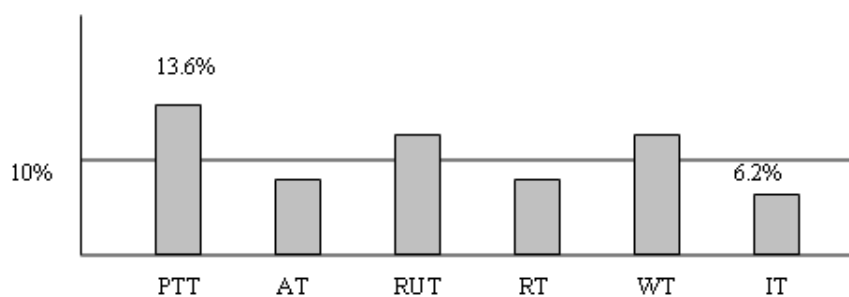
rate (23.7%) is displayed by road and urban transport texts. This is shown in *Diagram 4*.

*Diagram 4 Active verbal form distribution in different fields of traffic and transport engineering*



PTT texts, on the other hand, contain the highest value for passive forms (13.6%), and intermodal transport texts the lowest value (6.2%). *Diagram 5* illustrates these results.

*Diagram 5 Passive verbal form distribution in different fields of traffic and transport engineering*



### **3.2. Some Functions and Meanings of the Most Frequently Used Verbal Forms in Two Specialist Texts**

This section of the article reports on results obtained from two texts – one on air traffic and the other on telecommunications traffic (see Dimković-Telebaković 2003:258, 268). According to the analysis, the most commonly used

verbal forms are the Present Simple, past participles and present infinitives. Here are the functions and meanings of these verbal forms identified in the two texts:

The *Present Simple* expresses the present state and a specific situation (e.g. “works”; see also Malcolm 1987), may refer to topic generalizations (e.g. “is”; cf. Malcolm 1987), can make claims (e.g. “is”, “becomes”), can explain previous claims (e.g. “is based”, “depend”, “is said”, “prevents”, “is called”), can refer to topic specification (e.g. “is posed”, “is”, “illustrates”, “receives”, “has”, “receive”, “send”, “transmits”, “repeats”, “reinforces”), can express ability (e.g. modal active “can send”, modal passive “can be transmitted”), and can express necessity (e.g. modal passives “must be encoded” and “must be carried”).

*Past participles* are used as part of the present passive (e.g. “is posed”, “is based”, “is called”), of the past passive (e.g. “was launched”, “were introduced”, “were called”, “were coded”), of the passive infinitive (e.g. “to be equipped”), as part of the Past Perfect (e.g. “had shown”), or of the Present Perfect (e.g. “have attracted”, “has consisted of”, “has been designed”), to shorten passive relative clauses (e.g. “faced”, “equipped”, “shown”), as adjectives (e.g. “advanced”, “engined”, “transmitted”), as part of set phrases (e.g. “at a specified carrier frequency”), and as part of modal passives (e.g. “must be encoded”, “can be transmitted” and “must be carried”).

*Present infinitives* are mainly used to express aims (e.g. “to fly”, “to become”, “to be equipped”, “to fulfil or develop”, “to utilize”, “to develop”, “to choose”, “to build”, “to send”, “to provide”), as part of the Future Simple (e.g. “will be”), as part of present modal (e.g. “can send”), as part of the Future-in-the-Past (e.g. “would have”, “would cost”, “would derive”), and as part of impersonal constructions (e.g. “is to be sent”).

#### 4. Conclusions

The case study shows that nearly 1/3 of all forms, used in the examined specialized written texts, are verbal forms. This finding points to the conclusion that these forms play a very important role in English specialist written discourse in the fields of transport and traffic engineering. The obtained results also reveal that actives occur more often (27.3%) than passives (9.4%) in these settings. Apart from active and passive forms, the most frequently employed verbal forms in the texts are the Present Simple (13.9%), past participles (12.3%) and present infinitives (12%), whereas present participles (5.9%), modals (4.3%), the Past Simple (3.8%) and gerunds (3.5%) are less used. Conditionals (1.8%), the Future Simple (1.8%), the Present Perfect (1.4%), perfect infinitives (1.2%), the Present Continuous (0.9%) and the Past Perfect Continuous (0.1%) and perfect participles (0.15%), the Past Continuous (0.05%), subjunctives (0.05%) and imperatives (0.05%) are even less frequently used in the analyzed texts.

Based on the analysis of only two texts out of eleven, the most frequently used verbal forms proved to have the following meanings and functions: the *Present Simple* can express the present state and a specific situation, can refer to topic generalizations, can make claims or explain the previous claims, can refer to

topic specification, and can express ability or necessity, when combined with modals. *Past participles* can be used as adjectives, as part of present or past passive, as part of passive infinitives, as part of modal passives, as part of the Present or Past Perfect, as part of certain set phrases, and to shorten passive relative clauses. *Present infinitives* are mainly used to express aims, or can be used as part of the Future Simple, as part of present modal, as part of the Future-in-the-Past, and as part of impersonal constructions.

These results have teaching implications. ESP practitioners should help their students learn verbal form usage in specialist written discourse appropriately.

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## Annex I

The following texts are analyzed in this article:

'New Airbus Industrie Airliners on Course for Long-haul Era', *ICAO Journal*, January 1992; 'Evolution of the Commercial Airliner', *Scientific American*, September 1995; 'Faster Interchange', *Cargoware International*, April 1992; 'Rail Linkages to Ship, Barge and Truck', *Transportation Research*, March 1992; 'Siemens Opens LRV Plant', *Progressive Railroading*, April 1992; *The European Project ERTMS*, UIC and CENELEC, Stockholm, 1993; 'Protecting the Entire Ship', *Marine Log*, February 1993; 'Port Equipment and Services', *The Dock and Harbour Authority*, October 1988; 'Some Basic Features of Satellite Communications', *Understanding Communications Systems* by D.L. Cannon and G. Luecke; 'Intelligent Network Overview', *IEEE Communications Magazine*, March 1993; 'Getting a Ford HEV on the Road', *IEEE Spectrum*, July 1995.

The texts can be found in Dimković-Telebaković 2003 and 2009.

# PROSODY IN ELICITATIONS: A STUDY OF INTONATION IN BBC TALK RADIO SHOWS

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**Abstract:** *The paper is concerned with the prosodic features of non-literal language use in indirect elicitations in radio talk. It will be demonstrated how intonation becomes mirror of some contextual factors, and how the prosodic features of elicitations can corroborate the speaker's meaning manifested through certain lexico-grammatical elements in the discourse.*

**Keywords:** *context, discourse, indirectness, lexico-grammar, prosody*

## 1. Introduction

*“Every sign by itself seems dead. What gives it life? In use it is alive”*  
(Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* §432).

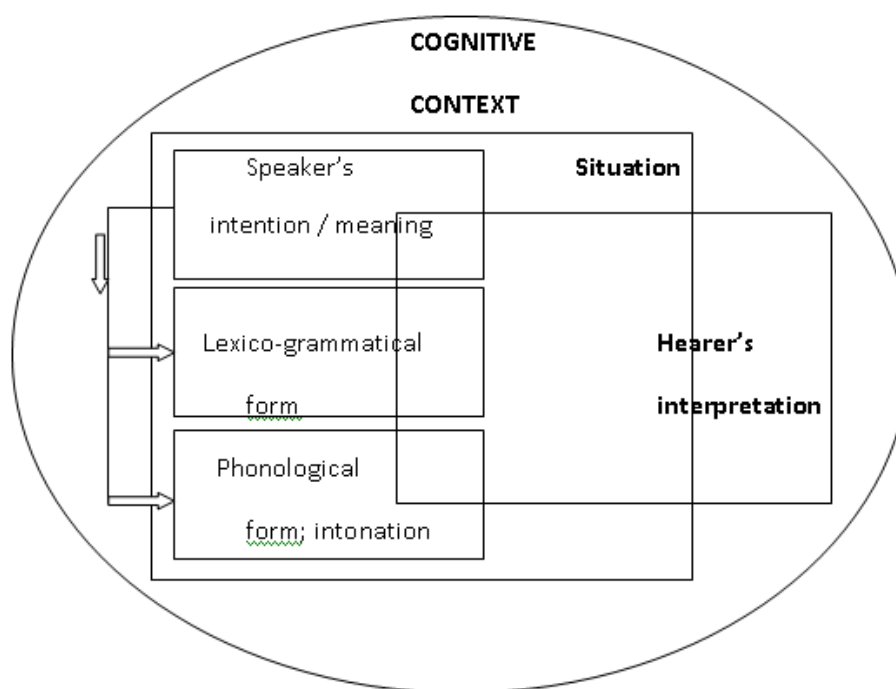
Croft and Cruse (2004:98-99) spell out Wittgenstein's message by highlighting the fact that although an isolated sign has semantically relevant properties, semantic potential, and “these properties have an influence on eventual interpretations”, “life” is breathed into a sign when it is given contextualized interpretation. The common view among cognitive linguists that meaning is construed in context and that non-linguistic knowledge plays a significant role in interpretation is justifiable when linguistic units are looked at in discourse. It is evident that even the same words in the same grammatical constructions may have different pragmatic effects (cf. e.g. Wells 2006:5). Indeed, if we think of the lexical meanings of the verbs *gather*, *understand*, *take*, *seem*, *must* or the conjunction *so*, we can hardly recall or instigate all possible interpretations. Discourse facts show that in natural conversations each of these lexical units occurs in Hypothetical acts, and, as a rule, the utterance in which they are selected by the speaker is typically understood by the addressee as elicitation for response.

There are some prevailing principles with regard to meaning in discourse: it evolves in the form – function correlation, hence it is contextually controlled, and the pragmatic effects of utterance meaning can be achieved or enhanced by intonation. My view of discourse context is Relevance Theoretical. I assume that context is a mental phenomenon, it is a psychological construct controlled by *knowledge* involving shared assumptions about the world between the speaker and the hearer, selections from a variety of possible choices regarding appropriate interpretation, and as such, it is dynamic, changing from moment to moment in the discourse (cf. Sperber and Wilson:1995, 2002a, 2002b, Herczeg-Deli:2009a, 2009b among others). The hearer's understanding is correct if (s)he responds appropriately whether or not the speaker's linguistic form is straightforward, which



signifies that the speaker's act has had a *positive cognitive effect*. One type of positive cognitive effects is *contextual implication* (see Sperber and Wilson 2002a:251), the interpretation of which requires the processing and selection of the possible assumptions regarding the speaker's meaning in the context.

The following figure is meant to illustrate the interdependence between the hearer's interpretation and the speaker's meaning and form – both lexicogrammatical and phonological – in the given cognitive context:



Prosodic features like prominence, pitch level and tone greatly contribute to the communicative value of an utterance. The speaker's intonation is spontaneously exploited by the hearer facilitating his selection from his assumptions about the speaker's intention and attitude towards him, albeit the interpretation of intonational cues may be subjective.

My research into the prosodic features of indirect elicitations aimed at uncovering the relationship between the lexico-grammar and the intonation of the language of Initiation Moves in natural radio talk. I am interested in the contextual implications of intonation, the ways in which those contribute to the lexico-grammatical meaning of an utterance and the modes that reflect the speaker's intention. The source of the data is non-edited discourse on BBC Radio; talks in the studio and phone-in programmes. The transcriptions follow David Brazil's transcription model: the tone units begin with the signal of the type of tone identifiable in that particular stretch of discourse, prominence is marked with capital letters, the tonic syllable is underlined, and relative pitch level is also

indicated. The transcriptions are complemented with arrows on the tonic syllables to make the recognition of the tone types easier to identify.

## **2. Speaker's Meaning and Intonation**

Intonation is inseparable from the utterance, and it projects several aspects of the context. Roach (2009:146) recapitulates four commonly proposed functions of intonation. It can add a special kind of "meaning" to spoken language by indicating some emotions, which is usually called the "attitudinal function". The "accentual function" helps to produce the effect of prominence and thus to focus attention on a particular lexical item, while it has some "grammatical function" and makes the listener able to better recognize the information contained in the utterance. The fourth function is the discourse function. It can signal to the listener what is considered "new" by the speaker and what should be taken as "given" information, it can suggest contrast or some kind of link with material in another tone unit, and what is more, discourse intonation can convey to the listener what kind of response is expected. Two more functions are identified by Wells (2006:11-12). He refers to a "psychological function", pointing out that intonation helps us to organize speech into units that are easy to perceive, memorize and perform, and he also distinguishes the "indexical function" which reflects the participants' social identity.

On the whole, we can say that intonation is a kind of reflection of the *cognitive environment* of the individual (for the concept see Sperber and Wilson 1986, 1995:38-46, 58-60), and its *pragmatic effects* are determined by the hearer's knowledge and abilities to identify the speaker's meaning and intention.

### **2.1. David Brazil's Model**

Brazil (1985) is concerned with the relationship between the intonational features of an utterance and the "context of interaction". His rationale to some essential characteristics of discourse seems somehow analogous to Sperber and Wilson's theory; Brazil also presupposes that some kind of understanding of the situation is previously established and that the speaker's assumption is part of the communicative value of the utterance. He emphasizes that "intonation projects a certain context of interaction" (1985:47). Therefore Brazil takes it as a general linguistic principle that:

whenever a speaker has a choice of meaningfully different courses of action, he may exercise that choice to make his utterance mesh with some presumed state of affairs already existing: or he may exploit his opportunity to choose, and represent the state of affairs in the light he wishes his hearer to see it in (Brazil 1985:48).

The idea of choice and its relationship to meaning chimes in with Sperber and Wilson's concept of selection from a variety of possible interpretations (cf. Sperber

and Wilson 1986:14-7), thus Brazil's stance – although never stated so by him – has to be considered cognitively based, too.

For the description of the communicative values of intonation Brazil established *three systems*: *prominence*, which accounts for sense selection, *pitch-level choices*, which describe relative pitch heights in the tone units to determine the key (the onset) and the termination of the tonic segment, and *tones*, which project a context of interaction. These systems reveal a specific functional view of meaning rather than a phonetic connotation.

Tones in Brazil's view represent discourse values of the assumptions of who knows what. Falling tone ↘ - signals something freshly introduced into the conversation, something not yet present in the common ground, something the speaker assumes the hearer didn't know. In Brazil's terminology this is a *proclaiming* tone. Fall-rise -↘↗-, on the other hand, is termed *referring* tone; it is used by the speaker when the constituent uttered with it is already "in play"; when it is based on some supposed common ground between speaker and hearer. Brazil presumes that this part of discourse represents speaker - hearer convergence. The system also handles role relationships, which can be projected by the speaker. To mark this Brazil introduces a + factor. The *p+* tone is rise-fall ↗↘ -, while the *r+* is a rise: ↗. An utterance said with a *p+* or an *r+* tone can be the signal of conversational dominance, Brazil points out, but he also notes that the choice of roles is a voluntary act, and his data show that *p+*, e.g. is relatively infrequent. The system also treats lack of pitch movement in a tone unit. Level tone -→ - is a zero tone, which means that in the given syllable there is no change in pitch level.

In David Brazil's framework one utterance is not interpreted as one tone unit, nor do grammatical units predetermine the number of tone units in a real communicational situation. The groundbreaking model is especially appropriate for the capturing of the relevant, meaningful intonational cues of discourse, and can be used to discover how the speaker structures his message, and how the intonational composition of a stretch of speech reveals the speaker's needs.

## 2.2. Investigations of Intonation in Elicitations

The data are Elicitation acts, i.e. utterances that realize stylistic varieties of questions in exchanges in BBC Radio talk. The grammatical form in each case is declarative, and has any of the following features: the speaker's utterance comprises a linguistic sign of the elicitation function, a hypothetical component, an unspecific linguistic unit or some combination of these.

There is a prevalent view of the relationship between sentence type and tone, viz. that tone choice is not predictable (Brazil:1985, Wells:2006, Roach:2009, among others). What is very probable, on the other hand, is that prominence and high pitch add to the implication of the speaker's meaning and thus can signify the communicative function of an utterance.

### 2.2.1. High Pitch

My examinations of the data show that high pitch can reveal both some mental and attitudinal factors of the speaker's mental context. Complementing the meaning of a lexical unit high pitch is "tagged on" to implicate a niche in the speaker's knowledge regarding the addressee's personal world or to signal some contrast with his knowledge of reality. High pitch can also be a signal of certain emotions such as surprise, or of particular interest in the content of the addressee's response. All in all, it can function as an indicator of certain aspects of the speaker's *total cognitive environment*.

In radio talk the speaker's indirect inquiries about the addressee's world are frequently communicated via Hypothetical acts. Hypotheses involve the sense of some Unreal – the Unknown or Unspecific – m or imply the Uncertainty of the speaker about his proposition, which generates a certain U-factor (for the concept see Deli (2004), Herczeg-Deli (2009b) in the context. The presence of this U-factor in the communicational situation may be signalled by the speaker with high pitch, as it happens in the following examples:

- (1) *I must ask you about the spelling of your name, incidentally.*

(1a) // *p* i MUST ASK you //  
 // *r* about the SPELLing of your NAME incidentally //  
 // *p* 'ts a LONG WAY ROUND //

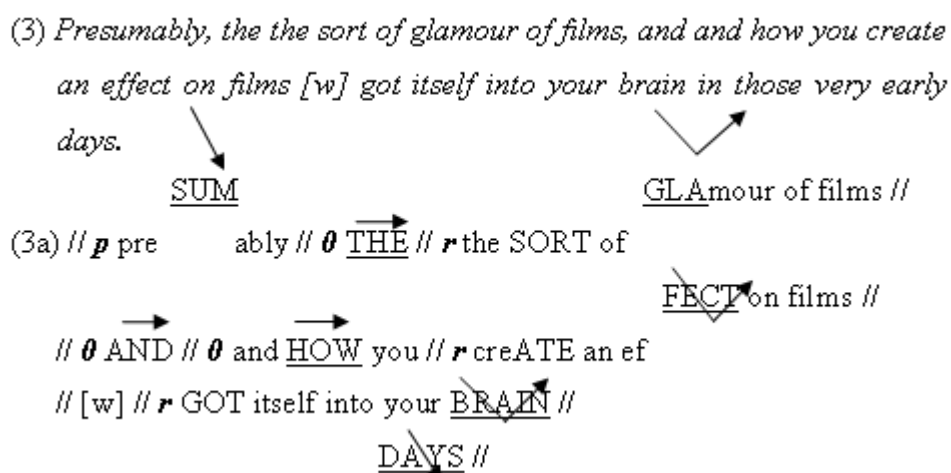
High pitch occurs on three prominent syllables in the utterance: once on the elicitation marker ASK, once on the main topic of the inquiry: your NAME, and on the the termination of the last chunk of the utterance: ROUND. The implication is double: the speaker needs specification, and as the high termination suggests, he faces something unusual and perhaps surprising. The following example is the result of the speaker's inference of some supposed reality. It's a checking move marked with *so*:

2. *So there are no drums in there at all.*

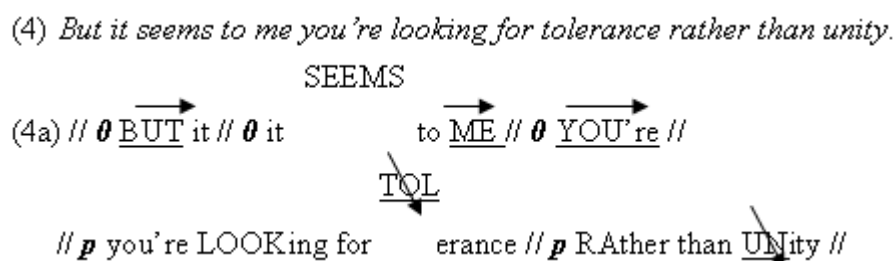
2a // *θ* so there are NO DRUMS // *p* in THERE at ALL //

This is another example of the frequent cases when the termination is uttered with high pitch. It seems to be the signal of strong interest and surprise. The effect is that the addressee gives explanation and further details of the situation discussed in the conversation.

High pitch is commonly selected with falling tone (see examples (1) and (2) above, and also (3) below):



The Hypothesis marker *presumably* receives high pitch indicating contrast with what the speaker knows as reality, and high pitch is on three more syllables including the termination, which emphasizes the speaker's interest. In extract (4) the Hypothetical verb *seems*, which becomes the onset syllable, the key of the second tone unit, similarly to the hypothetical adverb in the previous example, is also pronounced with high pitch:



The topic of the Elicitation, *tolerance* receives high key, too; this is what the speaker infers from their previous conversation; something he considers a possible reality. The utterance implies interest and also some surprise, the intended function is asking for some explanation, the effect is that the addressee gives some reasons for not looking for unity in religion. The concept of *tolerance* here emerges as an unspecific element of the discourse and requires specification by the addressee in the response move.

As examples (1), (2), (3) above, in (5a), and (6a), below too, the last tonic segment – the termination – is pronounced with high pitch:

(5) ...so women must have a real commitment to these careers which, clearly, you have.

(5a) // *p* so WOmen MUST have // *p* a REAL comMITment //  
 // *θ* to THESE carREERS //  
 → WHICH // *p* CLEARly YOU have //

(6) I gather you had problems getting # getting back into the country last night.

(6a) // *θ* i GAther you had PROBlems // *θ* GETting // *θ* GETting //  
COUNtry  
 // *p* BACK into the last night //

High pitch is not an essential condition for the utterance to have an elicitive force, but its occurrence in the termination of a declarative is very common in the data when the utterance is interpreted by the speaker's partner as a call for details of or reasons for the current topic of discussion. Such examples underline Brazil's observation that with high key choice the speaker expresses expectation for an active response (1985:181).

### 2.2.2. Tone Choice

The data show a variety of tone choice. Referring (fall-rise) tone on a discourse unit projects some common ground between the speaker and the hearer, while proclaiming (falling) tone, in general, signals what the speaker introduces as new for the hearer. Not quite so, however in Elicitation acts. In such discourse units *p* tone tends towards the removal of the speaker's uncertainty or seeks to elicit new information.

The function of the caller's move in the following example is to check her inference from the current situation and some common knowledge about the reward callers can get in this phone-in programme. Falling tone on the termination here indicates that she wants information / confirmation:

(7) I understand I can have a photograph.

(7a) // *θ* i UNderSTAND // *p* i can HAVE a PHOtograph //

Level (zero) tone on the Hypothetical may be accidental here, or it may be a reflection of the speaker's reserved attitude, i.e. of her showing distance between herself and the host of the programme.

In example 1a above the speaker knows his conversational partner's name, but he is uncertain about the spelling; the prominent word NAME articulately receives *r* tone, while the *p* tone on the termination implies that the speaker expects specification of the correct spelling of the hearer's name.

The recurring fall-rise in 3a above seems to signal some kind of convergence in the knowledge of the participants; the host of the programme has a strong assumption but it has to be checked and accepted by the addressee as truth, hence the falling tone on the termination.

Brazil (1985) suggests that the *r+* tone can imply some kind of leading role on the part of the speaker, and can also project an assumption that he actually knows the answer. It occurs on the Hypothetical lexical unit *I gather* in 8a below and on a 'false start' in an Elicitation act in (9a):

(8) *You just have been made redundant, I gather, talking of other things.*

(8a) // *p* you JUST have been made reDUNdant // *r+* I GATHER //  
 // *r* talking of OTHER THINGS //

(9) *It's that... so, you specialized totally in African violets*

(9a) // *r+* it's THAT // *p* so you SPEcialized TOtally//  
 // *p* in AFrican Violets //

The following is an extract from a telephone call, where tone choices reflect a negotiated situation – “*I know you are there*” – on the one hand, and the projection that the caller, i.e. the host has the leading role. He also seems to assume that he knows the answer and expects the answer *yes*:





In the declarative Elicitations of talk radio shows proclaiming (falling) tone is very frequent. The data show that Brazil's conclusion (1985:154) about the discourse function of falling tone is situationally conditioned: a discourse stretch pronounced with it can "proclaim" or "impose the addressee to proclaim". This paper also provides evidence that with declarative elicitation "the world-changing element is not the assertion, but the *yes* or *no* that it seeks to elicit" (Brazil 1985:154) and that declarative elicitation typically seek for confirmation, information and/or explanation from the addressee. The elicitative effect is frequently lexically enhanced via some contextually non-specific discourse unit, which, as a rule, is pronounced with prominence, and occasionally with high pitch. The latter quality on the onset (the key) or on the tonic syllable (the termination) in a cognitive pragmatic sense involves some kind of contrast. The speaker's special interest, and/or surprise is commonly implied by high pitch.

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# IT WILL/MUST/MAY BE A MODAL AUXILIARY

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**Abstract:** *The English modal verb system has proved to be a difficult linguistic concept even for advanced EFL students. Their comprehension/usage problems may be of purely morpho-syntactic and semantic nature or may also involve sociolinguistic dimensions. The paper examines the question of polysemy, sociolinguistic factors and the role of ELT models.*

**Keywords:** *applied linguistics, CEFR, ELT, modal auxiliaries, theoretical linguistics*

## 1. Introduction

It is a well-known fact that the system of English modal verbs is a difficult concept for many EFL students regardless of their level of proficiency. There may be several causes that give rise to comprehension/usage problems, but perhaps the most persisting one involves the sociolinguistic dimension of modality. This problem is well-described by Leech (2004:72):

[m]any pages, chapters, books have been written about the modal auxiliary verbs in English. One thing that makes it difficult to account for the use of these words [...] is that their meaning has both a logical (semantic) and practical (pragmatic) element. We can talk about them in terms of such logical notions as 'permission' or 'necessity', but this done, we still have to consider ways in which these notions become remoulded by the social and psychological influences of everyday communication [...] factors such as [...] politeness, tact and irony.

It needs to be stressed that the role of the context and other sociolinguistic factors within the (English) modal system has been thoroughly investigated from a theoretical perspective in recent decades. In fact, it is nowadays almost impossible to find a theoretical model examining modal auxiliaries that does not take the context and the sociolinguistic factors into consideration. Yet, it seems that modern applied models, including ELT models, do not follow this trend, but rather resort to more traditional theoretical models in which the sociolinguistic factors are not regarded as significant.

We believe that this approach is one of the most dominant factors that contribute to EFL learners' comprehension/usage problems with the English modal verb system. To confirm the claim, the paper presents the treatment of (English) modal verbs in formal approaches (section 2), and then compares it with those employed in the ELT applied models (section 3). Section 4 concludes the paper.

## 2. Theoretical Approaches

### 2.1. Basic Tenets

The first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was dominated by structural linguistics, whose primary aim was to abstract language as a system from its spoken and written use in order to first identify linguistic elements, and then to classify them into a definite set of linguistic categories. The basic principle behind structuralism was that language is represented by an indefinite set of grammatical structures which can be split into different building blocks (e.g. phonemes, morphemes, phrases, clauses, etc.), and joined together by a finite set of grammatical rules (e.g. word-formation rules). In such a framework, sociolinguistic concepts such as context and the social position of the user were almost non-existent.

The 1950s saw a shift in perspective that moved away from the notions of formalism and structuralism. Although the tradition of formalism and the pure structural approach were preserved in some schools (e.g. Chomskian theoretical approaches), other schools tried to expand their research into other, at that time not purely linguistic, realms, including contextual and sociolinguistic dimensions. Halliday's Functional Grammar, for example, primarily builds on the function of language, and identifies three functions, the so-called metafunctions of language: (i) ideational metafunction (the linguistic representation of ideas/concepts), (ii) interpersonal metafunction (the function of language with regard to users' personal and social relationships), and (iii) textual metafunction (the function of language with regard to context). (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004). According to the Functional Grammar perspective, every linguistic expression is never construed *per se*, but it always needs to fulfil the three metafunctions. All three metafunctions co-exist in any linguistic expression, but any one of the metafunctions can play a dominant role in a given context/text type. Thus, the same linguistic expression can obtain different interpretations, depending on which metafunction is more dominant in a given context/text type. Halliday's concept is further developed by S. Dik (1997), whose main objective is to focus on the relationship between the instrumentality of language (i.e. language as an instrument of human interaction) and the effect of the linguistic expression within a given social interaction. Cognitive linguistics, another school that rejects the structuralist and generativist claims that the linguistic faculty is autonomous, argues that grammar should be understood in terms of conceptualisation, and that our knowledge of language is not an innate human property, but arises from our linguistic experience/exposure, or, in plain words, from language in use (Croft and Cruse 2004). Thus, dominant modern models, with the exception of structuralism and its offshoot theories, pay special attention to the contextual and interpersonal function of language. To illustrate these notions with regard to the usage of English modal verbs, let us now examine diagram (1). It represents the correlation between three most important functions/concepts acknowledged by the contemporary theoretic linguistic schools. The use of neutral terms is intentional, since the paper does not want to advocate any particular linguistic theory.

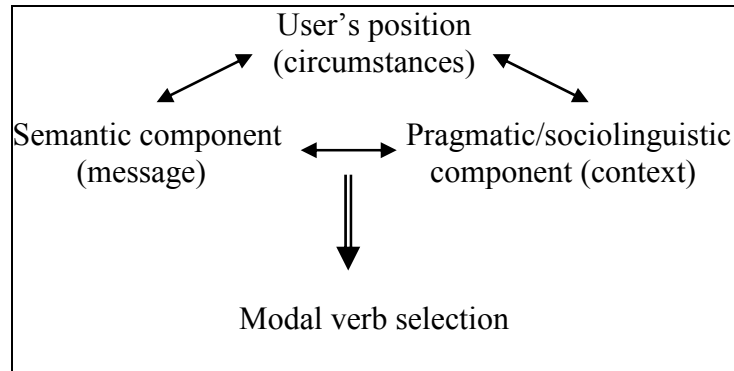


Diagram 1: Correlations between different linguistic functions with reference to the modal verb selection.

Let us exemplify the interdependencies presented in diagram 1 by addressing the differences between utterances (1).

- (1) During a board meeting:  
 a) It may be clear to everyone that this plan won't work.  
 b) It must be clear to everyone that this plan won't work.

In the given situation (i.e. during a board meeting), the core message of the utterances in (1) is almost identical: it expresses a degree of obligation imposed by the speaker on the addressee(s). Yet, we may assume that the social position (pragmatic/sociolinguistic component) or the circumstances are not identical. (1a) is typically produced by a person who is institutionally inferior, whereas (1b) can be produced only if the speaker is socially either superior or equal in rank. This fact is directly reflected in the selection of the modal verbs. *May*, often referred to as a tentative or face-saving modal verb of obligation, is selected by users of inferior social rank, whereas *must*, the modal verb denoting strong and direct obligation, is typically selected in cases in which the user is socially superior or equal in rank. In a reverse situation, the selection of the modal verb *may* would be considered too weak, and *must* too strong, even offensive.

## 2.2. Modal Verbs and Theoretical Approaches

Two different approaches to English modal verbs can be found within the contemporary descriptive theoretical frameworks. The first, I will call it the polysemous approach, argues that since there are many different independent meanings of modal verbs, they should be analysed as polysemous items. The main aim of this approach (cf. Lyons 1977, Palmer 1991, Bybee and Fleischman 1995, Huddleston and Pullum 2002 among others) is to identify as many discrete meanings of an individual modal verb as possible. This strategy can be best

observed in (2), where isolated sentences illustrate various (modal) meanings of *will*. The list is far from exhaustive, since it excludes its (pure) temporal meanings:

- (2) a) This will be the man you're looking for. → supposition
- b) You will remain where you are! → command
- c) I'll write tomorrow. → promise
- d) Parents tell their children they'll stop their pocket money. → threat
- e) You cannot find a publisher who will take it. → volition
- f) Some drugs will improve the condition. → power
- g) A: "I can't breathe." → insistence  
B: "Well, if you will smoke like that, what can you expect?"
- h) Accidents will happen. → characteristic situation
- i) She will sit for hours watching TV. → habits
- j) Oil will float on water. → inference

The monosemous approach to English modal verbs (cf. Haegeman 1983, Klinge 1993, Groefsema 1995, Papafragou 2000 among others) claims that each modal verb has one core meaning, which is then modified by the context and other sociolinguistic factors. The aim of the monosemous approach is to identify the core meanings of the modal verbs, the so-called modal indeterminates, and determine the sociolinguistic factors that affect the interpretation of a modal indeterminate. Comparing the two approaches, we can easily establish the direct link with the theoretical approaches presented in 2.1: the polysemous approach is reminiscent of the structuralistic tradition, whereas the monosemous approach is closer to functional and cognitive theories.

### **3. Applied Linguistic Approaches**

#### **3.1. Basic Tenets**

The principal role of applied linguistic models is to put the findings of the theoretical linguistics into practice. It is used to solve a wide spectrum of everyday language related problems, including fields such as sociology, computer science, anthropology and pedagogy. Since the focus of the paper is the use of the English modal verbs by ELT students, special attention will be paid to the ELT applied models.

Stemming from the deep-rooted structuralist tradition, LT models in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century adopted a similar approach to language teaching (Richards and Rodgers 2001:50-71). The commonly held belief was that the prerequisite for a good command of a foreign language was a good knowledge of the target language grammatical system. Grammar was seen as a definite set of grammatical structures that can be learnt by recognizing the building blocks of the language in question, and combining them linearly by applying various grammatical rules. This concept advocated the use of charted diagrams to explain the grammatical system of the foreign language. Such diagrams have persisted to the present day, as shown by diagram 2:

## Question forms

### Word order

The usual word order for questions is as follows.

Question word	(Auxiliary) verb	Subject	
—	Was	she	tired?
—	Have	they	arrived?
What	does	'collocation'	mean?
Who	are	you	meeting?
When	did	he	arrive?

Kay & Jones (2009: 126)

Diagram 2: Grammar diagram following the structuralist tradition.

Late 1960s saw an emergence of a new approach to the language teaching, the so-called Communicative Language Teaching (henceforth: CLT). CLT was strongly influenced by the contemporary developments in theoretical linguistics, in particular, in the field of functional grammar. It is, therefore, not surprising that CLT lays a strong emphasis on the functional and communicative definition of language. The approach aims at making communicative competence the goal of language teaching as well as developing procedures for the teaching of the four language skills (Richards and Rodgers 2001:155). According to Richards and Rodgers (2001:156), the most distinctive features of the CLT pertaining to the grammatical issues are the following:

- (i) meaning is paramount;
- (ii) contextualisation is a basic premise;
- (iii) the target linguistic system will be learned best through the process of struggling to communicate;
- (iv) any device that helps the learners is accepted;
- (v) accuracy is judged not in the abstract but in context.

So, what CLT basically proposes is that language teaching and learning should be contextualized and meaningful; therefore, there must be a clear-cut connection between the form (i.e. structure) and the meaning. This perspective is neither controversial nor radical and is, in fact, in accordance with the parallel development in theoretical linguistics. At the same time, CLT does not claim that methods advocated before CLT are useless. Littlewood (1991:9-10), for example, points out that “we are still too ignorant about the basic processes of language learning to be able to state dogmatically what can and cannot contribute to them. Structural practice may still be a useful tool[.]” CLT’s standpoint towards linguistic forms, namely that each linguistic form must be contextually meaningful and purposeful, however, has often been misunderstood, and it has been interpreted in sense of eliminating the concept of the linguistic form *per se*. As a consequence, the term grammar with all its metalanguage has almost become a taboo word. This

movement can be easily observed in present-day textbooks. For instance, grammar sections are turned into euphemistic Language or English in Use sections, participles and gerunds are referred to as *-ing* forms, syntactic units are called word groups, etc. But what CLT really calls for is the fact that any grammatical structure must be treated contextually with the emphasis on its communicative function. Other than that, anything is acceptable, providing it helps the learners.

### 3.2. Modal Verbs and Applied (ELT) Approach

For the purposes of the analysis, several contemporary English intermediate textbooks and practice books commonly used in teaching English in Slovenia have been examined, including Soars and Soars (2009), Kay and Jones (2009) and Murphy (1994). The analysis shows that in all cases the modal verbs are treated similarly, and it identifies at least four common points:

- (i) modals are strictly analysed as polysemous items (cf. 2.2);
- (ii) the main focus is on the semantic component (cf. diagram 1);
- (iii) the explanations are supported by examples *in vacuo*, so the learners are not provided with a sufficient contextualised input (cf.: examples (2));
- (iv) the sociolinguistic component is neglected or reduced to a minimum (cf. diagram 1, and example (1)).

The question of modal verbs as polysemous items is dealt with in two ways. The dominant approach is to group modal verbs according to meaning, and then to explain the differences in meanings between the modal verbs, as in (3). The second possibility, which is slightly less typical, is the listing of different distinctive meanings of a modal verb, as in (4).

#### (3) Obligation: *should*, *ought to*, and *must*

Use

*Should* and *ought to* express mild obligation, suggestion, or advice. *You're always asking me for money, I think you **should** spend less.*

*You **ought to** be more careful with your money.*

*Must*, like *have to*, expresses strong obligation. *Must* can express an obligation that involves the speaker's opinion. It's personal.

*I **must** get my hair cut.*

(adapted from Soars and Soars 2009:137)

#### (4) *Have to*

Use

*Have to* expresses strong obligation.

*You **have to** work hard if you want to succeed.*

*Have to* expresses a general obligation.

*Children **have to** go to school until they are 16.*

(adapted from Soars & Soars 2009:137)

In addition, it is often the case that one meaning of the modal verb is emphasised, whereas other meanings are treated at a later stage and/or with less attention, for example, the deontic meanings of *must* and *should* are much more emphasised than their epistemic use. Occasionally, special attention is also paid to register variation, for example, claims that *might* is more formal and polite, whereas *may* is less formal and spoken/colloquial.

A direct result of such an approach is the learners' distorted perception of the English modal system. In particular, rather than acquiring the concept presented in diagram 1, which reflects the real-life usage of modal verbs, the learners build a simplified version (diagram 2), which can be directly linked to textbook descriptions such as those in (3) and (4). In such a model, the contextual and sociolinguistic functions are almost completely neglected.

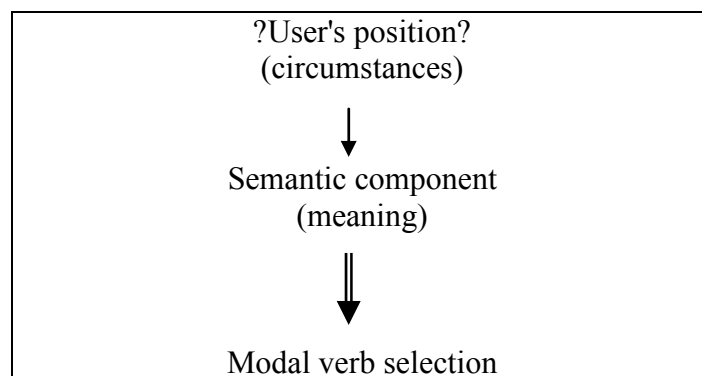


Diagram 2: Simplified model of the modal verb selection.

To show the insufficiency of the simplified selection of modal verbs, let us examine sentences in (5):

- (5) a) You may want to rewrite your essay.
- b) In your next argumentation, you should include more facts.

The interpretation of expressions such as (5a) strongly depends on the awareness of its contextual and sociolinguistic function. When the modal verb *may* is followed by a lexical verb such as *want* or *wish*, the combination is understood in the deontic rather than in the epistemic sense. We must first point out that since deontic modality pertains to social relations such as permission, obligation, and prohibition, special attention must be paid to the social position of the deontic source (i.e. the authority that imposes the modal notions). There are basically three options: the deontic source and the addressee(s) may be equal in rank (e.g. schoolmates), the deontic source may be superior in rank (e.g. teacher-student relation) or the deontic source may be inferior in rank (e.g. junior-senior partner). The selection of any deontic modal verb strongly depends on the position of the deontic source. Combinations such as *may want* are typically produced in environments in which the deontic source is socially superior to the addressee(s). In



(5a), the speaker wants the addressee(s) to perform the action required (i.e. rewriting the essay), but at the same time wants to avoid explicitly imposing an obligation on the addressee(s) as would be achieved by using a more straightforward modal verb, for example *must* or *have to*. Thus, we can say that *may* in (5a) functions as a face-saving expression, giving the addressee(s) a false impression of optionality.

Now, let us return to EFL learners who may be unaware of these implications, mostly due to the distorted understanding of the modal verb use stemming from overgeneralisations provided by various textbooks (cf.: (3-4) and diagram 2). In their decoding process, we may assume that students will mainly focus on the semantic component, i.e. the meaning of the modal verb *might*, which grammatical overgeneralisations typically associate with epistemic and tentative dimensions. Consequently, *might want* is interpreted in the sense of tentative possibility, i.e. the speaker gives the addressee(s) an open choice whether they want to carry out the activity or not. In this case, the addressees do not necessarily perform the required action, and thus the communicative function of (5a) is not fulfilled.

Let us now turn to (5b), in which *should* is used in its deontic sense. (5b) may be completely acceptable, if the participants are of equal social rank or if the deontic source is superior in rank; however, if the deontic source is inferior, then the acceptability of (5b) becomes contextually questionable. It is interesting that textbooks do place some emphasis on register variation (formal, informal, colloquial), and on regional variation (e.g. British vs. American English), but little or no attention is paid to the social position or rank of the user, so they typically assume that the participants are of the equal social position. In English culture, where the social dimension still plays a vital role, these notions are directly reflected in practical language use; therefore, it is surprising that this sociolinguistic feature is not emphasised more in present day ELT textbooks.

#### 4. Conclusion

A question may arise whether it is really necessary to explore the system of English modal verbs in a greater detail for EFL purposes. We must admit that present day textbooks do cover the basic concepts, and EFL learners do acquire a satisfactory command of the subject matter. The problems may arise when the use is contextually/sociolinguistically specific, as exemplified in (1) and (5), and discussed at greater length by Westney (1994) and references therein. The answer to the posed question may be easily found within the *Common European Framework of Reference* (henceforth: CEFR). Descriptors for B2 level (Independent User, (upper)-intermediate level) state among others:

- (i) Can understand recordings in standard dialect likely to be encountered in social, professional or academic life and identify speaker viewpoints and attitudes as well as the information content. (CEFR:68)
- (ii) Can communicate [...] with good grammatical control [...], adopting a level of formality appropriate to the circumstances. (CEFR:74)

(iii) Can engage in extended conversation on most general topics in a clearly participatory fashion, even in a noisy environment. Can sustain relationships with native speakers without unintentionally amusing or irritating them or requiring them to behave other than they would with a native speaker. Can convey degrees of emotion and highlight the personal significance of events and experiences. (CEFR:76)

Here we can observe that the basic concepts of the English modal verb system are not enough, since even at the (upper)-intermediate stage it is required that the users be comfortable in the original target language environment. Thus, a user having problems with either decoding or encoding modal messages in natural i.e. unadapted environments cannot be described as a competent B2 user. Consequently, any progress to higher levels is hindered.

To conclude, ELT applied models should pay more attention to the social and pragmatic function of modal auxiliaries. There should be a well-designed balance between the purely linguistic and contextual/pragmatic components. Grammatical simplifications for language-learning purposes thus need to focus even more on the sociolinguistic function of modal auxiliaries.

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# TYPES OF METAPHORS IN THE ENGLISH LEGAL DISCOURSE

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**Abstract:** *The main purpose of my paper is that of analyzing English legal discourse and legal texts belonging to different genres within the same subject field, in this case legal English, from the point of view of the variety of metaphors it consists of. Metaphor represents one among many other elements of legal discourse.*

**Keywords:** *legal discourse, conceptual metaphor, texts*

## 1. Introduction

*Metaphor* is, among many others, a significant element of *legal discourse*.

The hypothesis I started from in the writing of this paper, is that, in spite of the prejudice that specialist vocabularies are largely free of figurative elements, comprehensible figurative expressions have long been part of legal diction.

I intend to summarize some basic theoretical perspectives on *metaphor* and law, and provide a sustained account on how these perspectives can impact the work of legal professionals.

My research interest in legal metaphors draws on the conviction that:

- *legal discourse* is rather determinative in the life of the individual and society;
- *metaphors* have been both understudied and underestimated in this field;
- *metaphor* pervades these types of texts that have long been thought to be devoid of any emotive (if metaphors in cognitive linguistics evoke emotions) features.

Thus, throughout the paper, a distinction is made between *linguistic metaphor* which is seen as matter of language, i.e. the use of particular words which have semantic values and overtones, and *conceptual metaphor* (as a cognitive device, a way of making sense of reality). *Buried metaphors* abound in the language of the law throughout all its branches.

My main concern in the present paper is to demonstrate how *cognitive metaphor theory* works and what its specific application to *legal analysis* and *communication* might be. In the law we *live by* there are important *metaphors* that have a direct impact on millions of people in the world.

## 2. Terminological clarifications

The *genres* under discussion in the present paper are very common in this subject field; on the one hand both professionals and ordinary people can come across texts belonging to them; on the other hand some of them are most

representative from the perspective of the Latin influence. In what follows I will enumerate and describe the genres I shall refer to.

*Laws and statutes* are written in general terms that apply to everyone; there are certain ‘techniques’ to be made use of when dealing with the inapplicability of a statute, namely another statute or legal principle from a prior case can be applied. Moreover, “laws may be a specific interpretation and definition of a statute” (Walston-Dunham, 2009:32).

*Agreements and contracts* are an essential part of the *legal profession and discourse*. Contract law is based on the principle expressed in the Latin phrase: “*pacta sunt servanda*” (*agreements to be kept*). Its roots are in the *lex mercatoria*. Any agreement that is enforceable in court is a contract.

*Indictments* are formal accusations of crime and are drawn up by a prosecutor attorney.

*Judgment* is the word used in relation to a legal trial, to refer to a final finding, statement or ruling, based on a considered weighing of evidence, called *adjudication*. The word comes from the Latin *adiudico*, *-are*, *-vi*, *-tum* which means *to win, to award, to give*.

The corpus I have made use of in this paper includes a collection of sample texts and authentic documents from online archives and different books on law, representing the following English legal genres:

- laws and statutes
- agreements and contracts
- indictments
- judgements (<http://www.legaldocs.com/>)

The samples selected and belonging to these genres are illustrative of the choice of linguistic means and structuring as well as of the occurrence of metaphors or Latin affixes, in our case.

In the present paper I will make use of several *terms* that need to be explained so that the reading and understanding of the paper becomes linear and easy to follow. Terms that need clarification at this point are: *metaphor and conceptual metaphor*.

According to the Thesaurus ([www.thesaurus.com](http://www.thesaurus.com)) *metaphor* is nothing else but:

a figure of speech in which an expression is used to refer to something that it does not literally denote in order to suggest a similarity ([www.thesaurus.com](http://www.thesaurus.com))

In the Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms, *metaphor* is:

the application of a name or descriptive term or phrase to an object or action to which it is imaginatively but not literally applicable (2008:308)

*Conceptual metaphor* refers to the understanding of one idea in terms of another. Conceptual metaphors are met in the everyday speech and they are often

used to understand theories and models. Concrete concepts, coming from people's experiences are used to structure more abstract ones.

### 3. Conceptual Metaphor Theory

Due to their widely recognized importance in the study of *metaphor and conceptual metaphor*, I will briefly summarize two works by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Kovecses (2002) respectively.

*Conceptual Metaphor Theory*, sometimes called *Cognitive Metaphor Theory*, was developed by researchers within the field of cognitive linguistics. It became widely known with the publication of *Metaphors We Live By*, by Lakoff and Johnson, in 1980. *Metaphors we live by* (Lakoff and Johnson 1980) is the first work to give an account of the existence and functioning of *conceptual metaphors*. In their views, *metaphor* is not a matter of language or words but a matter of thought, and our conceptual system is metaphorical in nature. "The essence of *metaphor* is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 5)

In their opinion, *metaphors* are divided into:

- structural (based on structural systematic mapping)
- orientational (spatially related concepts)
- ontological (having objects, substances and containers as domains)

As Lakoff and Johnson state:

the metaphor is not just a matter of language, but of thought and reason. If metaphors were merely linguistic expressions, we would expect different linguistic expressions to be different metaphors. (1980: 5)

According to the same authors:

metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action and 'our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 4)

*Metaphors* are very powerful instruments in the eyes of Lakoff and Johnson. As Lakoff explains it:

metaphor is a neural mechanism that enables networks used in sensorimotor activity also to be used for abstract reasons. Conceptual metaphor is an entity pertaining to and emerging in the field of cognitive linguistics. (1999: 7)

*Conceptual metaphor theory* has since been developed and elaborated. Thus, *metaphor* operates at the level of thinking. Kovecses is of the opinion that "metaphor is defined as understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain" (Kovecses, 2002:4).

A conceptual *metaphor* consists of two conceptual domains, in which one domain is understood in terms of another: "A conceptual domain is any coherent

organization of experience” (Kovecses, 2002:4). There are two key words that need explaining when talking about conceptual *metaphors*, and those are the *source domain* and the *target domain*. *Metaphors* link these two conceptual domains.

Lan and MacGregor state: “The source domain, the domain we draw metaphorical expressions from, to understand another conceptual domain, consists of a set of literal entities, attributes, processes and relationships, linked semantically and apparently stored together in the mind. These are expressed in language through related words and expressions, which can be seen as organized in groups resembling those, sometimes described as *lexical sets* or *lexical fields* by linguists.” (2009: 16)

Similarly, they define: “the *target domain*, the conceptual domain understood this way, tends to be abstract, and takes its structure from the source domain, through the metaphorical link, or *conceptual metaphor*. Target domains are therefore believed to have relationships between entities, attributes and processes which mirror those found in the source domain. At the level of language, entities, attributes and processes in the target domain are lexicalized using words and expressions from the source domain.” (Lan, L. and MacGregor, L. 2009: 16)

Kövecses (2002:128-129) suggests that abstract complex systems are part of the Great Chain and that machines (as complex systems), buildings (as complex objects), plants and humans are also part of it. He considers that *abstract complex systems* should be integrated within the Extended Great Chain (Lakoff and Turner 1989) framework at the level above humans, which includes society as one of its categories (Kövecses 2002:128-129).

The cognitive view on what a *metaphor* is builds on considering it a way of qualifying and describing certain concepts by means of others, or, in Lakoff and Johnson’s words, “the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” (1980: 5), the former being less familiar to the language user than the latter. Besides shaping our understanding of reality, metaphors convey emotional connotations, evoke and carry feelings and attitudes against the thing, phenomenon or person metaphorically referred to: “Far from being merely a matter of words, metaphor is a matter of thought, all kinds of thought” (Lakoff and Turner 1980: 227).

If we refer to the legal *discourse*, examples of the categories presented above include those instances when we talk and think about law in terms of building, war, confrontation, etc.

The investigation of *metaphors* in legal texts is supposed to be useful in determining the role of *metaphors* as a language necessity and at the same time a cognitive tool. The *metaphors* I will focus on, could be said to be world-explaining or describing.

#### **4. Findings. Legal metaphors**

*Metaphor* is absolutely central to human understanding and communication. The *cognitive or conceptual metaphor theory* has had profound influence in many fields of human intellectual endeavor over the past twenty-five years or so, as we have seen so far.

A common technique in the analysis of conceptual metaphors is to identify the linguistic *metaphors* used to talk about a topic, and from these postulate underlying conceptual *metaphors* which are presumed to motivate them. The researcher can then consider which aspects of the target domain are highlighted and hidden by the *metaphor*. In many cases, linguistic *metaphors* represent subconscious choices on the part of the speaker or writer, whose choice of language is partly constrained by the conceptual structures shared by members of his or her community. *Metaphors* can also help people talk about difficult, emotionally intense or uncommon experiences, and thus, according to conceptual metaphor theory, to think about them.

*Cognitive metaphor theory* can – and does – have a profound impact on our conception of law and legal practice.

Legal professionals use *metaphors* applying to different sources, grammatical form or domains, so as to make their either discourse or speech even their writing more interesting, but using *metaphors* enables us to think more carefully about our subjects.

Legal discourse applies to *visuality*. There seems to be a tendency towards a visually oriented *legal language*.

The *visuality* of the legal discourse has much to do with our own preference towards everything that can be seen or visualized.

“Our *visuality* shapes our sense of social identity and difference. As a society puts more of its essential information in written form, its members become more focused on the visual sense which enables them to retrieve that information by reading”. ([http://faculty.law.pitt.edu/hibbitts/meta\\_p2.htm](http://faculty.law.pitt.edu/hibbitts/meta_p2.htm)).

Law does not have so much to do with speaking (except the court, and even there everything that happens is transcribed), but with seeing or looking, something to see and be seen. Thus, the law has become more recognizable and accessible. Law expressed in visual terms is more understandable, becomes more easily readable.

Visual *metaphors* occur more often than the aural or tactile ones. They are the most frequently used in legal discourse or its various genres like judgments, indictments or agreements, thus illustrating the importance of understanding and analyzing the text.

#### **4.1. Latin legal metaphors**

Among the various types of legal metaphors, I will stress the importance of the *Latin legal metaphors*. There is a number of legal terms that are either in their



Latin form, have a Latin root or have suffered certain modifications along the time; they may also be borrowed from other languages.

After a very detailed and close analysis of the corpus I have selected, I could find various legal metaphors having Latin as main source:

- ‘articles 7, 8, 38 and 41 of Council Regulation (EC) No 40/94 of 20 December 1993 on the Community trade mark (OJ 1994 L 11, p. 1), as amended, *provides...*’ (*provideo, -ere, -vidi, -visum – to foresee, to take measures*)
- ‘registration was sought for goods and services in Classes 1 and 40 of the Nice Agreement concerning’ (*concerno, -ere – to distinguish, to see*)
- ‘*In support of*’ (*supporto, -are – to bring*)
- ‘which was *served*’ (*servo, -are, -vi, -tum – to watch*)
- ‘*dismiss the action*’ (*mitto, -ere – to send*)
- ‘Appeal did not *err*’ (*erro, -are – to be mistaken*)
- ‘The only evidence *adduced*’ (*duco, -ere – to bring, to take*)
- ‘the Opposition Division and may not therefore be *submitted*’ (*mitto, -ere – to send*)
- ‘it is *apparent*’ (*apparo, -are – to prepare*)
- ‘*the degree of similarity* between the marks in question *is not sufficiently* high for a finding that there is a likelihood of *confusion*’ (*similes, -e, -similar*)(*sufficio, -ere – to color, to offer*) (*confusion, -onis – mixture*)
- ‘that provision *confers* greater protection’ (*confero, ferre, tuli, latum – to bring, to gather*)
- ‘the word mark TUFFTRIDE has been *registered* as a national mark in several countries’ (*rego, -ere, rexi – to lead*)
- ‘*interim* financial statements’ (*meanwhile, sometimes*)
- ‘Any *pro forma* financial statements’
- ‘the principle of *pro rata temporis* shall apply’

## 4.2. Personifying metaphors

*Metaphors* used in reference to the body represent a collective human experience of the body, or better stated, body *metaphors* illustrate the body-mind connection. The metaphor of the human body has been broadly exploited in different types of discourse. The human body represents knowledge, plurality, is easy understandable at a first glance. Thus, legal discourse applies to the use of *body metaphors* so as to be more connected to reality, to be more *human*. The law itself, legal entities and legal documents are frequently portrayed as either possessing parts similar to those of the human body, its corresponding vital functions, or experiencing human feelings and having human attitudes:

### 4.2.1. Metaphors containing parts of the body

- ‘the crime may be laid at the *feet of the law*’
- ‘the petition was dismissed, the two parties being equal in the eyes of the law’
- ‘they shall receive the same treatment *at the hands of the law*’
- ‘this issue is *at the heart of the judgment* of the Court of Appeal’

#### 4.2.2. Metaphors containing bodily functions

- 'the accused must have felt *the breath of the law* on her neck'
- 'similar cases have been *digested by the law* and lawyers'
- 'his law *cries out for* reform'
- 'Article 7 *suffered two* amendments'

#### 4.2.3. Metaphors containing moral values

- 'the Penal Code *punishes* the violation of intimacy'
- 'the legality of the contested decision must be *appraised*'
- '*make access* to particular conditions of employment'

#### 4.2.4. Metaphors containing human actions

- 'The Board of Appeal was wrong *to dissect* them'
- 'It follows from the *wording* of Article 42(1)'
- 'regulation do *not fall to be examined* as part of the opposition procedure'
- 'the core element of a potential series of marks is sufficient *to give rise to a likelihood* of association'
- 'This conclusion *cannot be called*'
- 'That provision *confers greater protection*'
- 'The BORROWER *will allow the OWNER access* to the HORSE'
- '*enjoy* the Property during the term'
- 'The *transferred* capital at the date of the incorporation is of'
- 'to the full extent *permitted* by law'
- 'to *give his best efforts* and loyalty to the Club'
- '*engage* in activities related to football otherwise than for Club or *engage* in any activity other than football'
- 'The Company *will furnish*'
- 'have all corporate power and authority necessary *to own or hold* their respective properties and *to conduct* their respective businesses'
- 'The Company *has full legal right, power and authority to enter into* this Agreement and perform the *transactions contemplated* hereby'
- '*carrying out* such responsibilities as are normally related'

### 4.3. Reifying metaphors

Elements belonging to the legal system are sometimes metaphorically talked about as if they were objects. The two most frequently encountered such implied comparisons rely on the source domains *building* and *container*

#### 4.3.1. Metaphors referring to Building

- '*the foundation* of this provision is the concept of 'scienter''
- 'Law 248 of 2001 is *the foundation* on which *the defence* is built'

- 'while 20th Century Fox sued Rogers for breach of contract, *the accusation collapsed*'
- 'the jury *constructed* a verdict in favour of Rizzonelli but against the District'
- 'a carefully *constructed legal edifice* crumbled at the touch of the jury's common sense'
- 'It is, however, common *ground* that the applicant does not use'

#### 4.3.2. Metaphors referring to Container

- 'the allegations *contained in the first petition*'/'the absolute grounds for refusal *contained in* Article 7
- 'the mark registered *within the Nice Agreement*'
- '*the Penal Code* is *full* of vaguely worded provisions'
- '*the law* to which the judge refers *encapsulates* the theory'
- '-likelihood *constitutes* a specific case of the likelihood of confusion '
- 'the *grounds* on which an opposition'
- 'the 'Property' *includes* any part or parts of the Property'
- '*(inclusive)* (which relate to breach of any obligation by a Tenant) *contained in* the Housing Act 1988 Schedule 2 apply'

#### 4.4. Process metaphors

##### 4.4.1. The war / confrontation metaphor

It may be illustrated with the following examples from my corpus:

- 'Action *brought against* the decision of the First Board...'
- '-*This legal battle* has dragged on for several years'
- 'a point not really *contested* by the applicant in reply to a question from the Court at the hearing'
- 'the intervener has pursued a marketing *strategy* aimed at ...'
- 'Regulation No 40/94 is not a ground of *opposition* within the meaning of Article 42(1) of that regulation'
- 'It follows from all the foregoing that the action must be *dismissed* '
- 'It is, moreover, *undisputed* and was confirmed by the statements of the parties'
- 'The intervener *submits* that the goods designated by each of the two marks in question here are significantly different'
- 'it deliberately *misleads* the public as to the commercial origin of the goods and services in question'
- 'the applicant *submitted* to OHIM such observations'
- 'an action may be *brought before*'

#### 4.5. Sensory (modal) metaphors

##### 4.5.1. Visual Metaphors

*Metaphors* can reflect the circumstances and attitudes of the society that generates them. In light of this point, it seems reasonable to suggest that the traditional popularity of visual metaphors in English *legal* language has much to do with the bias towards visual expression and experience that has traditionally

characterized English culture and, inevitably, English law. People usually give aesthetic priority to visual effect. Our *visuality* shapes the sense of social identity and difference.

- 'he acted in good faith, with *a view* to the best interests of the corporation'/'in view of the subsequent reconciliation'
- 'OHIM takes *the view* that...'
- '... the court shall, unless it *sees* good reason to the contrary, strike out the cause'
- '*see* paragraph...; *see* Law...; *see* Seaboard Offshore vs. Secretary of State...; *see* clause...'
- 'in the *light* of police reports...'
- 'in the *light* of those considerations'
- 'OHIM *points out* that this finding would not be affected'
- '*It is in light* of the foregoing considerations'
- '*With regard to* the first respective elements of the trade marks in question'
- '*Regarding* the applicant's request...'
- '*as regards* the commercial links...'
- 'With regard to the first respective elements...'
- 'In the present case, it is *apparent* from the contested decision that...'
- 'The Court finds, as rightly *pointed out* by OHIM... that...'
- 'It should be recalled, as a preliminary *point*... that...'
- '... be aware of the cessation of those links, *a point* not really contested...'
- '-*as regards* the argument'
- 'could be *perceived* as being two marks'
- 'it is not *apparent* from the case'
- 'to enter and *view* the Property for any proper purpose'

#### 4.5.2 Aural metaphors

- 'the Board *shall call* an annual meeting ... and *may ... call* a special meeting of shareholders'
- 'this finding / this conclusion *cannot be called* in question'
- 'evidence *was called* before the jury / *was called* on behalf of the Crown'
- 'other questions have incidentally been raised ... which *call for* brief consideration'
- 'the petitioner should have appealed ... in *the first hearing*'/ 'at *the hearing* on 2 July 2002'/'
- 'the minutes of *the hearing*'
- 'second, when *aural* similarity is compared, the two elements in question are not phonetically similar either'
- 'in the hypothesis that the relevant public *pronounces* those two syllables'

#### 4.5.3 Tactile metaphors

- 'the jury left the difficulty *untouched*'
- 'the judge *touched* on the ruling / on erroneous findings of fact'
- 'the intervener maintains that this is *unsubstantiated*'

- 'the Tenant will keep the interior in a good, clean and *tenantable state* and condition and not *damage or injure* the Property'

#### 4.5.4 Orientational metaphors

- '... such *course* of conduct was in the best interest of the Joint Venture and such *course* of conduct did not constitute negligence'
- '... the proper *course* for the learned trial judge'
- '... intended *the course* of justice to be obstructed'
- '... perverting *the course* of justice'
- 'the proceedings took a different *course*'
- '... such a measure *must not go beyond* what is necessary'
- '... the parties had reconciled and *had gone back* to live together'
- '... to propel the law *in the direction* which Mr. Lewis seeks'
- 'any notice, cheque or other document *directed to* such persons'
- 'this contract *covers* one football season ... unless *extended*'
- 'goods and services *covered* by the trade marks'
- '*under* Article 7, a trademark is ineligible for registration...'

### 5. Conclusions

Browsing through a number of legal documents and examining both their legal context and linguistic features, I came to the conclusion that the role of metaphor is very important in understanding and making a legal text accessible to everyone.

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# THE ROLE OF CONTEXT IN POLYSEMY

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**Abstract:** Polysemy, the phenomenon whereby a linguistic unit exhibits multiple distinct yet related meanings, has always been a topic of great interest for both lexical semanticists and lexicographers. The primary aim of this paper is to investigate what role context plays in the interpretation of the different senses of polysemous lexical items.

**Keywords:** context, homonymy, lexical semantics, polysemy, vagueness

## 1. Introduction

Being a very common feature of any language and a central problem in the study and description in natural language, polysemy or “the multiplicity of meaning of words” poses special problems both for lexical semanticists and lexicographers. Nevertheless, except as a source of humour and puns, polysemy is rarely a problem for communication among people. In fact, language users select the appropriate senses of polysemous words effortlessly and unconsciously (Ravin and Leacock 2000:1).

One puzzling question that both lexicographers and lexical semanticists are faced with is how to distinguish polysemy from homonymy. As generally defined in semantics (Leech 1981:227-229, Lyons 1977:550-552, Lyons 1981:43-47, Lipka 1992:135-39, Lyons 1995:54-60, etc.), homonymy refers to etymologically unrelated words that happen to have the same pronunciation and/or spelling.

Consider the word *ear* with the meanings “organ of hearing” and “head of a corn”, which are distinguished as homonyms because they were formally distinct in Old English and thus have a different etymology: OE. *ēare* = organ of hearing; OE. *ēar* = spike of corn (Onions 1966:297). Consequently, they should be treated as two separate words in dictionaries, which is not always the case. It is clearly seen in its treatment by *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (2009:531), in which these two meanings are given under one headword:

- ear 1. PART OF YOUR BODY one of the organs on either side of your head that you hear with: *She tucked her hair behind her ears.*
- 2. GRAIN the top part of the plant such as wheat that produces grain: *an ear of corn*

In contrast to homonyms, polysemes are etymologically and therefore semantically related, and typically originate from metaphoric usage. Consider words like *body*, related to OE *bodig* (Onions 1966:104). Some of its meanings given in *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (2009:172-173) are as follows:

1. PEOPLE/ANIMALS the physical structure of a person or animal
2. DEAD PERSON the dead body of a person
3. GROUP a group of people who work together to do a particular job
4. MIDDLE PART the central part of a person or animal's body, not including the head, arms, legs, or wings
5. VEHICLE the main structure of a vehicle not including the engine, wheels, etc.
6. TASTE if food or an alcoholic drink has a body, it has a strong FLAVOUR

Although it has a range of distinct meanings, these are related both etymologically and semantically.

The distinction is, however, not always straightforward, especially since words that are etymologically related can, over time, drift so far apart that the original semantic relation is no longer recognizable (Leech 1981:227-229, Lyons 1981:43-47 and Lyons 1995:54-60, etc.). It can be illustrated by the verb "*pass*" with its two meanings: "go past" and "give", which are etymologically related to OF. *passare* (Onions 1966:655).

Furthermore, as noted by Lyons (1977:551-552, 1981:45), the borderline between polysemy and homonymy is sometimes fuzzy as even native speakers often hesitate or are in disagreement about it in certain situations. Some native speakers will claim to see a connection between the different senses of polysemous words, whereas other native speakers deny that any such connection exists. Relatedness of meaning appears to be a matter of degree. Thus the native speaker's intuitions of relatedness of meaning in deciding between polysemy and homonymy seem not to be reliable. Although etymology in general supports the native speaker's intuitions about particular lexemes, it is not uncommon for lexemes which the average speaker of the language thinks of as being semantically unrelated to have come from the same source. A much quoted example is the homonymous *sole*: sole 1 (bottom of the foot/she) and sole 2 (kind of fish). These two distinct meanings are related to F. *sole*, L. *solea* sandal, sill, formed on *solum* bottom, pavement, sole of the foot, with the fish being named so because of its shape (Onions 1966:844).

Homonymy and polysemy often give rise to ambiguity, and context is highly relevant to disambiguate the meaning of utterances. Consider the following example in which the two phenomena appear together (Lyons 1977:397): *They passed the port at midnight*. This utterance is lexically ambiguous. However, it would normally be clear in a given context which of the two homonyms, "port" ("harbour" related to OE. *port* - L. *portus*) or "port" ("a strong, sweet Portuguese wine", short for Oporto wine), is being used (Onions 1966:697-8) and also which sense of the polysemous verb "pass" ("go past" or "give") (*Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, 2009:1271) is intended.

In recognition of the crucial role that context can play in the interpretation of the multiple meaning of some words, linguists, such as Tuggy (1993), Geeraerts (1993), Ravin and Leacock (2000), Croft and Cruse (2004), Evans and Green (2006), etc. provide a cognitive perspective on the traditional problem of polysemy. They argue that besides homonymy vs. polysemy, a second important distinction

has to be made, i.e. between “polysemy” and “indeterminacy”, sometimes referred to as “vagueness”, which means that word meaning is the result of contextual specification. This distinction is at the core of semantic theory as it defines the relation between the semantics of linguistic expressions and the extralinguistic entities to which the expressions refer (Ravin and Leacock 2000:3).

The primary aim of this paper is to highlight the role of context in exploring the meaning of polysemous words and what types of contextual factors affect the nature of polysemy.

## 2. The Importance of Context for Polysemy

Although some traditional linguists, such as Lyons (1981:44, 1995:55), realized the context-dependence of homonymy and polysemy, context played a surprisingly small role in their lexical semantics. Nevertheless, context can alter the meanings of the words found in it. In other words, word meanings are subject to extralinguistic factors. The fact that context affects the nature of polysemy in several ways is clearly shown by the highly polysemous lexical item *thing*. It has 38 meanings given in the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (2009:1832-33), some of which are as follows:

That’s a terrible <i>thing</i> to say.	(idea)
What’s that red <i>thing</i> ?	(object)
Jim began to unpack his <i>things</i> .	(clothes)
He kept his gardening <i>things</i> in the shed.	(equipment)
<i>Things</i> could be worse.	(situation)
The baby is a nice little <i>thing</i> .	(person)

Even these few examples show that the expression *thing* could be used to refer to almost any entity (an object, an idea, a situation and a person, etc.), yet it seems unlikely that semantic memory links this expression to all the possible entities that it could refer to. Instead, the meaning of this expression is fully specified by context.

As mentioned above, in more recent approaches, such a phenomenon is called “vagueness” or “indeterminacy” (Tuggy 1993, Ravin and Leacock 2000, Croft and Cruse 2004, Evans and Green 2006). Thus these mainly cognitive lexical semanticists distinguish between polysemy (distinct senses stored in semantic memory) and vagueness (meaning “filled in” by context) (Evans and Green 2006:341).

Croft and Cruse (2004:116-138) and Evans and Green (2006:352-355) refer to a number of ways in which context affects the nature of polysemy, such as usage context, sentential context and knowledge context.



## 2.1 Usage Context

In some cases the usage context influences the meaning of a lexical item. Coft and Cruse (2004:126) and Evans and Green (2006:353) refer to it as a sub-sense or microsense of a lexical item. A subsense is “a distinct word meaning that appears to be motivated by usage context: the specific situational context in which the word occurs” (Evans and Green 2006:53).

Consider how the lexical item *knife* is understood in the following contexts (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 2009:921):

- (1) John called the waiter over to his table and complained that he had not been given a knife and fork. (cutlery knife)
- (2) The attacker threatened the couple with a *knife*. (flick knife)
- (3) He used a sharp *knife* to cut the meat into thin slices. (carving knife)
- (4) The boy had a *knife* with multiple blades and additional tools. (penknife)
- (5) Kelly was about to go under the *knife* when the surgeon stopped everything. (surgeon's knife= scalpel)
- (6) You don't have to mix the paint on your palette: putting different shades on the *knife* gives a more interesting effect. (palette knife)
- (7) He used a *knife* to open his envelopes. (paper knife)
- (8) He went to a craft shop to buy some replacement blades for his *knife*. (craft knife)
- (9) He put his *knife* back into its sheath. (sheath knife)

The following situation also illustrates a context-specific sub-sense of the lexical item *knife* (Croft and Cruse 2004:128, Evans and Green 2006:353):

- (10) Mother: Haven't you got a knife, Billy?  
Billy (at table, fingering his meat: has penknife in his pocket, but no knife of the appropriate type) No.

Although Billy does have a knife (a penknife), the context (sitting at the table) stipulates that it is not a knife of the appropriate kind, that is, not a cutlery knife.

However, in certain situations the distinct subsenses CUTLERY KNIFE and PENKNIFE disappear:

- (11) The drawer was filled with *knives* of various sorts.

This sentence could appropriately be used to describe a drawer that contained a cutlery knife, a penknife, a surgeon's knife, a flick knife, a paper knife, a craft knife, a sheath knife, and so on. In other words, the example in (11) appeals to a unified meaning of knife in which the contextually induced subsenses disappear. This demonstrates that subsenses do not qualify as fully distinct senses because they require specific kinds of context in order to induce them. Hence, the

polysemy associated with the lexical item appears to be heavily dependent upon usage context.

Another polysemous lexical item that justifies the role of usage context usage in identifying its specific subsense is *card*. Consider its following subsenses as they are used in different situations (*Longman Dictionary of contemporary English* 2009:240-241):

- (12) Employees must show their *card* at the gate. (information)
- (13) Lost and stolen *cards* must be reported immediately at the bank. (money)
- (14) I sent her a *card* to her birthday. (greetings)
- (15) I sent you a *card* from Madrid where I was on holiday. (holiday)
- (16) Let's play cards. There are fifty two *cards* in a set. (game)
- (17) My name's Adam Carver. Here's my *card*. (business)

These can be contrasted with the reading of *card* that appears in (18), which is a hyperonymic reading of (12)-(17), in which the context-dependent subsenses of *card* above disappear:

- (18) The box was full of *cards* of various sorts.

## 2.2 Sentential Context

In other cases a particular sense of a lexical item, which is called a “facet” (Croft and Cruse 2004:116, Evans and Green 2006:354), is due to the part-whole structure of an entity selected by a specific sentential context. Coined by Croft and Cruse (2004:116), facets are distinguishable components of a global whole, but they are not capable of being subsumed under a hypernym.

As pointed out by Evans and Green (2006:354), similarly to subsenses, facets are also context dependent because the distinctions between them only arise in certain sentential contexts. For example, consider the lexical item *book*. By virtue of its structure, the concept BOOK consists of both TEXT (the informational content of a book) and TOME (the physical entity consisting of pages and binding). These two meanings are facets rather than subsenses because they relate to the intrinsic structure and organisation of books in general rather than relating to contexts of use. However, these facets only become apparent in certain sentential contexts. Consider the following examples in (19):

- (19) a. That book is really thick.
- b. That book is really interesting.

The example in (19a) refers to the TOME facet of book while (19b) refers to the TEXT facet. In Evans and Green's view (2006:354), it is sentential context (the presence of the expressions *thick* and *interesting*) rather than the context of use that induces a particular facet. However, just with subsenses, the distinction between facets can disappear in certain contexts:

(20) Although it's an expensive book, it's well worth reading.

In this example, while price (it's an expensive book) relates to the TOME facet, the fact that the book is interesting (it's well worth reading) relates to the TEXT facet. The fact that the example in (20) coordinates these two facets without the difference in meaning being marked in any way suggests that the distinction between the facets disappears in this context. In this example, the facets combine to form a unified meaning of *book* that includes both TEXT and TOME.

One might be tempted to say that the facets of book are separate senses, related to separate concepts. However, as illustrated by (20) there exists a global sense "book", corresponding to the global concept (BOOK, which represents the unification of the two facets), and it justifies the claim that the facets do not have the full status of lexical senses. This must be the reason why dictionaries don't usually give two separate entries for the facets of *book*:

book 1 - a set of printed pages that are held together in a cover so that you can read them. *I've just started reading a book by Graham Greene.* (*Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* 2009:177)

book 1- a number of pieces of paper, usually with words printed on them, which are fastened together and fixed inside a cover of stronger paper or cardboard. Books contain information, stories, or poetry. *His eighth book came out earlier this year and was an instant best seller.* (*Collins Cobuild English Dictionary* 1995:179)

Another example of word with facets is *bank* (in the "financial" sense), which gives the following readings (Croft and Cruse 2004:116):

- |                                  |               |
|----------------------------------|---------------|
| (21) a. The bank was blown up.   | (PREMISES)    |
| b. It's a friendly bank.         | (PERSONNEL)   |
| c. The bank was founded in 1597. | (INSTITUTION) |

On the basis of the above sentences we might say that the word *bank* has three facets. As noted by Croft and Cruse, facets are not generally considered to represent polysemy in the traditional sense; for instance, they are rarely given separate definitions in dictionaries. The *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (2009:116) makes a distinction between the following two meanings *bank* under the same entry:

bank 1 PLACE FOR MONEY. a) a business that keeps and lends money and provides other financial services: *We have very little money in the bank.* b) a local office of a bank: *I have to go to the bank at lunch time.*

The *Collins Cobuild English Dictionary* (1995:117) also distinguishes between the same meanings of *bank*:

bank 1 an institution where people or businesses can keep their money (INSTITUTION)

bank 2 a building where a bank offers its services. (BUILDING)

As is evident from the above definitions, the PERSONNEL facet of *bank* is missing from both dictionaries, which justifies the fact that this meaning is induced by the adjective *friendly* in the sentence.

The items in (22) illustrate cases of words possessing facets analogous to those of *book* or *bank* (Croft and Cruse 2004: 116-117):

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| (22) a. letter: | a crumpled letter<br>a moving letter   |
| b. film         | a 16mm film<br>a sad film              |
| c. CD           | an indestructible CD<br>a beautiful CD |

## 2.3 Knowledge Context

The third kind of context is knowledge context, which relates to “encyclopaedic knowledge” rather than context of use or sentential context. The fact that each individual has different experiences entails that each individual also has different mental representations relating to their experience of particular entities. This creates an encyclopaedic knowledge context that can influence how words are interpreted (Evans and Green 2006:355). Croft and Cruse (2004:137) call this phenomenon “ways of seeing”, which mean different ways of looking at the same thing. The authors propose the following ways of seeing (WOS):

- the part-whole WOS: views an entity as a whole with parts (e.g. a horse, as viewed by a vet)
- the kind WOS: views an entity as a kind among other kinds (e.g. a horse as viewed by a zoologist)
- the functional WOS: views an entity in terms of interactions with other entities (e.g. a horse viewed by a jockey)
- the life-history WOS: views an entity in terms of its life-history, especially its coming into being (e.g. a book as viewed by an author or publisher)

To justify this, Croft and Cruse (2004:138) show that the expression *an expensive hotel* can be interpreted in three different ways depending upon different “ways of seeing”:

- (23) *an expensive hotel*
- “kind” way of seeing: “a hotel that is/was expensive to buy”

- “functional” way of seeing: “a hotel that is expensive to stay at”
- “life-history” way of seeing: “a hotel that is/was expensive to build”

Consider some other examples:

(24) *an old friend*

- “kind” way of seeing: “a friend who is not young”
- “life-history” way of seeing: “a friend who someone has known for a very long time”

(25) *a delightful house*

- “part-whole” way of seeing: “a house that is delightful to look at (due to the harmonious distribution of its parts)”
- “functional” way of seeing: “a house that is delightful to live in”

As we have seen above, context can affect our interpretation of a lexical item in different ways.

### 3. Conclusions

As is demonstrated by the foregoing discussion, polysemy has always been a topic of great interest for both semanticists and lexicographers. In traditional approaches (Leech 1981, Lipka 1992 and Lyons 1977, 1981, 1995, etc.), polysemy is often discussed with homonymy. If two words have either etymologically different meanings or semantically unrelated meanings, they are regarded as homonyms. In contrast, if the meanings concerned are related in some way, generally by metaphorical extension, they are considered to be polysemous, i.e. one single word having distinct senses. However, while some of the senses count as distinct, established senses which are retrieved from the mental lexicon, others are construed at the moment of use. Although traditional lexical semanticists also refer to the importance of context in the interpretation of the meaning of polysemous words, context has not been given much attention in those studies.

The more recent approach to polysemy represented by mainly cognitive lexical semanticists, such as Tuggy (1993), Geeraerts (1993), Ravin and Leacock (2000), Croft and Cruse (2004) and Evans and Green (2006), etc. emphasises the fact that word meanings are subject to context. Thus besides the distinction of homonymy and polysemy, they argue that a second distinction has to be made, i.e. between polysemy and vagueness. In their view, some senses of polysemous words are stored in semantic memory while others are said to be vague, i.e. their meanings are inferred on-line as a result of contextual information. As is discussed above, the contextual factors that play a role in determining word meaning include the situation in which an expression is used, the sentence in which an expression occurs and/or the experience of particular entities each individual has.

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# PROSODIC AND SEMANTIC PROPERTIES OF INTONATIONAL PHRASES

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**Abstract:** *The aim of this paper is to investigate the relation between prosodic and semantic properties of Intonational Phrases, based on the facts from Serbian. The production tests and elicited judgements show that the prosodic integration of the embedded IPs (appositives, parentheticals, and the left-peripheral adverbs) has a distinct semantic effect, or is accompanied by the narrow focus interpretation within the proposition modified.*

**Keywords:** *conventional implicature, focus, intonational phrase, prosodic integration*

## 1. Introduction

In discussing prosodic properties of Intonational Phrases (IPs), we follow the theory of Prosodic Phonology (Nespor and Vogel 1986, Selkirk 1984, 1986). Specifically, we assume that phonological representations are organized into prosodic structures, which are based on but not isomorphic to syntactic structures. We adopt the view that IPs typically correspond to the root clause in the syntactic representation (Emonds 1970), but also to parentheticals, appositives, appositive relative clauses, heavy constituents, tag questions, and certain preposed elements, which can also form a separate IP (cf. Nespor and Vogel 1986, Selkirk 1984, 1986, among others).

We will assume that the prosodic and meaning difference indeed stem from different syntactic information, whether stated in structural terms or in “featural information”, which serve as instructions to the interfaces (e.g. comma-feature for semantics, focus feature for both semantics and phonology/prosody).

As far as the prosodic properties of IPs are concerned, we will assume that these prosodic constituents are characterized by comma intonation.

Regarding their semantic nature, we follow the proposal by Potts (2003), later adopted and built upon by Selkirk (2005), that comma intonation is the phonological realization of the syntactic [+Comma] feature, and its semantic reflex is the so-called “conventional implicature” (CI) interpretation.

In the current work, we focus on the data from Serbian, which has an excellent diagnostic tool for identifying IPs – clitic placement. Serbian clitics are sensitive to I-boundaries, and can’t appear in their regular second-position if the first constituent in the clause projects its own prosodic domain, namely IP. This PF filter forces the clitic to appear in a lower (clitic-third) position:

(1) \*[XP]<sub>IP</sub>clitic

Occasionally, however, these elements do allow clitics to attach to them, which predicts that in those cases the I-boundary is eliminated. In the following sections, we discuss the possibility of prosodic integration of these syntactic elements. Specifically, we address the issue of how the change of the prosodic properties of syntactic constituents affects their semantic properties.

## 2. Semantic Effects of Prosodic Integration

### 2.1 Appositives

In discussing some apparent violations of the generalization regarding the clitic-second effect, specifically, the cases where clitics are found immediately after appositives, Marković and Milićev (to appear) show that the possibility of clitic attachment to some appositives brings about both a change in the set of boundary features and a change of meaning.

In terms of meaning, prosodically integrated appositives are no longer interpreted as “supplemental” but rather as “restrictive” or semantically “integrated”:

- (2) a. Majinetetke, profesorice latinskog **su mi** objasnile ablativ.  
 Maja's aunts professors of-Latin AUX me explained ablative  
 “Maja's aunts, professors of Latin explained ablative to me”
- b. Majinetetke, profesorice latinskog objasnile **su mi** ablativ.  
 Maja's aunts professors of-Latin explained AUX me ablative  
 “Maja's aunts, professors of Latin, explained ablative to me”

In (2a), the integrated appositive restricts the meaning of the antecedent, while the appositive in (2b) specifies the meaning of the antecedent. In other words, the sentence (2a) implies that *Maja* could have more aunts, whereas this implication is absent in (2b).

### 2.2 Parentheticals

In the production study by Marković and Milićev, parentheticals have been shown not to be as flexible as appositives. At least in the cases investigated, they quite regularly disallowed cliticization: the I-boundary features were almost always all present, and the speakers regularly judged the sentences as highly infelicitous. This strongly suggests that parentheticals cannot be integrated. But this prediction is, in fact, wrong.

Ever since Nespor and Vogel (1986), parentheticals (comment clauses, as-parentheticals, interjections, etc.) have commonly been assumed to project their own intonational domain. More recent studies, however, have shown that the



generalization is too strong, since some parentheticals can be integrated into the intonational domain of the main clause (cf. Dehé and Wichmann 2010).

According to these authors, parentheticals can have (a) *propositional contribution* – i.e. they can contribute to the truth-value of the proposition, or (b) *discoursal/interactional/interpersonal function*. In the latter case, parentheticals can be used to indicate information-structural organization of the sentence (for instance, they can be used to set off a marked theme). Their pragmatic function is to attach an illocutionary commitment to the host utterance. According to Dehé and Wichmann, parentheticals which are reduced to a discourse function will behave as integrated, i.e. will be phrased below IP.

The production study of parentheticals in Serbian has shown that they almost always come with an I-boundary, and thus block cliticization. We hypothesize that the reason why the option of alternative phrasing was not more clearly reflected in the study is due to the restricted range of parenthetical expression investigated, as well as the research methodology applied. We believe that much more conclusive results can be obtained if the data were drawn from a spoken corpus of Serbian, rather than by elicited production.

### 2.3 Left-Peripheral Adverbials

It is a well-known fact that some left-peripheral adverbials are typically associated with an I-boundary. According to Potts, these adverbs are marked by Comma feature. Consequently, phonology assigns them comma intonation, and in the semantics, they are interpreted as conventional implicatures (CIs). Based on the data from English, Potts states that the +Comma adverbs include subject-oriented, speaker-oriented, speech-act adverbs, and discourse adverbs. All CI items can be then understood as comments upon an asserted core, “providing a means for a bit of editorializing on the part of speakers” (Potts 2003:206)

In Serbian, however, some of these adverbs either do not project an IP, or can, alternatively, come without an I-boundary, thus permitting cliticization:

- (3) [adverb]<sub>IP</sub> [XP clitic... ]<sub>IP</sub>  
       [adverbclitic ... ]<sub>IP</sub>

#### 2.3.1 Subject-Oriented Adverbs

The sharpest contrast with English, at least, concerns subject-oriented adverbs. They do not trigger any clitic delay (4a), which strongly indicates that they do not come with comma intonation:

- (4) a. [Pametno **ga** **je** poneo sa sobom]<sub>IP</sub>  
 Wisely him AUX taken with self  
 “It was wise of him to have taken it with him.”
- b. # [Pametno]<sub>IP</sub>[poneo **ga** **je** sa sobom]<sub>IP</sub>  
 wisely taken him.ACC.CL AUX.C with self  
 “It was wise of him to have taken it with him.”

Subject-oriented adverbs can also have a manner interpretation. Since manner adverbs in Serbian can occupy sentence initial positions (usually when they bear narrow or contrastive focus), a sentence like (4a) is always ambiguous between a subject-oriented and a manner reading of the sentence-initial adverb.

### 2.3.2 Speaker-Oriented Adverbs

In the proceeding discussion we will adopt the following classification of the speaker-oriented adverbs (cf. Ernst 2002 and the references there): a) epistemic, which are further divided into (i) modal and (ii) evidential; b) evaluative, and c) speech-act.

*Modal adverbs*, according to Ernst (2002:73), are a speaker’s assertions about the degree of certitude of the truth-value, expressed in terms of possibility or necessity. They take as their objects propositions whose truth-value is unspecified (i.e. unknown by the speaker). Unlike other “clausal” or “sentential” adverbs, modal epistemic can only operate on propositions and cannot have event-modifying function (e.g. manner reading).

In Serbian, most modal epistemic adverbs prefer to be integrated, as illustrated with a modal epistemic in (5), which is not predicted by Pott’s analysis:

- (5) a. **Možda** će mu saopštiti novost.  
 maybe will.CL him.DAT.CL tell news  
 “Maybe, they will tell him the news.”

*Evidential adverbs* describe the manner (specifically, the ease or clarity) of perceiving the truth of their object proposition, which must be true and thus a fact. That evidentials can also have manner reading, Ernst, for instance, explains in the following way: evidential epistemics are predicates of the perception of something, and many other things besides truth may be perceived. – they can select either for propositions or for events, i.e. allow the manner reading as well.

In Serbian, evidentials, as opposed to modals, allow dual prosodic phrasing, as evidenced from the possibility of having both clitic-second and clitic-third orders, illustrated in (6a) and (6b), respectively:

- (6) a. **Očigledno** sam preporučila Mariju klijentima.  
 obviously AUX.CL recommend Mary to-clients  
 “I recommend Mary to the clients obviously (in an obvious way).”  
 b. **Očigledno**, preporučila sam Mariju klijentima.  
 “Obviously, I recommended Mary to the clients.”

The difference in prosodic phrasing usually corresponds to the difference in interpretation (integrated match the manner reading, whereas non-integrated are interpreted as evidential). However, an adverb can be integrated and still have a speaker-oriented reading. This means that (6a) for instance, can, alternatively, have the same interpretation as (6b).

*Evaluatives* represent the speaker’s evaluation of some state of affairs, and they can be pure or dual evaluatives, depending on whether the adverb also allows a manner reading. Again, it seems that dual prosodic phrasing serves to distinguish them:

- (7) a. **Srećom**, dobro ga poznajem.  
 by-luck well him<sub>ACC.CL</sub> I-know  
 “Luckily, I know him well.”  
 b. **Srećom**ga dobro poznajem.  
 by-luck him<sub>ACC.CL</sub> well I-know  
 “It is by luck that I know him well.”

However, as shown in (8), the adverb immediately followed by a clitic does not have a manner interpretation:

- (8) a. **Začudo** ga ne poznajem.  
 oddly him<sub>ACC.CL</sub> not I-know  
 “Oddly, I don’t him.”

If the change in prosodic phrasing does not bring about a change in meaning, this represents a serious problem for Pott’s analysis. It looks like the Comma feature is ignored by phonology. Upon a closer look, however, some

differences between clitic-second and clitic-third orders with these adverbs can be noticed:

- (9) Normalno ga pijem dvaput dnevno.  
 normally it.ACC.CL drink twice a-day  
 “Normally, I drink it twice a day”

It expresses that the normal state of affairs is for me is to drink it twice a day, but in addition, the sentence triggers alternatives, and a continuation is expected, where this normal state of affairs is contrasted with some other (i.e. exceptional) state of affairs (e.g. but today I will drink it only once). The adverb itself looks like a topic, or is included in the background (of the focus):

- (10) a. Koliko često ga normalno piješ?  
 “How often do you normally drink it?”  
 b. [Normalno ga pijem]<sub>background</sub> [dvaput dnevno]<sub>focus</sub>

Interestingly, the focus interpretation becomes even more evident when the proposition, or main assertion does not involve the speaker:

- (11) **Prirodno/Nadžalost** je Petar odustao od takmičenja.  
 naturally/unfortunately AUX<sub>CL</sub> Peter given up from competition  
 “Naturally/Unfortunately/Oddly, Peter gave up the competition.”

The examples in (11) clearly show that the sentence initial adverb can only be integrated if there is an element with narrow focus in the main proposition, or the adverb itself has narrow focus.

*Speech-act adverbials* are generally assumed to always have a manner reading as well. The I-boundary distinguishing the speaker-oriented from the manner reading is illustrated in (12):

- (12) a. **Iskreno**, to mu zameram.  
 honestly that him hold-against  
 “Honestly/Frankly, I hold it against him.”
- b. **Iskreno** mu to zameram.  
 Honestly him that hold-against  
 “It is in an honest way that I hold it against him.”

(12b), though, is not impossible under the speaker-oriented interpretation, and, focus, again, plays a significant role in the clitic-second orders (e.g. in this case, a narrow focus on the verb).

### 3. Conclusions

In this paper we have shown that Serbian offers plenty of evidence for the strong correlation between intonational phrasing and meaning. In our discussion of left-peripheral adverbials, we have shown that their analysis as supplements is not as straightforward as proposed by Potts. First of all, the obligatory integration of modal adverbials into the “at-issue” content, suggests that their relation to the proposition they “modify” includes more than merely providing a speaker’s perspective on the proposition. We have also shown that most other speaker-oriented adverbs allow dual prosodic phrasing, and that this is largely due to the influence of focus.

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# IN-BETWEEN DISCOURSE AND GENRE: DOCTOR-PATIENT INTERACTION IN ONLINE COMMUNICATION. FORMAL AND INFORMAL FEATURES IN CMC

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***Abstract:** This paper presents the results of a corpus-based study which investigates the genre of medical e-exchanges between doctors and medical website users. Three conversational routines (greetings, politeness, formal and informal linguistic features) are analyzed. The framework of the study is what some researchers refer to as net linguistics (Posteguillo 2003), consisting of the linguistic study of Computer Mediated Communication (CMC). The findings indicate that health posts are a relatively informal type of d/p interaction which is largely influenced by e-mails and chat conventions.*

***Keywords:** CMC, genre, medical discourse, written speech*

## 1. Introduction

A new way to talk about medical and health issues is represented by online services sites run by institutions (health organizations, hospitals etc.) or by health professional insiders who run simple blogs or collaborate with other specialists in order to offer online medical help. These sites basically give information on medical topics, news and statistical data, and very often have a “doctor-answers” section in which users can ask directly for details concerning personal issues, second opinions on treatments and diagnosis or even actual treatments. This new mode of communication arouses linguistic curiosity as it posits itself alongside written communication on health issues and oral doctor/patient interaction.

### 1.1. Computer Mediated Medical Communication

Interactive written language represents a (new) variety of genre and language with features drawn from written and spoken discourses.

Popular claims which held that CMC is anonymous, impersonal, egalitarian, fragmented and spoken-like are debated and contrasted by scholars. In particular, one of the most prominent contributions to the study of net communication is Herring's studies on CMC (2004, 2001) in which she defines Computer Mediated Discourse (CMD) as an umbrella term for a plurality of genres in which technology, social and cultural factors contribute to this differentiation. She underlines that most errors (i.e.: “yr” instead of year, “mo” instead of month) are deliberate choices made to economize typing space and effort or to mimic spoken language (Herring 2001).

Stein (2006, online) views the new language and style characterized by the internet as an “evolutionary stage of the evolution towards a medially appropriate style”. The internet has undoubtedly created a new genre, or has at least transformed traditional genres. Studies on websites have traditionally been based on language issues from the point of view of the linguistic quality of websites and language use in various domains. However, the dynamic dimension of the web also involves new genre issues.

Health medical service sites are the answer to a relatively new practice that seems to be emerging. One of the main reasons for their success is related to their expediency. Users may be more informal, more direct and may access information more readily. Doctor/patient interaction evokes the spoken word, a face-to-face interaction. However, as suggested by Herring (1999) for other contexts, CMC feels like a spoken conversation despite being produced by written means. Asynchronous CMC is usually closer to the written end of the written-spoken continuum as it potentially requires more time to edit messages. Most of the researchers working with asynchronous CMC modes conclude that their data are substantially conversation-like in discourse strategies, management of interactions and dynamics. However, a problem arises with some features as “turn-taking [that] is a point of difference as CMC produces disrupted turn adjacency and overlapping exchanges” (Herring 1999). In asynchronous electronic communication Radić-Bojanić (2006) focuses on two opposite characteristics attributed to written and oral languages: detachment versus involvement and integration versus fragmentation. Most entries are characterized by fragmentation, which is considered one of the main features in chat room discourse. Baron (1998) concluded that CMC was essentially a mixed form between face-to-face speech and paradigmatic written language, therefore one expects medical online exchanges to fall within these parameters.

Traditional doctor/patient interactions are basically orally mediated; however, they always retain some kind of conventional separation of roles and power attributions (Cordella 2004), even when they sound very informal. Communication is affected by the social constructions of roles but displays closeness (from the doctor’s side) in order to acquire information and show sensibility. The doctor is in fact the “silent listener” (Ribeiro 2002) and the expert translator of personal emotions and subjective realities (Guido 2006). In doctor/patient interactions the speakers know one other and discourse analysts are able to study both the contexts and the speakers themselves. The first potential issue when analyzing online communication is that speakers’ data are not available or, worse, speakers are treated as a collective community (and sometimes they are not).

## **1.2. The Community**

Analyzing media communication does not mean analyzing a virtual community’s language. The real meaning of virtual community has in fact been abused in media studies, diverging from the original definition of an online group



brought together and centred around a shared professional focus (community of practice; Bergs 2006; Wenger 1998). Health service site users are not a virtual community as they are not regular participants; values are not necessarily shared and they certainly don't have a self-awareness of their group as an entity distinct from other groups (see the six criteria identified from literature on virtual community; Herring 2004). Not being a community in strict terms, there is not a common style of written form but a composition of different styles according to the author or the site. Users are interested in satisfying their own need (of knowledge, of sharing or of treatment prescription) and only in forums do forms of participation and exchange occur. Leimeister and Krcmar (2005) describe an evaluation of the design elements of a virtual community for German cancer patients. They examine design features that support trust development among participants and that determine the success of that site. However, forums and service sites are quite different as participants and goals are not the same as in the forums. Exchanges occur between a health professional and a user-patient and often the online conversation is akin to doctor/patient interaction in examinations. The relationship model is help-seeker/help-giver. These two roles are not interchangeable and have different social positions.

### **1.3. Aim of the Study**

This paper attempts to understand what the nature of this dialogue is, whether it is a written speech or whether it displays the style of written forms.

In particular, the aim of the paper is an analysis of formal and informal features based on health related online exchanges. The study is based on a corpus formed by 805 comment entries dealing with health issues in which the following features (Perez-Sabater, Turney and Montero-Fleta 2008) were analyzed for each entry:

- greetings and farewells;
- politeness indicators;
- contractions and non-standard linguistic features.

The initial hypotheses were based on the assumption that CMC involves a low degree of formality and directness (Harvey 2008) whilst still taking into account the different roles among interlocutors. Accordingly, high levels of contractions and non-standard linguistic features were expected (emphasizing CMC features), a form similar to e-mail structure (implying a formality of greetings and farewells) and high levels of politeness markers. The study focuses on the formal and informal aspects of online health discourse.

## **2. Methodology**

The analysis is based on a corpus of 805 comment entries exchanged by net users seeking medical advice and counselling and doctors working on medical

service sites. The corpus is made up of 400 questions and 405 medical answers (124,807 total words, see Table 1).

TABLE 1. Dimension of the Corpus (see Annex 1), number of total words and comment entries for each site, mean word count for each comment entry

CORPUS	TYPE	N. WORDS (124.807 tot)	N. COMMENT ENTRIES (805 tot)	MEAN (IN WORDS) PER C.E.
DRJ	Question	27453	153	179,43
	Answer	34545	153	225,78
AMD	Question	5630	52	98,77
	Answer	7582	57	133,02
ADD	Question	11265	116	97,11
	Answer	17066	116	147,12
NETDOC	Question	5426	79	68,68
	Answer	15840	79	200,51

The service sites were all chosen according to the following criteria:

- availability without registration to the sites;
- the first to appear on the first page of a common search engine at the time of collection;
- service sites that were not linked to Institutional organizations.

When the users introduce themselves and their health issue, they produce messages containing between 68.68 and 225.77 words. The length of messages varies considerably according to the goal of the message: simple issue-related question or narration, or attention seeking message.

Data concerning age and gender were not always available for every comment entry, therefore results cannot be analyzed from this perspective. In the examples, names (real or fictional) of all the users and doctors involved were omitted because of ethical issues. Each post was first read, hand-tagged and analyzed following the parametres of formality and informality established by Perez-Sabater, Turney and Montero Fleta (2008). Greetings and farewells were examined taking into account assigned values according the criteria shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2. Assignment of formality degree

Formality of greetings and farewells	
Very formal	5
Formal	4

Informal	3
Very informal	2
No greetings or farewell	1

Moreover, the number of steps involved was analyzed assuming that the shorter the greeting/farewell, the more informal the move was. Contractions (“doesn’t” instead of “does not”, “pls” instead of “please”), misspelling (“therepy”), homophonic features (“nite” (night), “isent” (isn’t), “its” (it’s/it is)) as well as politeness markers (please, appreciate, thank you etc.) and paralinguistic cues (emoticons) were counted per message.

This paper has one important limitation related to the size of the corpus, the representativeness of data samples and the kind and amount of contextual information that is necessary (age, sex etc., which are very difficult to investigate without concern regarding ethical issues such as privacy protection).

### 3. Findings and Discussion

#### 3.1. Greetings and Farewells

Far from being a mere formula, greetings and farewells have been defined as part of “epistolary conventions” (Herring 1996) and studied for their important role in setting the tone in email exchanges. More than lexical politeness markers such as “thank you” and “appreciate”, greetings and closings belong to structural politeness markers and increase the perception of politeness thus resulting of a more refined nature.

In this study, salutations and farewells were valued for formality along a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being the least formal value and 5 being the most formal value) and by examining the number of steps involved. This means that, for example, a pre-closing step was calculated as a two-step closing. The results for formality in the corpus are shown in Table 3; the number of steps involved in greetings and farewells is represented in Table 4.

TABLE 3. Structural politeness markers: Greeting and Farewells in the corpus

			QUESTION				ANSWER			
			DRJ	AMD	ADD	NET DOC	DRJ	AMD	ADD	NET DOC
Greetings	5	Dear Mr/ Dr+name	3,9%	-	0,9%	-	-	5,3%	-	-
	4	Dear doc/ Welcome	5,3%	-	-	-	-	8,7%	1,7%	-
	3	Hello+ name	2%	-	0,9%	-	0,7%	19,3%	3,4%	-
	2	Hi/hello	8,5%	7,7%	9,5%	-	12,4%	56,1%	91,5%	-

	1	No greetings	80,3%	92,3%	88,7%	100%	86,9%	10,6%	3,4%	100%
Farewell	5	Your sincerely	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100%
	4	Best wishes/ Regards	-	-	-	-	0,6%	40,3%	18,1%	-
	3	Best/bye	-	-	-	-	-	1,7%	18,1%	-
	2	Take care/thanks	13,7%	17,3%	21,6%	-	9,1%	38,6%	31,9%	-
	1	No farewell	86,3%	82,7%	78,4%	100%	90,3%	19,4%	31,9%	-

TABLE 4. Number of steps involved in greetings and farewells. Values are expressed by percentage.

	DRJ		AMD		ADD		NETDOC	
	Q	A	Q	A	Q	A	Q	A
Total n. Greetings	30/153 (19,6%)	20/153 (13,1%)	1/52 (1,9%)	51/57 (89,5%)	13/116 (11,2%)	112/116 (96,5%)	-	-
1 step	100%	95%	100%	86%	100%	98%	-	-
2 steps	-	5%	-	11,8%	-	2%	-	-
3 steps	-	-	-	2,2%	-	-	-	-
Total n. Farewell (percentage)	20/153 (13,1%)	15/153 (9,8%)	8/52 (15,4%)	46/57 (80,7%)	25/116 (21,5%)	79/116 (68,1%)	-	79/79 (100%)
1 step	100%	100%	100%	58,7%	100%	74,7%	-	100%
2 steps	-	-	-	23,9%	-	25,3%	-	-
3 steps	-	-	-	17,4%	-	-	-	-

The results largely appear as expected but they also offer interesting variations. It is evident that greetings and farewells are used according to the habit of any single site. As regards the Netdoc corpus, openings are very informal both in the patient's and doctor's posts (no salutation). Conversely, closing is very different in questions and answers: while the questions maintain an informal style, in answers doctors tend to close with what appears to be a formula "Yours sincerely + name". The AMD corpus shows results indicating that on this site doctors tend to be more formal for all categories, even when answering posts that contain no

greetings or farewells. This asymmetry may have a tentative explanation in the use and habits imposed by the site and the role expressed by doctors who use formality in order to keep social distance. Assuming that the most polite entry is also the most formal, results indicate that when differences between doctors' and users' styles arise, medical posts always tend to be more formal than those of the users, at least for the formulae of farewells. On the doctors' part, the need to keep back distinctions and roles is more evident when doctors answer to posts urging medical help and feedbacks. In general, Table 3 shows that the style used on medical sites is very informal with no greetings – or very informal ones – used both by doctors and users, a tendency that is similar for closings that can be very informal or highly formulaic (at least in the doctors' case). Opening and closing the post almost always involves one step (“hi!/ regards/ take care/ yours sincerely”). The differences between the openings and closings on the sites could be explained by a tendency of the newcomers to adapt their own style so that their posts conform to those used by other users on the site. Consequently, the exchange between users and doctors on medical sites results in a very direct question and a very direct answer, with no greetings and a formulaic package for the medical closing, as in Example 1.

#### Example 1. Q/A model for NETDOC

Q: Is there an alternative treatment for cluster headaches/migraines?

A: The most effective are – acupuncture and homeopathy, though cranial sacral therapy (which is a kind of osteopathy) can also help.

Problem comes in finding a reliable and good practitioner – ask around, ask your GP or your local pharmacist if they know any good acupuncturists or cranial sacral therapists.

If you want to try homeopathy ask for a referral to an NHS homeopathic doctor.

If there are none in your area have a look at [x] or a list of qualified doctors practising privately in your area.

Yours sincerely

[xxx]

### 3.2. Contractions

The contraction is a clear marker of informality. Results in Table 5 show very low values for contractions, which seems to indicate a stylistic concern. This seems to go against the findings for greetings and farewells, which marked a certain laziness, and to make the posts more similar to edited e-mails. The most used contractions are employed to express time (yr [year], mo [month], mnths [months], wks [weeks], hrs [hours]), where the spelling is similar to the

conventions of mobile text messages. Other forms involve pertinent words (dr or doc [doctor], op [operation], dx [diagnosed], neg [negative], meds [medicines], appt [appointment]), and, surprisingly, only rarely verbs (I've [I have], I'm [I am], don't [do not], doesn't [does not]). In the analysis it is important to note that contractions are less used in medical answers. Concerning contractions, both users and doctors tend to be more formal, a result that seems to be significant in terms of style. This finding seems to go against common electronic stylistic features, rendering contractions one of the most outstanding stylistic features of CMD. Perhaps users from each side have decided to avoid reductions in order to be as clear as possible and to give the impression of an attentive care in posting the question or the answer.

TABLE 5. Contractions: percentage of contracted forms and full forms for each corpus

Contractions %	DRJ		AMD		ADD		NETDOC	
	Q	A	Q	A	Q	A	Q	A
Contracted form	7,98	0	11,76	26,67	17,19	22	2	0
Full form	92,02	0	88,24	73,34	82,81	78	98	0

### 3.3. Politeness Indicators

One of the most prominent studies on virtual politeness is Bunz and Campbell's Accommodating Politeness Indicators in Personal Electronic Mail Messages (2002), where they studied politeness accommodation in e-mails. In particular they addressed the issue of the level of politeness expressed in written questions. Starting from Bunz and Campbell's analysis, some politeness markers (both verbal and non verbal) were established and measured for each post as expressions of true gratitude or as established formulae. Some modal verbs were included (could and would) because they were used as hedging devices for non-threatening acts (Kranich 2009). Results (see Table 6) show striking differences among the sites: some results indicate that messages containing politeness indicators elicited polite response (corpus DRJ, AMD and ADD), but on one site the number of politeness indicators used in questions is considerably superior to the number used in doctors' answers (Netdoc, Q: 8,96 vs Netdoc, A: 3,45). Differences are also noted among sites for number of politeness markers both for questions and answers but it seems that results for Q and A vary according to the site.

TABLE 6. Politeness Indicator per message per thousand words

Verbal	DRJ	AMD	ADD	NETDOC
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<b>Politeness Indicators</b>								
	Q	A	Q	A	Q	A	Q	A
Appreciate	0,22	-	0,05	-	0,26	0,05	0,07	-
Thank you	1,05	0,63	1,77	0,65	2,21	0,46	0,37	0,12
Please	1,09	0,98	1,06	2,37	0,88	1,64	1,51	-
Grateful	0,03	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kind	0,10	-	-	0,26	0,08	-	-	-
Could	1,09	1,56	2,66	0,79	0,97	0,64	3,22	1,13
Would	1,85	1,24	1,95	1,97	1,86	4,21	3,79	2,20
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5,43</b>	<b>4,41</b>	<b>7,49</b>	<b>6,04</b>	<b>6,26</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8,96</b>	<b>3,45</b>

Findings also indicate that generally doctors tend to use politeness indicator “would”, probably as a softening device in the expression of certainty in their utterances.

### 3.4. Non-standard Linguistic Features

The inclusion of non-standard linguistic features makes the text more informal and shows the ability of users to adapt the medium to their expressive needs (Herring 2006). Among the most common feature, emoticons, features on spelling (misspelling, homophonic spelling, false contractions), and punctuation have been analyzed for each post. Emoticons (':)', ':(' etc.) are used to fill some of the prosodic or kinetic functions of spoken exchanges (Baron 1998). Misspelled words can be seen as lexical deviations or neographic forms consisting in misspelled words based on homophony but not corresponding to other words or formed by truncations (“nite” [night], “thru” [through]) or technical mistakes due to quick typing (“nd” [and], “caus” [cause], “therepy” [therapy]). Homophone words are those with the same pronunciation but a different grammatical function and spelling (“its” [it’s], “high” [hi]). A false contraction is a word that has been contracted and taken as one word (“im” [I’m], “cant” [can’t], “doesnt” [doesn’t]). Table 6 shows results for each typology of non-standard linguistic feature that has been analyzed for each post, including omitted capital letters or occurrence of informal punctuation. Results indicate that the score for misspellings, homophonic and visual features, such as emoticons, is low. This result seems to go against the common habit that non-standard features are an important characteristic of CMC (Perez-Sabater, Turney and Montero-Fleta 2008). Some posts contained many orthographic deviations. The most frequent deviation is the omission of the capital letter – for the first singular person in particular (“i” [I]) – and it seems to be common on each site but one. The corpus named Netdoc in fact seems not to show any non-standard linguistic feature, which implies a higher tone of formality. This

result, however, is striking in that it goes against findings of formality for greetings and farewells for which this particular site turned out to be the most informal.

TABLE 7. Non-standard linguistic features: occurrences per thousand words

		Lousy Punctuation	Capital Letters omission	False contractions	Mispellings	Homophonic Spelling	Emoticons
DRJ	Q	1,20	4,22	0,55	0,55	0,07	0,07
	A	0,02	0	0	0	0	0
AMD	Q	4,08	8,52	2,13	0,53	0,71	0
	A	0,39	0	0	0	0	0
ADD	Q	4,79	4,97	0,97	0,79	0,62	0,08
	A	0,52	0	0	0,11	0	0
NETD OC	Q	0	0	0	0	0	0
	A	0	0	0	0	0	0

#### 4. Conclusions

In this paper patterns typical of oral and written discourse in electronic investigation were investigated on four medical service sites, by examining a range of linguistic and textual features that appeared in posts and that evoked oral and written discourse. Exchanges occurred between health professionals and user-patients often using online conversations that remind of doctor/patient interaction in examinations. The relationship model is help-seeker/help-giver. These two roles are not interchangeable and have different social positions (see the difference in style for greetings and farewells). The help-seeker asks for help and displays feelings of uncertainty/insecurity more in the virtual world than in the real one (“I don’t trust my doc, I need to know what you think, I need a second opinion”).

Doctor/patient interaction on service sites is characterized by colloquial personal styles, even potentially rude if occurring in real life (no greetings, no farewell etc), which increases confidence. However, doctor/patient online interactions differ from traditional ones in that the online exchange is written. Findings reveal typical written-style features, the first being the possibility to edit and re-shape the message before sending it. Visual representations such as smileys and emoticons are generally used to improve understanding in verbal sentences. They are used very rarely in the groups analyzed (appearing in fact only 4 times in three messages) and their use is supposed to depend on the age of the user (although this datum is not verifiable). Specifically, homophonic spelling, contractions, and orthographic faux pas (etc) reflected informality. Messages also evoked formal wording and structure closer to written formats. The informality of the word choice and syntax makes them seem closer to casual speech than to written genres. In some posts, the language and the style are affected by an amount



of chat shorthands. Baron (1998) suggests that virtual communication (e-mail in particular) looks like speech because of durability assumptions (senders seem to pay no attention to letters that will not last through time), fast response time, unspecified audience identity and the language style that is often more informal than face-to-face speech (avoidance of salutation, use of contractions, sometimes slang). More interestingly, one group does not display any form of politeness, which in a way supports informal exchanges but seems to go further than simple informality (it verges on rudeness). One of the possible reasons for such linguistic behaviour could be found in Stein's conclusions (2006) in which the problem of distance between written and spoken forms must take into account the opposition between paper texts (that are "read") and hypertexts (that are "scanned"). Hypertexts must be convenient in terms of proportions of text and space; markers must be more visible and the process of reading must be an easy task with sentences being simple and quick to see and understand. However, this does not explain the total lack of politeness in service posts that seems to display a deficit of social inhibition on the users' part. Politeness is largely known to be both a matter of personal taste and of cultural background. Regarding doctors, even the most bad-mannered posts prompted their understanding and support, which led to the conclusion that doctors tend to use politeness as a strategy to reaffirm their social roles or they are simply used to this online linguistic behaviour.

Electronic health exchanges seem to display characteristics of both written and oral discourse as well as features seemingly unique to electronic use. The analysis of the corpus seems to suggest different discourse styles occurring in these health encounters, within the same context of interaction. Consequently, while limited to a corpus of only 805 posts, these findings indicate that health posts are a relatively informal type of doctor/patient interaction, which is largely influenced by e-mails and chat conventions, and suggest a richness in electronic communication that needs to be further explored.

#### Annex 1: The Corpus

Subcorpus name as appearing in the article	Original subcorpus name	URL
DRJ	DrJoshua.com	<a href="http://www.drjoshua.com">www.drjoshua.com</a>
AMD	AskMedicalDoctor	<a href="http://www.askmedicaldoctor.com">www.askmedicaldoctor.com</a>
ADD	DoctorsLounge	<a href="http://www.doctorslounge.com">www.doctorslounge.com</a>
NETDOC	netdoctor	<a href="http://www.netdoctor.co.uk">www.netdoctor.co.uk</a>

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## **II**

### **ELT STUDIES**

# ON COMPETENCE-BASED APPROACHES TO TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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***Abstract:** The paper discusses some elementary concepts and issues in competence based education (CBE) in general and in a competence-based approach to teaching English as a foreign language in particular. It is shown how some basic assumptions and concepts apparently widely adopted in CBE and language pedagogy are confusing, misguided, and incoherent and how some of the incoherence and inconsistencies may be resolved.*

***Key words:** competence, skill, knowledge, communicative language teaching, competence-based education*

## **1. Introduction**

Competence-based education (CBE) has recently become the dominant international educational doctrine, which is sometimes imposed on state schools and teacher education institutions by governments in European countries, including Hungary, Britain, and Belgium, for example (cf. Lawes 2003 and Struyven and De Meyst 2010). As Struyven and De Meyst (2010) report, teacher education institutions in Belgium, for instance, are struggling to implement competence-based educational prescriptions – and they are finding it hard. One important result of the survey Struyven and De Meyst conducted shows that the majority of experienced teacher educators find that the teacher competencies prescribed in the decree issued by the Flanders Department of Education are not clear enough, therefore “insufficiently applicable” (2010:1495). This is a euphemistic way of saying that experienced instructors, curriculum designers, etc. do not understand what they are supposed to do in order to meet government prescriptions because the prescriptions are confusing. This is especially ironic in the context of CBE, as its purported goal is to enable participants to do things. If experienced teacher educators are increasingly confused about some of the key concepts of competence, as those are presented to them and prescribed for them in government decrees, then those decrees can hardly be said to be doing a great job of contributing to the competence of educators in their efforts to implement them.

More generally, and more importantly, educators’ frustration with the conceptual content of the decrees in question and their failure to

implement them in spite of the efforts they are making testify to an old simple truth, apparently overlooked by educational policy makers advocating CBE – you cannot expect anyone to act meaningfully and effectively unless they **understand** what they are supposed to do. The Flanders Department of Education decree, or any similar document issued by any other government, is just one example, and as such, an important symptom, of what happens, or fails to happen, when fundamental concepts that are a prerequisite for effective action remain unclear. The adopted notion of competence in CBE in general and in a competence-based approach to teaching English as a foreign language in particular, is a case in point. If CBE is based on a poor understanding of the notion of competence (and a range of related concepts including knowledge and learning), confusion is likely to occur and participants can hardly be expected to act effectively, as testified by the less than maximally successful efforts made by educators in Belgium and elsewhere and the problems they report they are having in their attempts to meet unclear prescriptions and expectations.

Competence-based education may be new to some people in teaching but certainly not for most foreign language teachers. Teaching a foreign language has always been guided, at least tacitly, by the desire to enable students to use a foreign language for an obvious function – to communicate with others in speech or in writing or both. The standard technical term that is almost universally used to denote those abilities in a student is *communicative competence*. It is hard to imagine that anything could go wrong either with this guiding principle or about its implementation in foreign language teaching. But education appears to be the one profession where almost anything that can be misunderstood will be misunderstood. This short essay is about how some central elements of CBE in general and competence-based English language teaching (CBELT) in particular, including the very notion of competence, have apparently been misunderstood and how some of these misunderstandings can be rectified.

## **2. Some foundational concepts in CBE**

In its struggle for independence, primarily from psychology, pedagogy is noted for its tendency to borrow concepts from other disciplines, such as psychology, for example, and attempt to reinterpret them in educational theoretic terms. A well-known example is the concept of learning, which pedagogical theory has borrowed from psychology and has, remarkably unsuccessfully, been trying to redefine in its own terms (cf. Nahalka 1997).

The concept of competence is another case in point. If indeed “competence is regarded as the possession and development of integrated skills, knowledge, appropriate attitudes and experience for the successful performance of one’s life roles” (Struyven and De Meyst 2010:1496), then it is a completely incoherent and useless notion in any theory of education which adopts it. Apparently, even some of the pedagogical movements or theories that adopt it use it inconsistently. In CBE, it is sometimes used in the broad, and useless, sense just quoted and sometimes in a much narrower sense, in which it is “considered synonymous with performance skills” (ibid.). Clearly, these two different notions of competence are mutually contradictory. If a person’s competence is their skill, then, quite obviously, it cannot include “skills, knowledge, appropriate attitudes and experience,” whatever is meant by these terms (Struyven and De Meyst 2010:149).

How can these inconsistencies be removed and the underlying conceptual problems clarified? Let us begin with the narrower notion of competence, the simpler case. In the narrow sense, cited above, a person’s competence is a skill they possess, which enables them to perform some activity, mental or physical, or a combination of the two. It is precisely in this sense that a person’s mental grammar of a language is otherwise conventionally called their competence in linguistic theory (cf., Chomsky 1965, for example). What a person’s linguistic competence enables them to do is to construct and understand an infinite number of different expressions in a language. If we take a person’s competence to be a skill, we might just as well regard a speaker’s mental grammar a special skill (cf. Ambrus and Németh 2008). Linguistic terminological tradition prefers to call a speaker’s internalized grammar their *competence* as a matter of convention, as is the case with any other technical term in any other theory.

A person’s linguistic competence is special on two counts. First, it is specifically designed for one function: to construct and interpret linguistic expressions (cf. Chomsky 1988, 2000, 2005 etc.). Second, no one is aware of their mental grammar. As nobody is aware of the rules and principles they otherwise employ in the construction and interpretation of linguistic expressions, such rules and principles, and whatever else a speaker’s mental grammar contains, as well as the operation of such mental subsystems, are termed *implicit*. Our mental grammars are not the only implicit subsystem that enables us to carry out specific actions. There are several other things we do only if we possess the specific prerequisite implicit skills that enable us to perform them, such as swim or ride a bicycle, for example. People do such things only when they know how to. But nobody is aware of their knowledge of how to swim or ride a bicycle, or speak a language. Therefore, no cyclist, swimmer or language speaker can report anything at all about the

fundamental elements of their knowledge of how to ride a bike, swim, or speak a language. These kinds of a person's procedural knowledge are implicit.

Notice how the foregoing offers a straightforward definition of a skill, a central but rarely clarified notion in pedagogical theory, notoriously used in confusing senses, sometimes incoherently, as in the broad and narrow definitions of competence cited above. The discussion above suggests that a person's skill, such as their ability to ride a bicycle or construct and understand sentences, for example, is a specific form of *implicit competence*, a variety of a person's *procedural knowledge*, designed directly to enable that person to perform specific activities. In fact, this is the standard interpretation of a skill in cognitive psychology (cf. Ambrus and Németh 2008, already cited). This predicts that a person's skills are each associated with specific functions, procedures or activities. A particular skill is a specific kind of a person's implicit procedural knowledge, in other words their competence, which enables that person to carry out a specific type of action, such as construct sentences or ride a bike, etc. Let us adopt this definition of a skill for the rest of the present discussion.

Let us turn to the broad sense of competence now. As already noted, the broad sense of competence is inconsistent with its narrow sense. Therefore, in principle, a theory may adopt either, but not both. In the broad sense, cited above, a person's competence includes their knowledge, skills, attitudes, and experience. What else is there in a person's mind? On this broad interpretation, a person's competence covers practically everything a human being may possess in their minds. The only exception seems to be emotions, not explicitly listed in the definition, although mentioning attitudes is a step in the direction of including a person's emotions too. Indeed, one could easily argue that emotions ought to be included, as they play an important part in human behavior or "performing one's life roles," such as teaching, for example.

One very simple reason why such a broad definition of a person's competence is completely useless is because on this reading, it becomes a synonym of 'anything a person may know or feel', which is entirely unhelpful either for practicing teachers or for a theory of education. It is entirely unhelpful, because it does not clarify or add anything at all to anyone's informal understanding of what education is about. If the general goal of education is going to be redefined in the competence-based approach, as apparently it is, as the attempt to develop learners' competence, then, on the broad interpretation of competence, it amounts to saying that teachers and schools are supposed to develop anything and everything students may know or feel in order for them to be better able to perform

their life roles. This is little more than a long way of saying “do something so students are a better able to do things.” Try and find one teacher in the world who disagrees with it or can name a single new element in such a characterization of what they are expected and always wanted to do. Better still, try and find any adult in the world, in or outside schools and education, who says they disagree with it or that they have a completely different idea of what education is all about.

On a more serious note, let us turn some graver inadequacies in the broad understanding of competence. As we have seen above, the broader the notion, the less interesting or useful it becomes, right to the extent of being completely uninteresting or of any use at all. If it is extended to cover such aspects of a human mind as a person’s “skills, knowledge, appropriate attitudes and experience,” then it is not only uselessly broad but also incoherent.

First, notice that the list of components of a person’s competence just quoted implies that knowledge and skills are just as different from each other as, for example, a person’s attitudes are from their experience. The list also implies that a person’s experience is, again, something very different from what we are ready to regard as part of their knowledge. Either implication runs counter to standard, almost universally embraced assumptions, some of them apparently adopted in CBE.

Take the question of knowledge and skills first. As already indicated in the discussion of the narrow sense of competence above, on the standard interpretation of a skill in cognitive psychology, it is a person’s implicit procedural knowledge, alternatively called their competence (cf. Ambrus and Németh 2008). This entails that the concept of a skill is a subcategory of knowledge. Competence in this narrow, and the only useful, sense of the term, in which it denotes a person’s procedural knowledge, is now commonplace in epistemology, cognitive psychology, or linguistics (cf. Allwright 1999, Pezzulo 2011, Ten Berge and Van Hezewijk 1999, Chomsky 1965, Pritchard 2006). Even elementary discussions of the topic, such as Pritchard (2006), for example, make a distinction between declarative knowledge, sometimes also called propositional knowledge, on the one hand, called so, because it conveniently takes the form of declarative sentences or statements, and procedural knowledge on the other hand, which is not easily reported in propositions, and which has a very different function in a person’s mind – to enable them to carry out a specific activity.

Now take the second implication mentioned above, a considerably more complex issue, which, therefore, we shall not discuss here in any detail. This is the problem of how, if at all, a person’s experience is fundamentally different either from what they know or from what they are



able to do. On empiricist assumptions, which appear to dominate rational inquiry do date, but which are not at all adopted by the author of this essay, a person's experience is not only non-distinct from what they know, but, quite the contrary, experience is the only source, as well as the testing ground, of all of our knowledge of the world (cf., Popper 2005, for example). If this is assumed, the concept of experience is not only non-distinct from knowledge but they are near-complete synonyms.

In a recent alternative to empiricism, anything a person knows, including their declarative knowledge as well as any skill or competence they possess, is a personal construct of the mind of an individual. For a discussion of this view of knowledge, called (radical) constructivism, to be distinguished from what has come to be called social constructivism, in the context of educational theory, see Nahalka (1997). We cannot discuss any of the fundamental differences between these two competing theories of knowledge or their important implications for pedagogy here. Although these radical differences and their educational implications are truly fundamental, from the perspective of the issue immediately at hand, the problem of how experience and skills relate to the concept of knowledge, little turns on whether you are committed to empiricism or constructivism. In either case, both a person's experience and any skills they may have are aspects of their knowledge. Therefore, any notion of competence which implies or suggests otherwise, such as the broad sense of competence apparently adopted in popular variants of CBE, and some government decrees that prescribe them, is incoherent.

Finally, consider the ironic consequence of adopting a notion of competence on which it is a near-complete synonym of knowledge. Such a conceptual innovation backfires, rendering CBE, purportedly a radically new approach to education, completely indistinguishable from a conventional, informal or intuitive understanding of teaching, which it is meant to replace. Notice that to simply re-label a poorly understood and incoherently interpreted notion of knowledge as *competence* will not do. Rather than resolve or clarify any conceptual issues, such as, for example, how people make different uses of different sorts of knowledge in their attempts to adapt to and cope with the conditions in part imposed upon them by the world external to them, this brash terminological innovation adds to the confusion. To make matters worse, it allows both practicing teachers and educational theorists to draw undesirable conclusions about some central issues in education, such as its major goals, for example, which are otherwise not easily permitted by conventional, sometimes intuitive assumptions. We shall turn to some of these undesirable consequences in foreign language teaching directly.

### 3. Elements of competence-based English language teaching

As we have seen above, on the broad interpretation of competence, it amounts to relabeling knowledge as competence, which is not only pointless and incoherent, but, not surprisingly, may lead to some further serious misunderstandings. Some of these misunderstandings are directly relevant for foreign language teaching (FLT).

As noted early on, as far as FLT is concerned, there is nothing original or entirely new about a “competence-based approach” to it at all. Any form of FLT has always been motivated by the goal or desire to enable students to do something they otherwise could not – understand spoken or written discourse in a foreign language and produce such discourse for themselves, loosely called communication. A competence-based approach to FLT is just as obvious, and has been since long before anyone began to say anything at all about CBE a few decades ago, as in many other areas of education, sometimes called training, such as the education of construction engineers, medical education or the training of carpenters, brick layers, car mechanics, etc., or in what is conventionally and misleadingly called teacher training. Ironically, not for the first time in the history of education, confusion and misunderstandings occur and proliferate when an intuitively clear and natural idea is poorly developed, with some originally correct intuitions completely distorted, into an incoherent theory, sometimes called a “philosophy of education,” which practically nobody understands, including government officials who nevertheless believe, or, perhaps, pretend they believe, that it is wise to prescribe such incoherent conceptual patchwork in decrees. Not surprisingly, some of the most experienced people in the profession have a hard time trying to work out what such prescriptions actually expect from them.

Take what is called communicative language teaching (CLT). The basic intuitive idea underlying CLT is quite clear and unproblematic unless unnecessary and brash innovations, partly from outside of FLT, interfere – you want your students to be able to make natural and meaningful use of the foreign language in what are loosely called communicative situations. The now familiar technical term used to denote a speaker’s knowledge that enables them to do that is *communicative competence*. The term allows a concise formulation of the ultimate goal of FLT, universally accepted in CLT – to develop learners’ communicative competence. Apparently, no formulation of the goal of FLT could be more consistent with the basic assumptions, and prescriptions, of CBE. It is easy for a language teacher to

take encouragement from the central prescription of CBE and focus on developing their learners' communicative competence.

How will any foreign language teacher do that? The only way anyone can do that is by relying, minimally, on their understanding of what verbal communication is, what a person's competence is, and what a person's communicative competence is. Some important questions arise immediately.

Let us begin with an EFL teacher's notion of competence. Do they assign a broad or a narrow interpretation to this concept? And are they consistent in assigning one or the other? Similar questions arise about communicative competence. How broadly or narrowly is it construed in ELT? And what interpretation is assigned to the concept of communication?

The broad and apparently most popular but incoherent interpretation assigned to the concept of competence in CBE may suggest to the EFL teacher that a comparably broad interpretation is to be assigned to communicative competence, on which it will cover practically anything a learner may know or learn about what is called the English language, its speakers, their countries [sic], their cultures [sic], and the rules and principles of verbal communication in a narrow sense. From the perspective of the efficiency of teaching EFL (TEFL) this broad interpretation, although somewhat incoherent, is not necessarily undesirable, provided that an EFL teacher can discriminate between the subcomponents of this complex body of knowledge and the specific role each plays in speaking English. (Although, when that is sufficiently clearly understood, this broad concept will immediately be abandoned.) What is less attractive about this (incoherently) broad concept is an implication it has for CLT. Briefly, the implication is that CLT becomes virtually indistinguishable from any other more conservative or conventional approaches to TEFL, which, at least intuitively, always assumed that some or all of the tasks or goals subsumed under the broad concept of communicative competence were part of what an EFL teacher should do.

It is clear, then, that nothing very interesting or new can be derived about ELT in CLT, unless a sufficiently narrow concept of communication and communicative competence is adopted, a sufficiently clear and coherent, in other words narrow, concept of competence is assumed, a clear distinction is made between different types of competence in a speaker's mind, the specific function of each is clearly understood, and, finally, its made adequately clear how different types of a speaker's competence contribute to their ability to communicate in English. Any theory of or approach to ELT that falls short of these minimal conditions is inadequate. Therefore, if any variety of such and inadequate theory is adopted or

imposed upon EFL teachers, it is guaranteed to jeopardize the efficiency of ELT, unless one or more of its shortcomings are intuitively rectified by practicing teachers.

As some, perhaps many, EFL teachers are aware, this is not only possible but an essential part of their daily educational routine. One easy way for an EFL teacher to outsmart an educational prescription they consider unproductive is to simply ignore it and do something different, which makes sense to them, even though they know it will count as a violation of what is expected or prescribed. I will mention only two of the best known examples of such educational prescriptions now, which, as most EFL teachers are aware, are almost universally considered outdated counterproductive dogmas, but which used to dominate the scene for quite a while.

One has to do with teaching grammar, the other with the use of the students' (and teacher's) first language in the classroom. For a long time, there used to be a ban on both. But I do not believe there is a single EFL teacher in the entire world that never violated at least one of these mindless restrictions. Whenever they did it at the right time, in the right way, and for the right purpose, they did the right thing.

Perhaps paradoxically at first sight, it is lucky that we have had to climb some slippery slopes on what we now know was the dark side of FLT. It is good, too, that we survived, without serious casualties. We can make good use of the experience by learning some important lessons from it. Learning from mistakes you have made is not at all paradoxical for people in FLT.

#### **4. Conclusions**

In conclusion, I will briefly discuss one important lesson to be learned from the awareness that we used to adopt but have since abandoned some assumptions, some of them prescriptions, some restrictions, etc., which we now know were to be rejected. Like the two examples I have just mentioned, none of them was ever explained or justified consistently in clear and coherent terms. None of them was ever derived from reasonable assumptions and none of them was ever based on solid principles. Instead, some of them, including the two examples above, were contradictory not only to elementary commonsense concepts but to some reasonable assumptions already adopted in the same conceptual framework that somehow managed to tolerate the presence of what are now known to have been incoherent dogmas. The lesson to be learned from this is very simple – inconsistencies, incoherent concepts, incomprehensible prescriptions or

dogmas that stand without any serious justification have no place in an approach to or theory of education in general, or TEFL in particular, if it is to be of any use at all. There is a variant of this lesson that teacher educators ought to learn and bear in mind so they are better able to equip students of TEFL, for instance, with the knowledge and understanding that it takes to avoid being too easily “persuaded to join the mindless march behind the latest banner,” as Widdowson (1984:33) put it nearly thirty years ago.

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# AT THE CROSSROADS OF GRAMMATICAL AND COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE? – ACADEMIC WRITING AT THE C2 LEVEL (CEFR)

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**Abstract:** The study has been conducted within the project 178014 entitled *The structure dynamics of the Serbian language*, financed by the Ministry of Science and Technology, Republic of Serbia

*Academic writing at the C2 level, according to the Common European Framework of Reference, experiences a fundamental change of focus from the lower-order concerns in writing, to the notion of communicative aspect of discourse and towards the higher-order concerns in writing. This study explores the degree of communicative competence in L2 writing that these students exhibit.*

**Key words:** *academic writing, communicative competence, grammatical competence, higher-order concerns, lower-order concerns*

## 1. Introduction

It is not infrequent to speak of crossroads, marginal or overlapping areas in research. Theories, approaches and methods of applications vary to an extent that we frequently question ourselves in terms of perspectives and positions we hold in teaching. Likewise the field of second language acquisition is a fruitful premise for reconsidering the approaches to teaching L2 writing and the aim of this study is to discern elements of communicative competence in the writing of the undergraduate students.

According to Weigle (2002:35), experts in the field (Cumming, 1989; Kroll, 1990; Krapels, 1990 ) indicate that “over the past several years a consensus has emerged among researchers that second-language proficiency – defined as control over the linguistic elements of a second language – and expertise in writing are different, although not unrelated abilities.”

This claim clearly illustrates, and even calls for the collaboration between two competences that are by no means related in L2 writing – *the grammatical competence* and *the communicative competence*. Writing, being a skill that by nature poses great demands even for the L1 writers, may be considered a complex ground, a battlefield where the second-language writers combat both with language and with themselves in the role of writers.

## **2. Cognitive demands in L2 writing**

It is commonly believed that the productive skill of writing is among the most difficult skills to master when learning a second language. Weigle (2002: 35) illustrates "...writing in a second language may be hampered because of the need to focus on language rather than content" and all due to the great cognitive demand that this skill presupposes of second-language writers.

Therefore, a number of studies reflected on the difference between the L1 and L2 writers, noting the indisputable gap between the writing ability among the novice and expert writers (Hayes & Flower, 1986; Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1987; Hyland, 2002). They primarily aimed at illuminating the different approaches these writers take and the various composing stages they go through. Hayes and Flower (1986) indicate that skilled writers spend more time revising when writing than do unskilled writers and pay more attention to *higher-level aspects* of composing process such as coherence and argumentation. Eysenck and Keane (2005) cite evidence that skilled writers are much more concerned with revision that involves changes to meaning than are unskilled writers. (Shaw & Weir, 2007:42)

As illustrated, writing involves engagement at many levels and all at the same time which indeed is that additional cognitive demand when writing in a second language. At the undergraduate level, writing in a second language becomes even more demanding as the students are expected to demonstrate language proficiency, as well as discourse fluency at the academic level.

## **3. Academic writing at C2 level (Common European Framework of Reference)**

Academic writing at the undergraduate level represents the context within which *higher-order elements* of writing should be attended to. At this level L2 students have already been exposed to a myriad of language items and have had years of experience in mastering the microlinguistic elements of writing. They have engaged in a number of classes that integrate language skills and confront language issues from many different angles in terms of grammaticality. However, Academic writing classes place a greater emphasis on the communicative elements of language that can be found in the *higher-order issues* of writing.

Although a great deal of research on the *communicative competence* has focused on oral skills, researchers have begun to consider it in the field

of L2 writing as well. As Reid (1993: 39) indicates “communicative approaches stress the *purpose* of a piece of writing and the *audience* for it”. According to Hyland, the purpose for writing in this new paradigm is communication rather than accuracy (Shaw & Weir, 2007:9). Alongside, the Common European Framework of Reference, aimed at testing language skills in the acquisition of the second language, has proposed descriptors in mastering each level of language acquisition. Therefore, for the C2 (proficiency) level of the writing skill the following descriptors have been assigned:

Overall Written Production	Overall Written Interaction
Can write clear, smoothly flowing, complex texts in an appropriate and effective style and a logical structure which helps the reader to find significant points.	Can express him/herself with clarity and precision, relating to the addressee flexibly and effectively.

Table. 1 CEFR C2 Proficiency

Based on Council of Europe 2001: 61, 83 in Shaw & Weir (2007: 13)

These descriptors clearly involve both the logical structure of the text, with the aim to ‘guide’ the readers and help in interpretation, and the interaction aspect of the text where the writer addresses and engages the reader more directly. *Communicative competence (higher-order concerns)* is evidently the expectation in academic writing at this level, while the *grammatical competence (lower-order concerns)* simply underlies these superior aims of writing.

#### 4. Lower-order issues vs. higher-order issues in L2 writing

There is an obvious detachment from the grammatical accuracy as the primary parameter of a successful and satisfactory composition. As Reid (1993:29) cites “McKay (1979a, 1979b, 1981) argued in both her research and her textbooks that grammatical accuracy in writing classes was a secondary concern.” According to Bean (1993:226), in writing we make a distinction between:

Lower-order concerns	Higher-order concerns
style of writing, grammar and mechanics (spelling, punctuation)	ideas, organization, development and clarity of discourse

Table 2. A distinction between the lower/higher-order concerns in writing



(Bean, 1993:226)

However, *lower-order concerns* should not be disregarded in writing and Bean (1996:227) clarifies that “(they) are lower not because they are unimportant but because they cannot be efficiently attended to until the *higher-order concerns* have been resolved. Therefore, we are emphasizing the communicative aspect of writing which should at C2 level extend beyond the grammaticality of the discourse towards the awareness of the *purpose* of writing and the *audience* with which the writer experiences genuine communication.

## 5. Research

The aim of this pilot study was to analyze the written production at the C2 level of writing of the 3<sup>rd</sup> year students at the Faculty of Philology and Arts, Department of English. This pilot study was conducted on 21 student essays (10 with lower grades and 11 with higher grades) within the course of Academic writing. The course itself realizes teaching of different essay types and crucial elements of composition, the style of formal academic expression with the emphasis on precision and clarity, as well as the exposure to up-to-date articles. However, apart from brief instruction on cohesive devices, students were not explicitly taught the *reader-based approach* to writing that focuses on text connectivity and the interactive writer-reader relationship. It is our belief that without this explicit instruction and greater emphasis on *higher-order concerns* in writing, the students are not truly motivated to engage in genuine ‘dialogue’ with their readers.

Therefore, their essays have been considered in terms of the presence/absence of *higher-order elements* in writing with essays of both higher and lower grades. According to the combined descriptors previously noted in Table 1 and Table 2, and having considered both the demands of the C2 level (CEFR) and the results that we encounter with the students that should adhere to these expectations, we have come up with a slightly modified instrument (Table 3) that has been used in the analysis.

<b>HIGHER-ORDER CONCERNS IN WRITING</b>
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(Mostly) writes clear, smoothly flowing texts (clarity of discourse, presence of cohesion/coherence in the text; only slight or no microlinguistic constraints) Precision & clarity in expression (vocabulary, phrases, expressions) Academic style of writing (adequate formal essay writing) Logical structure of the essay - that 'guides' the reader through significant points in the text (full audience awareness) Interacts and engages with the reader –use of attention grabbers; appeals; questions, thus engaging in a dialogue with the reader (full audience awareness)
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Table 3. Characteristics of *higher-order concerns* in academic writing at the C2 level

The questions posed in our study were:

- 1) How are these *higher-order elements* of writing distributed among the essays with lower grades?
- 2) How are these *higher-order elements* of writing distributed among the essays with higher grades?
- 3) Do L2 undergraduate students employ *higher-order elements* in writing and therefore exhibit *communicative competence*?

Since the proficiency level of English as the second language at the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of undergraduate studies realizes mastery of all microlinguistic structures and grammar in general, it was expected that students devoted more time and effort to the *communicative aspects* of composing. They were expected to organize and develop their ideas at a higher level, to use cohesive devices and connect the text appropriately, to use a formal academic style of writing and to address their readers with a genuine *purpose* and *audience awareness*. The research aimed at identifying whether the students had awareness of the *communicative competence* in writing or only opted to satisfy the *grammatical competence* in composition.

## 6. Results

Evaluation of essays is an inevitable parameter that should be considered in close relation to teaching instruction and practice, as Hyland himself (2003: 207) notes “feedback is central to learning to write in a second language”. Therefore, the results achieved in student essay writing were our primary source in the study.

### 6.1. *Higher-order concerns within essays of lower grades*

Although it is expected that less skilled writers that commonly earn lower grades exhibit certain microlinguistic constraints in writing, our

research did not focus on the analysis of those elements. We were interested in determining the extent to which they display the tendency to communicate with the intended readers by taking into consideration their use of *higher-order elements* in writing. We applied the Table 3 instrument to determine the presence/absence of these communicative features in ten student essays that received lower grades and the findings were illustrated in Table 4.

QCC student essays comm. elements	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total (%)
1. clear, smoothly flowing texts (cohesion/coherence)					+	+		+			30%
2. precision and clarity in expression			+		+	+	+	+			50%
3. academic style of writing (formal)											0%
4. logical structure of the essay – ‘guiding’ readers through the text (full audience awareness)									+		10%
5. Interacting and engaging with the reader (full audience awareness)		+	+		+		+			+	50%

Table 4. *Higher-order concerns* within essays of lower grades

Communication in writing, accomplished through the use of *higher-order elements*, evidently is not greatly displayed among the students with lower grades.

6.1.1. The most alarming issue concerns the *academic formal style of writing* (0%). Although present in the teaching instruction and prevailing in the academic texts, these students refrain from applying the rules of formal composition. This could be explained by the fact that *grammatical competence* is their primary concern, along with the successful topic development. A writing task for them presents a great cognitive demand, especially at the C2 level. Harris and Graham (1996:195) note that “as the cognitive processes required by the task become more numerous and complex, task difficulty increases and greater cognitive capacity is needed”. Therefore, they tend to ‘play safe’ and place more attention on the grammaticality of their sentences, rather than introducing additional parameters that may impair their writing.

6.1.2. Another questionable aspect of writing that we need to consider is the text connectivity, accomplished through the use of cohesive devices (question number 1 - 30%) and frame markers (question number 4 - 10%) with the intention to ‘guide’ the readers through the text. The unskilled writers at this level obviously do not experience writing as communicating with the anticipated reader. They are unaware that discourse is both what a text producer means by the text and what a text means to the receiver. (Widdowson, 2007: 7)

6.1.3. Precision and clarity are issues addressed from the 1<sup>st</sup> year of their undergraduate studies and therefore it is not a surprise that they reflect on the lexis and expressions that they use, avoiding vague language in general (question number 2 - 50%).

6.1.4. Interaction and engagement is also very much present in their essays (question number 5 - 50%). It primarily reflects the use of questions within the essay, as well as occasional comments of the writer with the need to subjectively reflect on an issue. Questions are a useful rhetoric strategy that may be used as attention grabbers, as a way to engage the readers in communicating with them. However, this issue should be regarded more closely together with their use/overuse in L2 writing. With the unskilled writers, there may be an indictment that these writers are unable to express their ideas in the form of claims, arguments and supporting statements and so their essays are filled with questions, rather than ‘answers’ to the topic. Frequently suchlike essay do not fully address the topic and the writing task and therefore receive a low mark. The issue of questions in general and specific type of questions is a writing strategy that may be a completely new area of research, but it is not the subject of further research at the moment.

## 6.2. Higher-order concerns within essays of higher grades

Communicative features with the more skilled writers at C2 level were expected to be encountered in the research findings. These higher aspects of academic writing should be an indictment of the mastery of the productive skill of writing, and also an indictment of an inherent need to communicate through writing. These students are expected to be more fluent in grammatical expression and therefore to be ready to tackle additional communicative aspects of writing. They are not cognitively overloaded as the unskilled writers and are likely to be more creative in writing and to use writing as a tool for thinking and discovering ideas. The findings of the study are illustrated in Table 5.

Q student essays comm. elements	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	Total (%)
1. clear, smoothly flowing texts (cohesion/coherence)	+	+						+	+	+	+	54.5%
2. precision and clarity in expression	+	+	+	+	+		+	+	+	+	+	91%
3. academic style of writing (formal)		+	+	+			+	+		+		54.5%
4. logical structure of the essay –‘guiding’ readers through the text (full audience awareness)	+							+			+	27%

5. Interacting and engaging with the reader (full audience awareness)	+	+	+		+	+	+	+				63.6%
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Table 5. *Higher-order concerns* within essays of higher grades

6.2.1. We will primarily highlight such a low percentage of frame markers used to compose a logical structure of the essay because it statistically is the least common higher-order feature found in the essays of the more skilled writers (question number 4 - 27%). Although these students have had years of experience in composing essays they have obviously not mastered or not understood the significance of ‘guiding’ the readers through the text. Comparatively, as the unskilled writers, they do not recognize the need to communicate well through writing and assist their readers in interpreting their ideas.

6.2.2. The findings have encouraged us to believe that, although not fully adopted formal style of writing, there is a tendency of the improving expression and awareness of sophistication they should strive for in academic writing (question number 3 - 54.5%). Enriching one’s vocabulary and expression is a never-ending process, supported by extensive reading and constantly being exposed to the second language.

6.2.3. Precise and clear language for the more skilled writers has reached its highest point in writing and these essays display a firm understanding that vague expression is not a feature of academic writing at C2 level (question number 2 - 91%).

6.2.4. Finally, we will consider the communicative aspects of coherence/cohesion (discourse clarity) (question number 1 - 54.5%) and the interaction/engagement with the readers (question number 5 – 63.6%). Both of the questions can be regarded as the students’ ability to imagine a virtual intended reader. Some of the essays have illustrated a high degree of connectivity, varying cohesive devices and at times even playing with language. Others have only attempted occasionally to consider ‘guiding’ the reader through the text. Nevertheless, the comparison with the unskilled writers illuminates a promising tendency in improving this strategy. Interaction and engagement are even more present, with a slight difference in comparison to the unskilled writers, as these students use a combination of attention grabbers, questions, comments but also appeals to engage the audience in the discussion.

### 6.3. Higher-order concerns and the accomplished results in essay writing

q student essays  comm. elements	LOWER GRADES										HIGHER GRADES											Total (%)
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	
1.clear, smoothly flowing texts - cohesion/coherence					+	+		+			+	+						+	+	+	+	43%
2. precision and clarity in expression			+		+	+	+	+			+	+	+	+	+		+	+	+	+	+	71%
3. academic style of writing (formal)												+	+	+			+	+		+		28.6%
4. logical structure of the essay – ‘guiding’ readers through the text (full audience awareness)									+		+							+			+	19%
5. Interacting and engaging with the reader (full audience awareness)		+	+		+		+			+	+	+	+		+	+	+	+				57%

Table 6. *Higher-order concerns* and the accomplished results in essay writing

The overall results of the research present us with an overview of one group of students at the C2 level with a varying second language proficiency. It is important to consider the results in these terms as every class is heterogeneous and therefore the teaching instruction and evaluation should be based on the overall accomplishments of the entire class.

6.3.1. Evidently, the formal expression that is a prerequisite of academic expression is a ground difficult to master and therefore should be attended to more seriously in the teaching instruction (question number 3 – 28.6%). Thinking about the intended reader, in this case the academic reader, needs to be regarded more and the students should be supplied with sufficient exposure to formal texts that employ this style of writing.

6.3.2. It is alarming to note that the entire group scored the least with the feature that directly supposes awareness of the act of communication through writing (question number 4 - 19%). As only 19% of students displayed the need to organize their essay structure with the purpose of interpretation on the part of the readers, this draws our attention to their lack of motivation to establish a writer-reader relationship. The greatest reward in writing is reaching the readership and transmitting the message. Unfortunately, we may claim that these students write essays only to satisfy the requirements of the course or only to express their ideas, without considering the feedback of their strenuous process of composing.

6.3.3. Precision and clarity of expression are the higher-order features that we may say these students have mastered to a great extent (question number 2 - 71%). As they master the language more and become more fluent and proficient they will maintain this tendency to express themselves precisely, as this is a strategy that has been firmly acquired.

6.3.4. Finally, both skilled and unskilled writers only occasionally apply text connectivity in writing (question number 1 – 43%), and direct interaction/engagement with the readers (question number 5 – 57%). This can be explained by the fact that they have not been explicitly taught cohesion and coherence, nor the discourse markers that imply interaction with the reader. Additional practice in pair writing with a true production-interpretation relationship might motivate them more in considering the reader and their comprehension.

## **7. Conclusion**

Our primary research has been administered on one common, heterogeneous group of undergraduate students, entailing both the unskilled and skilled writers. Research has illuminated that essays of the unskilled writers generate the following outcomes.

- They focus primarily on the grammaticality of their written texts because additional parameters (higher-order parameters of writing in this case) may pose an obstacle and impair their writing products.
- They are not reader-sensitive and are unaware of the communicative imperative of written discourse, primarily in terms of ‘guiding’ their readers and ensuring full understanding of the text.
- Their engagement with the audience is present most frequently in the use/overuse of questions, which is an interesting aspect of research. This may not be a reflection of creativity and genuine need to connect with the readership, but the inability or avoidance to express their ideas as claims, arguments, supporting statements or appeals. Further research may reveal the purpose of questions in student writing.



On the other hand, the skilled writers do exhibit a more sophisticated academic expression and a keen sense of precision and clarity in writing. Analysis of their essays in terms of use of communicative elements has yielded the following results.

- Although they slightly statistically supersede the unskilled student writers, they have obviously not mastered or been sufficiently exposed to the linguistic features such as frame markers that ensure full reader guidance.
- There is a promising tendency in improving text connectivity, varying cohesive devices to the extent of using language as a tool – writing in order to learn, explore and express inner beliefs.
- They engage their readers at a significantly higher level with a myriad of genuine attention grabbers, questions, writer's comments, as well as appeals to motivate the imaginary reader in joining the communicative ordeal with the writer.

Therefore, we may conclude that these skilled and unskilled student writers would enjoy writing more and therefore give better results if exposed more to the essence of communicating through written discourse. Motivation is a significant factor that can improve or impair one's attempts in mastering a specific skill. Being additionally motivated to reach the anticipated reader they would improve their text connectivity and attend to attracting their attention, persuading them or moving them into action by their writing. Teacher instruction and assessment greatly influence students' written production and we must conclude that the aforementioned communicative elements of writing must be taught firsthand in order to be expected in student writing and ultimately applied in assessment rubrics. We should not overlook the fact that the greatest reward in fact is reaching the anticipated audience and fulfilling the purpose of writing.

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# MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES IN TEACHING LITERATURE

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**Abstract:** *Discussing the conventional teaching of literature versus an alternative one, a new viewpoint is brought by Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (1983). Considering that we have different ways of increasing knowledge, of learning, we thought of a way of developing these intelligences through literature: the practical approach refers to literary texts studied from all these perspectives.*

**Key words:** *alternative teaching, conventional teaching, literature, multiple intelligences.*

## 1. Background

Literature methodologists have gathered a multiplicity of reasons for teaching literature, as expressed by Showalter (2003), Carter & Long (1991), Mc Rae (1991), Bassnett & Grundy (1993), McKay (2000): literature is meant to moralise, civilise, humanize; it transmits moral values and offers spiritual guidance; it enriches cultural knowledge; it is an explicit political act, a mode of conscious raising, a branch of philosophical inquiry. But literature is more than that, as Showalter (2003:24) states: "all of us who teach literature believe that it is important not only in education but in life".

Literature reflects the image of a society at a certain point, sublimating reality, a community being represented by the fundamental literary texts that make up its cultural heritage. The connection has been analyzed several times from the perspective of the literary canon: the set of distinctive principles that are the basis of the literary canon can be seen from the perspective of social values. This could be noticed especially in the evolution of the literary studies at the end of the last century when we notice an opening perspective of literature towards other territories.

The conventional study of literature involves the use of traditional methods, based on the reading of the text and its interpretation. The texts used are mostly canonical ones, the issue of the canon rising a debate on the chosen texts. The literary canon (Bloom 1994) is generally defined as a set of standards, general aesthetical rules, which distinguish and set a corpus of literary texts that marked the history of literature. The disagreement regarding the necessity of a literary canon arises from the desire to overthrow values, to deny tradition, to redefine the present in terms of the "new". This generated, in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a new aggressive conflict, such as the one between modern and traditional,

between the post-structuralist supporters of cultural studies and the traditional supporters of aesthetical value.

Harold Bloom, in *The Anxiety of Influence. A Theory of Poetry*, but, especially in *The Western Canon. The Books and School of the Ages* (1994), sees the roots of the canon in the ideological revolutionary context of 1968, whether French or American. Setting a body of literary texts, building the canon, is one of the important issues regarding the teaching of literature.

Another important issue refers to the actual approaches used, the methods that teachers employ in order to rise the students' interest and motivation. Therefore, we can distinguish theories in the didactics of literature, balancing between tradition and modernity, involving the use of canonical texts or not, centering on the teacher or the student. According to Showalter (2003) there are four types of theories that refer to the teaching of literature:

1.1. *Subject centered theories* represent traditional approaches to teaching literature. They are also called "transmission theory of teaching", based on transferring information from the teacher to the student, focusing on the content proposed.

1.2. *Teacher centered theories* are called the performance approach to teaching, focusing on the teacher. They are conventional and traditional, stressing the instructor's speaking and acting abilities, along the intellectual ones.

1.3. *Student centered theories* are modern approaches, based on active learning. The emphasis is on the learner, the techniques used being the dialogue, problem solving, shifting from the teacher to the student.

1.4. *Eclectic theories* are modern approaches, a mixture of all theories. They involve the use of modern and traditional techniques, but the final touch is a modern one, as the focus is still on the student.

Whereas traditional theories believe in uniformity, transmitting the content in the same way, modern approaches, such as student centered theories or eclectic ones, focus on individuality, personality, variety. It is a perspective common to many educational approaches today, one of them being Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. Even though it is not an educational theory, but a psychological one; it has been applied in many educational situations. Gardner himself pleads for the personalisation of the content, teaching it in various ways, as we have different personalities and different types of intelligences. It is an alternative perspective, a pluralist view on the mind, leading to a pluralist view on education, which should be based on the individual, should consider the multiple intelligences in teaching and learning.

Linking didactical theories of teaching literature to psychological ones, adopting a modern perspective, focusing on the student, introducing multiple intelligences in teaching literature could become a way of motivating students, convincing them to approach a literary text in a personalized manner and, therefore, more successful.

## **2. Practical approach**

### **2.1. Purpose of study**

The aim of the study is to adapt literature to students' personalities, teaching it through different activities devised according to different intelligences, personalizing the content, making it adaptable to all types of learners (reading and interpreting, dramatizing, categorizing, analyzing stylistically).

"I'd like to see an erosion of the boundaries between literary criticism and creative writing, between teaching and acting, between the abstract ethics of theory and the real ethical and moral problems involved in teaching material that raises every difficult human issue from racism to suicide. Graduate training in PhD should include training in pedagogy, and also in acting, performance and writing. Teachers should read contemporary literature, go to the theatre and movies, watch television, write in all forms and reflect on how all these activities contribute to what we do in class." ( Showalter 2003: viii)

Starting from this theoretical background, our paper aims at finding an answer to the following questions:

- Could literature be taught according to the multiple intelligences' theory?
- Will students be interested in different types of activities, adapted to their personalities?
- Will this type of approach suit them better than a traditional one, which proposes just one type of activity for the whole class?

### **2.2. Participants and methodology**

A group of 40 students in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year, Romanian and English, Faculty of Letters, West University of Timișoara participated in the study. The qualitative methods used were the experiment (which consisted in introducing new, modern activities for teaching literature based on multiple intelligences theory), students' feedback, observation and retrospection.

### 2.3. Stages

The first stage of the process consisted in giving the students the necessary information related to Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, discussing it and asking the participants to discover, through introspection and observation their own types of intelligences. Following Gardner's instructions, we did not use tests to determine a certain type, but qualitative methods mentioned above (introspection and observation). All the participants were able to determine several intelligences they had and identify a dominant one.

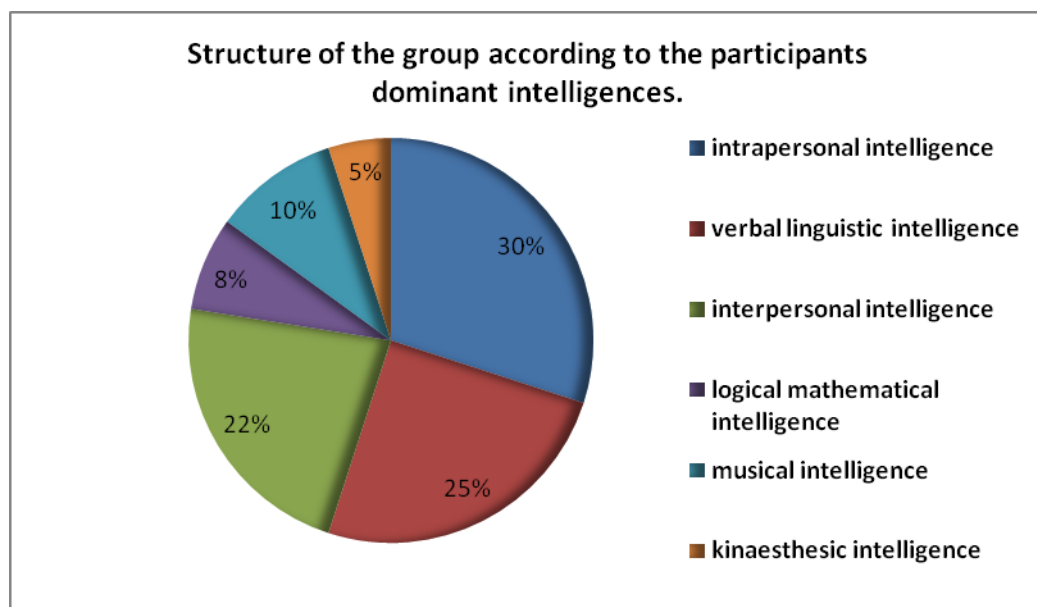
The selection of texts and creation of the activities was the next stage, which involved the answer to an important question: What type of texts should we choose: canonical ones or not? The texts chosen were canonical ones, Virginia Woolf - *Mrs. Dalloway*, Oscar Wilde - *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Oscar Wilde - *De Profundis*, R. Frost - *Fire and Ice*, Edgar Allan Poe - *The Raven*, as we consider them fundamental texts, necessary for any students' background. The types of activities were designed according to the intelligence meant to be developed therefore the texts were chosen accordingly:

- The first activity aimed at increasing the *verbal-linguistic intelligence*, as it was a creative writing activity. The students were asked to read R. Frost's poem *Fire and Ice* and create their own poem on the same theme and with the same title.
- *Logical-mathematical intelligence* was developed through a task that involved the use of charts in order to order different elements: participants were asked to read an excerpt from Virginia Woolf's novel *Mrs. Dalloway* and categorize the stylistic devices in a chart (epithets, metaphors, and personifications).
- *Spatial intelligence* was connected with an activity that involved the graphical representations of a literary text. Students had to read a fragment from Edgar Allan Poe's poem *The Raven* and draw the image suggested.
- The fourth task referred to *kinaesthetic intelligence* and concerned the acting of a theatre piece. Participants were asked to read and then interpret a fragment from Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*.
- *Musical intelligence* was connected with rhythmic speech: the task was to read a stanza from Edgar Allan Poe's poem *The Raven* in a rhythmic manner.
- *Intrapersonal intelligence* was developed through diary writing. Students had to write a diary page starting from the fragment taken from Oscar Wilde's *De Profundis*.

- The last activity was meant to increase the *interpersonal intelligence* and for that purpose we proposed project work. Starting from Robert Frost's poem *Fire and Ice*, participants were engaged into making a project representing the apocalypse.

#### 2.4. Findings and discussions:

The intelligences of the 40 participants were distributed in the following way: intrapersonal intelligence -12, verbal linguistic intelligence - 10, interpersonal intelligence – 9, musical intelligence – 4, logical mathematical intelligence – 3, kinaesthetic intelligence – 2.



The feedback and our observation techniques gave us the following results: students completed their tasks successfully and considered them appropriate for their type of intelligence and appreciated the qualities of their activities, as imaginative, creative.

Nevertheless, there were few students (4 out of 40) who misjudged their type of intelligence, realising it afterwards. They even asked for a test to determine their type of intelligence, an element Gardner finds irrelevant, suggesting observation instead.

The musical and kinaesthetic tasks were considered the most entertaining and appreciated by the other students, as well. Interpersonal

learners judged the task interesting, a good opportunity to express their thoughts, a liberation.

Here are some of the students' opinions:

- "From my point of view it is easier to remember what the text was about and the activity instils in a different way in your memory."
- "I liked this task because I think it fits my type of intelligence, I enjoyed it even though I don't like literature".
- "The exercise was challenging, and it also proved stimulating for my creativity."
- "It is quite hard to determine your type of intelligence without a test."
- "This activity is quite difficult. I am not sure I have chosen the right type of intelligence".

The majority of the students enjoyed the activities and all of them solved them successfully. However, there were few students who considered that they haven't chosen their right intelligence, because the task did not fit. The overall impression was positive and the approach was considered new and challenging. Students were surely interested in different types of activities, adapted to their personalities, with the help of the theory of multiple intelligences. It proved that literature can be taught according to the Gardner' theory, based on differentiated learning, on activities devised for each type of intelligence.

This type of approach seemed to suit them better than a traditional one, which proposes just one type of activity for the whole class. All the students were involved in the task received; they completed it successfully and enjoyed doing it. However, there were inherent difficulties, caused by the right choice of dominant intelligence and therefore the right type of activity. Another problem referred to the large groups of students, the approach proving difficult to use. It remains an experiment to be improved and hopefully used in the future with smaller groups.

## **2. Conclusions**

In the context of actual literary studies, the problem of re-discussing literary approaches is closely linked to the educational system, to methodologies of teaching literature: schools have an essential role in setting canonical texts and the manner they are taught and adapting the teaching methods to the dynamics of the modern world becomes a necessity.

The debates concerning the multiple intelligences also bring a new perspective. Quoting Gardner, who says we have multiple intelligences, we can also state that we have multiple literatures, multiple manners of approaching a literary text. A difficult task which could be achieved, as

Showalter states (2003: viii), through “training in pedagogy, and also in acting, performance and writing. Teachers should read contemporary literature, go to the theatre and movies, watch television, write in all forms and reflect on how all these activities contribute to what we do in class.”

The conventional, canonical approach to literature can not be replaced by modern approaches, but they can only coexist, offering each individual something valuable to learn from and develop their own identity, sense of values, personality and knowledge.

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### Acknowledgements

This study was conceived in the context of the postdoctoral research, “The Contradictions of the Literary Canon. Interdisciplinary Approach”, within the project “CommScie”, program co-financed by European Social Fund by POSDRU/89/1.5/S/63663, 2007-2013.”



# **III**

## **CULTURAL STUDIES**

# **CINDERELLA'S ASHES - NEW WOMEN, OLD FAIRYTALES**

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**Abstract:** This paper brings into focus the feminine qualities that heroines in Western fairy tales possess, as well as the roles they traditionally perform. The heroines are either rewarded or punished in accordance to how well they fit the feminine pattern, while the association of femininity with the female clearly indicates the social impact of gender ideology. Two variations on the *Cinderella* story will illustrate how feminist revisions of fairytales upset this rigid division.

**Key words:** Cinderella, fairytale, femininity, feminism, gender roles

## **1. Introduction**

Fairy tales are fictional stories, and their common beginning "once upon a time" implying a timeless situation has become a special feature of the genre. In many popular fairy tales, recurring plots can be identified, such as: good people will get rewarded one day; a beautiful princess will marry a handsome prince; the community returns to the peaceful situation after the wicked witch is eradicated by the hero. Although these tales were written a long time ago, the values and morals mentioned are still applicable to the modern environment nowadays.

The present paper explores the close connection between femininity and the dreams of the main heroines in fairytales. The myth of "living happily ever after", constantly advanced in fairy-tales, implies, through fixed gender-related patterns, that only good girls who perform feminine roles properly can be rewarded with a happy life. In *The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales*, Maria Tatar explains that the heroine can get her man through a 'combination of labor and good looks' (1987:118).

From a feminist point of view, however, this is the most traditional outlook on sex, implying blind acceptance of cultural norms governing the patriarchal order. Indeed, since gender roles are culturally determined, as Beauvoir (1997) suggests, most feminists think that 'the traditional fairy tales spread false notions about sex roles' and the traditional role models in the fairy tales 'manipulate our notions about sex roles' (Zipes 1986:5). As a result, the feminist fairy tales are written to free the females from the rigid sex roles that have been "arranged" for them. Maria Tatar sees the emergence of the feminist fairy tales as a challenge to the ideological male-female relationship:

"Rather than giving us heroines who are passive, submissive, and self-sacrificing, tales with a feminist bent feature a heroine who is bold, resourceful, and sassy. She

is more likely to rescue the prince than the other way around. Indeed, in some contemporary fairy tales, there isn't even a prince.” (1987:240)

Whatever the explanations for the correlation of "passivity" and "femininity" are, male and female are always in an antagonistic position, a binary opposition as Helene Cixous proposes:

“Organization by hierarchy makes all conceptual organizations subject to man. Male privilege, shown in the opposition between activity and passivity, which he uses to sustain himself. Traditionally, the question of sexual difference is treated by coupling it with the opposition: activity/passivity [... and] woman is always associated with passivity in philosophy.” (1994:38)

Thus, under the patriarchal system, a "proper" female should be passive, inferior and without much initiative. Therefore, "waiting" is the privilege of female and we are taught that a "good" female should take no action to get what she wants but wait quietly for the chances to come to her.

Cinderella's tale clearly illustrates the idea of female passivity. When Cinderella leaves the ball, the prince chases after her, and, obviously, this symbolizes the "active-ness" of the male and "passive-ness" of the female. To Marcia Lieberman 'Cinderella plays as passive a role in her story. After leaving her slipper at the ball she has nothing more to do but stay home and wait.' (1986:191). When the prince is actively looking for Cinderella, Cinderella only waits patiently at home. 'The active attempts of the two stepsisters to win the prince are treated as negative, whereas the passive and shy Cinderella is rewarded' (Pace 1982:256).

Even when a good girl encounters difficulties, she will usually get assistance from the magic agent because she performs well in her gender role. Cinderella's mother says to her in the Grimm's version, 'Dear child, be good and pious, and then the good God will always protect you, and I will look down on you from heaven and be near you' (1972:121).

In Perrault's version of the tale, the fairy godmother also makes a deal with Cinderella: 'promise to be a good girl and I will arrange for you to go [to the ball]' (1969:69). Therefore, good girls are to be protected and helped by supernatural agents.

Cinderella, in Grimm's version, listens to her mother's instructions, and prays to God every day and obeys all her stepmother's and stepsisters' orders. She never complains about the harsh jobs she needs to perform, but tolerates all the hardships. Her virtue is, firstly, rewarded with the "gift" from the supernatural power, her fairy godmother, which is a nice beautiful gown. Then, she is able to go to the ball she has longed for and meets her

soul mate there, mostly due to another established feature in Western fairy tales, namely the exquisite beauty of the heroine:

‘the immediate and predictable result of being beautiful is being chosen [...]. The beautiful girl does not have to do anything to merit being chosen [...] she is chosen because she is beautiful.’ (Lieberman 1986:188)

Her charm shocks the guests in the ball, and even her stepsisters or stepmother cannot recognize her

‘At once there fell a great silence. The dancers stopped, the violins played no more, so rapt was the attention which everybody bestowed upon the superb beauty of the unknown guest. Everywhere could be heard in confused whispers: \* Oh, how beautiful she is!\* The king, old man as he was, could not take his eyes off her, and whispered to the queen that it was many a long day since he had seen anyone so beautiful and charming. All the ladies were eager to scrutinize her clothes and the dressing of her hair, being determined to copy them on the morrow, provided they could find materials so fine, and tailors so clever.’ (Perrault, 1969:71)

It is because ‘supernatural beauty and down-to-earth hard work are linked to create the fairy-tale heroine's passport to success’ (Tatar 1987:118).

## ***2. And then the prince knelt down and tried to put the glass slipper on Cinderella's foot - no blind choices.***

The predictable fairytale patterns mentioned above are altered by feminist authors in order to achieve a certain desired effect. An example in point is a poem written by Judith Viorst entitled *And then the prince knelt down and tried to put the glass slipper on Cinderella's foot*. The tale only contains a few sentences and these lines are the continuation of the title line. Viorst is re-writing the ending of the traditional Cinderella fairy tale, as follows:

“I really didn't notice that he had a funny nose.  
And he certainly looked better all dressed up in fancy clothes.  
He's not really as attractive as he seemed the other night.  
So I think I'll pretend that this glass slipper feels too tight.” (1982:73)

The chief difference from the source text is the assertiveness of Cinderella in making her own choice of not marrying the prince. Symbolically, this represents the rejection of the marriage system under the patriarchal order. Instead of being chosen by the prince, Cinderella chooses not to be the wife of the prince and she gives up the chance of being

wealthy. The four lines are not merely a matter of choice made by female. The readers are brought to understand the inner psyche of a female, usually overlooked in traditional fairy tales. Feminist fairy tales, as Jack Zipes suggests (1986:xi), 'conceive a different view of the world and speaks in a voice that has been customarily silenced' (1986:xi).

The idea of beauty is given an inverted perspective, as the scrutinizing mirror is turned onto the figure of the prince. Stripped of his shiny clothes and ball glamour, the prince is presented as an ordinary man whose physical features hardly impress Cinderella, and shortly lead her to tell a lie in order to justify her decision to reject him. The prospects of courtship, marriage and living wealthily ever after are instantly dismissed. In sum, the princess portrayed in Viorst's poem is depicted in a radically different way from the usual representation female characters have in traditional fairytales.

This subversion of the genre carried out by the poem's author may be addressed as a critique to the acculturation of women into the traditionally expected social roles thought to occur as a result of the influence of the reading of fairy tales.

### **3. *The Moon Ribbon* – the path to freedom.**

The second example I have chosen as illustration of the idea of pattern-breaking is *The Moon Ribbon*, written by Jane Yolen, also a revision of Cinderella's story. The heroine is called Sylva and mirrors Cinderella, as she is a motherless girl who lives with her father and his new wife who has two daughters of her own. However, Sylva is not a pretty girl. This is a chief ideological break from traditional fairy tales and folktales that have taught us to assume that the lovable face must be linked with lovable character (Lieberman 1986:188). Sylva is 'plain' but 'good-hearted' while her stepmother and stepsisters are beautiful but 'mean in spirit and meaner in tongue' (1986:81).

The first half of the story is similar to that of Cinderella, since the stepmother orders Sylva to do all the household work after her father's death, with the notable difference that Sylva does not get assistance from the fairy godmother. Instead, she has a ribbon that her mother has left her, 'a strange ribbon, the color of moonlight, for it had been woven from the gray hairs of her mother and her mother's mother and her mother's mother's mother before her' (1982:81).

The development of the story is strange afterwards. The "magic" ribbon leads Sylva to a house where there is a woman. Sylva goes there twice and she gets jewels in both trips. Her stepmother and stepsisters also want to get

the jewels and so they rob Sylva of her "magic" ribbon. However, instead of going to the same house, they are led to a staircase that goes down to the ground. The ribbon is left on the grass and the stepmother and her daughters never come back.

At the beginning, Sylva is a copy of Cinderella, a good, obedient girl, never complaining about her stepmother's attitude and the difficult tasks she sets to her. For instance, when her stepmother asks her to take out the ribbon, Sylva 'obediently' shows it to her stepmother. She is a good girl, from a patriarchal point of view, because she possesses the feminine qualities. From a feminist perspective, on the other hand, Sylva is a tragic figure who is being oppressed. There is no fairy coming out to help her, and the silver ribbon is hardly a match to supernatural forces. The magic ribbon leads her on a journey of significant change that teaches her to be 'active'. In her first journey, the woman she meets in the house asks Sylva for her hand. However, the floor suddenly cracks apart and they are separated. Sylva then cannot reach the woman:

"I cannot reach," said Sylva.

"You must try," the woman replied.

So Sylva clutched the crystal knob to her breast and leaped, but it was too far. As she fell, she heard a woman's voice speaking from behind her and before her and all about, warm with praise.

"Well done, my daughter. You are halfway home." (1982:84)

The word 'try' implies an effort in order to achieve a goal, with motivation as leading factor. Though Sylva has failed to reach the woman by falling into the chasm, she has tried her best. Therefore, her effort is appreciated.

On her second journey, however, the road no longer moves to carry Sylva to the destination:

'Sylva stood on the road and waited a moment more, then tentatively set one foot in front of the other. As soon as she had set off on her own, the road set off, too.' (1982:84)

This also symbolizes that Sylva rejects the oppression prevalent in patriarchal society and chooses the feminist way. Sylva's change is also figured by the different descriptions of the grassland. In Sylva's first trip, though she passes 'larkspur and meadowsweet, clover and rye, they did not seem like real flowers, for they had no smell at all. (1982:83)

The second time,

‘Sylva strode purposefully through the grass, and this time the meadow was filled with the song of birds, the meadowlark and the bunting and the sweet jug-jug-jug of the nightingale. She could smell fresh-mown hay and the pungent pine.’ (1982:85)

When Sylva starts to be "active" rather than "passive", the surrounding nature is full of life and vitality, metaphorically suggesting that Sylva is "alive" again.

Sylva's endeavors are in fact a process of finding her own identity that is not labeled by the male dominated culture. The jewel that the woman gives Sylva has melted and then Sylva feels ‘a burning in her heart [...] and she [feels] her heart beating strongly beneath’ (1982:87). Other than recognizing her "self", Sylva learns to be independent and, as Cinderella in Judith Viorst's version, makes her own choice. When the woman asks Sylva to give her back the jewel, Sylva claims that the jewel has been taken by her stepmother. However, the woman says, ‘No one can take unless you give.’ (1982:86). It is a matter of choice. From then on, Sylva learns how to reject her stepmother's request for the jewel by saying "I cannot" and "I will not".

According to Maria Tatar, Sylva's transformation is a positive one:

‘The change from "I can not" to "I will not" signifies Sylva's transformation from a passive, subservient child to an active, self-assertive young woman. Her transformation, significantly, takes place without the help of a prince but rather from her experiences with a nurturant adult female. In Yolen's tale, there is no fancy ball, no magic slipper, and no male presence to save Sylva from a malevolent stepmother. Left to her own devices, the heroine asserts her independence and carves out a new identity for herself.’ (1987:241)

Traditional gender ideology is always in an antagonistic opposition to the idea of feminism. Older fairy and folk tales re-enforce the binary opposition of male and female while the feminist fairy tales protest against the conventional ideas on female representations. The system of rewards in fairy tales, according to Marcia Lieberman equates three factors: ‘being beautiful, being chosen, and getting rich’ (1986:190).

Gender relations, I have argued, are complex and unstable in the fairytale arena of ongoing conflicts and contingent negotiations between male and female.

In the two literary examples above, the relationship between female and femininity breaks down. The heroines' personality is different from the traditional fairy tales and folktales portrayal, advocating the idea that femaleness and femininity are culturally related and not biologically determined.

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# CINEMATIC MEMORY AND THE AMERICANIZATION OF THE HOLOCAUST

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**Abstract:** Steven Soderbergh's *The Good German* (2006), while grounding itself in WWII, casts a wide net as it attempts to examine the role of memory, the difficulty of assigning guilt, determining justice, defining the past, and writing history. Its nuanced treatment of these issues is enhanced by its complex ethnic characterizations and its contextualization among a group of WWII American cinematic classics. This ultimately leads to a shift in viewer reception aimed at creating greater understanding and empathy.

**Key Words:** Film Noir, Jewish representation, identity, memory, WWII

## 1. Introduction

*The Good German* (2006) by Steven Soderbergh grounds itself in film noir's World War II roots as it positions itself in the rubble of Berlin on the eve of the Potsdam conference (July 1945). There, Truman, Churchill, and Stalin meet to establish peace and to come to grips with issues of the aftermath of war. Soderbergh's film, largely overlooked, is a dense intertextual work, which addresses memory—private and public—in a time of trauma (deWaard 2010:107). Specifically, it deals with the Holocaust. Contemporary with Soderbergh's film are several other works which testify to the ongoing cultural interest in memory, particularly, as it relates to history. One is the two-volume edition of essays accompanying the “massive” exhibit on WWII by the German Historical Museum in Berlin in 2005 which brought together works by major historians of memory from twenty-five European countries and Israel. Another is Harvard Professor and critic, Susan Suleiman's *Crisis in Memory and World War II* (2006) and yet a third is Ann Kaplan and Ban Wang's *Trauma and the Cinema* (2004). While some critics claim the Holocaust and memory have become an overblown obsession, Suleiman argues we should be asking “how this recurrent interest in memory is best put to public use,” not “when will it fade?” (2006:8).

The far-reaching import of the Holocaust has been widely acknowledged by Andreas Huyssen: “[the Holocaust is] a powerful prism through which we may look at other instances of genocide.” (2003:14). Suleiman also claims the Holocaust “has become a template for collective memory in areas of the world that had nothing to do with those events but that have known other collective traumas.” It is precisely the Holocaust as

template that inspired Kaplan and Wang's *Trauma and the Cinema*, which focuses on reconciliation efforts in international conflicts. "Putting to use" what we have learned from the "memory boom" of the last twenty plus years since Pierre Nora's seminal study on sites of memory in France, *Les lieux de memoire* published between 1984 and 1992 is also a key concern of Suleiman. Her interest in effective political negotiating is apparent from her reference to the 2004 Harvard conference on "cultural citizenship," and the problems that underlie this concept--"contested memory" or "conflicting narratives" (2006: 8). While focusing specifically on the Holocaust and the aftermath of WWII, Soderbergh's *The Good German*, like Suleiman's *Crisis of Memory and the Second World War*, casts a wider net.

The complexity which Soderbergh brings to his treatment of memory, history, and justice is particularly highlighted when considering his work in the context of two other American WWII film classics, which, in fact, are intertexts for his, namely, *Casablanca* (1942) and *Schindler's List* (1993). Michael Curtiz's *Casablanca* is a propaganda film designed by Warner Bros. to urge America's support of the war, while Spielberg's work--often cited as playing a crucial role in the Americanization of the Holocaust--immerses viewers viscerally into the horrors of war and specifically concentration camp life. The earlier film makes no mention of Jewish issues due to a complex blend of "economic insecurity, diplomatic isolationism, and anti-semitism" (Mazzenga 2009:2-3 and Birdwell 1999:78-82, 129). Spielberg's brings the plight of the Jews, especially those who immigrated to the United States, on to central stage. It also contributes to the revision of the evil German stereotype presented in *Casablanca*, as the director focuses attention on the moral "bildung" of German businessman and profiteer Oscar Schindler. Soderbergh's film, while participating in this American cinematic continuum, serves as a dramatic counterpoint--and much needed complement--to these two other World War II films. Having a Jewish voice at its center, *The Good German* seems, at first glance, to redress one of the commonly cited absences in Spielberg's, whether justified or not, namely, the lack of a Jewish spokesperson--critics often focus on the sidelining in *Schindler's List* of Ben Kingsley's character, Itzhak Stern (Hansen 1997:147). Soderbergh, in making his central character a Jewish female who self-identifies as a German, also pushes beyond Spielberg's in terms of gender issues.<sup>6</sup>

While both Curtiz's and Spielberg's film have embedded film noir elements, they remain essentially idealistic narratives that gravitate toward historical accounts in black and white that emphasize the life-affirming role of memory. *The Good German*, true to noir, exposes the underbelly of American idealism and exploits themes of duplicity, aiming for a more

complex perspective. Soderbergh's treatment of self and other-German and American, Jew and Gentile—good and evil are even more intricately intertwined. Curtiz's "we will always have Paris" and Spielberg's highlighting of the power of Jewish communal ritual and remembrance in the midst of attempted Nazi erasure in Krakow, contrast with Soderbergh's more sobering view of memory and war. *The Good German*, in fact, revises *Casablanca* (Nelson 2009), bringing historical nuances to Curtiz's earlier film. While Soderbergh shows "it is hard to get out of Berlin," as a mental site, his film focuses on the determination to try. History and justice are amorphous and slippery concepts, if paramount.

Central to *The Good German*, much like *Schindler's List* (Burgoyne 2008:104), is the integration of the story of a real individual and an encompassing narrative of World War II.<sup>4</sup> Soderbergh's Lena Brandt (Cate Blanchett), based on Stella Goldschlag, is the major channel through which complex issues of memory, defining the past, assigning guilt, and determining justice and responsibility are explored. Yet what a controversial complement this voice is. Lena is not only Jewish, but German. The real model for Lena, Stella Goldschlag, later Kubler and Isaaksohn, was a "greifer," a Jew who informed on U-boats--other Jews living undercover in Berlin--often sending them to their deaths. The Lena/Stella story, which broke in 1992, opened up the field for new discussions of Jewish involvement in the war. It was launched by American immigrant/citizen, Peter L Wyden, a German-American journalist and a former classmate of Stella during her years at the Goldschmidt school in Berlin. Unlike Stella, Peter had successfully escaped Germany before the onslaught of the War (Wyden 1992:271). His investigation, perhaps stemming from survivor guilt, was an attempt to try to understand Stella's actions, a good starting point for Soderbergh's similar attempts to try to make sense of Stella and larger issues of justice.

Soderbergh, unlike Wyden or Spielberg, gives few graphic specifics of his main character's life during wartime. Wyden details the life of an attractive blond with Jewish cultural roots who considered herself nothing other than completely German and refused to wear the star except at work. She was caught by a "griever" and forced to acknowledge her Jewish roots, accused of passing as an Aryan, tortured by the Nazis for it and threatened with family deportations. Subsequently, she too became a "griever." In *The Good German* Lena's suffering is conveyed by her determination and desperation to get out of Berlin--a geographical location as well as a mental state--and by her bouts with self-loathing. Soderbergh's focus is on Lena's conscious choice to transform her identity, a action which is akin to that defined by Susan Suleiman as a "crisis of memory" (2006:113,134).

This apparently audacious recasting of the traditional femme fatale is obscured and complicated by Soderbergh's withholding of information about her role as "greifer" until the denouement. He first presents a contradictory body of evidence, forcing viewers to participate in a complex moral evaluation which is fundamental to his film's thematics. This body of evidence includes not only background on the Germans, as the title of the film suggests, but also on the Americans. While Truman takes the high moral ground in his public rhetoric, stating America wants no material gain for itself, only peace, the reality of the American diplomatic core on the ground shows a group of military, judicial and diplomatic personnel working at cross-purposes, conflicting agendas and diverse ethnic and political allegiances. The chaos which results is magnified by the moral morass of the postwar situation in which bartering and hypocrisy abound. Structuring the film in this way allows for the intermingling of Lena's personal story with numerous others, thus illustrating the difficulties of assessing and writing history, especially during wartime. The film thus offers a new, more nuanced view of the German and American character and history, of self and other.

## **2. Moral Ambiguities**

For Lena the process of getting out of Berlin is aligned with the desire to be a "good wife" to her husband, Emil Brandt (Christian Oliver), who is clearly targeted by her as the "the good German." He is an SS soldier who was the secretary/assistant to the infamous German scientist Franz Bettmann (modeled after Arthur Rudolph) the director of a slave labor camp, camp Dora, which produced V2 bomb technology. Thousands of Jewish workers were killed there and Bettman was directly responsible. Emil, being his secretary, has the documentation and/or memories crucial to understanding and assigning responsibility for the deaths. Without these there is no way to link Bettmann with the atrocities.

Emil is pronounced "good" by Lena partly because he has saved her— "a Jew married to a SS is not a Jewess," as she says. Emil is an idealist, like Victor Lazlo (Paul Henreid) of *Casablanca*, though he supports the opposite side. Lena's husband is devoted, not only to his wife, but his country and wants to do the right thing, to clear Germany's name and restore it to its rightful place in history. He wishes to do this by telling the "truth." Only in this way, he argues, can he redeem his country for "the future" --a phrase which takes on added valence in the film.

Despite the initial focus on Emil, Lena is central in giving voice to the phrase from which the title comes and it is Lena who is in possession of

Emil's documents--history in the making. As is soon clear, Lena has a past as well, one waiting to be opened, one that will expose further the complexity of the good, bad, and the ugly. Emil's "goodness" seems infectious, challenging or inspiring Lena to redemptive action. In declaring her intention and duty to be "a good wife," Lena makes a conscious decision to get her husband to a place where he can tell his story and redeem Germany which, in turn, has the potential to enable her to escape. This one good deed, she claims, is the only way out of Berlin.

More than half way through the film, viewers get a glimpse of the relationship of Lena and Emil. In order to do so, we descend into the bowels of the earth, into a womblike setting. Water images reflect off the walls. Sleeping at the core is Emil whom Lena describes as a little boy with numbers in his head. The visual scene reinforces his portrayal; Emil is depicted with a boy-like innocence. Lena treats him as a child, thus becoming a devoted mother. However, a mother's love can be blind and deadly in its own way. Lena's devotion is dangerous in that she will go to any lengths to protect Emil, which includes killing, thus exposing a basic dichotomy. The numbers Emil has in his head involve the working out of the calorie count needed to determine life and death. Lena never acknowledges this to be a problem. Even if Emil was ordered to do this job by Bettmann and even if a wife's devotion to her husband is noble, are we to assume they are without blame? Lena does.

The cause of Lena's initial guilt is not clear. At first it seems to be survivor's guilt. Her memory encompasses the horrors of war compounded by her Jewish identity: her entire family has been killed in concentration camps. She survives only to be raped by the Russians. Driven by starvation, she has become a prostitute who is subject to abuse. Her self-loathing is expressed by her statement: that "she knows what she has become." One of the few details of the dire conditions of her existence comes from the bartender who says he knew her during the early days when she would have "a go for a can of tuna." Over time she has become callous which is perhaps one of the horrors of war.

Getting out of Berlin as in "telling the truth," however--even apart from difficulties associated with postmodern ones--is a lot harder than one might expect. In trying to get out and getting her husband's testimony into the open, the film brings into focus the difficulty of judging guilt and the compromising nature of the moral world of those establishing the rules of justice, the Americans. It also exposes Lena's own moral shortcomings.

As said before, the American political team in Berlin is composed of persons with various backgrounds which problematize the moral mission of the US and the record of the past that will be re-membered. No one is

innocent. Three main governmental investigators and one journalistic representative, are of chief importance. Their mode of operation is but a modified version of the larger postwar activity in Berlin open to marketeering and scavenging in which all are ready to prey, profit, compromise and revel in the power politics. It is a world in which everyone is "acting like the war is not really over."

Muller who is head of the military police, is in charge of security. In fulfilling his job he needs to get the best German scientific minds over to the American side, to keep them from the Russians and to assure America's future. In carrying this out, he has stashed Franz Bettmann, the head of camp Dora mentioned earlier, in a safe house waiting to be transported to the U.S. He would also like to bring Emil. Muller is not concerned with who is responsible for the atrocities committed at the camps. Judging from an antidote he tells about a mule in military attire, a scientist's loyalty is to his profession, not to a political ideology. To him, Emil's documents and testimony represent an inconvenient truth which he needs to expunge.

Bernie is the chief U.S. officer in charge of deciding war crimes, an impossible task as he readily admits. He is not aware initially that the other members of the American team are hiding facts from him (e.g. Bettman's detainment). It is suggested that Bernie's ancestry, most probably Jewish American, may compromise his ability to carry out his mission in an unbiased way.

The third political representative is a Congressman from New York who has a large German constituency. He insinuates that Bernie may be too zealous in his pursuits, and thus verges on revenge rather than justice. He wants to make sure Lena and Emil makes the "right" decision, which is to give over the documents so they can be hushed. He tells Lena there are things the US wants to forget just as there are things Germans want to forget.

The fourth investigator is the reporter Jake Geismer (George Clooney), sent to Berlin to cover the Potsdam conference and/or any other worth-while stories. He represents the so-called traditional private dick of noir, yet he is definitely no Bogart. He is German by background and possibly Jewish American as well. He presents a threat to Bernie and Muller because he probes into their business, causing problems. Also, his previous love relationship with Lena can be a possible detriment. He, like Rick of *Casablanca*, is a romantic. But unlike Rick, he has no more insight than the audience. His ineptness is signified by the bandage he sports, which links him with the other Jake of *Chinatown* fame who is plastered with a huge nose bandage. Lena, whom he clearly still loves, is someone he wants

to aid and protect. But to Lena's credit she seems not to want to take advantage of him.

Lena, realizing her limited options, finally turns to Bernie as the only one who will enable her husband to testify. Bernie, rather surprised, says she must trust and that he loathes Muller's hypocrisy, yet, he doublecrosses Lena by trading her secret regarding the whereabouts of her husband for the chance to bring to trial twelve bigger Nazi criminals. Then he betrays Muller. Jake tries to intervene to help protect the husband of the woman he loves. He does so by bashing in the head of a member of the American military police with a brick. Then he offers up Emil's documents for a transit visa for Lena to a destination of his choosing.

### **3. The Judgment**

The last scene of *The Good German* replays the airport scene in *Casablanca* and, as in that earlier film, there is a surprising twist at the end. In the latter, Rick surprisingly announces to Ilse he is not accompanying her on the plane out of Casablanca; he will sacrifice his love for the larger cause, i.e., for the Resistance which her husband Lazlo represents. Ilse's support, Rick maintains, is vital to carrying out her husband's mission. However, when Jake meets Lena on the tarmac, in spite of his unquestioning love, he poses one last puzzling issue about her past. The inquiry addresses how she survived so long—up until 1943—before Emil could protect her. Her answer is shocking for both him and the viewers. She states she has informed on twelve Jews. With this, Lena turns and gets on the awaiting plane, alone, even though the plan was for her and Jake to leave together. Certainly this ending reinforces the notion of femme fatale with a vengeance.

What are we to make of such an ending, especially after we have been led to sympathize with Lena throughout the film. Are we meant to condemn her? Jake, by refusing to accompany her, certainly does. Yet idealism has misled Jake throughout most of the film. As Bernie says, in another context, "Jake you have been wrong every step of the way, why stop now."

Lena is not "killed off" like most femme fatales. Jans B. Wager, the author of *Dames in the Driver's Seat* would no doubt put Lena in the category of progressive femme fatales, together with Tarantino's Jackie Brown of whom Wager's approvingly states, "[she] drives off to the airport...not admitting what she did was okay, but that she did what she did to get by"(2005:154). Certainly, if rephrased, this could also fit the situation of Lena, if the context was not so blasphemously different: she

flies off from the airport not admitting what she did was forgivable, but that she did what she had to do to survive.” “Everything is to survive,” as Lena says.

Lena is aware of “what she has become” which is manifested in her self-loathing and in her simultaneous resignation, indications of an exhaustion of the trauma she has undergone. She recognizes her need to make amends and attempt to be a better person, “a good wife.” This is not because of political shifts. In fact, she risks her own life in the process, being, as she is, a “hunted” woman. However, she only succeeds in getting her husband killed. The irony of her failure is that her seemingly good-faith agreement to deliver her husband’s testimony to Bernie is betrayed by those to whom truth and justice are entrusted, the Americans, who trade her information about her husband to get something they want more—bigger fish. The Americans, too, see survival as all important. As Muller shamelessly asks Jake, “What do you think this Postdam conference is about, who gets Poland?” To which he adds, “it’s about the future.” By this he means getting the scientists for the future of U.S. bomb technology.

This context, while not exempting Lena, places her situation in a wider context of human behavior which casts a new light on it. If Lena is unable to deliver truth, as her husband knows it, she does, at least, speak out the truth about herself which she has been skirting throughout the film. This truth exposes not only her own situation, but that of others as well.

Lena perhaps questions why Jake doesn’t follow her on the plane, as she did earlier when she left him to attend her husband, which suggests her desire for the old romanticism. The death of her boy-like husband, who also retained vestiges of that innocent past, already signaled its loss. Truth is now so traumatic, it cannot be processed. Betrayed once again by her American lover, Lena is rejected by Jake. However, she does literally get out of Berlin but doesn’t perform the one good which in her eyes is a prerequisite for redemption and the alleviation of her moral torment represented by Berlin, through no fault of her own. Yet even if she had been able to deliver Emil, redemption would not have been forthcoming. All seem to bear witness to the fall of romanticism and the ruins of her post-war world.

How different this is from the sentiment evoked by “we will always have Paris” at the end of the Michael Curtiz’s *Casablanca*, which Soderbergh refashions. How different it is, too, from the redemption of Oscar Schindler, the con-man with good intentions, at the conclusion of *Schindler’s List*, and that film’s celebration of survival of both victims and viewers, who have suffered a vicarious trauma.

Both Jake and Lena long for the old romanticism but “We will always have Paris,” uttered by Rick, has no equivalent in Soderbergh’s post-



war Berlin landscape. Memory can not be so easily re-membered so as to become a source of comfort and joy; the memories of Berlin are traumatic, painful, and inescapable. Soderbergh's work gives voice to the unspeakable sins in which redemption is not possible and survival is a living torment.

The case of the real Lena, Stella Goldschlag, as detailed by Peter Wyden, while different in many ways from that of Soderbergh's figure, also reinforces it. Wyden places his character's story in a wider historical context, in which he recounts the numerous examples of others who assisted the Nazis in order to survive. Among these he considers the conduct of Jewish doctors and the Judenrat, in addition to examining the proceedings of the Jewish Courts of Honor, noting the few guilty verdicts delivered. Stella's suffering is also evoked as her daughter was forcibly taken from her by the Nazis. Although the Russian courts incarcerated Stella for 10 years, Wyden notes "Memories, notoriously selective in court proceedings, are also flawed by absence of context that by-gone era" (1992:248). His contextualization in *Stella* influences one's perception of her deeds. As Wyden himself says, "I couldn't rid myself of the feeling that there, in the defendant's chair, Stella Kubler...did not sit alone. There, invisibly, sits the entire system of a totalitarian state...Everybody mistrusted everybody else. Everybody was frightened of the next person. Innumerable people were ready to sacrifice their neighbor in order to survive" (1992:253).

The suicide of Stella, which occurred soon after Wyden's publication, indicates that she, like Lena, found it "hard to get out of Berlin." Both Wyden's and Soderbergh's contextualizations of Stella's/Lena's stories attempt to reach some level of understanding of the committed actions and thereby create empathy. Soderbergh's film differs, however, from others in the cinematic WWII trilogy mentioned previously. It alters its cinematic strategy: rather than inducing forgetfulness via a melodramatic cure like *Casablanca* or vicariously traumatizing viewers as in *Schindler's List*, the film transforms viewers into witnesses (Kaplan and Wang 2004:9-10). In doing so, Soderbergh addresses Susan Suleiman's recommendation quoted in the opening of this paper, a recommendation that readers and viewers ask how we best use the stories of the Holocaust which have come to the fore in increasing numbers in recent times.

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# REPRODUCING GENDER NORMS THROUGH PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORT PEDAGOGY IN ROMANIA

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**Abstract:** This paper aims to identify and analyze the ways in which physical education and sport pedagogy in Romania currently contribute to the reproduction of gender stereotypes. Sport opportunities are limited by the separate expectations of males and females in physical education and sport settings, leaving little room to challenge the meanings of masculinity and femininity through physical activity in the Romanian society.

**Key words:** equity, gender norms, masculinity, femininity, physical education, sport.

## 1. Introduction

The topic of gender in physical education is important because, at present, in most Romanian schools differences are still being made between male and female pupils during the physical education and sports class, despite the fact that teaching, in Romania, respects the principle of coeducation (common education for both genders).

School, as an educational and formative element, is the medium in which moral, civic, educational values are learned; however, in the didactical activity, gender differences appear at various levels, such as promoted values and culture, types of relationships etc. The physical education lesson through its mixed characteristics allows the socialization of male and female pupils with the purpose of reducing social as well as other differences between the two categories: “female” and “male” (Delphy 1991; Mathieu 1991) but also “girl-pupil” and later “woman” and, respectively, “boy-pupil” later “man”. Gender studies can be approached from the perspective of physical education through the analysis of gender stereotypes regarding the sports branches and disciplines which are not recommended for girls, as they are considered to be “masculine” (Mennesson, 2005) and can be incorporated into what is known as *feminist studies*. However, the same rules also applies to boys that wish to practice sports branches or disciplines considered to be “feminine”, such as dance, ballet, even volleyball and this can be incorporated into *masculine studies*. Gender differences are defined as the product of the interaction between the biological characteristics of women and men and the environment. They reflect individual differences regarding biological, psychological and behavioural variables (Ruble& Martin 1998).

Through gender identity, one understands the process of social construction of the differences between the two categories: “feminine” and “masculine” (Delphy 1991; Mathieu1991). However, the differences at the level of cognitive abilities of girls and boys explain the different needs in their learning process, including those related to physical education. Through cognitive abilities, one understands the set of processes involved in the processing of information (reasoning, memorising, attention, language use etc.) and the physical education teacher must create and offer learning contexts suitably adjusted for boys and girls respectively, in order to ease and improve this process. As regards the motive abilities, it has been noticed that boys have more developed overall motive abilities, while girls have more developed specific motive abilities (Gurian 2001). The different development of motive abilities facilitates the different development of cognitive abilities: boys will get involved specifically in developing spatial abilities, while girls will engage in social and interactive abilities, with the purpose of developing their verbal activities (Gurian,2001). In view of this, team games are recommended for girls with the purpose of stimulating cooperation and competition, while for boys pair games are recommended for stimulating communication (Chiriac 2004). At a pedagogical level, during the physical education class it has been noticed (Balica et al., 2004) that boys aged between 10 and 14 do not know how to cooperate, but only to compete, having predominant traits such as competitiveness and combativity (Chiriac, 2004). The educational system itself is structured around the notion of competitiveness and not around the notion of cooperation and the search for a role and status suitable to every pupil within the group is not seen as an optimal variant. Girls, who generally do not adapt to the competitive system during the physical education class generally register poorer results than boys (Davisse 2000) and the girls that manage to adapt are labeled as “sportive” or “boyish”. From gender studies into education, a few stereotypes about boys and girls detach themselves, such as: boys are strong and brave, while girls are attentive to the boys’ needs, sensible, caring and they have artistic manifestations (Chiru & Ciupercă, 2000), boys are the one who “get the job done”, while girls are “those that simply are” (Grünberg, 1996). It has been noticed that some girls wish to practice certain sportive activities labeled as being “masculine” (Mennesson 2005) even from an early age, but certain stereotypes do not encourage them to take on the venture. If boys must be “tough”, “strong”, “combative”, “competitive” in the physical education class, then girls are required to be “delicate”, “feminine”, to have “posture”, to “be good” and a girl that plays football will be labeled as a tomboy.

Research show that women have a much more positive attitude towards cooperation than men, while males have a much more positive attitude towards competition than females (Ahlgren 1983, Boehnke & al., 1989, apud Hoyenga & Hoyenga 1993). Often, boys get involved into games of a competitive nature. Even in the situations in which girls and boys play the same game, the boys get competitive with everyone else, while the girls form cooperation groups. (Parker, 1984, Hughes, 1988, apud Hoyenga & Hoyenga 1993).

Through gender education, one also understands the appropriate education of the different learning needs of boys and girls, with the purpose of assuring them equal changes of development. Furthermore, the analysis of the school curriculum represents a current topic. (Balica ş.c.2004). If, up to 2010, the specifics of the curriculum regarding physical education in Romania consisted of guidelines and recommendations regarding the practice of various sportive branches for girls and others for boys, the 2010 curriculum has eliminated these recommendations, complying with the European and national requirements of education. It should also be noticed that in the past, in certain schools, if the space and material conditions would not allow them, the physical education lessons were organized completely unmixed, the timetable was built as to schedule a physical education class for two parallel classes, including the fact that a male teacher would take over the boys and a female teacher would work with the girls when this was possible, if the school had a male and female physical education teacher. These practices are not recommended presently, because they no longer comply to the current educational requirements, it being thought that by working on an unmixed basis, much is to be lost from the boy-girl interaction, even if something is gained at a motive or organizational level. The main problem encountered in physical education and sports can be noticed in the “feminisation” or “masculinisation” of certain sportive disciplines and the work with mixed groups during the physical education lesson is important even from the start of the pupils’ educational path and throughout its duration, with the purpose of avoiding the formation of gender stereotypes.

We consider this subject to be important because at present in the majority of Romanian schools differences are still being made between boys and girls in the physical education class and, if in the introductory part of the lesson, frontal work is conducted, in the learning-consolidation of some specific motive abilities of some sportive games, the groups are formed on a gender basis and not according to value or preference (Combaz 1991). It is important that each lesson of physical education be conducted according to the gender characteristics of the group and this way of working should be

permanently applied, regardless of the content of the lessons. If at the moment of developing certain psychomotor abilities, the repartition on groups of value according to gender can be justified, because pupils' development from a physical point of view is different according to gender, that of the general or specific motive abilities is not justified according to this criterion (Davisse & Louveau 1991). Some teachers prefer to practice football with boys and volleyball with girls (Griffin 1984); this stems from the stereotype that boys are more "aggressive" so the physical contact in football encourages their participation, while girls are more "delicate" and are guided towards volleyball. These teachers do not take into account the other factors that can be resolved by working with mixed groups, such as: learning to communicate verbally and non-verbally with the opposite sex, respecting the civic and moral rules of behaviour, accomplishing the general objectives of education, but also the specific ones of physical education and sports and, last but not least, developing psychomotor abilities but also of basic and specific motive abilities (Cogérino, 2005). It has been noticed that (Coupey 1995) an early practice on mixed groups, especially from the age of 9 – the start of the preadolescent period – will yield major results as regards the resolution of illegalities (Lentillon & Cogérino 2005) and promotion of equity.

The scholastic sports activities are segregated on a gender basis as well. Thus, "easy" sports are recommended for girls, with a low level of competitiveness, and boys are encouraged to practice sports which are strongly competitive. When it comes to education for the formation of abilities (including technical ones), it is oriented, in its practical aspects, through industrial work for boys and manual activities for girls (especially for the role of housewives). The same situation of segregation is also evident when it comes to sexual education (Ștefănescu 2003). By eliminating these gender stereotypes in the physical education class, pupils are allowed to develop their social mobility, defined (Sorokin 1959) as the movement of individuals within a social structure with the purpose of occupying a position suitable to their qualities and abilities (studies, competences, social class, political power and, in the case of our field, motive abilities and qualities). The status represents the position or rank of an individual within the group and generally, in the case of physical education, it is prescribed and gained according to gender (the one in which the individual develops through his/her own efforts and requires creativity, initiative, competition). The status represents an ensemble of duties and privileges and the role represents exercising them and defines the expected behaviour from the one that has acquired a certain status.

**1.1. The purpose of this research** is to dispute gender stereotypes within the physical education class through working with pairs, groups and mixed teams and to analyse the way in which acquiring the status of leader is made on a gender basis.

**1.2. The object of the study** constitutes the analysis of the boy-girl relationship within the pairs, groups and mixed teams within the physical education class and the way in which female pupils will improve their status by assuming active roles.

## **2. Material and method**

The experiment took place in the local school from Jamu Mare, Timis county, during the 2009-2010 scholastic year, on a class of 15 pupils (5<sup>th</sup> graders) – 6 girls and 9 boys with the age of 11-12.

As methods of research, the observation method (systematic method) and Moreno's sociometric method (Moreno, 1934; Georgescu, 1979) were used. The sociometric test was applied, the sociometric matrix has been created and the sociometric indexes have been calculated: the Index of Social Status (ISS) and the Index of Social Preference (ISP) on the basis of the total number of preferences (TPref) and rejections (TRej). The sociometric test used for determining choices and rejections contains 4 types of questions: a) *Whom would you choose to be part of your football team?* b) *Whom would you not choose to be part of your football team?* c) *Who do you think will choose you to be a part of his/her football team?* d) *Who do you think will not choose you to be a part of his/her football team?*

Three variants of answers are provided, each being graded with 3 points, 2 points and 1 point in the order of preference and -3, -2 and -1 for the rejections. These choices will be represented by a sociometric matrix in which only the choices and rejections between girls and boys will be presented.

In the tables presented below, the boys are registered in blue and the girls in red. An initial testing has been conducted at the beginning of the scholastic year and also a final one has been conducted at the end of the same year (Tables 1-4).

## **3. Hypothesis**

Even if initially, in the physical education lesson the statuses are distributed traditionally according to sex and physical abilities, which mean that the boys with skills are the leaders, after working with mixed teams, one

can notice that the distribution is made according to gender and physical abilities which means that the girls with physical abilities will be recognised by his pairs and will be part of the leaders.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Initial testing

#### 4.1.1. Choices and rejections

Following the initial testing, it can be noticed (Table 1) that the formal leader of the group is PD (a boy) with an ISS of 0,85 followed by SS (a girl) with an ISS of 0,35 – they are the most popular pupils of the class. It can be noticed that PD received choices from both boys and girls, while SS is only chosen by girls and rejected by boys. The next boys that have a high social status are two: GV (0,28) and GS (0,14) and the girls next in rank when it comes to a high social status are four: SP (0,21), CL (0,21), NL (0,14), SM (0,14).

**Table no. 1**

Class	SM	ML	IL	KC	TI	GI	GV	AR	CL	NL	SS	SP	PR	GS	PD
SM	0			-3					1		3	2	-2	-1	
ML	3	0		-1					2	-2	-3	1			
IL	-1		0	-2	-3	3	1								2
KC	-2	-3	1	0		3				-1					2
TI		-1	1	-3	0						-2			2	3
GI	-3	-2	2			0	3			-1					1
GV			1	-2	-3	3	0						-1		2
AR				-3	-2			0			2	1	-1		3
CL	-1	-3			-2				0	2	3				1
NL	-2	-3			-1				2	0	3				1
SS	2			-2	-3					3	0	-1			1
SP		-3			-2	1		-1			3	0			2
PR			1			3	-1	-2					0	-3	2
GS				-1	-2	3	1	-3						0	2
PD		-1	3			2	1			-3	-2				0
T. Pref	2/5	0/0	7/7	0/0	0/0	7/7	4/6	0/0	3/5	2/5	5/14	3/3	0/0	2/2	12/22
T.Resp	5/7	7/7	0/0	8/8	8/8	0/0	1/1	3/3	0/0	4/7	3/7	1/1	3/4	2/4	0/0
ISS	0.14	0	0.5	0	0	0.5	0.28	0	0.21	0.14	0.35	0.21	0	0.14	0.85
ISP	-0.21	-0.5	0.5	-0.57	-0.57	0.5	0.21	-0.21	0.21	-0.14	0.14	0.14	-0.21	0	0.85

When it comes to preferences, it can be noticed that PD has the highest ISP (0,85) – he is the most popular pupil in the class and he is followed by three male classmates (IL-0,5, GI-0,21) and three female classmates (CL-0,21, SS-0,14, SP-0,14) that represents the chosen and integrated pupils in the group of pupils. The pupils with 0 ISS are indifferent for the group; among them are: KC, TI, AR and PR and only one girl: ML and those with a negative ISP are those who have been rejected: SM, ML and NL.



Noticing the mutual choices and rejections between boys and girls from Fig. 1, it can be observed firstly that they are made on a gender basis (boys choose boys and girls choose girls) and secondly it can be noticed that the preferences are manifested between pupils of the same gender and thirdly, the rejections are targeted at the opposite gender.

#### 4.1.2. Presumed choices and rejections

From Table 2 it can be noticed the girls presume that they will be chosen by girls and rejected by boys. The presumed ISS places PD on the first place (0,57), which indicates the central spot the he occupies within the group, 8 of the pupils thinking that they will be chosen by PD to be part of his team, which denotes his status as leader and the others' desire to be chosen by him. On the second position are two boys GI and IL (0,42) who, as is PD's case, are preferred by boys and rejected by girls and on the third place is a girl – SS (0,35), who is preferred by girls and rejected by boys. On the following position is a boy – GV (0,28), together with a girl – CL, followed closely by three girls: SM, NL and SP (0,28).

**Table no. 2**

Class	SM	ML	IL	KC	TI	GI	GV	AR	CL	NL	SS	SP	PR	GS	PD
SM	0	1				-3	-1			3	2				-2
ML	3	0				-1	-2		1			2		-3	
IL	-3	-1	0	-2		3	1								2
KC	-3		1	0		2	-1							-2	3
TI			-3	-2	0	3		-1						1	2
GI		-2	3			0	1		-3			-1			2
GV			1	-2	-3	3	0						-1		2
AR	-2	-3	1				-1	0			2				3
CL						-2			0	2	3	1	-1		-3
NL			-1			-3	-2		2	0	3	1			
SS	2	-1		-2					1	3	0				-3
SP	2					-3			1		3	0		-1	-2
PR			1	3		-3	-2						0	-1	2
GS					-2	3	1	-3		-1				0	2
PD	-1	-2	1			3	2		-3						0
T. Pref	3/7	1/1	6/8	1/3	0/0	6/17	4/5	0/0	4/5	3/8	5/13	3/4	0/0	1/1	8/18
T.Resp	3/8	5/9	2/4	4/8	2/5	6/15	6/9	2/4	2/6	1/1	0/0	1/1	2/2	4/7	4/10
ISS	0.21	0.07	0.42	0.07	0	0.42	0.28	0	0.28	0.21	0.35	0.21	0	0.07	0.57
ISP	0	-	0.28	-	-	0	-	-	0.14	0.14	0.35	0.14	-	-	0.28
		0.28		0.21	0.14		0.14	0.14					0.14	0.21	

The index of preferential status places SS (a girl) in the center of the group's preferences, even if it indicates the fact that the girls would like to be chosen by their classmate, they do not think that SS would choose them, as opposed to PD who has 8 pupils that think they will be chosen by him and

other 4 that think they will not be chosen by him, which lowers his preferential status index.

Among the accepted boys, IL and PD (0,28) are also present. Among the accepted girls are CL, NL and SP with an ISP of 0,14 and one boy (GI) and one girl (SM) are indifferent to the group of pupils. Those rejected by the group of pupils are: KC (-0,21), TI (-0,14), GV (-0,14), AR (-0,14), PR (-0,14) and GS (0,21), the same as ML (-0,28).

Given that the boys are more numerous than the girls, the preferences and choices between them are not in the favour of SS, a girl with the highest ISS and ISP among the girls. Due to not knowing the group of pupils and working with an unmixed group, the boys prefer to have a boy leader, while the girls naturally prefer a girl and thinking that they will be chosen by girls, while boys prefer boys in their turn.

## 4.2. Final testing

### 4.2.1. Choices and rejections

From Table 3 one can notice that PD has remained the pupil with the highest status (0,78) but shares this position with SS, who is chosen the same number of times as PD. It can be noticed that SS is chosen equally by boys and girls, the same way as PD. On the following position come two boys: GI (0,57) and IL (0,50).

**Table no. 3**

Class	SM	ML	IL	KC	TI	GI	GV	AR	CL	NL	SS	SP	PR	GS	PD
SM	0	-3	1	-2							3		-1		2
ML		0	2						-1	-2	3			-3	1
IL	-3	-2	0			1		-1			2				3
KC				0	-1	1	-2	-3			2				3
TI			3		0	-1		-2		-3	1				2
GI			1			0		-2	-3		2			-1	3
GV			-1			3	0		-2		2		-3		1
AR	-3		-2		-1		2	0			1				3
CL	-1		1		-2	2			0		-3				3
NL	2		-3				-2			0	3			1	-1
SS		-3				2		-2		3	0		-1		2
SP	1		-2			2	-1				3	0			-3
PR	-1					1				-2	-3		0	2	3
GS	-1		2	-2		3	1				-3			0	
PD		-1	1					-2	-3		3			2	0
T. Pref	2/3	0/0	7/11	0/0	0/0	8/15	2/3	0/0	0/0	1/3	11/25	0/0	0/0	3/5	11/26
T.Resp	5/9	4/9	4/8	2/4	3/4	1/1	3/6	6/12	4/9	3/7	3/9	0/0	3/5	2/4	2/4
ISS	0.14	0	0.50	0	0	0.57	0.14	0	0	0.07	0.78	0	0	0.21	0.78
ISP	-0.21	-0.28	0.21	-0.14	-0.21	0.5	-0.07	-0.42	-0.28	-0.14	0.57	0	-0.21	0.07	0.64

The index of preferential status places PD (0,64), SS (0,57) and GI (0,5) as being the most popular, followed by IL (0,21) and GS (0,07) as

being accepted and SP, who is indifferent to the group. The following boys are excluded: KC (-0,14), TI (-0,21), GV (-0,07), AR (-0,42) and PR (-0,21), together with the following girls: SM (-0,21), ML (-0,28), CL (-0,28), NL (-0,14).

It can be noticed that the girls receive rejections from boys and the boys receive besides rejections (as in the initial testing), also choices.

#### 4.2.2. Presumed choices and rejections

As regards the presumptions about whom would choose them and who wouldn't, the two leaders (PD – a boy and SS – a girl) lead by far from the rest of the group. However, SS (0,71) is perceived better by the group than PD is (0,50).

**Table no. 4**

Class	SM	ML	IL	KC	TI	GI	GV	AR	CL	NL	SS	SP	PR	GS	PD
SM	0	1	-3			-1			3		2				-2
ML	2	0		-2			-3		1		3	-1			
IL		-3	0			1		-2			3		-1		2
KC			3	0	-1			-2		-3	1				2
TI	3	2	-1		0				1		-2				-3
GI			3			0	2		-1		1			-2	-3
GV	-1			-2		3	0				-3			2	1
AR			3		-2	2		0			-3		-1		1
CL	3	2	-1						0		1	-2			-3
NL			-2					-1	1	0	3	2			-3
SS	-1		1			-2				3	0	-3			2
SP		-1		-2			2		-3		3	0			1
PR			3	-1		-2		-3				1	0		2
GS	-1		-2			2	3				1			0	-3
PD			2			1	-3		-1		3		-2		0
T. Pref	3/8	3/5	6/15	0/0	0/0	5/9	3/7	0/0	4/6	1/3	10/21	2/3	0/0	1/2	7/11
T.Resp	3/3	2/4	5/9	4/7	2/3	3/5	2/6	4/8	3/5	1/3	3/8	3/6	3/4	1/2	6/15
ISS	0.21	0.21	0.42	0	0	0.36	0.21	0	0.28	0.07	0.71	0.14	0	0.07	0.5
ISP	0	0.07	0.07	-0.28	-0.14	-0.14	0.07	-0.28	0.07	0	0.5	-0.07	-0.21	0	0.07

As regards the index of preferential status, it can be noticed that SS (0,50) is the leader of the group. The group of accepted pupils consists of two girls: ML (0,07) and CL (0,07) and three boys: IL (0,07), GV (0,07) and PD (0,07). The group of indifferent pupils consists of two girls: SM (0) and NL (0) and one boy: GS (0). The group of the rejected is formed by five boys: KC (-0,28), TI (-0,14), GI (-0,14), AR (-0,28), PR (-0,21) and one girl: SP (-0,07).

## 5. Discussions

One can notice that, if upon initial testing, the girls rejected the boys and the boys neither chose nor rejected girls, after working with mixed teams, the boys choose SS, highlighted as a leader with real sports abilities, but they do not choose other girls and the number of rejections towards them increase. This could be explained by identifying the sport and especially team sports, due to the existing contact as being male sports and by competitiveness – at this level only SS manages to rise but the other colleagues do not identify with the competitive model of the sportive person.

If upon initial testing none of the boys think that they will be chosen by SS, upon final testing the majority of the boys (with the exception of one) think that they will be either chosen or rejected by her.

ML goes from being rejected by the group to achieving acceptance upon final testing.

## **6. Conclusions**

It can be noticed that if initially boys and girls did not express any opinion towards the opposite sex (in the case of boys) or, on the contrary, they rejected them directly (in the case of girls) based on stereotypes, after working in pairs, groups and mixed teams, the boys and girls get to know each other and express their choices and rejections according to the abilities and the boy or girl's way of communicating. By working on a mixed basis with a group of pupils, a better development of the capacity of communication and competition is encouraged for boys and girls, respectively. This determines a better mutual knowledge and implicitly paves the way to finding a role within the team for every boy and girl, regardless of gender.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

This communication is made and published under aegis of Iași “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University and West University of Timișoara as a part of a research programme which is funded by the European Union within Operational Sector Programme for Human Resources Development through the project *Trans-national network of integrated management for post-doctoral research in the field of Science Communication. Institutional construction (postdoctoral school) and fellowship Programme (CommScie)*. Code Project: POSDRU / 89 / 1.5 / S / 63663.

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**LOST IN THE BERMUDA TRIANGLE:  
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF LOCATIONS IN JEAN RHYS'S  
*WIDE SARGASSO SEA***

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**Abstract:** *This paper attempts to show in what way the exotic island of Jamaica expose the main characters and their fate. This part of the Atlantic Ocean seems to be torn between two different cultures, and also covers the notorious and mysterious Bermuda Triangle. The title is also foreboding for the protagonist's fate: she will get just as lost into madness as ships in the Sargasso Sea.*

**Key words:** *Caribbean islandscape, cultural identity, location metaphors, periphery of consciousness*

## **1. Introduction**

The most important location in the book is the island of Jamaica, where the action of the novel takes place, more specifically the house in which Antoinette spends her years as a young girl. The nature that surrounds her home is seen as the 'Garden of Eden': "Our garden was large and beautiful as the garden in the Bible- the tree of life grew there. But it had gone wild. The paths were overgrown and a smell of dead flowers mixed with the fresh living smell" (Rhys 1999:10-11). Apart from the intertextual link with the downfall of the Bible's Eden, it is a foreboding image of Antoinette's life. Her garden is a symbol for her own fate. She too will grow out of control and in a way be a mixture of life and death, ending up crazy.

## **2. The Sargasso Sea**

The state of being marooned links Antoinette to the wilderness of her place and her existence: "Indians who escaped the genocidal tactics of the colonizers were then called Maroons. By the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the word had taken on connotations of being 'wild', 'fierce', and 'unbroken'" (Emery 1990:54). One of the locations within the island itself is the convent in which Antoinette lives a regular life for a while. She finds her identity within the patterns of the convent. As Emery Mary Lou says: "[t]he opening of the convent gates represents the dissolution of Antoinette's feelings of security and clarity behind the convent walls" (Rhys 1999:71). The convent is all that oppose the island itself: strictly divided, regular, understandable and predictable, while she herself is too wild, just like the island.

Moreover, there is Mr. Rochester, Antoinette's husband, not by choice. It is soon apparent that he does not get on well with the island, illustrated by his thoughts: "Everything is too much ... Too much blue, too much purple, too much green. The flowers too red, the mountains too high, the hills too near" (Rhys 1999:71). He is blown away by its overpowering beauty, it is almost as if he cannot handle the island. Antoinette means the same to him as the island does:

"I hated the mountains and the hills, the rivers and the rain. I hated the sunsets of whatever colour, I hated its beauty and its magic and the secret I would never know. I hated its indifference and the cruelty which was part of its loveliness. Above all I hated her. For she belonged to the magic and the loveliness. She had left me thirsty and all my life would be thirst and longing for what I had lost before I found it". (Rhys 1999:50)

Rochester hates what he desires, yet cannot understand; both island and Antoinette are a mystery to him, but both cast a certain enchantment upon him. To sustain this fact, in his *Critical Study* of Rhys, Thomas Staley stresses their differences: "[...] we are constantly made aware of the unbridgeable gulf of understanding which separates them. [...] Antoinette is a part of the Islands; her attraction to the wild and the exotic confirms her affinity; it ties her irrevocably to this land" (Staley 1979:103). From this quotation it clearly appears that Antoinette cannot really be separated from the island. In this sense, John Su asserts: "Antoinette expresses a profound longing for the West Indies of her youth; [she] contrast[s] [her] lifeless and lonely present among the white English against a vibrant past among the black West Indians" (Su 2003:68). Their honeymoon takes place on island of Granbois, near a village with a very much evil omen name, that of Massacre. Therefore, their marriage will not last, but will in a way end up in a massacre. Even more Rochester's attitude towards the island shows that his relationship with Antoinette will not last, especially when he takes her to England. Although most of the significant locations in *Wide Sargasso Sea* are exotic, the contrast between Jamaica and England is also meaningful. On the island itself, the honeymoon estate titled Granbois ('great forest') foretells her emigration to the cold large forests of England.

Rochester stays with Antoinette only for her money, so he has to take her with him to England, because he will not stay on the island. It is too wild and complicated for him. On the one hand, he leaves Antoinette (the island) behind and on the other, he takes her (Bertha, his creation) with him. With this act, part of Antoinette dies:

"I have been too unhappy, I thought, it cannot last, being so unhappy, it would kill you. [...] England, rosy pink in the geography book map, but on the page opposite the words are closely crowded, heavy looking. [...] Cool green leaves in the short

cool summer. There are fields of corn like sugar-cane fields, but gold colour and not so tall. After summer the trees are bare, then winter and snow. White feathers falling? Torn pieces of paper falling? They say frost makes flower patterns on the window panes. I must know than I know already. For I know that house where I will be cold and not belonging". (Rhys 1999: 68)

Antoinette does neither belong to England, nor she has left her real identity, self on the island. "Her image of England is gradually dominated by cold and snow, all of its features set in careful contrast to the warmth of her native land. England holds no hope for her; it is cold, menacing, isolated, dead. [...] There is no unifying element where the two of them [Antoinette and Edward Rochester] can meet; there is no context to join them" (Staley 1979:90). England was always dead to Antoinette, as is Rochester to her. Antoinette belongs to her island, even though she has a complicated relationship with its native inhabitants. She is as colourful, wild and unpredictable as the island. England and Rochester are cold and do not and will not understand Antoinette. She lives there, but her mind is on the island: "Now at last I know why I was brought here and what I have to do" (Rhys 1999:112).

Finally, the major location, the Sargasso Sea is situated between the West Indies and the western (other) world of the United States. Not only does this part of the ocean seem to be torn between these two different cultures, but it also covers the notorious and mysterious Bermuda Triangle, or also known as "The Sea of Lost Ships". If the plot of *Wide Sargasso Sea* is unknown to the reader, at least the title is foreboding for Antoinette's fate: she will get just as lost as ships in the Sargasso Sea, both being an unstable mixture of two cultures.

### 3. The Caribbean (Is)landscape as Homeland

In the process of locating the cultural identities to the *place*, Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin argue that the concept of place in post colonial societies is a "complex interaction of language, history and environment" (Ashcroft *et al.*, 1995:389). The *Caribbean landscape* is both beckoning and impenetrable; it is wild and lush and it is corrupt and untamable. It discloses great mystery and beauty but this merely tempts the greedy of heart to cry: "I want what it hides" (WSS, 189).

The displacement and resettlement of Rhys's protagonists is condemned to *inbetween-ity*. Antoinette's belonging to the *Caribbean landscape* can be observed in *Wide Sargasso Sea* through the colonial distance from what it must forever be her *dream space*: "we changed course and lost our way to England" (WSS, 213). Thus, the Caribbean islandscape



becomes an *illusory psychic space* made out of flashbacks of second-hand memories.

In dealing with *the loss of Caribbean landscape as homeland*, Rhys's fiction foreshadows the issue of homecomings and alienating experiences of the white Creoles who oscillates between the lost ancestral cultures, harsh poverty-stricken island societies and the hostile landscape of the metropolitan host cultures. Homecoming then can only be a contradictory return in and to a *Caribbean imaginary* or the Caribbean *topoi*.

Not quite English and not quite 'native', Rhys's Creole woman straddles the embattled scission between human and savage, core and periphery, self and other. For example, in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, after a disagreement, Antoinette accuses her friend of being a "cheating nigger" (WSS, 10) and Tia calls her a "white cockroach" (WSS, 9). Both girls are moved by the touching atmosphere of the moment because they feel that something has been lost. They see each other as in a mirror image. Moreover, if immediately after her mother's second marriage Antoinette is glad "to be like an English girl" (WSS, 17), later she will come to wonder who she is: "So between you I often wonder who I am and where is my country and where do I belong and why was I ever born at all" (WSS, 64).

Christophine, "a wedding gift from Martinique" (WSS, 8), is an emblematic character in the novel. She is practically Antoinette's caretaker and – in the first part of the text – appears different from the other women in Antoinette's eyes: "she was not like the other women. She was much blacker. [...] she had a quiet voice and a quiet laugh (WSS, 7). Nevertheless, as soon as Christophine says she does not know England, Antoinette thinks "but how can she know the best thing for me to do, this ignorant, obstinate, old Negro woman" (WSS, 70).

But once the local has been fixed, once the materials out of which a text has been made have been located and studied, the critical movement has finally to be outwards, towards the larger picture of which the locality forms only a part. Readings that focus on the counter-discursive strategies of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, though often carried out with radical motives, have tended to set the categories of 'colonial' and 'postcolonial' in stone. Jean Rhys's novels, especially *Wide Sargasso Sea*, may be seen as an entry point to the analysis of the Other as 'latent' to the Western metropolitan centre and its discourses. As the metropolitan space is unmapped, the Other therefore destabilizes the terrain on which Western appropriating strategies are conducted. To re-map the centre's geographies and identities can be an act of resistance especially when metropolitan space is re-described from within the perspective of the Other. The oxymoronic conceptualization of the Other as absent/present defines the Other as never *present*, never *now*. Rhys's

postcolonial narrative strategies institute accordingly new stances about identity. Rhys's postcolonial strategies of resistance seek to embrace a perspective whereby identity, space and temporality may be rendered contingent, shifting and uncertain.

In dealing with the absent Other of the metropolitan centre, Rhys's novel does not only undermine the universal consensus of human rights and social equality as an impossible political and social utopia, but it also touches upon the limits of the finite thought of the Same, upon the inadmissible and the uncanny. They point to the uncertainty and ambivalence at the heart of the self and other, centre and periphery to make up that which exceeds the 'historical', the 'social', the 'rational', and above all the 'Manichean'.

Moreover, Rhys shows the tension between imperial and resistant constructions of 'place' through her attention to the ways in which the island is produced not only by her protagonist's imagination, but by a dominant, imperial imagination as well. The relationship between identity and belonging focuses on two directions of thought: one that claims that the reinvented self expresses the simultaneity of home-exile; and the other one that argues that the existential anxiety is related to the feeling of estrangement from the natural environment. First, a colonial who is trapped within the logic of a place that enforces her Caribbean status while insisting that she can never really be English, exposes his/her national identity itself that is always subject to confusion. Secondly, as long as Englishness is so unreliable, the Caribbean 'colonial identity' too must remain in doubt. There are reasons to believe that both these views offer a broad picture of the relationship between the two approaches of belongingness.

Taking into consideration the 'multi-relation' that 'shadows' the region, a new creative and cultural context for Caribbean identity can be effectively forged. Essentially an artistic framework that draws on linguistic, cultural, and historical patterns of pluralism within the region to express the totality of the Caribbean experience, 'Creolité', as Michael Dash continues, "is essentially a strategic defense of the ideal of diversity in a world threatened by the disappearance of cultural difference" (Dash 1998:239). Barbados, Jamaica and Martinique are among the remnants of a British-colonial empire which now only encompasses a few overseas departments, overseas territories and 'collective territories'. While their historical past and colonial present relate them to a distant metropolis, their history, socio-demographic profile, their cultural traditions and geographical location place them within a Caribbean continuum. They serve to anchor the fundamental role played by the struggle between the written and the oral word in the search for identity in the British Caribbean. This linguistic/literary struggle

has also led to the creolizing the literary trace left by European authors in an attempt to open new perspectives on Creoleness.

#### 4. Conclusions

To conclude, it can be said that locations play a large role in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Places can symbolise a character's attitude and opinion towards something, such as Rochester's view towards both island and Antoinette. She herself is very much entangled with the island, sharing main characterisations as viewed by Rochester. He hates and fears both of them in a way, but desires to have them and their secrets. For Antoinette both wilderness and peaceful convent show her own contrasts. Her need for regularity, but her craving towards the wild. She is not able to control herself, just as the island cannot control itself. It is the core of what Rochester fears: lack of control. This aspect explains Rochester locking his insane wife away, in that way he can still control her.

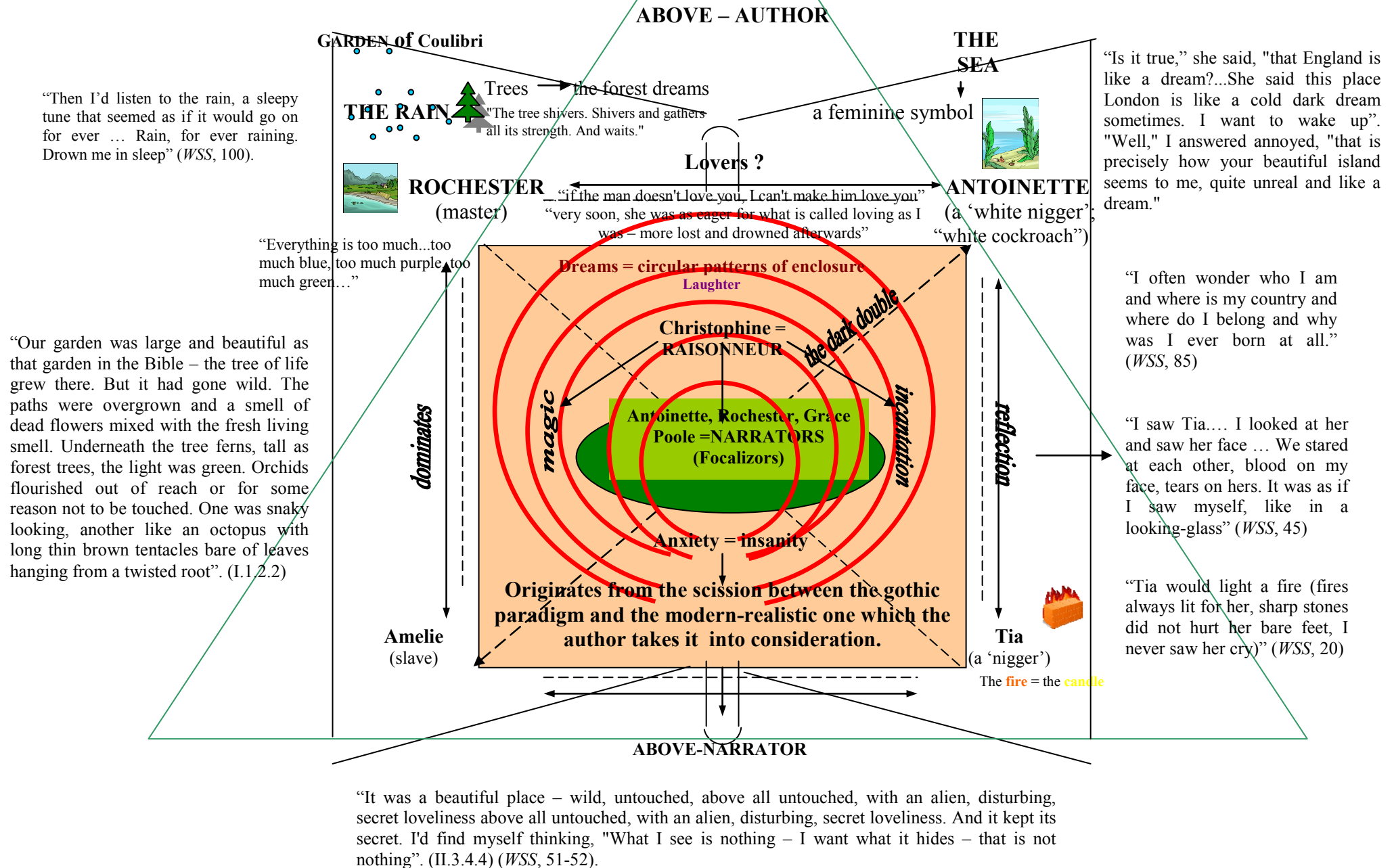
The locations are also foretelling: the names of the places, feelings, surroundings, already show that Rochester and Antoinette will not live a happy life. Even the title itself signals how lost Antoinette will be in the end. Thus, the reader is introduced through all the descriptions of the locations into the tragic climax of Antoinette's sad fate, namely the madness at the end of the novel (see the figure in the appendix).

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# LOST IN THE BERMUDA TRIANGLE:

## The Significance of Madness in Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*



# **IV**

## **LITERATURE STUDIES**

# ALIENATION IN CARYL CHURCHILL'S *A NUMBER*

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**Abstract:** *Caryl Churchill's play A Number echoes the author's attitude towards scientific evolution, having as a result cloning, and its impact on social and moral values and relationships. The paper will focus on identity problems raised by cloning, on the clash between uniqueness and seriality, on the confusion arising from opportunities and unexpected effects.*

**Keywords:** *alienation, British drama, seriality, uniqueness*

## 1. Introduction

Caryl Churchill's intriguing plays tackle various themes related to identity, social and political contextualization shaping realities around dichotomies such as: rational/irrational, masculine/feminine, past/future or past/present. She has faithfully followed this resourceful and ever twisting axis as a response to contemporary problems and threats, disclosing a critical attitude and a warning against the bending of the conventional "order". Caryl Churchill has created an eccentric enjoying of "the orgy" (Baudrillard 2002:3) and then has simulated the joy stemming from a too easily accepted freedom. While staging a postmodern fractal society, resulting in alienation, the playwright also revives traditional, cultural and social patterns, a sort of "centripetal compulsion" (Baudrillard 2002:5) resonant of man's longing for a referential or traditional supporting centre, which instils the necessary tension.

Various forms of alienation trouble the evolution of Churchill's characters. Starting with *Cloud Nine* (1979) the playwright attempts to reach an extreme situation with Joshua and Betty:

There were no black members of the company and this led me to the idea of Joshua being so alienated from himself and so much aspiring to be what white men want him to be that he is played by a white. Similarly, Betty who has no more respect for women than Joshua has for blacks, and who wants to be what men want her to be, is played by a man. (Churchill, 1999:VIII)

In *A Mouthful of Birds* alienation appears as the abandonment of reason and results in "possession, dream, obsession and other states" (Kritzer in Rabey 2003:136). The postfeminist play *Top Girls* shows a manlike behaviour with women and stages a conflict between women who remained stuck in their domestic, traditional role, and career women who discriminate and disconsider the former.

## 2. Alienation in *A Number*

Although closely following Churchill's thematic preference, *A Number* undergoes an ongoing process of alteration in both form and ideas. According to Case (2007:159), the play is "not an interactive performance, but a standard two person play that stages the personal, psychological effect of cloning". Yet, the play defies even the modernist standards by abandoning the setting, which implies cultural decontextualisation, and by overstepping Pinter in the ambiguity and scarcity of the dialogue. *A Number* is play-audience interactive, in the sense that the audience has to fill in the gaps in the text, and it also offers glimpses of the social effects of cloning with reference to the father-son relationship and to family relationship in general. The play attempts alienation at the level of the form, as the traditional dramatic structure into acts and scenes is replaced with non-conventional parts or sections which are equal in importance and form and instil the idea of seriality.

*A Number* provides the reader with the author's attitude towards scientific evolution, having as a result human cloning, and with the impact it has on social relationships and moral values. Human cloning may cause, in Churchill's opinion, identity problems arising from the clash between uniqueness and seriality, from the difference between normality and artificiality, since the artificially created human being evolves within a false medium with an invented history. Seriality implies annihilation of identity. Thus, the power arising from scientific evolution and the consequent opportunities lead to unexpected effects, eventually demonstrating man's inability to master his creation. By breaking moral and social rules, Churchill's characters become alienated and confused.

Besides the characters' alienation in relation with themselves and with the fictional world in which they act, the authorial alienation during the process of creation, leading to characters as variants of the authors' personalities, as reflections of her sides, can be taken into consideration. Due to the feminist drive in Churchill's works, her having created only men characters may either imply man's inability to master his creation, to overcome difficulties or to replace women, the mother in this case. On the other hand, these men may be seen as hypostases of women, which may suggest both the empowerment of women, who are very alienated and behave like men, resorting to the propagation of the species via cloning, and the impact of a woman's absence in child's or a family's development, an idea that triggers the theme of women's alienation in *Top Girls*. The play is ironic in Case's opinion:

Churchill's history of writing feminist plays might suggest that this is a strategic irony, in settling a new interactive traffic among females upon the dislodged father-son model that has determined centuries of structural inheritance. In Churchill's play, the mother, the egg donor, is absent. The father is named Salter - only the condiment, but not the meat. (Case 2007:159)

In *A Number* the playwright offers another perspective upon alienation since, by emerging from the scandal of animal cloning, it treats the idea of multiple personalities more concretely by providing more physically identical characters, each having a different personality. The idea of multiple personalities hosted by the same individual becomes visible, as the clones are actually parts of the original, have evolved/grown up from a “speck” or a cell of him, stolen from him, which seems to have amputated his psychic potential, while making parts of it manifest in the clones. The result eventually lies in linear characters that do not know each other and refuse familial relationships.

### **2.1. Physical Alienation**

Monotony and variety coexist in an original way. Only two actors appear on the stage, Salter – the father – and one of his identical “sons”. The difference between the sons and the situations is revealed through dialogue. The two characters on the stage are always complementary: B1, B2 and Michael Black are not complex, yet Salter displays different personalities being able to adjust to each of his interlocutors. The contrast between Salter’s relatively complex reactions and ability to adjust and his sons’ linearity leads to complementarity. Salter’s fluid and duplicitous nature increases the sons’ uncertainty and creates a sort of discomfort with themselves as they have no fix centre to hold on. This situation is the outcome of ambiguous genealogy and of physical alienation.

Bernard’s surprise at his having been cloned reminds of Fowles’s work *The Aristos* and the state of being nobody through physical alienation. According to Fowles (1970), each part of his body has its own identity and can be perceived in itself (as an entity), has its independence. Similarly the speck taken from Bernard’s body stops belonging to him and becomes an entity. In a way, it is implied that each cell encompasses an individual and can evolve independently into one. Thus, the play suggests the idea of a multiple mirroring of the individual in him/herself, of deconstruction and alienation. Besides, the text raises the problem of a person’s rights over his/her own body and the legal framework that can hinder someone from stealing physical identities. A house or a garden, Fowles (1970) states, is legally owned while there is no contract to assure one’s ownership over the cells of his/her body, especially at a very early age. When a person perceives his/her body as made of “specks” which can be estranged or sold, then s/he gets aware of his/her physical alienation. B2 and Michael Black are concrete examples of physical alienation and of the potential latently resting in each cell or “speck”.

The traditional and direct father-son interdependence and consubstantiality is annihilated as the father loses his role in the process of conception/creation. Such a scientific discovery makes the notions of “father” and “mother” obsolete. B2’s being



born in a laboratory makes him different from the people he assumes he knows, and everything around him becomes uncertain. He also realizes that his father is not so much physically related to him.

As regards Salter, he is baffled when he is told that there are more than one clone, but he does not reveal any real concern about his son's traumatic experience. He accepts his status as a father of all his sons although he had naturally fathered only one of them and had ordered only one clone. Consequently, he has a very strong sense of his physical ownership and is very pragmatic. Salter assumes that his being the father gives him any right upon his son: including the one to clone him and the right to abandon him. Salter's right over his sons, which is not exercised aggressively and against their will, should not be perceived in the sense of the ancient Greek tragedy, but in a more contemporary way, which makes the father treat his sons as commodities or things. The biological link is altered when Salter chooses to have a copy of his son, made of his son's flesh. B2 and all the other clones are not really his sons in a traditional and natural way.

Besides, the father-son relationship is altered when Salter measures his "sons" in money, he considers them "things", although they are living beings, and they get a price. Their physical status undergoes alienation due to the production: B2 and Michael Black become series products deprived of uniqueness. Although Salter does not reveal any awareness, by cloning his son he abandoned his physical ability to be the father and he got physically alienated, too. The irony of the play rests in the fact that the empowerment induced by scientific discovery cancels both the authority and the power to create of the father through externalization.

## **2.2. Psychic Alienation**

Psychic alienation is related to the multiple personalities as a result of the contrast between the sons' physical similarity and their psychic dissimilarity. This implies the fact that any individual encompasses latent personalities or sides which may be manifest or not, depending on the situations s/he experiences. Alienation is also obvious through alteration of feelings and emotions within the same individual: B2 chooses to leave the house when he realizes he is a number.

Caryl Churchill proposes a paradoxical change of values: alienation as a feeling of not being part of a group appears here as a result of the characters' suspicion of belonging to another group. The character's alienation is the result of a shocking discovery of having lived in a lie, which raises the problem of his identity, not only physical, but also cultural.

Brought up within a traditional context, though incomplete as his mother had died, B2 feels his identity threatened by the existence of the others because of two reasons: 1 – he may be one of them, a clone, which means that his father is not his biological father and his mother is just an invention, he has no family as he was

conceived in a laboratory; 2 – he may be the original and, in this case, his uniqueness has been altered and/or stolen apparently without his father's consent. He does not know whether he should blame his father, the doctors/scientists or both. He remains without bearings: confused and scared at the beginning.

- B2** no it was stupid, it was shock, I'd known for a week before I went to the hospital but it was still
- Salter** it is, I am, the shocking thing is that there *are* these, not know how many but at all
- B2** even one
- Salter** exactly, even one, a twin would be a shock
- B2** a twin would be a surprise but a number
- Salter** a number any number is a shock (11)
- [...]
- B2** what if someone else is the one, the first one, the real one and I'm
- Salter** no because
- B2** not that I'm not real which is why I'm saying they are not things, don't call them
- Salter** just wait, because I'm your father
- B2** you know that? (Churchill 2002:11-12)

B2's experience has alienated him from people and from his family, he starts reconsidering his life by other criteria: real versus not real; normal versus artificial; facts versus verbal reassurance. When his father tells him "I'm your father", B2 cannot believe him. Unable to answer who he is and what he is, feeling insecure in the street and at home because of B1's aggressiveness, B2 resorts to isolation. His newly created inner void determines the need for a new space, an alien environment, a place to hide, more appropriate for his new identity.

- B2** yes I know what you mean, I just, because of course I want them to be things, I do think they're things, I don't think they're, of course I do think they're them just as much as I'm me but I. I don't know what I think, I feel terrible. (Churchill 2002:12)

As far as B1 is concerned, his trauma is much deeper and has been endured for 35 years. He was abandoned by his father and replaced with B2, who was, according to Salter, the child that he wanted. B1 was perfect, probably physically, but he used to cry and was very demanding. B2 was tidy and good, obedient and easy to manipulate, he was the opposite. In his conversation with Salter, B1 is domineering and determined, radical and aggressive, threatening and enraged due to his stolen childhood, home and family, and probably genetically violent, which makes him follow and kill B2 and himself.

The fact that Salter keeps saying that he wanted B1 to be cloned because he was perfect increases the bafflement, as B1 does not know his father's reasons, and Salter's arguments rest on a contradiction. It is curious that B1 chooses to punish B2 and himself, both of whom are actually the victims of his father's decision. Salter tells him: "It wasn't his fault, you should have killed me, it's my fault you." (Churchill 2002:51) Salter is very direct and harsh with B1 revealing him his feeling:

I could have killed you and had another son, made one the same like I did or start again have a different one get married again and I didn't, I spared you though you were this disgusting thing by then anyone in their right mind would have squashed you ... (Churchill 2002:51)

Salter as a more complex character, yet not fully developed in the play, bridges the past with the present: from a common family with a single parent to a harmonious and uninteresting new family – Michael's. Although at the source of the tragedy, Salter remains passive pretending bafflement, he avoids telling the truth and continuously adjusts the speech to respond the interlocutor. When he speaks with B2, Salter is domineering and manipulative, distracting B2's attention from his identity problem and lying to him. The conversation is fragmentary and repetitive suggesting the characters' groping for a meaning and Salter's obvious effort not to directly contradict B2. What really baffles him is related to money: he sees the clones as a source of money because the scientist produced more than one. He tries to convince B2 and B1 to sue the hospital for having damaged their uniqueness. Salter turns out to be an alienated father, insensitive to his sons' needs, and ready to accept new discoveries and experiments without pondering on the possible consequences: what he did was not a trivial thing. Salter also represents the father who feels threatened by his son B1, who is very demanding, and abandons him, which is a substitute to killing him, reminding of King Laius.

### **2.3. Social Alienation**

As mentioned before, within the established limits, the play helps the audience distinguish between the sons through their core emotions expressed in their conversation with Salter, through their stories and through the way in which they behave in this small social group. Their identity is externalized from the body to the text they produce, the only indicator of their identity. With Norbert Elias the body and its natural resources come first, before spoken language, in the process of communication (Elias 1991 in Shelling 2003:201). With Caryl Churchill, the body does not communicate the identity due to the similar physical appearance and to the absence of stage directions in this particular case. Besides, the reader is faced with a tense moment in the father-son relationship, which makes him get a distorted and

focalized image different from the everyday social characters. Chris Shelling (2003:196) mentions that sociological research considers that “the body as a phenomenon is simultaneously biological and social. (...) The body is seen as ‘unfinished’ at birth, an entity which changes and develops throughout an individual’s life.” Social and cultural factors contribute to the construction of one’s identity. The twentieth century emphasis on the body is shifted from the biological to the social in *A Number*, as the difference between identical bodies with the same genetic inheritance arises from the social and cultural context in which they have evolved. Although all the sons are biologically related to the same degenerate father, they are different. B1, who was abandoned and has dark memories of his parentless and loveless childhood, is aggressive and envious on B2, who was made to replace him. B1 kills B2, avenging his years far from his father and punishing his father by taking away the substitute. B2 lacks the sense of belongingness and has a weak personality, as he was the amorphous matter Salter moulded to his wish. By losing the certitude of his origin, B2 has also lost his identity, which shows a socially inadapted being. Michael Black, the clone that had never met Salter is balanced and has a harmonious, although boring, life. He proves that one’s identity is not necessarily biological, but social and cultural.

### 3. Conclusion

As a message, the play is similar to Huxley’s *Brave New World*, warning us against the unexpected, traumatizing effects scientific evolution can have and implies that once the process began, it can no longer be controlled or stopped. It also shows that the alienation problem is a relative one, as it is closely related to the social and cultural background of the individual experiencing alienation. B1 and B2 who evolved within a false and traditionally enwrapped context, being educated in the sense of a father-son lineage, cannot cope with the situation. Michael Black is educated and brought up as a clone, therefore he behaves accordingly and accepts the technological evolution that makes him a number. He complies with the social rules and does not reveal intense emotions. His acceptance of his serial existence results in what Salter considers trivial identity, a number without anything special.

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# GOING BACK TO ONE'S ROOTS: THE REVIVAL OF ORAL STORYTELLING TECHNIQUES IN THE ENGLISH CONTEMPORARY NOVEL

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**Abstract:** *My paper examines the interplay between the sophisticated postmodernist techniques of intertextuality, parody, metafiction and a return to orality or better said of pseudo-orality, a simulated-oral discourse or what the Russian Formalists called "skaz", brought about by much postcolonial, ethnic or feminist literature.*

**Keywords:** *grotesque discourse, intertextuality, metafiction, oral discourse, pseudo-orality, skaz narratives, storytelling*

## 1. From the novel of introversion to secondary orality and *skaz* narratives

If the word *extroversion* best characterises orality due to its participatory nature, *introversion* becomes the attribute of literacy. The interactive relationship of the oral narrative is replaced by the double absence of writer and reader who produce and read the text in solitude. This introversion is transferred to the text through an increased concern with language and a gradual internalisation of narrative technique. From a technical point of view, the self-conscious, almost plotless and de-heroicized, modernist novel is apparently completely different from the oral discourse. The "uncanny" access to the characters' minds, allowed by what Stanzel (1999:161) called the "reflector" mode focusing on a character that thinks, feels and perceives but never addresses the reader like a narrator, and the detached "unnatural" perspective of the camera-eye are poles apart from the garrulous storyteller of oral cultures.

Moreover, Walter Benjamin in his much celebrated and quoted essay "The Storyteller" (1936) pessimistically announced the demise of traditional storytelling due to the depressive inter-World War spirit that suffused much of the modernist literature then. Unfortunately, Benjamin did not live enough to see the revival of orality, or better said of pseudo-orality, a simulated-oral discourse or what the Russian formalists called *skaz*, used extensively by postmodernist writers. Hence, new literary forms have appeared: Magic Realism, ethnic and postcolonial literature. "Simulation of orality in writing appears to want to restore this situation of live communication in a medium that is necessarily marked by detachment, solitude, privacy, and lack of context" (Brooks 1987:36). The keyword here is simulation, since what we have is a simulation of oral discourse, a fabrication, a simulacrum.

This new orality called by Ong (2002:133) secondary orality resembles primary orality, the orality before the invention of writing, in its participatory mystique, its focus on community and concentration on the present moment, and even in its use of formulae. However, as I have said above, this is a simulated orality, thus a more self-conscious and deliberate one which cannot function without writing and print.

Secondary orality is both remarkably like and remarkably unlike primary orality. Like primary orality, secondary orality has generated a strong group sense, for listening to spoken words forms hearers into a group, a true audience, just as reading written or printed texts turns individuals in on themselves. But secondary orality generates a sense for groups immeasurably larger than those of primary oral culture—McLuhan's "global village". Moreover, before writing, oral folk were group-minded because no feasible alternative had presented itself. In our age of secondary orality, we are group minded, self-consciously and programmatically. The individual feels that he or she, as an individual, must be socially sensitive. Unlike members of a primary oral culture, who are turned outward because they have had little occasion to turn inward, we are turned outward because we have turned inward. In a like vein, where primary orality promotes spontaneity because the analytic reflectiveness implemented by writing is unavailable, secondary orality promotes spontaneity because through analytic reflection we have decided that spontaneity is a good thing. We plan our happenings carefully to be sure that they are thoroughly spontaneous. (Ong 2002:134)

This is the orality of the Media, its excessive rhetoric overwhelms us. We are bombarded with personal stories, confessions, whether we like it or not. Everybody wants to tell their story, everybody demands an audience. We have talk shows, reality shows, political debates, personal blogs, stand-up comedies. We have a simulated return to the archetypal storytelling scene in which a storyteller sits in front of his/her audience, which in its turn takes an active part in the performance. The keyword becomes extroversion; an extroversion pushed to its extremes which was also transposed in the novel. Therefore, this archetypal storyteller scene is re-enacted over and over again in *skaz* literature.

According to Kenneth Womack (2006: 115), *skaz* remains one of the most important contributions to literary criticism given by Russian formalists.

A richly textured narrative technique inherent in nineteenth and twentieth century Russian prose, *skaz* refers to literary works in which metaphor, theme and point of view function according to the stylistic requirements of oral and folk tales. (2006:115)

The word comes from the Russian *skazat* which means "to tell" and it is semantically related to *rasskaz*, "short story" and *skazka*, "fairy tale". Jacob L. Mey (2000:166) links *skaz* to homodiegetic novels where an *I* person is telling his/her story

to someone else; thus this dialogic *I* is characterised by “addressivity”. According to the same author, this narrative device is closely connected to oral discourse and the vernacular. Mey (2000:167) also links *skaz* to dialect, or more precisely to “eye” dialect or phonetic deviation: “[overall] the storytelling genre of *skaz* is coloured by the intrusion of the vernacular into the language of the characters (including the language of the narrator as a character)”.

Bakhtin distinguishes two types of *skaz*: simple and “parodic” *skaz*. The former is made of what Bakhtin called words of the second type (objectified discourse of a represented person); this is the case of Leskov’s oral narration who according to Bakhtin uses *skaz* not for its orality but primarily to represent “a socially foreign discourse and a socially foreign worldview” (Morson & Emerson 1990:153). The latter, exemplified in Gogol’s “The Overcoat” is the doubled-voiced *skaz* or the dialogised *skaz* (with “quotation marks” which does more than use oral discourse, it also shows an orientation towards another’s distinctive discourse). According to Bakhtin, quoted in Morson and Emerson:

[to] ignore in *skaz* its orientation toward someone else’s discourse and, consequently, its double-voicedness, is to be denied any understanding of those complex interrelationships into which voices, once they have become varidirectional, may enter within the limits of *skaz* discourse (1990:154).

For Fludernik (1993:107) *skaz* is “a form of storytelling that imitates, parodies and stylizes oral storytelling” which can be encountered in both first and third person narratives. In the latter case, it takes the form of *vox communis* or *communis opinio* which can develop into the voice of *the villagers* thus establishing an empathetic connection with the readers (Fludernik 1996:220-221). Recent novels employ frequently this type of narration characterised by excessive addressivity and the use of the vernacular or dialect. It is enough to mention Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*, Margaret Atwood’s *Surfacing*, Anthony Burgess’s *A Clockwork Orange*, Jeanette Winterson’s *The Passion*, Jeffrey Eugenides’s *The Virgin Suicides*. More recent example of *skaz* are highly dialogical, to use Bakhtin’s term showing a distinct orientation towards the discourse of another. This leads us to the next topic that of intertextuality.

## **2. Postmodernism and the Revival of Orality**

Before writing, the notion of authorship did not exist. There were no authors, but only storytellers or narrators and since there were no authors, one cannot talk about originality, not in our sense of the term. The performance could have been original, but not the story as such. In fact, what they did was to recycle and rearrange plots or themes that had proved successful in the past, in other words, they juggled with them; embellished them according to the needs and desires of their audience, which, of



course, took a very active part in the making of the narrative. Repetition with variation was also necessary in the absence of any recoding devices: without reiteration, a story would have been lost. This is one aspect of intertextuality: recycling old stories, weaving together different narrative threads. I could not think of a better metaphor to illustrate this than Rushdie's Sea of Stories from *Haroun*.

Traditionally, stories were stolen, as Chaucer stole his; or they were felt to be the common property of a culture or community.... These notable happenings, imagined or real, lay outside language the way history itself is supposed to, in a condition of pure occurrence. (Gass qtd. in Hutcheon 1988:124)

However, what oral stories lack is the deliberate ironic or parodic dimension which is a defining characteristic of intertextuality. Without the existence of an author we cannot speak about distance between author and narrator or author and story, and without distance we cannot talk about irony (irony implies distance and authorship). Of course, we do have the distance between storyteller and characters, listeners and characters, hence the humour arising from their description since both storyteller and listeners share a common ground. But this is something else. Moreover, without any means of recording such as writing or print, it was practically impossible to re-visit a story and rewrite it in a parodic key. Nevertheless, the possible connections between orally delivered stories and intertextuality need careful reconsideration.

The issue of intertextuality leads to the next topic that of metafiction or what Hutcheon calls narcissistic narrative (1999:203). Orally delivered stories presuppose the existence of a storyteller that performs a story in front of an audience. The invention of writing resulted in the disappearance of both storyteller and listener and the emergence of the author and the reader. But the author does not write his/her text in the presence of the reader, therefore, the interactive relationship of the oral narrative is replaced by the double absence of writer and reader (and by the double fictionality of narrator and narratee). In the oral tradition the narrative was being created in front of the audience with the assistance of the same audience. With writing, the narrative process becomes invisible; this is the case of much Realistic literature, which in its eagerness to imitate reality, hides the scaffolding of the text. When the novelist exposes the hidden mechanism of the text and invites his readers behind the scenes, the narrative process becomes visible, thus the focus shifts from "fiction" to "narration", from the plot proper, to the plot of narrating. The former type of plot is action oriented, whereas the latter is linguistically oriented. However, when the author decides to re-create the archetypal storytelling scene with a garrulous narrator and an active narratee, as is the case with much ethnic, postcolonial literature, and historiographic metafiction, both the plot proper and the plot of narrating become central. Thus, *skaz* or simulated orality becomes the perfect pretext to combine the sophisticated Postmodernist metafictional game with a non-nostalgic return to plot and story-line.

Not to mention that the narcissistic narrative, with its metafictional structure, bares its fictional and linguistic systems to the reader's view, transforming the process of making, of *poiesis*, into part of the shared pleasure of reading (Hutcheon 1999:203). The reader, according to reader-response theory, holds the key to meaning in a text:

As the novelist actualizes the world of his imagination through words, so the reader – from those same words – manufactures in reverse a literary universe that is much his creation as is the novelist's. (Hutcheon 1999:208)

This freedom of the reader in interpreting a literary text, correlated with new techniques used by writers, such as parody, intertextuality or metafiction, which replace the author-text relationship with one between reader and text, can be said to parallel to some extent the interactive component of oral literature that demands active involvement on the part of the listener both in transmitting the story but also in its delivering. Not to mention that the rise of popular fiction has resurrected the plot and story line, no matter how truncated these two might be in a postmodernist novel.

In her essay about Magical Realism and Postmodernism, Wendy B. Faris (1995:164) writes about the “replenished” postmodern narrators, somehow in opposition to the “exhausted” modernist narrators and calls them Scheherazade's children “born of the often death-charged atmosphere of high modernist fiction but somehow able to pass beyond it”. They rejuvenate the hermetic discourse of their forerunners and their desire for accessibility, and I would add, their return to plot is in contrast with the highly introverted modernist narrative. According to Faris (1995:163), Scheherazade embodies the high modernist narrator – “exhausted and threatened by death, but still inventing”.

Scheherazade's children are storytellers deeply rooted in orality, but since they belong to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, their orality is a mixture between primary and secondary orality. According to Hoogestraat (1998:51), Ong's distinction between primary and secondary orality is deemed to be very useful since it allows those who were excluded from the dominant, central colonial languages to recreate their past histories using an alternative discourse. She goes on to say that Ong's work acknowledges the category of primary orality as a way of imagining the language and culture of others whose language was assimilated or has not survived because of the colonial oppression. However, recreating primary orality can be seen as a utopian endeavour, since according to Tyler (qtd. in Hoogestraat 1998:51) a purely oral culture survives only as an absence in the written record of an ethnographer. To him, the Ongian “primary orality” and Derridean “absence” are almost identical: “[the] oral voice of natives becomes the absent centre around which the text revolves and without which it would not exist” (Hoogestraat 1998:53). The keyword here is absence and thus it becomes important to re-imagine and re-create the absent voices that haunt the official “cultures” and languages. In this category we can include not only the missing voices

of the colonised, but also the absent voices of women or of homosexuals, transsexuals, and the list could continue to include the madman, the convict, the social outcast. Therefore, images of the carnival or of the circus proliferate in the contemporary literature as a way of asserting difference and diversity.

How can one give them voice? By allocating them the role of the storyteller and by allowing them the freedom of an oral discourse within the very limits of a written one. Hence, we encounter a proliferation of first person narratives, displaying a wide range of idiosyncratic narrators; a polyphony of voices looking for an audience, a polyphony of voices that infuse and even saturate contemporary literature. Paradoxically, in many cases the recreation of an oral discourse requires a first person narrative. I use the word “paradoxical” since stories of personal experience were quite rare in ancient and medieval oral stories. Storytellers were not seen as individuals but as members of a community that represented the values of that community, taking their authority from tradition. People started to be perceived as individuals later on but only in relationship with divinity, with God (see St. Augustine’s *Confessions*). Only when religion was replaced by morality, could we talk about the rise of individual (Fludernik 1996:77). Also, in an oral storytelling situation the listener is in the presence of the storyteller, whereas in a writing situation the storyteller is absent, and the best to make him/her present is to give him/her the voice of a first person narrator.

The absent voice that becomes present takes on a subversive role, crosses the boundaries of discourse, becomes an “ontological” *I*. I am adopting here McHale’s distinction between the epistemological dominant (Modernism) and the ontological one (Postmodernism). The epistemological *I* or storyteller (this is the case of Marlow from Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*) is concerned with knowledge and the limits of knowledge, how much you can know yourself and the others. Whereas, much Postmodernist writing, according to McHale (1987:10) deals with violating boundaries. *Skaz* narrators violate first of all world and stylistic boundaries. What do I mean by world boundaries? In many cases, the oral discourse is coupled with a fantastic mode that seeps peevishly in the realistic discourse to undermine the latter, hence, the adherence of many narratives to a mythical consciousness specific to the oral mode. I am now referring to historiographic metafiction, which combines the mythical consciousness of the timeless storyteller and the historical consciousness of the writer of history (the novels of Winterson, Rushdie, Ackroyd, Barnes, etc.). This duality translates itself into a quasi-mythicality that skilfully subverts all dominant accounts of the official past. Therefore, they re-tell the past through the filters of memory which becomes almost entangled with collective memory: a repository of myths, dreams. The inability of oral cultures to document the past in a systematic and detailed manner, due to the absence of writing, of course, means that they are dominated not by a historical but a mythic consciousness. The adoption of a mythic consciousness frees *skaz* narrators from the constraints of time and realism.

Moreover, according to Bal (1999:147)

memory is also the joint between time and space. Especially in stories set in the former colonies, the memory evokes a past in which people were dislodged from their space by colonizers...Going back in retroversion to the time in which the place was a different kind of space is a way of countering the effects of colonization.

The space becomes entangled with myth and fantasy; a reinvented space for a different, ex-centric identity and this return to a mythical space is also reflected in the adoption of a different discourse of what I call a grotesque discourse. I will explain the term later in my paper.

Sometimes the fantastic mode finds expression in fairytales, especially in the novels or short stories of Angela Carter ("The Lady of the House of Love"), Emma Tennant (*Wild Nights*), Jeanette Winterson (*Sexing the Cherry*) or Margaret Atwood (*The Robber Bride*). Nevertheless, it is a parodic rewriting of fairytales in a feminist key; in fact many female writers have adopted this feminine fantastic that has its origins at the margins of patriarchy and heterosexuality. To the same category, one can also add science fiction with narrators representing an alternative reality and addressing narratees which can be members of the same community. *Skaz* narrators are usually described as narrators or storytellers who are associated with the setting of a story, usually their hometown or country (Fludernik 1996:274). One can add here alternative reality, be it science fiction or fantasy: Atwood's *Handmaid's Tale*, Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*. Sometimes they even adopt the language of that community and the narrator addresses a narratee who is allegedly a member of that community (Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*).

### **3. Postmodernism and the Oral Discourse**

The intrusion of the fantastic mode into the realistic one is paralleled by the intrusion of the oral discourse into the written one. Many postmodernist novelists use what I have termed a grotesque discourse. Bakhtin defined the grotesque in *Rabelais and His World* (1987), correlating it with carnival festivities. Hence, the grotesque did not have a negative meaning, contrary to commonly held belief which equals it with monstrosity and deformity, gross naturalism, a negative connotation recently acquired, but had a positive, assertive character, it meant regeneration and renewal. The grotesque discourse is the combination between the oral discourse and the written one, or in other words the written discourse is renewed by the oral one.

In what follows I am going to briefly present some characteristics of oral discourse, as it is used by postmodernist writers. I do not wish to exhaust all the possibilities; instead I will focus on a few illustrative examples. Obviously, not all the narratives that use a garrulous, visible narrator are intensely oral (maybe with the exception of ethnic and postcolonial novels).

Oral discourse is *situational rather than abstract*. This situational use of words becomes obvious in the treatment of metaphors. Metaphors have both literal and idiomatic import. We normally use the idiomatic import in everyday situations, whereas writers like Rushdie or Morrison use both the idiomatic and the literal. The combination of the two is meant to recreate that situational, non-abstract language infused with a mythical reality. Thus, all mundane reality acquires mythical significance: “metonymy and metaphor, as essential phenomenological and epistemological structures, are more deeply integral to the oral consciousness than they are to the chirographic mind (Janmohamed 2002:46)”. In *Midnight’s Children* metaphors for the making of a story from the fragmented view obtained by a doctor of his patient through a hole in a sheet, to the chutnification of history in jars that corresponds to the chapters of the novel appear quite often. Oral cultures explain abstract notions such as love, friendship using animals, fables. This is what Achebe does in *Things Fall Apart*, following the pattern of African stories. Narrative becomes the best tool for creating situational language. “Since oral cultures cannot generate abstract or scientific categories for coding experience, they use stories of human (or anthropomorphized animal) action to organize, store, and communicate knowledge and experience” (Janmohamed 2002:46). Thus, for example, oral narrative will often incorporate folktales, orations, fables.

In the absence of writing, memory played an essential part in the preservation and transmission of information. However, verbatim memory without writing is almost impossible. Hence, a question arises: how could an oral society commit to memory and then transmit its wealth of information? One possible solution is offered by the use of visual clues or visual mnemonics,

which are material objects and sometimes graphic signs that fall short of fully fledged writing because they do not record linguistic expressions per se but only loosely refer to them. (Goody 2000:29)

Also, the information stored with the help of mnemonic systems is hardly verbatim: “instead such systems present you with an object or a grapheme to remind you of an event or a recitation, which you then elaborate”, thus they offered a multiplicity of meanings through their multireferential iconography: coloured beads, for example, referred to specific culture heroes, lines of beads to migrations (Goody 2000:30).

In the hands of postmodernist writers like Rushdie, Jeanette Winterson or A.L. Kennedy these mnemonics or communicators become alternative storytelling devices and have a well-established narrative function. Salman Rushdie in *The Moor’s Last Sigh* uses one of his characters’ paintings to construct the narrative, A.L. Kennedy’s narrator uses alcoholic beverages to weave her story in *Paradise*, Jeanette Winterson’s ungendered narrator structures the story around his/her lover’s body.

Oral discourse is *participatory, performative, empathetic and antagonistically toned* (Ong 2002:43-46). In other words, both storyteller and listener have an active role in the creation of the story: the storyteller delivers the story and the listener enhances the performance by responses, questions, asides, comments. Therefore, many Postmodernist writers used not only dramatized narrators but also dramatized narratees: Saleem and Padma in Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, Dr. Jordan and Grace Marks in Atwood's *Alias Grace*. Sometimes they are not characters in the story but they are mentioned explicitly by the narrator: extradiegetic narratees (Alex's narratee in Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*). To simulate an interactive, oral discourse, narrators will use: embedded false starts and hesitations (Saleem in *Midnight's Children*, formulaic openings or phrases (*The Passion* by Winterson), language that belongs to a certain community (*A Clockwork Orange* by Burgess), periphrasis and apostasy (*Things Fall Apart* by Achebe), verbal habits, addressee and speaker-oriented markers (*The Satanic Verses* by Rushdie).

#### 4. Conclusions

This return to orality, or better said to pseudo-orality "can be regarded as the ultimate endpoint in a conceptual development from oral storytelling into written forms of narrative and their eventual re-oralization at the other end of the spectrum" (Fludernik 1996:178-179). Such a return accommodates influences from both current postmodernist writing practices such as *skaz* narrations, intertextuality, metafiction, experimenting with language, time, space and history, and from alleged oral traditions. Thus, it is only natural for ethnic, postcolonial, feminist literature and not only to have adopted this technique of pseudo-orality which gives voice and freedom of expression to the before silenced ex-centric voices. The use of such a technique, especially for ethnic and postcolonial writers, could suggest a nostalgic return to one's roots.

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# A RETURN TO SENSES: THE HEALTHY SELF IN NADINE GORDIMER'S WRITINGS

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**Abstract:** *The paper analyses some aspects of healthy and diseased bodies presented in Nadine Gordimer's latest writings that mark the writer's return to senses. Some of Susan Sontag's considerations on 'illness and its metaphors' are introduced in order to accentuate the significance of the healing proces in the circle of health, disease and recovery.*

**Keywords:** *diseased Other, Gordimer, healthy Self, senses*

## 1. Introduction

The present paper considers some of Nadine Gordimer's writings that have acknowledged the end of the political novel, what Ileana Șora Dimitriu (2000:91) calls “the novel of the civil imaginary”. The South African writer has always been preoccupied with images of healthy (beautiful and erotic) bodies, considering physicality and sexuality as significant as political life. Consequently, critics have often described her prose as being “suffused with the sensuous”, especially since she declared in an interview that ‘sensuous experience’ made her become a writer in the first place (Ettin 1993:60). Her interest in the human body is expressed in all her novels and short stories. In fact, her latest volume of short stories, *Beethoven Was One-sixteenth Black*, marks her return to sense with a three-part story that analyses love relationships from the perspective of the five senses: “sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch” (Gordimer 2007:141). It represents a new start for South African writers, including the “white quartet” (Kellas 2004) formed of J. M. Coetzee, Nadine Gordimer, André Brink and Breyten Breytenbach who are less interested in describing South African political and social life and more enthusiastic about exploring the mysteries of the human body. Thus, health and disease are used as tropes for a redefinition of private and public relationships and as the means to explore new issues that arise in the South African society. Health is the mark of the self, whereas disease – as the mark of outsiders – expresses the otherness of the self and provides experiences which are thoroughly depicted and analyzed in Gordimer's latest novel *Get A Life*.



## 2. The Healthy Self and the Diseased Other

Healthy bodies have long been considered as beautiful and erotic and they used to oppose diseased and, hence, ugly and unappealing bodies. The numerous outbreaks of diseases during the twentieth century made scholars reconsider their theories about the beauty and ugliness of healthy bodies. Cancer and AIDS are two of the diseases that allow the body to be beautiful and erotic for some time before they manifest themselves. These diseases do not mark the body from the beginning and this is the reason why 'beautiful' is no longer a synonym of 'healthy'. If the healthy Self used to rely on skin to tell the story of the Other, now "visible beauty no longer [offers] any protection" (Gilman 1995:146).

Susan Sontag (2001:26) considers that "health becomes banal, even vulgar" when discussing healthy and diseased bodies, yet Nadine Gordimer's writings celebrate healthy and erotic bodies. Although Gordimer starts from the presupposition that there is always a latent particle in every healthy body that may become activated and, eventually, the healthy Self transforms into an unhealthy Other. Susan Sontag (2001:3) also maintained in *Illness as Metaphor* that

illness is the night-side of life, a most onerous citizenship. Everyone who is born holds dual citizenship, in the kingdom of the well and in the kingdom of the sick. Although we all prefer to use only the good passport, sooner or later each of us is obliged, at least for a spell, to identify ourselves as citizens of that other place.

However, the South African writer considers the recovery process more significant than the disease. Her characters use the 'bad passport', recover and return to their ordinary lives. Gordimer's post-Apartheid novels and short stories offer a careful observation of the human body. She studies both the male and female bodies in order to provide images of physicality that need to be considered due to their significance in assembling the healthy Self. Regardless of their skin colour, women are admired by husbands (in the intimacy of their marriage), by colleagues, fellow politicians or freedom fighters – male or female – (when they decide to abandon their private lives).

Such an example is offered by Vera Stark, the main character in *None to Accompany Me*, a white woman in her sixties who resorts to sexuality in order to redefine her identity. Her life experience has taught her that she needs privacy, in spite of the fact that her work is related to the public and to other people's lives: "she had never realized how much her [...] sense of privacy had grown" (Gordimer 1995:247). The moment she sees what her husband considers to be a masterpiece – a work of art inspired by Vera, in fact a headless torso – she realizes she has no identity beyond that of a beautiful body. She understands that her body is nothing more than flesh, a "warm soft body" wrapped in "the sap-scent of semen" (Gordimer 1995:323). She is objectified both by her husband and by society. Finally, Vera "ends up moving alone

towards the self” (Gordimer 1995:306), satisfying her “need to redefine [...], placing the burden of the self within the other” (Gordimer 1995:276). In this case, the healthy Self searches for a sexual Other to be consumed in a physical relationship and later abandoned.

The same consumption of a sexual Other is encountered in *The Pickup*. Julie and Abdu disrespect the tradition of Ramadan and have sexual intercourse during the fasting period. Although they both know the taboo, their bodies feel the desire rising “overwhelming the lassitude of hunger and the drought of thirst” (Gordimer 2001:155). After the two bodies have consumed each other, “they wash each other off themselves”, although they are aware that Abdu’s mother will sense the forbidden act from “the disturbance in the air of the house – made by his body, alone of anyone else’s” (Gordimer 2001:156). The Arab woman considers the sexual act a sin and her son’s body is “horribly changed [...] into corruption and ugliness” (Gordimer 2001:157). The sexual Other is no longer beautiful, despite its health, it shows a “distorted visage” (Gordimer 2001:158), for it has committed the sin of succumbing to temptation.

The healthy body can also be described as socially integrated, and the proof that a diseased body has been restored to its healthy condition is the welcoming of others. Nadine Gordimer’s latest novel, *Get a Life*, presents two cases of “dual citizenship” – a man diagnosed with cancer and a little girl infected with HIV – who manage to escape that ‘other place’ which is the kingdom of the sick either by defeating the disease or by obtaining acceptance to be integrated in the community of the healthy Other. Their bodies become the markers of individuals who are quarantined before they are accepted by the healthy community. Gordimer examines the body – scarred yet cured – and seeks the answer to the question about the possibility and necessity to depict the sick body in order to render illness and health experiences tangible. The body is invested with the capacity to heal itself with the help of extreme treatment (radiation) so that it may return to normality and order may be restored.

For Paul Bannerman in *Get a Life*, the return to ordinary life as a “natural expression” (Gordimer 2005:110) is marked by the afternoons spent with his two black friends and their families. The man prefers to have children who “swarm around” and thus, he avoids privacy and meditation. Gordimer’s description of children’s games is a small-scale picture of different races interacting on the South African territory: they “race about in rivalry, covet one another’s toys, invent games, hug lovingly, tussle savagely and have to be parted” (Gordimer 2005:112).

### **3. Writing for the Senses**

The writer’s concern with senses is at the center of Gordimer’s narrative, both in the Apartheid and post-Apartheid period. Her latest volume of short stories (*Beethoven Was One-sixteenth Black*) records her interest in the faculties of the human

body, as she places a definition from the Oxford English dictionary at the beginning of each of the three parts of the story "Alternative Endings": "The senses 'usually reckoned as five – sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch'." (Gordimer 2007:141)

### 3.1 Visual and Tactile Senses

Visual stimuli elicit a response at unexpected levels. In *My Son's Story* (published in 1990), a fresh gaze at the lover offers knowledge about art, sexuality and male attitude towards women. For the man in love, the woman's eyelashes "catching the morning sun" reveal everything "he had puzzled over in the days of his self-education [...] as if all were always present even to the casual glance. What would he have known, without Hannah!" (Gordimer 2003a:102). In *The Pickup*, the white woman admires the Arab's "unconscious grace" and his "eyes deep as wells she would feel herself as if straining precariously to look into" and she becomes aware of the fact that love is "that unspoken knowledge they can share; that country to which they can resort" (Gordimer 2001:129-30). Every time she touches her lover's body, smells "the odour of his skin" (Gordimer 2001:148) or overcomes his silence, she recalls her experience in the desert in an attempt to understand its apparent lack of shapes and movement. The lover's silence is paralleled by the stillness of the desert. Julie dreams of taming both her lover and the desert: the first should be persuaded to settle down and renounce his status of eternal nomad, whereas the latter should become a green area. Nevertheless, both 'projects' require financial investment from her part and, regrettably, they fail to materialize. Before Abdu emigrates to the U.S.A. and Julie remains in the Arab country, she makes a final attempt to draw her lover "against her tightly, breast to chest, belly to belly, but he resists wildly and the embrace becomes a parody of the violence that has never existed between them" (Gordimer 2001:263). The sensual experience teaches her how to deal with the cultural and sexual Other and how to integrate in the community bordering the desert.

In *Get a Life*, Paul experiences the benefits of the healthy body before he undergoes surgery and radiation treatment by making love to his wife. His parents use the act of physical love to bury their fear of illness and death: "He stroked her hair, her shoulder, [...] a signal they would have to meet, kiss. [...] They made love, as Paul and his woman had buried their fear when the judgment came by telephone, and they were not aware of their son without this resort, this brief haven from fearful solitude" (Gordimer 2005:28). The sensual experience enables the two couples to hide their anxieties and return to their ordinary lives. At the same time, it provides the opportunity to get in touch with their inner selves and, in Paul's case, come to terms with the diseased body, although his greatest ambition is "to go back to touch and be touched" (Gordimer 2005:54).

### 3.2 Auditory Sense

Silence plays a significant part in the construction of Gordimer's characters. On the one hand, there is the constructive silence of the desert or of the private act of love-making that encourages the contemplation of the beauty of nature and of the healthy bodies. On the other hand, there is the hostile silence caused by the disappearance of a community, by forcing the sick to isolate themselves and deal with the sound of "rabid cell on loose" inside their bodies (Gordimer 2005:87). If Abdu and Julie escape from the noisy family by retreating either to a room or into the desert, Paul is left "in the middle of staring emptiness, of himself" when everybody disappears from his life. When the voices of "disembodied callers" are muted, there is a "vacuum that is filled with the overwhelming furtive sounds" (Gordimer 2005:47-48). The hostile silence transforms into taboo and invites to meditation only when it is broken by words that "can be said among all that cannot" or by the sound of wild creatures that live in the garden-asylum. However, for the diseased, silence seems endless and it imposes a "confrontation with an unimaginable state of *self*" (Gordimer 2005:67). Any disease that requires an isolation of the body and is surrounded by the silence of unexpressed opinions and emotions is

more than a physical and mental state of an individual; it's a disembodiment from the historical one of his life, told from infancy, boyhood, to manhood of sexuality, intelligence and intellect. It's a state of existence outside the continuity of his life. (Gordimer 2005:67)

Silence can be broken by erotic sounds produced by healthy bodies, accompanied by music. In the short story "Some Are Born to Sweet Delight" (1991), the young South African woman who 'chases' a foreigner discovers that she is

overcome, amazed, engulfed by a sensuality she had no idea was inside her, a bounty of talent unexpected and unknown as a burst of a song would have been welling from one she knew she had no voice. (Gordimer 2003b:79)

In the story "The Second Sense", Gordimer describes the love relationship of a musical couple: the wife 'listens' to her career failure as a flutist and to her husband's success as a cellist. She hears the "low tender tones of what had become his voice, to her, the voice of the big curved instrument, its softly-buffed surface and graceful bulk held close against his body, sharing this intimacy" (Gordimer 2007:159). The cello emits sounds that move "from the sonority of an organ to the faintest stir of silences no human voice could produce" (Gordimer 2007:160).

The disharmony that she senses when her husband has an affair is also expressed by the instrument with its “low notes dragging as if the cello refused the cellist” (Gordimer 2007:166). Finally, the wife accepts her husband’s affair and considers it the “experience of a different instrument to learn from” (Gordimer 2007:166).

Gordimer’s return to senses and sensual experiences has been influenced by Susan Sontag’s and Edward Said’s writings. In his essay “Music as Gesture” (1994), Edward Said remarks that

For an audience, watching as opposed to only hearing a musical performance is very much part of the whole experience. What we see can either enhance such qualities as elegance and clarity or it can startlingly dramatize faults inherent to performance. (Said 2008:175)

Nadine Gordimer’s attempt to offer her readers writings that appeal to all senses has materialized in texts that are remarkable due to their refinement, clarity and subtlety.

### 3.3 Olfactory Sense

Visual, tactile and auditory senses are accompanied by olfactory descriptions in Gordimer’s stories. The odour emanated by the diseased body functions as a repellent for the healthy, and it does not disappear with the disease or “by contact with the bodies, with the essence of others” (Gordimer 2005:48). It remains ‘undiluted’, although it is “distilled by [the] days and nights” spent in the garden-asylum. Animals also refuse to share the same space with the ill: Paul’s old dog twitches “its flared nose along the hospital hold-all” and prefers to keep away from the radiant body which is identified as dangerous. Paul’s recovery also implies regaining the smell he has lost “scent by scent” (Gordimer 2005:51).

In “The Third Sense”, two bodies engaged in the act of lovemaking know the smell of life, that is

the smell of his skin mingled with what she is, a blend of infusions from the mysterious chemistry of different activities in different parts of their bodies, giving off a flora of flesh juices, the delicacy of sweat, semen, cosmetics, saliva, salt tears: all become an odour distilled as theirs alone. (Gordimer 2007:172)

The healthy female body likes “to breathe there, into him and breathe him in, taking possession he was not conscious of and was yet the essence of them both” (Gordimer 2007:171). In *The Pickup*, the rooms faintly give “the scent of perfume and semen from an image of how it will be to make love there” (Gordimer 2001:152). The

same smell of the sexual Other makes the lover aware of the absence of intimacy and hollows “him out with the deep breath it made him take, all through his body, limbs and hands” (Gordimer 2001:174).

In *My Son's Story*, smell reveals the presence of different types of people at a political rally: “A woman's French perfume and the sweat of a drunk merged as if one breath came from them. And yet it was not alarming for the whites; in fact, an old fear of closeness, of the odours and heat of other flesh, was gone. One ultimate body of bodies was inhaling and exhaling in the single diastole and systole” (Gordimer 2003a:110). In *Burger's Daughter*, “the cosmetic perfumes of the middle-class white and black ladies and the coal-smoke and vaginal odours of old poor black women” combine in order to offer the olfactory picture of a multiracial society (Gordimer 1980:204).

Gordimer's novels abound in descriptions of black bodies, always healthy and sensuous, expressions of sexuality and power in South Africa. Yet, it must be reminded that, during the Apartheid period, laws were passed to reinforce restrictions for black citizens who were considered mere bodies. The black body was treated as the diseased and infectious Other, and had to be isolated in ‘special’ neighbourhoods (Soweto, for example) where it could no longer contaminate the healthy Self, which used to be the equivalent of the white body.

#### 4. Conclusion

Numerous critics have denounced Nadine Gordimer's decision to abandon the ‘grand narrative’ and turn to the individual. However, her interest in the human body and sensual experiences can be found in many of her writings due to the fact that healthy bodies are Gordimer's modality to express her optimism as far as the future of South Africa is concerned.

To paraphrase Susan Sontag, we might say that the way societies perceive illness and regard the unhealthy Other is what makes illness ‘the evil’ of all times. Yet, “there are new beginnings, in place” (Gordimer 2005:176) and the breaking of taboos will transform the reading of the diseased body from a text that differentiates and stigmatizes into a palimpsest that may be interpreted to uncover the circle of health, illness and recovery.

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# DANIEL MARTIN'S MULTIPLE JOURNEYS

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**Abstract:** *Modern literature modifies the pattern on which most western narration was founded. The hero's adventures come to exhibit the same dependence on initial conditions as dynamical systems do. In John Fowles's novel, Daniel Martin, both character and author benefit from multiple journeys, the fractal characteristics of the novel standing in contrast with the wholeness of the vision.*

**Keywords:** *the hero's journey, adaptation of the myth, fictional experiments, fragmentation, wholeness.*

## 1. Introduction

Western literature, as a complex, historically defined entity, has been to a great extent under the influence of the quest narrative manifesting as the story of a journey, whether physical or symbolical but serving, since the times of Odysseus and Gilgamesh, as a perfect catalyst for the presentation of a plot line that gives lavish opportunities for the unfolding of a sequence of conflicts and resolutions. Many illustrious examples validate the form through the building of a hero whom the journey has caused to leave his natural equilibrium, grow, have his moment of illumination and return to a life changed by the experience itself. Through the hardships endured, the hero achieves his spiritual journey and in Devera's words (2008), transforms “within a personal landscape of ethos and pathos, even as the character traverses the literal landscape”.

This article starts from two premises. The first is that the concept of fractality can be extrapolated to the study of literature, namely, similarities can be found between the structure of Fowles's novel *Daniel Martin* (in which the journey, seen as the dynamic component moving the plot forward, undergoes iteration) and fractal structures (which refer to natural phenomena and which signify the presence of an apparently chaotic dynamic system), since “Even the best examples of natural fractals do not possess self-similarity at all scales, but rather over a sufficiently large range...” (Addison 1997:5). The second premise is that the notion of *wholeness*, which is the philosophy encircling the novel, is both achieved and undermined by iteration and fragmentation, thus triggering cyclicity instead of a final outcome.

## 2. The Traveller's Journey and Its Modern Interpretations

In *The Hero with A Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell surveys the classic formula of the rites of passage (separation – initiation – return) which he elevates to



the level of the mythological adventure, passing from the “domestic, microcosmic triumph” achieved by the fairy-tale hero to the “world-historical macrocosmic triumph” of the mythical hero (Campbell 1949:35). Campbell emphasizes the fact that “the ageless initiation symbolism,” which takes the form of images, is to such an extent a necessary ingredient for the psyche that, if such images “are not supplied from without, through myth and ritual,” both seen as a source of knowledge, they will have to be supplied “through dream, from within,” their absence resulting in a blockage of our energies (1949:11). Campbell also acknowledges the numerous possibilities on the scale of the monomyth. Elements of the cycle of adventures, to which he provides the keys, can be enlarged, others can be connected into strings: “Differing characters or episodes can become fused, or a single element can reduplicate itself and reappear under many changes” (Campbell 1949:228). Modern literature modifies to an even greater extent the infinity of variations, with each new period and each culture refreshing the experience to harmonize the new interests and concerns. Such modifications can range from the destruction of the hero in the process of the journey, as it happens in Kerouac’s *On the Road*, to a multiplication of the experience rendered in a new experimental form of the journey narrative, as is the case with John Fowles’s (1997) monumental novel.

Under the guise of the conventional plot of a *Bildungsroman*, also suggested by the title of the novel, and an apparent stylistic straightforwardness of the narrative, Fowles conceals his most complex novel, one which is strikingly innovative, in spite of being the most autobiographical of all, and aggressively experimental, in spite of such remarkable previous examples as *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, written eight years before. While addressing its intricacy from either a unilateral perspective or in one article would damage the novel in its completeness, approaching *Daniel Martin* from the perspective of the *hero’s journey* seems to be the choice at hand. As shown above, the novel is to a great extent autobiographical, voicing the existential problems of the “unlucky generation”, “the last of the old Oxford”, at a loss for significance now that “all the stabilizing moral and religious values in society, were vanishing into thin air” (Fowles 1997:261). However, while the essence of the classic *Bildungsroman* is obvious, the structure and the perspective of the novel overthrow the logical development of the narrative line, just as they do with the hero’s journey.

The first two chapters of the novel already exhibit changes in the pattern of the mythic quest: the first chapter opens to a first Threshold which the hero, as an adolescent, has to cross on his way to maturity; the second ends with the Call to a second journey which will be an attempt to achieving *whole sight*, the adult’s desideratum.

Symbolically called “The Harvest” (the cognitive apprehension of the title involving the idea of attainment and consummation), the first chapter unfolds on the background of WWII, in the quiet Thorncombe Woods, in Devon. It is 1942 and Danny, the future main character, is about fifteen. Fowles lessens his individuality by

calling him “the boy”, while mentioning all the other characters by their names, for at least two reasons, the first of which becomes obvious at the end of the chapter, while the second is his perceiving the whole opening scene as a Breughel painting, crowded with people, no distinctive personality, except the one of his choice – the hero who will accomplish the journey and whose destiny he will bring close to fulfilment.

Dan, as the boy would prefer to be called, already feels different from the others, ashamed of his educated language (he is the vicar’s son) which he contrasts with the “phonetically condensed” regional speech of the villagers working in the field, a language he will forever associate with the landscape, “combes and bartons, leats and linhays” (Fowles 1997:6). He (or the author) is already struggling with existential problems: he is afraid of dying before the next harvest. He clings to the things he knows and likes, such as the small orchid, *Spiranthes spiralis* (a passion he shares with the author). He has learned to hide his loneliness, “his terrible Oedipal secret” (Fowles 1997:10), the father figure, the vicar, offering no support while he is on the threshold every son has to cross. If Daniel’s journey is not identical with Fowles’s, the latter will surely accompany him while achieving his own adventure. There can be no misunderstanding about it when, at the end of the chapter, there is a complete overlap: the author takes Danny’s penknife from his pocket, the one he has gutted the rabbits with and cleans it, while the boy carves his initials and the date on the beech-tree. This is the end of his childhood and of the dream.

Since later on Daniel does not remember either the events told in this first chapter or his parental environment, of which he tells more in “The Umbrella”, with nostalgia or the heart warming feelings that are normally associated with such memories, one can conclude that the novel opens with episodes of the tests he has to undergo and during which his father fails to act as a Helper. As a mature man, Daniel speaks of “items on the bill” (Fowles 1997:79) of negative influences his father exerted on him, the chapter itself being an explanation of why he grew up to be an atheist. A different chapter, “Phillida”, speaks about his early love story with Nancy Reed. With the girl as Helper and his father and aunt as Threshold Guardians, the road of his sexual initiation is started and abruptly interrupted, one more source for instability in his later relations. Ultimately, it is neither resentment nor desire of self-aggrandizement that tear him away from Thorncombe, in spite of his obvious personal discomfort, but all mythic heroes’ need to look beyond the restricting walls that parents, society and ultimately his own conscience have built around him. Thus, in Daniel’s case, his quests correspond to both Jungian propositions: they are a “testimony of a discontent that urges the discovery of new horizons”, as well as a “search for the lost mother” (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 1969:269), whom he actually lost as a child and to whom he is permanently attracted, but whom he loses again by marrying Jane, the wrong sister. Daniel cannot conclude his search without a restoration of the dislocated balance but, with no one to tell him the rules, he fails to grasp the moment of his possible perfection and, by making the wrong choice, he

maintains his duality and the struggle between good and evil in his soul. Therefore, an iteration of the journey, in which a different starting point will modify the result, is necessary.

As it often happens in modern reproductions of the myth, the pattern is broken, the second chapter does not continue the journey where it was left in the first. What the reader gets instead is what Campbell (1949) would identify as the Return, which it physically is, since Daniel, as a successful career man, leaves the U.S. and returns to England. However, taking into account the circumstances of the first journey, this new experience functions better as a second journey. When dealing with fractals, Bird (2003:3) shows iteration to be a “creative process” not a simple repetition: “When a process iterates, it is performed over and over again but each time with alterations and modifications that might be slight but are nevertheless productive”. Liebovitch says the same: “As a fractal object is magnified, ever finer features are revealed” (1998:4) and “The smaller pieces are like the larger pieces but they are not the exact copies of the larger pieces” (1998:12). Therefore, it is appropriate to consider that the second chapter marks the beginning of a new journey, an iteration of the first one, in which the elements that were missing in the hero’s first endeavour are filled and the quest becomes multiple, with a much larger reward at stake, since it also becomes an attempt to achieve *whole sight*, which is inseparable from inner truth and thus, in this case, as opposed to Nietzsche’s *standards*, *the value of truth* appears to be decided by the “effort required to attain it” (1996:302-3).

Thirty years later, in the early 70s, Daniel Martin is a middle-aged hotshot Hollywood screenwriter, who admits functioning like a computer and being able to write a script even in his sleep. As it often happens, success has its toll and this time it is twofold. On the one hand, he has changed into a rather infatuated, narcissistic person:

He divides conversation into two categories: when you speak, and when you listen to yourself speak. Of late, his has been too much the second. Narcissism: when one grows too old to believe in one’s uniqueness, one falls in love with one’s complexity – as if layers of lies could replace the green illusion; or the sophistries of failure, the stench of success. (Fowles 1997:13)

On the other hand, the same quote makes it obvious that the adult experiences the same feeling of exile that tormented the adolescent, which he assimilates with something that was due to him but had been taken away, “the betrayal of myths,” he calls it. At some point during his first journey he seems to “have been taken over by someone else,” “some kind of fink” (Fowles 1997:15) and thus the first journey appears to be spiritually unaccomplished. His much younger but quite observant Scottish girlfriend, Jenny, notices that Daniel is burned out and suggests writing a novel. But Daniel is aware of the risks, the worst of them being that of losing his

common sense, “the thing cobblers are meant to stick to.” He once “gutted” his friends for the sake of a good play and is not willing to repeat the experience. He ran away then and, as he tells Jenny, once you run away, “you can’t find your way back” (Fowles 1997:16). He left London for Hollywood and thus the first quest degenerated into a running from his own self. But such a flight never reaches its target, therefore it must necessarily be followed by a search into one’s self, which Chevalier and Gheerbrant (1969:270) consider to be the only real journey. The first quest is unrewarded. Through the incapacity of recognizing the Mentors on the way, no enlightenment has been reached, the situation in which the hero was thrust did not provide the way out and the obstacles did not reach the core issue. But Daniel left the door open: he bought Thorncombe for his daughter Caro (or was it rather for himself?). Discovering what is truly important will involve major changes in the character’s life and multiple moments of transcendence will lead him to his final epiphany.

Nietzsche (1996:305) links man’s desire for freedom of will with the moment when he is “most strongly fettered”. And it is exactly at this moment of end of road and confinement that the new Call arrives, in this case a literal phone call from Jane, his former sister-in-law. In between the first two chapters, the first journey has taken place and the way Fowles structured his novel makes obvious his desire to minimize it when set against his major quest.

Daniel has come a long way from his native village and the status of the local vicar’s son. He has certainly achieved what for most people would be the end of the journey, the primary goal of life – worldly success. Whether it is his “inflated ego” which “threatens to block all vital knowledge from the unconscious to become known to his conscious self” and thus triggers his psychological transformation, as Jovanovic (2008:301) suggests, or it is the self’s own necessity to get its own supply of the ageless process through which it is provided with primary initiatory images, is not really important. The second quest will bestow upon the hero’s self its real purpose and will endow him with the spiritual energy to achieve the physical journey that would ultimately allow it to perform to its best within its own microcosm, in conformity with the rules of a much bigger historical macrocosm. For Daniel Martin once the process starts there is no return. In the process of growing (since all stages of the mythological journey work towards the transfiguration of the hero), he overcomes several Thresholds and, in the process, he clears the path and does his mental cleaning of memories which hinder his passage. It is interesting to notice that he does not try to re-adjust his old roles with his new capacities; there is no Atonement with the father, which Campbell (1949:135) perceives as the necessary stage for transcending the blind spot of life. In the Occidental culture, materialism (the flesh) often replaces spirituality (the soul), and the hero is often forced to self-justification while struggling in the world of darkness in search for the light. The modern man is in a permanent search for the reasons – already there in his subconscious mind – that would explain his

behaviour. The chapters of the novel that involve flashbacks to the hero's childhood and adolescence are illustrations of this search.

To Daniel the meeting with Anthony on his death bed is a decisive moment. To Anthony, who willingly lived his whole existence within the strict confinements of the Catholic dogmas, the Devil is "not seeing whole" (Fowles 1997:181). The approach of his death allows him whole sight and he wants to correct one of Life's "major design faults" (Fowles 1997:183). Anthony asks Daniel to "disinter the person Jane might have been from beneath the person she is now" (Fowles 1997:177). Again, Daniel does not know the rules and therefore he improvises (in inviting Jane to Egypt he acts on a whim), but the understanding he gained during his first journey gets him through the Road of Trials this time and, therefore, the arbitrariness of the situation leads to the accomplishment of the most significant attempt at *wholeness* in the novel – the union of Daniel and Jane, which was not allowed thirty years before by circumstance and the characters' mixed up sense of responsibility.

Daniel and Jane illustrate two different types of isolation. Totally distinct in their approach to life, Jane, suffocated by Anthony's expectations, first withdrawing into the dogmatism of the Catholic Church then into Marxism, and Daniel superficial in his relations and refusing to see his real self in the turmoil of his social life, they both have a partial sight and need each other. Consequently, they will act as Helpers to each other so as to get the whole picture. During the journey to the mythic and timeless land of Egypt and in the name of a long forbidden love, they readjust their conflicts. Nietzsche (1996:304) points out that "to quieten the heart it is absolutely not necessary to have solved the ultimate and outermost theoretical questions" and this is exactly the process the two of them go through, at the end of which Daniel finally finds the long-sought for mother figure, while Jane's burying her wedding-ring in the Palmyra desert is a symbol of the liberation of her own soul and a sealing of their reunion.

Thus stands Daniel Martin at the end of the novel "reborn to the future" (Campbell 1949:14), which he had not chosen thirty years before but chooses now, having gone through the rites of passage that enabled him "to die to the past" (14) and changed his whole environment in order to assimilate his return to his normal world, the one which he originally belonged to but was not prepared for and could not find without the proper feelings.

## **1. Wholeness versus Fragmentation and Cyclicity**

The psyche has many secrets in store and, just as Fowles chooses to impersonate himself through different means in all his novels, Daniel chooses the role that will allow him to perform a new adventure: the writing of his own novel. Fowles as character pretends that Daniel's novel will forever remain a project, but Fowles as author does not, actually he has already written it.

One aspect of wholeness involves the framing of the novel within one and the same sentence: "Whole-sight; or all the rest is desolation" (Fowles 1997:3). Both author and alter ego have "ripened" during the experience and, within the landscape of their own creation, both have accepted the initiatory images, produced their own symbolic interpretation of the world and accepted the return. But Daniel's decision of writing his novel, coming at the end of the already written one, creates a cyclic movement; therefore, it seems only natural that the sentence he confesses to have found for the end of his yet unwritten novel will act as an overture for Fowles's actual novel.

Wholeness is disrupted at several levels. Fowles, as always, experiments with innovation all through the novel. This time he plays along with shifting perspectives, Daniel's first person account of his life often alternating with the author's third person narration of the events. Author, narrator and character overlap in the present and in the past, in an attempt to have multiple projections from the inside and outside of their unique self. Sometimes this happens in the middle of paragraphs and it culminates in "Breaking Silence" where there are no less than eighteen such shifts. Thus, in spite of the structural integrity of the novel, the very concept of wholeness of vision is obtained through fractality.

The self-similarity characteristic of fractals is manifested in space and time. The great number of locations and time references between which the novel evolves in an oscillatory movement have the role of both shifting the action forward and fragmenting it. While an autobiographical novel involves the idea of discontinuity, the structure of this novel exhibits careful planning when it comes to the physical and temporal journeys that accompany the spiritual one. If the five chapters connected with the first part of the quest are considered to have Hollywood as an anchor and the ten chapters referring to the second part (the exact double number of chapters being a mark of importance) are located in London and Oxford, then there are exactly ten chapters describing temporal journeys into Daniel's childhood, youth, or student years, and other ten spatial journeys with Jane, to Egypt and Libya. The rest of the chapters, again ten in number, refer to: one general discussion about Englishness and cinematography; Jenny's three "contributions", which add to the fragmentation of the structure; two temporal and four spatial travels (again, the number is doubled when reference is made to the second journey) but, unlike the previous ones, this time they are approached from the perspective of the present.

One such journey describes Daniel's repeated visits to a Native American *pueblo*, Tsankawi, in New Mexico. Both times when he undertakes the visit in the company of friends, Daniel is disappointed since he initiated them as tests, but the others seem unable to perceive the magnificence of the scenery the way Daniel does and thus fail to live up to his expectations as to their reaction to it. Moreover, Jenny makes the gross mistake of collecting pottery fragments in view of transforming them into necklaces (fragments into whole). This approach of the modern tourist shatters to

pieces, similar to the fragments of pottery, Dan's older civilisation and more mature approach. Petrified at Jenny's gesture of using vestiges of ancient civilizations as cheap gifts, he decides that she failed the test. In this relationship, in which each of them uses the other, Jenny is the one endowed with more acuity of perception: she understands much sooner that Daniel will not return, either to her or to his previous existence, while the latter, as consequence of a long habit of observing himself from the outside instead of acting as a responsible participant in his own life, and being more involved in physical relationships than in spiritual experiences, is very late in acknowledging the fact. Actually, Jenny's contributions, interspersed among the chapters, have the same role as the authorial shifts of perspective, or the mirrors in Daniel's Oxford room: they both reflect Daniel, but with Jenny they reflect what he has become at the end of his first journey.

The perception of a fluctuating space and time moves the novel forward and covers a host of fields of knowledge. A recurrence of images and experiences creates cyclicity. When Daniel finally has all the jig-saw pieces of his personal landscape fallen into place, he recovers the people whom he mistakenly believed he had to abandon in order to find his true self. Such a person is Caro, his daughter, whom he finds struggling to make heads or tails of her own existence: her involvement with Barney, Daniel's former Oxford colleague and friend, is her replacement of the father figure, as a Mentor. At a different level, Jenny McNeil herself may have undergone the same process, thus balancing Daniel's search for the mother figure.

Two other examples are worth considering, whose significance becomes obvious if the number three itself is seen, as it happens in some mythologies, as a symbol of completion, of the unity between body, mind and spirit. The image/symbol of death appears in three major scenes in the novel. In the first chapter, the pastoral quality of the scene is compromised by the rabbits killed by a mower and the reapers themselves. In the second chapter, Dan and Jane discover a corpse in the reeds while they are on a boat ride. Both these moments are connected with opportunities missed by the hero: in the first case, his fears result in the fragmentation of his self and lead to his becoming a third person observer of himself; in the second case, he passively accepts Jane's decision as to their future, which will completely distort their destinies since they were both in love with each other. It is this decision that Anthony resolved to annihilate before committing suicide, his final gesture thus correcting the implications of death in the first two scenes.

In two of the above situations references to paintings are made. The Breughel painting adds to the pastoral quality of the scene reverted by the symbol of death. A reproduction of Mantegna's *St. Sebastian* that hangs above Anthony's hospital bed, while being a display of his inner self, also acts as a shield against the two major decisions he is going to make: entrusting his wife to a friend and committing suicide. In the final chapter, having parted with Jenny, Daniel contemplates Rembrandt's *Self-Portrait* in Kenwood Gallery (mentioned by name only in the first edition). The

moment itself is important for two reasons. Firstly, it coincides with Daniel's final transcendent experience, which will conclude with his finding "a last sentence for the novel he was never going to write" (Fowles 1997:629), a novel that could only be a self-portrait just like the already written one. But most importantly, of Rembrandt's more than thirty self-portraits, this is the only one exhibiting two unfinished circles, left and right, in the background. The choice of this painting can be taken as an admission of incompleteness.

Thus the symbolic significance of the number three is undermined by the possibility of iteration, the qualitatively new apprehension of the experience, which in itself creates cyclicity. The repetition of the number three would thus point to the necessity of a third journey, the same way the title of the last chapter, "Future Past", and the uncertain but latent novel do.

#### 4. Conclusion

In *Daniel Martin* multiple journeys take place on multiple levels. While the hero's micro-journey reaches an end, the author's macro-journey will continue. Therefore, *whole sight* can be achieved as an aesthetic principle but not as a natural one. The encyclopaedic character of the novel becomes obvious at a first encounter and is not minimized by subsequent readings. As Weston (1920:65) points out, the modern scholars' tendency to specialize deprives them of seeing the object of study "as a whole" and thus "induces them to minimize, or ignore, those elements which lie outside their particular range". But, as already mentioned, addressing the novel in all its complexity would be an unreasonable endeavour. Even in this case wholeness is impossible and is reduced to fragmentation resulting in isolation and a narrow apprehension of the work's enormous multiplicity. This article makes no exception and the only excuse that can be brought to its defence is Siddhartha's noble idealism in Hesse's novel:

When someone is searching, then it might easily happen that the only thing his eyes still see is that what he searches for ... Searching means: having a goal. But finding means: being free, being open, having no goal. (2002:51)

And thus the search itself will be iterated.

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# OFF THE BEATEN PATH: ELLA D'ARCY'S *YELLOW BOOK* STORIES

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**Abstract:** *The small body of work produced by Ella D'Arcy in the 1890s is noteworthy for its experimentation with narrative instability, its unsympathetic treatment of character and its oppressive, claustrophobic fictional world. The paper looks at how D'Arcy's fiction makes use of shifts in focalisation, melodramatic plot twists and closure to build up a sense of irresoluteness and moral de-centering.*

**Keywords:** *1890s, Ella D'Arcy, narrative, short story*

## 1. Introduction

Despite her prominence in the literary milieu of the 1890s, Ella D'Arcy is little known today beyond her small body of work, her letters and several contemporary accounts. Nowadays, her name is most likely encountered in passing in an enumeration of prominent 1890s figures; a small number of her short stories have featured in anthologies, and there has been a brief revival of critical interest in the mid-1990s, owing to a temporary increase in curiosity for all things fin-de-siècle. Critics such as Benjamin F. Fisher (1990:xiv, 1995:223) deplore the fact that her works are not more widely available in print, or indeed that she didn't write more. Recently, the fact that the *Yellow Book* has been made available in its entirety on the *Internet Archive* has provided new opportunities to investigate the lesser known, but not necessarily less interesting writers of the decade.

During the 1890s, D'Arcy published intensely in a number of magazines. Her output consists mainly of short stories, which were then collected in two volumes, *Monochromes* (1895) and *Modern Instances* (1898), and includes only one novel, *The Bishop's Dilemma*, published in 1898.

In the mid-1890s, D'Arcy, hailed by her discoverer Henry Harland as 'remarkable' (Windholz 1996:116), became associated with the emblematic periodical *The Yellow Book*, to whose first issue she contributed the story *Irremediable*. She then contributed to almost all the 13 issues of the magazine, until its demise, which more or less also marks the end of her literary career. She quickly became sub-editor, which, as Anne M. Windholz shows, proved to be an ambiguous position for a female in the 1890s: she was unofficially appointed, and she was paid right out of Harland's pocket; she was in charge of answering letters and keeping in touch with the writers, but was not given the authority to make the selection of texts (Windholz 1996:116). In 1895, after Aubrey Beardsley was sacked in the wake of the Wilde trials, D'Arcy seems to have aspired to the post of art editor (she had initially trained to be a painter, an

aspiration which she gave up due to poor eyesight), but failed to get the post. Her frustrations with her status at the *Yellow Book* and her attempts to take more control of the editing work culminated in her changing the contents of Volume 9 without the main editors' approval and reducing the volume by roughly 100 pages by excluding a significant number of writers, an act of over-confident rebellion which resulted in her being sacked without any prospects of finding another satisfying literary job elsewhere (Windholz 1996:116-127). Although she still contributed stories until the last issue of the magazine, her career practically ended soon afterwards, failing to live up to its promising start.

## **2. The Short Story in the 1890s: A Playground for Innovation**

The fin de siècle marked both an increase in the production of short stories in general, owing to the appearance of cheaper media and new opportunities for publication, and an increase in the production of female short stories. Women found the medium easy to approach, flexible, and convenient (since it required no great investment of time and could, on the other hand, prove financially rewarding; Forward 2003:xiii), so that in the 1890s, and in *The Yellow Book* in particular, the short story became associated with the ideals of the *New Woman* and with the first sustained assertion of these in fiction. Quite a number of significant 1890s women writers (George Egerton and Charlotte Mew, among others) were accommodated there alongside the (now still) more famous male counterparts such as Henry James, H.G. Wells or W. B. Yeats.

In the same time, the genre itself was undergoing significant transformations, moving away from the Victorian conception of the short story as a shorter novel, and from the plot conventions and the constraints of the 'marriage plot.' The very term 'short story' was new at the time: the American critic Brander Matthews is credited with having coined it in 1884 in the *Saturday Review* (Forward 2003: xii; in contrast, earlier writers such as Edgar Allan Poe referred to the short narrative as 'tale'). Poe's influential theory of the short genre, formulated as early as 1842 in his review of Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales*, gained ground in the 1880s and '90s. His idea of the "unity of effect or impression" and of design that the short story should pursue (Poe 1842:571), as well as his definition of "the short story narrative" as a narrative "requiring from a half-hour to one or two hours in its perusal" (Poe 1842:572) were to become important in the formation of the modernist theory and practice of short fiction. Still, in the 1890s a clear theory of the genre was yet to be articulated, so that writers had at their disposal a fresh, dynamic medium. The medium had the additional advantage that it "could focus on specific episodes, encounters and impressions, analysing psychological responses to those moments", and also, importantly, it was one in which "it was acceptable for the ending to remain open" (Forward 2003:xii). The short story thus allowed greater flexibility and more opportunity for

experimentation, and lent itself to the exploration of new areas of interest and a changing social content.

At the turn of the century, the short story genre therefore “emerged as a dynamic site of modernist innovation” (Gillies and Mahood 2007:27). For Dominic Head, the short story is the prototypical modernist literary form, since it “has an enduring ability to capture the episodic nature of twentieth-century experiences” (Head 1992:1). In his discussion of the form’s aesthetic, he argues that there is always a paradoxical ‘disuniting’ effect in the story (Head 1992:2), which, due to the ellipsis and ambiguity inherent in the short form, functions as a counterpart to its ‘unity’ – that the story, and especially the modernist short story, has at its core tensions between unity on the one hand and openness / irresoluteness on the other. The same ambivalence marks its “moment of insight,” one of the central aspects of the aesthetic of the modernist short story. Confined by its brevity and by the requirements of the unity aesthetic to focusing on one significant moment or situation in one character’s life, on one revealing instant, the modernist short story typically challenges this very revelation (Head 1992:17-18). “In fact,” Head points out, “most of the accepted modernist ‘epiphanies’ are problematic” (Head 1992:20). While they provide a sense of narrative closure, they do not provide either moral conclusions or clear resolutions, and, with all their focus on unity, remain essentially open-ended.

### **3. Unsettled/Unsettling Narratives: Ella D’Arcy’s Fiction**

D’Arcy’s *Yellow Book* stories are in the spirit of these late Victorian developments, as they take advantage of the inherent instability and flexibility of a new genre to experiment with narrative technique, and use it to probe new subject matter and explore new ideas. They are populated by uncongenial characters and rendered in the voice of an unsympathetic narrator; its focalizers are often either morally repelling or naïve. The settings are sometimes claustrophobic (notably featuring the closed provincial scene of the Channel Islands, where D’Arcy lived for a while) and her bitter, cynical world view allows for no happy endings. Her choice and treatment of her subject matter remind both of Maupassant and of Henry James, but there is a certain indecisiveness in both subject matter and form and, in Head’s terms, an abundance of ‘disuniting’ effects, which generate a degree of ambivalence that rides a rather thin line between early modernist experiment and artistic flaw. Her realistic narratives, which display a very convincing, subtle and often chilling analysis of psychological mechanisms, sometimes suddenly turn gothic; there are frequent dramatic shifts from one point of view to another, or changes of focalizers to the point in which we lose track of who the main character in the story is. In addition to that, characters, including focalizing characters, often misunderstand or willingly misrepresent situations, a strategy used for the purpose of creating ambiguity, but also to achieve dramatic (or melodramatic) plot twists. Stories build up towards a final

moment of crisis, which however usually leaves us with no resolutions or insight – but rather with a refreshed set of questions.

In what follows, I will attempt to illustrate this by taking a closer look at three of D’Arcy’s contributions to the *Yellow Book*. The first two, *Poor Cousin Louis* and *An Engagement*, appeared in Volume 2 (July 1894) and Volume 8 (January 1896) respectively, and both feature Owen, a young doctor who is trying to establish himself in the Channel Islands. The third, *Sir Julian Garve*, appeared in the last volume (13, April 1897) of the quarterly.

In *Poor Cousin Louis*, we are introduced to the landscape of the Islands by an easygoing, humouring omniscient narrator who leads us seamlessly into the characters’ world by a lengthy description of the Channel Islands setting and of the house belonging to the old Louis Renouf, but refrains from inspecting more closely their identities, backgrounds, or inner minds. The situation is gradually introduced through the eyes of Mrs Poidevin, whose old cousin Louis is spending his last days in the decaying house.

We are gradually made to suspect from the observations of Mrs Poidevin (who however fails to understand what the reader does) that her cousin is at the mercy of his housekeeper and her husband. He is also tormented psychologically by Margot, a girl who helps in the kitchen and takes an evil pleasure in making the old man uncomfortable. The housekeepers manage to persuade Mrs Poidevin that Louis Renouf is senile, and that his reports of things being stolen from his house are figments of his disintegrating mind. While Mrs Poidevin’s incomplete understanding of the situation makes it unclear to the reader whether Cousin Louis is indeed senile or if he is physically helpless, but perfectly lucid, it is clear that he is certainly less senile than Mrs Poidevin believes him to be.

Despite his cousin’s mistrust, the terrified old man manages to convince her to take him away into town the following day. Unexpectedly, at this point in the story our focaliser so far – Mrs Poidevin – leaves the house – and we are introduced to the thought processes of another guest, Owen, the young doctor, who is as yet a stranger to the reader. He is called to pacify the old man, and, brighter than Mrs Poidevin, quickly figures out the situation. However, since he is still very much trying to establish a reputation for himself and is not yet doing very well in terms of patients, he has an interest in keeping the old man there, or at least in benefiting from the publicity that his death or an association with his name in the papers might bring him. The housekeepers have no interest in keeping the old man alive, and imply to Owen that their employer’s death wouldn’t be in the least inconvenient, since his departure might endanger their position. Thus, while the doctor gives precise instructions as to what must be done to ensure the old man’s survival, we are made to understand that he is in fact giving instructions on what might kill the old man. The story ends with Owen leaving the house – just as it began with Mrs Poidevin approaching it – and this circularity is underlined by the return of the image of a window from the beginning of the story, this

time framing a large shadow, as we are made to infer that the old man is being murdered (or at least that his death is being hastened).

On the one hand, the story is very cohesive structurally and stylistically, with the events gradually building up towards a climax and towards our full realisation of the situation; there are a number of unifying motifs, the most prominent of which being that of the stately old house, decaying at the same time as its owner. On the other hand, we perceive his drama through two very inadequate reflectors, one (Mrs Poidevin) too obtuse to understand what is going on, the other (Dr Owen) too cynical to care. Both are lacking in empathy, which prevents the story from slipping into sentimentality and makes the old man's tragedy even more chilling, as we ourselves, as readers, are torn between sympathy for the old man and identification with the perspectives of two characters who dismiss him as senile, and in a way or another become accomplices to the murder. Thus, despite the presence of the smooth, reader-friendly omniscient voice, we are denied any conclusive judgments and we lack any consistent moral centre. The story also lacks a clear sense of a main character – the place is disputed between the old man whose tragedy unfolds throughout the narrative, and Owen, who appears only half-way into the story, but whose motivation we are made to understand more closely and who is the character we literally leave the story with.

Owen reappears as the protagonist of one of the later *Yellow Book* stories, *An Engagement* – or at least of its first half, for the most part of which he is again the focaliser – and is the same ruthless character in much the same predicament. We find him getting engaged to Agnes Allez, while he believes she might be coming into a fortune and might help his position, and then trying to get out of the engagement when he realises that he has been misled and that the marriage might not be as socially advantageous as he initially thought.

In the second half of the story, a shift in point of view occurs once again. The events are now narrated, again in the third person, from the perspective of Owen's fiancée, who is rather simple-minded (there are hints of in-breeding) and, even after he breaks off the engagement, perseveres in finding him excuses until things become too obvious to deny. Eventually, she dies in despair of the shock (or rather of an ambiguous affliction that suggests a combination of sunstroke and broken heart).

However, the story does not end with her death, as we might expect; there is another last paragraph which gives us the perspective of a minor character – that of Mrs Le Messurier, Agnes's grandmother, as she remembers the dead from her past. This last perspective upon the events is unemotional and lacking in sympathy – she gazes into the past “through dim and tearless eyes” as she tends to her retarded grandson “with his mirthless laugh,” and then “the vision is scattered into thin wreaths of smoke” (D'Arcy 1896: 406).

Once again, we end up without a clear sense of who the protagonist is. Despite the fact that Owen is a recurring character (and focaliser), the drama is delusional

Agnes's. Had the story ended with Agnes's death, it would probably have slipped into melodrama. D'Arcy does go for melodramatic effects, but, like in the previous story, the effect she is interested in goes beyond mere sentimentalism. We are not allowed to sympathise with the victim to the end – but are given a last view of detachment and oblivion which foregrounds not Agnes's tragic end, not Owen's cruelty towards her, but rather the absurdity, the gratuity of her death – and of her life, as a matter of fact. What the story leaves us with is, once again, a sense of miscommunication and meaninglessness: Owen may understand but doesn't care; Agnes doesn't understand, or sometimes misunderstands willingly; whereas the uninvolved witness – Mrs Le Messurier – remains the carrier of a vague and unemotional memory.

The same sense of absurdity, triggered by similar uses of technique, is present in D'Arcy's last *Yellow Book* story – *Sir Julian Garve* – which in a sense is probably also one of her most daring and possibly least successful. It focuses on the meeting between Underhill, an American, and Sir Julian Garve, a British baronet, over baccarat at a Casino. Underhill realises that Garve is cheating and winning his (Underhill's) money by unfair means.

The point of view is technically speaking omniscient, but feels rather like a series of quickly alternating limited perspectives; focalisation shifts dramatically and abruptly from one character to another – generally between Garve and Underhill, but the perspective of a third character, Morris the diamond broker, is also occasionally introduced. The shifts are used not as much to give us an inside view of one of the characters, but to look at the other character from the outside – not to gain more insight and understanding, but rather to create blanks and ellipses.

Underhill is a rather typical 'innocent American' – in fact so innocent that he doesn't allow himself to believe his realisation that Garve is cheating, and only acknowledges it by Socratic talks with his unconscious self (his 'shadow' – an odd gothic echo in an otherwise realistic narrative). In the final confrontation between them, Garve acknowledges that he indeed cheats, and breaks down, seemingly humiliated by the revelation. The scene is rendered from Underhill's perspective – and we are made to expect that Garve will commit suicide. In a final plot twist, however, Garve appears to change his mind and decides to shoot Underhill instead, in order to prevent him from compromising his main means of survival. Surprisingly, the scene is rendered from the perspective of Underhill, who is so American that he refuses to believe that he is being shot; we join in his sensations, as we are ourselves misled by his disbelief: "For the fraction of a second he thought Garve had really shot him... but that was absurd... a little blow like that!" (D'Arcy 1897:307), before the ceasing of 'all sensation' and the fall of his body to the ground makes us acknowledge his death. Once again, we are left with the sense of an unsettling and disjointed narrative, which, while it provides a sense of closure in the death of its protagonist, refuses to give value to his insight (an insight which in fact he consistently denies) and rejects any moral solutions. There is no reward for the good Underhill and punishment for Garve the

wrongdoer – rather, like in many other of D’Arcy’s stories, the characters seem to be good only when they are too feeble-minded or naïve to be proficiently evil.

#### **4. Conclusions**

D’Arcy’s closures are almost always such hurried, jolting slaps in the face, preceded by a melodramatic (and admittedly rather artificial) plot twist. This is by no means a new development in Victorian literature – from Dickens’s early short stories to Hardy’s twists of fate or the grand finale of the fin de siècle gothic fiction, melodramatic closure is, if not the norm, then hardly an exception. However, unlike in the case of her predecessors, D’Arcy’s contrived, theatrical endings only superficially provide a sense of closure, and never a sense of a restoration of order. The fact that she associates these plot twists with an otherwise usually realistic narrative and with compelling psychological analysis, the lack of a moral centre in her stories, the fact that the focalisers usually arouse no sympathy and that there are few characters we are allowed to engage with only to find that they consistently misrepresent the facts, that there is no discernible authorial position implied in the narrative – all contribute to a sense of absurdity, cynicism and overall irresoluteness, despite the resort to unifying plot structures and symbolism. The stories do not as yet build up towards a modernist sense of epiphany, but they end on a note which is every bit as ambivalent and problematic.

This refusal to establish overt ethical sympathies is also why it is hard to argue that D’Arcy’s treatment of her feminine characters is proto-feminist. Despite the fact that she is a female writer whose real-life personality suggests a desire for emancipation and despite the fact that her writings frequently feature female characters who suffer at the hands of ruthless males, her women, while often presented as victims, are also morally questionable seducers, manipulators, tramps, or half-wits. In the same way in which she seems not to have settled on a narrative formula for her stories, D’Arcy doesn’t seem to have found a coherent model of womanhood. It is clear that the Victorian ideal of the ‘Angel in the House’ no longer holds currency, but also that no new ideal has yet taken its place. Similarly, her narratives assert themselves as texts that disregard the norms of well-wrought Victorian fiction, but their narrative formula is not yet crystallized, and one may only wonder what D’Arcy’s daring but occasionally baffling prose may have turned into if she had continued writing.

D’Arcy’s stories may not always be equally successful, and much of her disruptive technique runs against what we would consider ‘good writing’ nowadays, especially within the confines of a short story. However, they consciously, systematically pursue an alienation effect and culminate in unsettling endings in which neither the characters, nor the readers are left with a sense of conclusive understanding – a sense that, like some of the evil or naïve character-focalisers whose perspective we are made to share, we are ourselves prone to misunderstanding and misinterpretation.



Despite D'Arcy's small and uneven output, she more than merits attention as an original and often powerful short story writer, in whose work fin de siècle spleen meets pre-modernist experiment in representation.

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## RECONSTRUCTING A LIFE: CHARLES ‘BUDDY’ BOLDEN

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**Abstract:** *Michael Ondaatje’s novel Coming through Slaughter is a fascinating attempt to bring literature and oral history together in order to recreate Charles ‘Buddy’ Bolden’s mysterious life. Daily routines and gestures, inner thoughts and high musical notes form a puzzle to which the citizens of the flamboyant New Orleans keep adding pieces. With the help of his only existing photograph, the present paper focuses on the unquestionable father of jazz, who kept “away from recorded history”.*

**Keywords:** *fragmentariness, (in)sanity, jazz, memory, New Orleans, oral history.*

### 1. Introduction

*Coming through Slaughter* is Michael Ondaatje’s attempt to give the history of jazz a new face and to introduce its father to a broader audience. The novel closely follows Charles ‘Buddy’ Bolden’s existence, be it his personal life and his unofficial marriage to Nora, his daytime job at the barbershop, or his nightly appearances at bars and parades. The ups and downs of Bolden’s evolution are scrutinized with the eyes of the voyeur eager to notice every blink of an eye, each unique sound of the cornet or uncontrolled behaviour. Almost impossible to document, Bolden’s life builds the framework of this complex novel, which reveals the history of a person, but also that of the flamboyant city of New Orleans.

### 2. The Birth of Jazz

In order to understand the history of a musician, one first needs to grasp the phenomenon called “jazz”. This new sound emerged in the unique town of New Orleans from a “base combination of syncopation from Africa and the Caribbean mixed with the melodic structures of Spain and France; was seasoned with Deep South humidity and oppression; and finally was slathered with the rhythmic and harmonic contributions of individual musicians to achieve a unique and delectable stew” (Bultman 2000:184). However, the term “jazz” was not applied to this new sound until more than twenty years later; back in those days (late 1890s), this kind of music was referred to as “gutbucket”, “ragtime” or “ratty music”.

The reactions toward “jass” were rather aggressive, as the *Times-Picayune* (one of the city’s widely read newspapers) suggests: “All [i.e. jass music and the jass bands] are manifestations of a low streak in man’s taste that has not yet come out in civilization’s wash. Indeed, one might go farther, and say that jass music is the

indecent story syncopated and counterpointed. [...] Its musical value is nil, and its possibilities of harm are great" (*Times-Picayune* qtd. in Rose 1974:106).

The 'problem with jazz' was that musicians, educated in the European tradition, regarded it as an inability to play "correctly" according to their own standards. Moreover, the birthplace of jazz was no reason of pride either: instead of being the result of professional musicians playing in concert halls, this new music was heard mostly in the French Quarter (later known as Storyville) – more precisely, in the famous red-light district of this exotic town! Jazz was not a type of music destined for white people; instead, it brought together for the first time the musical knowledge of the downtown black (i.e. Creole) and the improvisational capacity of the uptown black (i.e. black). But where did it all start?

If I wanted to make a living, I had to be rowdy like the other group. I had to jazz it or rag it or any other damn thing. ... Bolden cause all that. ... He cause these younger Creoles, men like Bechet and Keppard, to have a different style altogether from the old heads like Tio and Perez. ... I don't know how they do it. ... But goddamn, they'll do it. Can't tell what's there on the paper, but just play the hell out of it. (Dominguez qtd. in Rose 1974:107)

Pete Lala's Café was the place most of the jazzmen raced to in order to entertain the eager audience. There was Joseph "King" Oliver, who won the "King" title after playing one night on the streets of New Orleans and succeeding to get the audience out of every place with a jazz band, seducing them all with his unique sound; Sidney Bechet, a great clarinetist, who later moved to Paris; Freddy Keppard who, gossip has it, used to cover his mouth with a handkerchief while he was playing so that no one could "steal" his notes, and who, in Bechet's eyes, imitated Buddy Bolden. And, of course, Manuel Perez, also a cornet player, preferred by many to Bolden. Nevertheless, all of them were united by the respect they paid to Bolden's innovating sound.

When not playing at Pete Lala's Café, they entertained at exquisite mansions, where the guests were as varied as businessmen, politicians or policemen. New Orleans' brothels were not ordinary establishments, but

the most pretentious, luxurious, and expensive brothels in the United States – three-story mansions of brick and brownstone, many of them built with the aid of politicians and state and city officials, and filled with mahogany and black walnut woodwork, and furniture, Oriental rugs and carpets, silver door-knobs, grand pianos, carved marble fireplaces and mantels, and copies of famous paintings and statuary. (Asbury 2003:358)

The exotic owners of these fancy mansions had seen early enough that a “professor” (i.e. a live pianist), not a piano player, was the perfect twist for their business. Al Rose (1974) believes that jazz music was not literally born in Storyville, since it had also been played before, at parades. This is true, but the district provided the perfect background for this kind of music. In order for a musician to be experimental and flexible, he needed the audience to encourage him and it was only this kind of audience that would allow a musician to play freely.

### 3. The Man behind the Cornet

It is in this context that Michael Ondaatje placed his character and started his own search for his leading figure. Nevertheless, his quest was not to be very fruitful, as “there is little recorded history” (Ondaatje 1979:2) in New Orleans. When writing a study about *Voodoo in New Orleans*, Martha Ward encountered the same problem: as she was looking for files and data regarding black people, she soon realized that very many official documents were either lost, or partially destroyed (Ward 2004:XII). Many New Orleansians who were certain about their white blood, were discovering the contrary in these files, so that they simply took the incriminating pages away from the City Hall records. When it comes to blood, New Orleans prefers to write its own history.

In this context, the only real data that Michael Ondaatje could gather was the only surviving picture of Charles ‘Buddy’ Bolden (taken by his friend and famous Storyville photographer, Ernest J. Bellocq, “but I was using an old film and it’s no good”, Ondaatje 1979:51). There were some unverified facts as well:

Charles ‘Buddy’ Bolden. Born 1876? A Baptist. Name is not French or Spanish. He was never legally married. Nora Bass had a daughter, Bernadine, by Bolden. [...] Bolden worked at Joseph’s Shaving Parlor. He played at Masonic Hall on Perdido and Rampart, at the Globe downtown on St Peter and Claude, and Jackson Hall. April 1907 Bolden (thirty-one years old) goes mad while playing with Henry Allen’s Brass Band. He lived at 2527 First Street. Taken to House of Detention, ‘House of D’, near Chinatown. Broken blood vessels in neck operated on. June 1, 1907 Judge T.C.W. Ellis of the Civil District Court issued a writ of interdiction to Civil Sheriffs H.B. McMurray and T. Jones to bring Bolden to the insane asylum, just north of Baton Rouge. A 100 mile train ride on the edge of Mississippi. Taken to pre-Civil War asylum by horse and wagon for the last fifteen miles. Admitted to asylum June 5, 1907. ‘Dementia Praecox. Paranoid Type.’ East Louisiana State Hospital, Jackson, Louisiana, 70748. Died 1931. (Ondaatje 1979:141-2)

These facts have all outlived Bolden, so that Ondaatje tries to reconstruct his life with the help of liquor bottles sent from various friends or “patrons”, bars he could have been in, or his daily presence at the barbershop, where he used to earn his living.

The novel has three parts, linked together by music and its major player. The first part corresponds to the “official” life of Charles ‘Buddy’ Bolden, describing his daily habits, his music and friends, only hinting at what is still to come. The second part is rather inwardly oriented, switching to the inner world of a disoriented Buddy Bolden, desperately fighting to keep his sanity. The third part depicts Bolden’s last days before the parade, before everything changed from jazz to the real madness of the mind.

The novel opens under the heading “His Geography”, which actually lists New Orleans’ peculiar attractions:

Here the famous Bricktop Jackson carried a 15 inch knife and her lover John Miller had no left arm and wore a chain with an iron ball on the end to replace it – killed by Bricktop herself [...] And here ‘One-legged Duffy’ (born Mary Rich) was stabbed by her boyfriend and had her head beaten in with her own wooden leg. [...] History was slow here. It was elsewhere in town, in the brothel district Storyville, that one made and lost money – the black whores and musicians shipped in from the suburbs and the black customers refused. (Ondaatje 1979:2-3)

Even though Storyville was neatly documented, the other infamous parts of the town, where blacks like Bolden or Louis Armstrong came from, had a “slow history”. People were not interested in the violence and vice of the poor, but only in the fall of the rich. Thus, even if Ondaatje tries to describe the underground life in the ‘Swamp’ and ‘Smoky Row’, he ends up writing about the district. This is the background for Ondaatje’s novel; from there on, the author tries to reconstruct a life as we know it, with daily routines and gestures:

This is N. Joseph’s Shaving Parlor, the barber shop where Buddy Bolden worked. ... He puts the towel of steam over the face. Leaving holes for the mouth and the nose. Bolden walks off and talks with someone. A minute of hot meditation for the customer. After school, the kids come and watch the men being shaved. Applaud and whistle when each cut is finished. Place bets on whose face might be under the soap. (Ondaatje 1979:4-5)

The barbershop was not merely a place for a nice shave, but also the location where famous people waited for their alcohol deliveries made by Tom Anderson, the *tsar* of the district. Bolden was not only known for cutting hair, but also for his drinking habits, getting usually drunk till noon. Friends would accordingly come early in the morning for their hairdo, in order to avoid the more flamboyant cuts in the afternoons. In the evenings, he would always play so that “[w]hat he did too little of was sleeping and what he did too much of was drinking and many interpreted his later crack-up as a morality tale of a talent that debauched itself” (Ondaatje 1979:7).

Ondaatje tries to reconstruct an ordinary day in the jazzman’s life: walking his children to school at 7 in the morning, and teaching them “all he was thinking of or

had heard, all he knew at the moment” (Ondaatje 1979:7); going to the barbershop afterwards and chatting with the people from *The Cricket* newspaper – Bolden was their gossip columnist and they would print all the information given by him, unedited; cutting hair until 4 o’clock; then going home and sleeping with his wife Nora until 8, when he would go out and play. The routine of a simple man, forgotten by the subjective history of jazz.

He was the best and the loudest and most loved jazzman of his time, but never professional in the brain. Unconcerned with the crack of the lip he threw out and held immense notes, could reach a force on the first note that attacked the ear. He was obsessed with the magic of air, those smells that turned neuter as they revolved in his lung then spat out in the chosen key. The way the inside of his mouth would drag a net of air in and dress it in notes and make it last and last, yearning to leave it up there in the sky like air transformed into cloud. He could see the air, could tell where it was freshest in a room by the colour. (Ondaatje 1979:8)

#### 4. Debating Music

Opinions about Bolden and the way he played differ indeed. While, in his reputed documentary *Jazz*, Ken Burns says that real jazz emerged with Buddy Bolden (Burns 2004:DVD 1), Louis Armstrong seems to highly disagree. In *Satchmo*, Armstrong writes: “Old Buddy Bolden blew so hard that I used to wonder if I would ever have enough lung power to fill one of those cornets. All in all Buddy Bolden was a great musician, but I think he blew too hard. I will even go so far as to say that he did not blow correctly.” (Armstrong 1986:23)

When reading Armstrong’s lines about Buddy Bolden, one has to keep in mind an extremely important fact: Armstrong claims that he was born in 1900, but it is now known that he was actually born in 1901. The very last time that Bolden played in New Orleans was in 1907, and previously he had been out of town for two years. This means that Armstrong could have been six years old when hearing Bolden play (even younger, in case he missed Bolden’s final public appearance, which is highly probable). Accordingly, Armstrong was too young to fully understand if Bolden played incorrectly or too loud. The famous musician also states that “[o]f course Buddy Bolden had the biggest reputation, but even as a small kid I believed in finesse, even in music. [...] As I said before Bolden was a little too rough, and he did not move me at all.” (Armstrong 1986:24-5)

Although Armstrong always had a good opinion about everybody, this was not the case of fellow instrumentist Bolden: he tried to dismiss Bolden from the history of jazz with the help of erroneous memories. At the beginning of his novel, Ondaatje introduces not only Bolden’s daily life and his way of singing, but also his psychical instability which was to take him away from jazz. It was his mind that finally gave him

away: he collapsed in the middle of the 1907 parade and was taken away to an asylum. The writer insists on his unstable, weak mind, and thus the novel is, at times, as chaotic as Bolden's mind and music were. It is only with the help of real life shades that the reader is able to decipher the pages to come: the novel is not very explicit in its construction and "plot", but rather improvisational, as life and jazz tend to be.

Images come in fragments, while different characters overlap on the same page, in order to build the bigger picture. We witness a cinematic approach to Bolden's existence, which corresponds to the fragmentariness of his life story. At the same time, *Coming through Slaughter* is a collage of texts: interviews with musicians or ordinary people; doctors' opinions or imaginary conversations with Bolden's friends. Although these different points of view may mislead the reader at times, they are necessary in order to reflect the way memory functions and the way music can be perceived.

While the writer and the characters are looking for him,

this is what Bolden sees: The woman is cutting carrots. Each carrot is split into 6 or 7 pieces. The knife slides through and hits the wood table that they will eat off later. He is watching the coincidences of her fingers and the carrots. It began with the colour of the fingers and then the slight veins on the carrot magnified themselves to his eyes. In this are of sight the fingers have separated themselves from her body and move in a unity of their own that stops at the sleeve and bangle. As with all skills he watches for it to fail. If she thinks what she is doing she will lose control. [...] The silver knife curves calm and fast against carrots and fingers. (Ondaatje 1979:28)

When reading the novel, one has to keep this image in mind, as it stands for Bolden's conscious desire to let his mind wander away, to associate images beyond reason, and for the instability which will finally conquer him and drive him away from jazz. Experimenting with reality was also typical of his music because, as one of the interviewed people declared,

There was no control except the mood of his power ... and it is for this reason it is good that you never heard him play on recordings. If you never heard him play some place where the weather for instance could change the next series of notes – then you should never have heard him at all. [...] It was just as important to watch him stretch and wheel around on the last notes or to watch nerves jumping under the sweat of his head. (Ondaatje 1979:35)

## **5. A Beautiful, Yet Unstable Mind**

The stories surrounding Bolden suggested that he went mad because of the power he used when blowing his horn. That he literally blew his brains out. Although jazz was described as having "so little wisdom", it screamed with spontaneity and subjectivity instead, a music rising from the deep caverns of the soul. The emphasis on

the lack of any pattern is important, because it simultaneously talks about the music and the musician: the feeling of a jam session, where everything can and will turn into music, is essential for any understanding of jazz and its creator. A strange figure, refusing to be recorded, Charles Bolden preferred to stay in the shadow, walking in and out of the audience as he pleased, taking distance even from himself.

His songs spoke not only of music, but also of life as it really happened:

He [his friend, Webb] watched him dive into the stories found in the barber shop, his whole plot of song covered with scandal and incident and change. The music was coarse and rough, immediate, dated in half an hour, was about bodies in the river, knives, lovepains, cockiness. Up there on stage he was showing all the possibilities in the middle of the story. (Ondaatje 1979:41)

Jazz stood for everything that was real, that could easily be identified by the masses so that they could, eventually, identify *with* it. Perhaps this was the most specific aspect of jazz: it was a mirror of life as it unfolded, with ups and downs, quick changes of mood and situation, beginning and ending in the strangest places.

The image of Bolden's later return to the barbershop is vivid due to its connotations: he goes back and looks for his old self, but is unable to "locate" himself; instead he sings his story under the amazed and scared eyes of the voyeur.

I'm sort of scared because I know the Lord don't like that mixing the Devil's music [i.e., the blues] with His music [i.e., a hymn]. But I listen because the music sounds so strange and I guess I'm hypnotized. [...] It sounded like a battle between the Good Lord and the Devil. Something tells me to listen and see who wins. (Ondaatje 1979:83)

The mixture of the sacred and the profane mirrors real life more than one would be willing to accept. Yet, it is not a matter of "who wins"; the essence lies precisely in the ambiguity (rendered so truthfully by Bolden's own life), in the 'both/and' that people are so afraid of. The unexpected is also captured later, when the public can no longer identify the beginning or the end of a song. Breaking the rules of 'canonized' music, Bolden chooses (the verb is, in fact, wrongly used, because it is not a matter of rational choice) the inner realm, surprising and unexpected even to himself. The lesson of his "forefathers" (as Ondaatje puts it) is rather the lack of any serious lesson, any craft that should be carried along in the same manner. It is the lesson of the "purest note", of the oblivion of patterns, the celebration of the genuine. But this willing lack of control (in music) also stands for real life, where chaos reigns over solid principles.

The people of New Orleans did not know much about Bolden himself: he arrived in the city at the age of twenty-two and started to play his fascinating tune. He



married Nora, a former prostitute at the mansion of “Lula White” (this is how Ondaatje spells her name; in Storyville, she was known as Lola White) and then suddenly vanished. After his disappearance, Ondaatje locates him at Shell Beach, the place of some friends, where he has an affair. It is during this time that Bolden understands the real dimensions of his sickness, and believing, probably like everyone else, that he will “blow his brains out” (due to his cornet), he stops playing for a while, trying to rest at Web’s cottage on Lake Pontchartrain. When he finally comes back to town, he finds Nora together with Willy Cornish (friend and member of his band). His ties with reality are thus cut forever, but he still tries to reconnect by reading all the issues from *The Cricket* that he had missed while he was gone:

I read it all. Into the past. Every intricacy I had laboured over. How much sex, how much money, how much pain, how much sweat, how much happiness. Stories of riverboat sex when whites pitched whores overboard to swim back to shore carrying their loads of sperm, dog love, meeting Nora, the competition to surprise each other with lovers. *Cricket* was my diary too, and everybody else’s. Players picking up women after playing society groups, the easy power of the straight quadrilles. All those names during the four months moving now like waves through a window. So I suppose that was the craziness I left. Cricket noises and Cricket music for that is what we are when watched by people bigger than us. (Ondaatje 1979:120)

His last days of jazz(y) life are rendered almost by the minute, but also through people’s memories:

Interviewer: To get back to Buddy Bolden –  
John Joseph: Uh-huh.  
Interviewer: He lost his mind, I heard.  
John Joseph: He lost his mind, yeah, he died in the bug house.  
Interviewer: Yes, that’s what I heard.  
John Joseph: That’s right, he died out there. (Ondaatje 1979:111)

This attempt at an interview proves to be a disaster: people cannot tell anything about Bolden, except that he went mad. He parted with his band at the parade, sang elsewhere, alone, and fell down in the middle of the street. Ondaatje tries to re-write his death, the moment when everything faded into oblivion:

For something’s fallen in my body and I can’t hear the music as I play it. The notes more often now. She hitting each note with her body before it is even out so I know what I do through her. [...] Half dead, can’t take no more, hardly hit the squawks anymore but when I do my body flicks at them as if I’m the dancer till the music is out there. *Roar*. It comes back now, so I can hear only in waves now and then, god the heat [...] the blood that is real move up bringing fresh energy in its suitcase, it comes

up flooding past my heart in a mad parade, it is coming through my teeth, it is into the cornet, god can't stop god can't stop it can't stop the air the red force coming up can't remove it from my mouth, no intake gasp, so deep blooming it up god I can't choke it the music still poring in a roughness I've never hit, watch it *listen* it *listen* it, can't see I CAN'T SEE. Air floating through the blood to the girl red hitting the blind spot I can feel others turning, the silence of the crowd, can't see *Willy Cornish catching him as he fell outward, covering him, seeing the red on the white shirt thinking it is torn and the red undershirt is showing and then lifting the horn sees the blood spill out from it as he finally lifts the metal from the hard kiss of the mouth.* (Ondaatje 1979:138-9)

This was the end: the end of jazz for Charles Buddy Bolden, and of Bolden's existence for the public. Ondaatje lists several of the hospitals the latter was in, talks to doctors and guardians, realizing that they had no idea about medicine and mental illness. When Bolden was brought to the last hospital, his guards were taking a cold bath in a place called Slaughter, with him watching. When he died, his corpse was taken through several cities, the first one being, once more, Slaughter, and was finally buried in an unmarked grave. Slaughter becomes, thus, the place where Bolden departs from his New Orleans' life and, simultaneously, the one where his existence ends for good. From there, Ondaatje has undertaken the task of 'reviving' him, in order to bring him back where he belonged: to the history of jazz.

## 6. Conclusion

The novel itself is a mirror of the 'facts' related to Charles Buddy Bolden's life: some are mere fables, which one may choose to believe or, equally, ignore; other parts of the novel are pure fiction, meant to create a new kind of reality out of the old, unrecorded history. This fragmentariness is welcome due to the aim of the novel: that of reconstructing a figure from a lost, yet glorious period. At times, the shadow is allowed to play its own role, while both reader and writer bear in mind the only photograph which was ever taken of Bolden.

I sit with this room. With the grey walls that darken into corner. And one window with teeth in it. Sit so still you can hear your hair rustle in your shirt. Look away from the window when clouds and other things go by. Thirty-one years old. [And as it happens in real life] There are no prizes. (Ondaatje 1979:170)

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## TRAGIC INNOCENCE IN PHILIP ROTH'S *AMERICAN PASTORAL*

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**Abstract:** *American Pastoral* is not only an elegiac fictional biography, but an in-depth analysis of the demise of the American dream in the context of post-war social and cultural mutations. The loss of innocence echoes the tragic mythical Fall from Paradise and the novel's main characters, Seymour "Swede" Levov and his daughter, Merry, mirror this process in a complex and meaningful way.

**Keywords:** *innocence, tragedy, identity, the American Dream*

### 1. Introduction: The Book of Levov

Nathan Zuckerman, the auctorial alter-ego in Philip Roth's *American Pastoral*, writes the story of his childhood hero, Seymour Levov, a talented athlete whose fate dramatically depicts what Harold Bloom named *the Other Side of the American Dream*, that is *the American Nightmare* (Bloom 2009:XV). This brutal reversal changes the entire spectrum of values and meanings in Levov's life and his once fascinating aura of success turns into a mask of sorrow and stoic endurance.

Seymour was lovingly nicknamed "the Swede", and he was the Viking blonde, athletic son of a prosperous Jewish family that owned a business in the peaceful post-war New Jersey, Newark Maid Gloves. He was also the Weekquahic High School idol who later married Miss New Jersey, had a daughter and lived a blessed life in the idyllic small town of Old Rimrock, until the day this ideal alignment of elements generated an implosion that left the Levovs devastated and hopeless. In 1968, amid the Vietnam War protests, Meredith, their beloved offspring, turned into a political fanatic and bombed the local post office, killed the doctor who happened to be around that morning, and became a fugitive and an outcast for five years. When she reemerges from seclusion and meets her father again, she is a starving Jain who refuses to bathe and breathes through a mask, for fear she might kill the bacteria on her skin and in the air around her.

Those were the years that marked the demise of the "Swede" version of the American Dream, his day by day defeat in the face of uncertainty and despair, the tragic loss of his pure energy and strong belief in the ultimate order of the world, the Fall of a genuinely innocent man from his Paradise.

"The powerful, the gorgeous, the lonely Swede, whom life had never made shrewd" (Roth 1998:79) – that would be a synthesis of Nathan Zuckerman's elegiac vision of Seymour Levov's heroic status. As a main coordinate of modern tragedy, innocence lies at the core of *hamartia*, the Aristotelian concept of tragic flaw that turns

the hero's destiny into misfortune, and involves another significant dimension of the intricate mechanism that causes the hero's downfall – guilt.

The present paper will focus on the ways in which tragic innocence, along with its sources and consequences, mold the two main characters in Roth's novel, Seymour "Swede" Levov and Meredith "Merry" Levov. Their metamorphoses provide a vast space for the exploration of both heavenly and hellish dimensions, from an individual perspective and a collective one as well. All these processes reveal the particular nature of modern tragedy imagined by an author whose place is, as Bloom argues (2009:xv), on the Other Side, near Poe, T.S. Eliot, Faulkner and Pynchon. As Elaine Safer (2006:66) remarked, *American Pastoral* is "an elegy on the death of the American Dream".

## 2. The Tragedy of Innocence

Following Leslie Fiedler's (1952:298) idea that the American writer can be seen "as the recorder of the encounter of the dream of innocence and the fact of guilt", Laurence Michel and Richard B. Sewall (1963:211) state, even more clearly, that usually "tragedy is consummated when the dream of innocence is confronted by the fact of guilt, and acquiesces therein." In order to fully grasp the meaning of this important observation on the nature of tragedy, we should mention that the meaning of innocence that is of interest here is directly connected to a negative revelation and a subsequent fall into the opposite realm, that of experience. The question at the basis of Swede's drama targets his involvement in both his and Merry's *fall* – what caused his daughter's anger that she became a terrorist, where did he fail as a parent and, implicitly, as a human, to raise such a monster?

Simple as they may seem, these interrogations can be tackled from multiple perspectives, but the best vantage point is always at the root of all tragic events: a trauma. To Philip Roth, tragedy and trauma have kept most of their ancient, initial meanings intact. Tragedy arises when the individual is at the hands of a blind, often merciless fate, as the writer would later prove in his 2010 novel, *Nemesis*. On the other hand, *trauma* is the term that connected Sophocles' Oedipus to the vocabulary of psychoanalysis – a violent act generating a wound that would never completely heal, a background pain that can suddenly become the principle of disaster. In *American Pastoral*, Merry is the absurdly deformed descendant of a family defined by prosperity, progress and success, the bomber in a house of harmony, the angry, sloppy, overweight daughter of Dawn Dwyer, Miss New Jersey 1949, and the handsome, gentle Swede. The auctorial mind, voiced by Zuckerman, never fully discloses the cause of Merry's erratic behavior or the Swede's potential contribution to her catastrophic later choices, simply because there is an entire network of causality and reasons that made it all possible. There is, nevertheless, one important clue concerning

the moment when a serious deviation might have occurred. As a baby, Merry cried constantly – “She entered the world screaming and the screaming did not stop.” (Roth 1998:390) Then, she uttered something strange and unsettling:

I'm lonesome, she used to say to him when she was a tiny girl, and he could never figure out where she had picked up that word. Lonesome. As sad a word as you could hear out of a two-year-old's mouth. (Roth 1998:226)

Despite the unusual vocabulary, Merry would stutter, and her disrupted speech marked a disruption in her connection to reality, fuelling her frustration that she could be heard and understood with difficulty. The bomb she detonated carried a political message that was a subjective one, too. Merry tragically lost her innocence to the perverse language of fanaticism probably because she wanted to be heard and remembered once and for all. When language and reason fail, it is typically replaced by violence and death – “she never stuttered when she was with the dynamite” (Roth 1998:259) and, as Timothy Parrish observed, the bombs “express the rage that the stutter concealed.” (Parrish 2000:92)

What makes this character whole and memorable is this particular trait – her genuine innocence, transformed, apparently without any logical justification, into the incomprehensible ethics of a murderous terrorist. If we are to explore the established cultural pattern determined by the tripartite structure of an age of innocence, followed by a Fall and the acute nostalgia of an irreversible golden time (the novel is divided accordingly, into three main parts- *Paradise Remembered*, *The Fall*, *Paradise Lost*, having Milton's epic as the archetype), we must notice the fact that Merry's infantile, yet very pertinent loneliness suggests a kind of inadaptability, a fundamental incapacity to fit in and act as required or expected. It's not the Swede's lack of parental skills to blame for Merry's affiliation with the Weathermen Underground (their contradictory conversations about her going to New York are a sort of anecdotes of extreme “reasonable parenting”), but his and Dawn's incapacity to react appropriately when the first warning signs of something going wrong appeared.

Merry's inner crisis has everything to do with her identity, and while in search of her elusive self, she mirrored her own father's dramatic identity quest – he was as unadapted and “lonesome” as she was, and his attempt to break free from the traditions of his Jewish family and marry a Catholic, a *shiksa*, turned out to be a mistake of great proportions. Merry had a “Catholic phase” and decorated her room with Christian symbols, an “Audrey Hepburn phase”, and adored the Hollywood icon, but all these seemingly inoffensive steps to a coherent identity form “an uneasy mixture” that “paralyzes Swede even as it echoes his own life.” (Parrish 2000:91)

Swede's guilt is divided into two main cells: the moment Merry watched a Buddhist monk's self-immolation on TV and the quasi-incestuous kiss the girl once placed on his lips. The Electra complex cannot trigger psychosis on its own, but,

nourished by an all-encompassing anger at all the perfection she was unable to adapt to, it makes her oscillate between the extremes of murder and self-annihilation. Her journey in search of identity ended when she became “someone who has ventured so far toward the outer edges of subjectivity that she finally chooses not to have a self at all.” (Parrish 2000:93)

The final collapse of the Swede’s relationship with his daughter (violently depicted in the scene where he vomits on her while exclaiming “who are you!”) is implied by the fact that he tries to connect Merry’s political extremism to “a pathological cause, [he] attempts to interpret her political actions as a sickness that may be cured.” (Kumamoto Stanley 2005) Merry could not be cured by a speech therapist, nor by a psychologist, because her stutter was only a symptom of her difficulty to adapt and ‘fit in’. She is both “the anarchic center of the novel” (Parrish 2000:91) and “the major disruption of the hero’s American Dream” (Safer 2006:87). But, at the same time, her innocence is genuinely tragic, primarily because her downfall occurred while she was a teenager and because it is deeply rooted in a severe identity crisis. Her father’s fall is, nevertheless, emblematic for the perils brought on by a less harmful plague – illusions.

## **2.1. A Life That Fits Like A Glove**

By far one of the most intriguing characters in Roth’s novel, Jerry Levov, the Swede’s brother, a cardiac surgeon with strong opinions and bold attitudes is the one that inspired Nathan Zuckerman to write about the Swede’s life. Growing up in the shadow of his brother’s God-like aura, Jerry highlights the essence of Swede’s drama in the same manner the ancient Greek chorus in a tragedy would play the role of a collective consciousness: “No reason for him to know anything about anything except gloves. Instead he is plagued with shame and uncertainty and pain for the rest of his life.” (Roth 1998:68)

A self-made medical celebrity, Jerry is able to clearly distinguish between real success and illusion. His rants against Seymour’s debilitating kindness and obsessive love for his daughter are counterpointed by Rita Cohen’s sharp observation that the family business is, in fact, a sad metaphor of the Levovs’ inability to see things in depth: “All you really fucking care about is skin. Ectoderm. Surface. But what’s underneath, you don’t have a clue.” (Roth 1998:137) Rita Cohen was Merry’s messenger and an anarchist of the cruelest kind; she lures Swede into a sexual dark corner and resuscitates his parental nightmare.

The glove is an unfortunate metaphor for Swede’s flawless life-scenario, because, unlike the mobile, ever-changing hand, this man’s existence

is static, frozen in an impossible project, immobilized by stereotypes and clichés. The most harmful of them all proved to be the American Dream, an ideal that collided with the harsh realities of postwar American history and left those who believed in it in bitter dismay. Roth sums up the process:

The old intergenerational give-and-take of the country-that-used-to-be, when everyone knew his role and took the rules dead seriously, the acculturating back-and-forth that all of us here grew up with, the ritual postimmigrant struggle for success turning pathological in, of all places, the gentleman farmer's castle of our superordinary Swede. A guy stacked like a deck of cards for things to unfold entirely differently. In no way prepared for what is going to hit him. How could he, with all his carefully calibrated goodness, have known that the stakes of living obediently were so high? Obedience is embraced to lower the stakes. A beautiful wife. A beautiful house. Runs his business like a charm. Handles his handful of an old man well enough. He was really living it out, his version of paradise. This is how successful people live. They're good citizens. They feel lucky. They feel grateful. God is smiling down on them. There are problems, they adjust. (Roth 1998:86)

The dangers associated with illusion lurk behind a luminous, promising façade, and once the mechanism of tragedy has been activated, nothing can restore initial peace. In this case, being unprepared for tragedy rhymes with naïveté and ignorance, rather than innocence. There is, however, an intricate structure of elements that leaves one puzzled when confronted with the tragic. Roth's conclusion echoes the gloomy nature of most of his heroes encounter with the Moira:

And then everything changes and it becomes impossible. Nothing is smiling down on anybody. And who can adjust then? Here is someone not set up for life's working out poorly, let alone for the impossible. (Roth 1998:86)

For a clearer image of Swede's project of an ideal life, and implicitly, his version of the American Dream, it might be useful to go back to a moment of intense pastoral serenity, when the man first projected his earthly paradise:

He saw a large stone house with black shutters set on a rise back of some trees. A little girl was on a swing suspended from a low branch of one of those big trees, swinging herself high into the air, just as happy, he imagined, as a kid can be. It was the first house built of stone he'd ever seen, and to a city boy it was an architectural marvel. (Roth 1998:189)



The ethics of Swede Levov targets three symbolic nuclei of prosperity and success – a good business, a home and a spiritual place (religion had been replaced by sports, according to the modern frame of mind), a structure directly connectable to Georges Dumézil's (1985) theory of the three functions that needed to be fulfilled in Indo-European societies in order to maintain the unity and well-being of their community. Sandra Kumamoto Stanley (2005) called this the Swede's "coherent assimilationist vision of America", a vision "defined by key American symbolic markers, especially the values of industrial capitalism, the ritual of sports, and the acquisition of a home". An American Jew, the Swede aimed at gaining a new form of identity, one that did not emphasize tradition and genealogy, and the symbolic representation of this new, "clean" man was Johnny Appleseed, a legendary character who "wasn't a Jew, wasn't an Irish Catholic, wasn't a Protestant Christian – nope, Johnny Appleseed was just a happy American.[...] No brains probably, but didn't need 'em — a great walker was all Johnny Appleseed needed to be. All physical joy." (Roth 1998:316) By identifying with Johnny Appleseed, Swede Levov wanted to overcome the hardships of ethnic and religious identity, in fact longing for a status that involved no depth and no responsibility. "He wanted to have been born something more than a physical wonder" (Roth 1998:79) and this rare gift proved to be a terrible burden, because he did, in fact, find "a higher calling" (Roth 1998:79), but his inability to outgrow his banal idealism when faced with disaster was too big a challenge and he failed.

His effort to become something other than he is – meaning a Jew who wants to be an assimilated American – derives from a social ideology that shaped American identity in the past century – "the American belief in cultural transformation as an inherent social good." (Parrish 2000:97) The question of identity is again a triad, as it aligns the real author (Roth), the fictional one (Zuckerman) and the fictional hero (Seymour Levov) in front of the harsh question of what it means to have Jewish origins in 20<sup>th</sup> century America .

The Swede's American pastoral is a farfetched Paradise that is too banal and unrealistic to last. It is "an embodiment of an ideal, a nostalgic yearning for a rural origin where one can recover an Edenic oneness. Such a vision, in the end, proves illusory." (Kumamoto Stanley 2005) The incongruence resides at the basic level of life, at the intersection of his capitalist ethics with his idyllic countryside utopia. Incompatibilities of this kind can only result in sheer disillusionment.

## **2.2. Innocence, Immaturity, Illusion**

We have come to the point where a most significant problem needs to be addressed. Is this character's emblematic innocence a different kind of candidness, one pertaining to the realm of illusion and naïveté? The Swede's projections, ingenuous,

yet inauthentic, are the main reason he is rendered helpless in front of a catastrophe of considerable proportions such as Merry's horrid deeds. She was the central element of his ideal representation, "the little girl on a swing" (Roth 1998:189) and, once she grew up to be a terrorist, the whole edifice crumbled, ruining Swede's life. Pastoral innocence is a flat representation, a banal cliché that only imitates an ideal, involving "concealment, pretense, artificiality, inauthenticity." (Rubin-Dorsky 2003:224) The opposition between Swede's dreamed-of pastoral and the nightmare he lands in, the *counterpastoral*, is clearly drawn by Merry's radical actions, and Roth tries to give us the right measure of "the fury, the violence, and the desperation of the counterpastoral", or what he calls "the indigenous American berserk" (Roth 1998:86). To her, the father "embodies that mixture of American exceptionalism and cultural imperialism that made the war against Vietnam possible. (Parrish 2000:97)

"The fall" is a logical consequence of the pastoral pursue of purity and innocence – "purity is a doomed project, for it is blind to our fallen epistemological condition." (Posnock 2006:85) Purity freezes, while error is a condition of movement and evolution. It is important to stress that, while he does not lose his faith (the Swede marries again and has children with his second wife), he must have shifted from innocence to experience, therefore from immaturity to a more solid identity.

The Swede's pastoral projections are a natural response to the collective ideal that he embodies in his Jewish neighborhood. As "the neighborhood talisman" (Shechner 2007:143), Swede feels the pressure associated with his remarkable status. Nevertheless, his position turns out to be paradoxical, because, in addition to the 'noblesse oblige' that accompanies his successes, other factors become decisive along the way. The political and economic changes in post-war American society cannot be neglected when it comes to the pressure of history. In the same tragic manner, but in a metaphorical way at the level of the collective, social imaginary, the Swede becomes a scapegoat in his community, the bearer of a different type of "ills" – illusions. His innocence is quite different from a tragic hero's, and does not evoke the archetypal matrix of the fallen innocent the way Merry does. Roth's irony in naming his heroine "Merry" seems to sabotage Swede's pastoral and utopian projections, but, at the same time, it laments the disintegration of a stereotype that had the authority of a national trademark – the American Dream. In his analysis of the phenomenon, Frederic Carpenter reiterates its initial definition, as it was given by J.T. Adams in 1931: "that dream of a better, richer, and happier life for all our citizens of every rank which is the greatest contribution we have as yet made to the thought and welfare of the world." (Carpenter 1955:5)

Incongruence and illusion seem to establish the parameters of Swede Levov's "fall" from his Paradise, but they generate a far greater tension in Philip Roth's work. The trilogy that starts with *American Pastoral* (1997) – followed by *I Married a Communist* (1998) and *The Human Stain* (2000) – reflects "three historical occurrences that fundamentally damaged American society after the Second World

War” (Safer 2006:79), namely the Vietnam War and the subsequent rebellions of the ‘60, McCarthy’s politics in the ‘50s, and the ebullition of Political Corectness in the ‘80s and ‘90s. This process was labeled by critics as “America’s repeated loss of innocence” (Safer 2006) and, if looked at from this angle, history is mirrored by individual destiny in a way that accurately shows man’s humble stature when faced with cosmic forces, destiny, or their modern equivalent, history.

### 3. Conclusion

In *American Pastoral*, the tragic dimension of innocence can be explored in relation with the two main characters, Seymour Levov and his daughter, Merry. The theme of innocence favors a wider perspective of central themes in the novel such as the pastoral or the American Dream and it reveals some of their less obvious nuances. A closer investigation of the issue of tragic innocence also exposes the complex meaning it bears when connected to the two characters in question here. Both characters are, in different manners and with different consequences, ‘crushed’ by history (the modern, but the similarly vengeful equivalent of destiny), yet Merry’s displacement from the center of her father’s pastoral American Dream and her evolution into a fanatic and a bomber give the novel its real tragic dimension.

The final question of the novel – “and what is wrong with their life? What on earth is less reprehensible than the life of the Levovs?” (Roth 1998:423) – might find its answer if one takes a deeper look at the intricate web of illusions that created the family.

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**AN EASTERN EUROPEAN TRAVELER TO PARADISE. LOS  
ANGELES IN  
PETRU COMARNESCU'S AMERICAN TRAVELOGUE FROM 1934**

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**Abstract:** *Published in 1934, Petru Comarnescu's American journal offers both a fresh take on the Californian milieu of the late 20s and the beginning of the 30s, and open-minded perspectives on the New World. The present paper analyzes how the Romanian intellectual put together the historical, social and cultural pieces of the complex city puzzle in his bold attempt at recreating the atmosphere of the chameleonic metropolis of Los Angeles.*

**Keywords:** *Los Angeles, travelogue, journal, travel writing, Eastern Europe*

## **1. Introduction**

In his private diary, kept between 1931 and 1937, Petru Comarnescu (1994:62) points out why the title *America văzută de un tânăr de azi* (*America as seen by a young man of today*, my translation) was the most appropriate choice for his American travelogue. While sketching up his own psychological portrait, Comarnescu confesses that his major fears – of growing old both in body and in spirit and his apprehension of being stuck in conventions and routines – triggered his continuous struggle against frozen judgments, his never-ending quest for youth and the desire to remain forever young. Therefore, Youth could act as the main key for understanding both Comarnescu's character and his American journal, which was published in March 1934.

The Romanian intellectual's piece of travel writing reveals both an Eastern European's perspective on the American culture and society and an erudite look at the Los Angeles of the late 1920s and the beginning of the 30s. However, a few days before his travel book was published and while in a state of unhappiness, Petru Comarnescu (1994:113) discloses – again, in his private diary – his crushing fears of becoming mediocre, of turning into a skeptic and a failure, but most of all of growing old as he genuinely believes his inner power resides in his youth.

Belonging to an internationally-acclaimed generation of intellectuals who wrote history on the Romanian cultural scene between the two world wars and which comprised Mircea Eliade, Eugen Ionescu, Emil Cioran, Constantin Noica (to name just a few), Petru Comarnescu was undoubtedly the foremost authority on the United

States. His sheer fascination for the New World was not only well-known to all his contemporary fellows (most of them Francophile) but after traveling to the US on a PhD grant meant to facilitate research at the University of Southern California, it also materialized in a book depicting his American journey from the East Coast to the West Coast and his two-year stay in Los Angeles.

What is important to mention here is the fact that Comarnescu wrote down his American experiences not as he traveled across the US but after he returned to his native land, so after filtering and pondering past things over. Therefore, his account is – at least at times – embellished with tinges of nostalgia, which has the effect of reevaluating his past journey. Noteworthy here are the bitter regrets expressed in his private diary for not having recorded his American journey at the pace it unfolded: “I now wish I had written *a real diary* when I lived in America. Memory is the only good which cannot be stolen from us. Yet, even memory needs helping, with all the risks entailed there...” (Comarnescu 1994:85, my translation)

## **2. The City of Los Angeles in Petru Comarnescu’s Travelogue**

The fourth chapter of Petru Comarnescu’s book depicts his two-year stay in California, “the country of hope and disillusionment”, and gives a first-hand account of living in Los Angeles at the end of the 20s and the onset of the 30s. Embarking on a challenging project, Comarnescu wrote up the protean metropolis of Los Angeles by putting together the variegated pieces of the historical, social and cultural city puzzle in his daring attempt at recreating the atmosphere of a chameleonic city that wanted it all in the 20s.

In his highly acclaimed *Southern California. An Island on the Land* (whose first edition was out in 1946), Carey McWilliams (1973:242, 248) points out that:

In the bonanza years from 1920 to 1930, Los Angeles had all the giddiness, the parvenu showiness, and the crazy prosperity of a gold-rush town [...] During the twenties, Los Angeles led the nation in the number of suicides, the number of embezzlements, the number of bank robberies, in the rate of narcotic addiction, and in the fancy character of its sensational murders.

The themes visited in Comarnescu’s diary are territory familiar to most travelers, exiles or writers of the City of Angels: the urban sprawl, the paradoxical centerless city, the chimerical Hollywood and the movies, the religious fervor, the car culture, and grand expectations turned to illusions and sheer disappointment. The real history of the city is recounted by Comarnescu in a few diary pages meant to draw the trajectory of L.A.: a mere village in 1781 – El Pueblo de Nuestra Senora la Reina de Los Angeles, set up by the Governor of California, Felipe de Neve – turned into a seething metropolis at the onset of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Linked now to Comarnescu's feeling of standing in front of an unreal city permanently looking for its deep roots, the Oscar award winner director Kathryn Bigelow (qtd. in Klein 2008:98) tries to explain why Los Angeles has always made the perfect set for apocalyptic movies: "Perhaps because there's so little history here [...] It's not a city. There is no center. And no identity except a 'poly-identity' suitable for whatever you project onto it, a faceless place... blurred into one."

Although Kathryn Bigelow's remark easily falls in the category of usual clichés voiced about Los Angeles, her hackneyed words could also stand as a reminder of the difficulties experienced when advertising a place in search of an identity. Whenever the history of Los Angeles seemed scant or unmarketable, the city boosters (those of the 1920s included) unflinching and unscrupulously manufactured and sold a historical past, firstly embellished, and then neatly packaged and delivered to hordes of incoming tourists and immigrants. And more often than not, the illusions sold ruined their dreamers.

Seen as a space of heterogeneity and amalgamation and as a mixture of architectural styles, the city of Los Angeles permanently disconcerts both the ordinary visitor and the more informed traveler. The opening to Comarnescu's fourth chapter of his American journal reveals precisely the diarist's disappointment at his first ride through Los Angeles. To the Eastern European visitor, the city in front of his eyes appears to be nothing but "a last – hour improvisation" (Comarnescu 1974:212, my translation). However, this is a recurrent motif found in the works of most travelers, exiles or writers on Los Angeles. In his major study upon Los Angeles in fiction, David Fine (2004:ix) points out that the foremost characteristic of the metropolis – the lack of a centre and the urban sprawl – made the first writers who arrived in L.A. believe exactly the same, that they were standing in front of a chimera:

First, in its low-density horizontal spread across a vast basin the city simply did not look like a city to the arriving writers – not like New York, Chicago, or San Francisco. It was a city that appeared to have no center and hence no periphery. It rambled on and on across a landscape that spread from mountain to ocean. Its pastiche of architectural styles, moreover, simulacra of every manner on architectural history, gave it the appearance of what the historian Carey McWilliams called "a giant improvisation". It seemed to the newly arrived writers like an "unreal" city – and was represented as such in their fiction – a fragile and temporary place that could be torn down at any moment if it didn't collapse first in an earthquake.

Therefore, the "last-hour improvisation" feeling experienced by Comarnescu when first entering Los Angeles in the late 20s stands both as a valid remark – shared, among others, by the reputed historian Carey McWilliams – and as a prevalent sensation imprinted upon a traveler's consciousness by a city which permanently eludes any cut and dry categorization.

According to the historian Gordon DeMarco (1988:113), the Mad 20s were “the olympiad of promise and high hopes”, but for Los Angeles they meant “business as usual – a boom within a boom. Oil, the movies, Sister Aimée, subdivisions”. The real estate boom, in full blast at the beginning of the 20s, moved L.A. to a pole position in the number of inhabitants, after surpassing San Francisco in 1922. With an increasing rate of 100,000 per year, Los Angeles experienced during the Roaring Twenties “the largest internal migration in the American history, larger than 1877 and the boom years between 1900 and 1910” (DeMarco 1988:113.) And the huge real estate boom brought along profound societal changes so much so that those reckless years left a lasting imprint on the further development of the city.

The essence of the City of Angeles during the Jazz Age can be found in the stories of two emblematic figures in the history of the metropolis: Sister Aimée, a charismatic religious entertainer and Chauncey “C.C.” Julian, a shrewd oil stock promoter. Both of them built empires and had their heyday in the mid 1920s and both ended their lives when the dream was gone. C.C. Julian, “the Great Gatsby of Los Angeles”, was the perfect embodiment of all the recklessness and wildness of the Flapper Era and of the American dream, which takes its dreamer along when it goes bust.

He was the talk of the town. An instant legend. Once he gave a cab driver a \$ 1,500 tip and another time threw a party that cost him \$ 25,000. He gave a Cadillac to a woman he met in a night club and once raised \$ 1.5 million in just a few hours on Spring Street. Then there was the fight with Charlie Chaplin at a Hollywood night spot. And the time he barricaded himself in a room at a Los Angeles hotel against process servers, driving them off with a gun. Julian maintained four homes in Los Angeles, and had apartments in New York and Oklahoma City. He vigorously denounced bankers, calling them ‘crooks, con men, and pawnbrokers’. He was Los Angeles’ version of the Great Gatsby as he might have been played by James Cagney. (Demarco 1988:116)

The female counterpart of CC Julian – in showmanship, power, and destiny – was Sister Aimée Semple McPherson, who made a capital on the spiritual yearnings of the Angelenos and brilliantly fit the portrait of any top eccentric who ever came to Southern California. Sister Aimée, the evangelical diva whose turbulent life story and electrifying sermons made the headlines of the day is in herself an icon and a landmark in the history of Los Angeles. Three years after her arrival in L.A. in 1922 – together with her church, her children and 100\$ in cash – Sister Aimée collected over 1 million dollars and owned property worth \$ 250,000 from preaching the message of her Four Square Gospel: conversion, physical healing, the Second Coming, and redemption. Most of the money went into building her Angelus Temple in Echo Park.

In addition to having close encounters with renowned movie stars of the 20s, the Romanian intellectual also visited the temple of the religious star of the day.



Comarnescu's visit to Sister Aimée's tabernacle could easily stand as a historical testimony along with other notable visits to the Angelus Temple, such as historian's Carey McWilliams in 1922 or H.L. Mencken's in 1926. After describing the temple "as large as a theatre", Comarnescu (1974:238, 239, my translation) sketches the portrait of the priestess: "a beautiful woman, a bit passé", "impressive because she appears to be both an actress and a sincere woman", "talking and the same time acting", "attacking evolutionism" and "using gestures, shouts, touching words" to impress her followers. The religious show is shrewdly used by Sister Aimée who, says Comarnescu, "undoubtedly oscillates between swindling and mysticism" since she – just like a versatile businessperson – correctly sensed the unhappiness of the people of Los Angeles, and turned their misery into a source of profit.

However, Carey McWilliams (1973:262) softens the portrait of Sister Aimée when noting the way he remembers the priestess:

Although I heard her speak many times, at the Temple and on the radio, I never heard her attack any individual or any group and I am thoroughly convinced that her followers always felt that they had received full value in exchange for their liberal donations. She made migrants feel at home in Los Angeles, she gave them a chance to meet other people, and she exorcised the nameless fears which so many of them had acquired from the fire-and-brimstone theology of the Middle West.

The religious fervor of the late 20s in Los Angeles was not the only significant detail that caught Petru Comarnescu's attention, whose vast interests in fields such as sociology, psychology, or the history of art turn him into a keen observer who deftly illuminates diverse facets of the American culture and society.

The Eastern European diarist (Comarnescu 1974:214, 218, 280) also draws a series of parallels between the Old World and the New World when analyzing what he calls *L.A. paradoxes*. First of all, Comarnescu points out that even if the city resembles an earthly paradise built for people to rest, a metropolis which bursts with human activity, it ends up being quite unusual and artificial. Second of all, although the climate of the city invites its inhabitants and its visitors towards more tolerant ways and more freedom in ideas and thoughts, the people who reach the city hold tight to their old mentalities and prejudices and afterwards try to impose their Puritan values upon their fellow citizens. So instead of generating a complete alteration in ways of behavior, the city remains powerless and the people it accommodates – mostly from the East and the Middle West – carry over to the newly-found land the rusty mentalities of their old land.

And lastly, Comarnescu also notes that the all-year-round Californian sunny climate triggers a constant disposition towards optimism and joy, and it also brings comfort, solace and equilibrium, whereas on the European continent, the changing seasons usually act as a gauge for assessing people's swinging moods. To add more,

the seasonal changes give one the crippling sensation of time passing by, of aging with the onset of each autumn and of rejuvenating with every coming spring. In contrast to that, Los Angeles offers one the overwhelming feeling of living an eternal youth, since the metropolis obliterates thoughts of death, ageing and abyss. Petru Comarnescu goes on even further when rhetorically asking himself whether his feelings would have been the same upon visiting California not at the age of 24 but at an old one. The answer attempted by the Romanian traveler is that LA is no country for old men but a city for young people in love with life, sports and nature. Old people are not in their element in Los Angeles since their old mentalities and Puritanism seem obsolete in a metropolis built for pleasure, joy and entertainment.

One more comparison between Europe and the US is employed when discussing the topic of movies. Comarnescu (1974:225) deems that while the Europeans select for their movies only exceptional individuals and those artists who usually stand out in a crowd through their extraordinary beauty, peculiarities, and oddities or through their superiority, the Americans – just like the Greek sculptors of old – go for the ordinary. Therefore, while the American spectators identify themselves with their stars, whom they perceive as their alter ego, the European spectators see in their movie stars the element of difference (e.g. exotic beauties, geniuses, diabolical tragedians, etc.), and idols who are poles apart from them. The diarist concludes that the old continent is enamored with the extremes, and in a permanent quest for the abnormal, the original, the exceptional, while the New World loves the standard, the ordinary, the norm.

Although Petru Comarnescu confesses to not being an enthusiast for the Hollywood scene, he obtained inside information about the world of the movies from one visit to the studios, “an experience as instructive and aesthetically disgusting as the image of human entrails in an emergency room” (1974:247, my translation). Moreover, he played as an extra in the movie *Floradora* – featuring the star of the day Marion Davies – for the sole reason of observing the inner workings of a movie studio. In addition to that, Comarnescu recounts his visit to the Paramount Studios when “An American Tragedy” was shot and having met a series of movie stars such as Anita Page, Carole Lombard, Buddy Rogers, Philip Holmes, Jack Oakie, etc., or having seen stars such as Joan Crawford, Marion Davies, Eddie Cantor, James Hall, Charles King, Charlie Chaplin, Norma Shearer and Mary Pickford. Comarnescu’s only regret is that he did not have a close meeting with Chaplin, the only star he did not consider mercenary or commonplace.

One peculiarity of Comarnescu’s piece of travel writing is represented by the consistent use of comparisons sending to Romanian realities. For example, when discussing on the unhappy world of Hollywood, the readers are also given the diarist’s look back home: “It is exactly the same distance from the center of Los Angeles to Hollywood as from the National Theatre [in Bucharest] to Chitila...” (1974:239, my translation). For the East European traveler, the past is the suitcase carried from one

land to another and which can never be forgotten or left behind on any platform. The old land – with its histories and landmarks – acts as a gauge, a benchmark, a projection onto the new land, which always blends, magnifies and/or distorts images.

On the same note, other Romanian diarists, such as Stelian Tănase (1998:29), stay aware – at all times – of the major stumbling block encountered by any traveler entering a new realm: the impossibility of looking at a new place with innocence and wonder. Before the traveler starts roaming through the entrails of the new city, s/he must forget at once what they once picked up about the visited place – from various sources of information: TV, newspapers, movies, and readings – in order to enable their sensibility to make fresh discoveries. That is why, the traveler, the exile or the emigrant of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, skeptical and a bit blasé, always surrounded by ordinariness and commonplace, and inundated with sundry information, may find it a real challenge to leave their cultural baggage behind when stepping into a new world.

And just like Vera Călin (1997, 2004) in her Californian diaries or like Petru Comarnescu, Stelian Tănase (1998:100) also uses in his *L.A. vs. NY* from the 90s a series of comparisons sending to past Romanian realities. For Tănase, not only do the abundant Californian markets represent undeniable proof of the United States' wealth but they also stand as a cold reminder of how the communist Romanian markets of the 80s looked like: cold, poor, grim and gray, and with shabbily clad people standing in never-ending queues.

However, the use of analogy in various American diaries (of exile or on travel writing) poses one thorny problem. In her study on nostalgia and the immigrant identity, which draws on Paul Ricoeur's concepts of *idem* and *ipse*, Andreea Deciu (2001:40) clearly shows that the pervasive use of analogies is both a risky means of argumentation – since the similarity and/ or the difference between the two objects can be challenged – and one which continuously feeds the nostalgia of the diarist and their *idem* identity, i.e. their “hard” self already shaped in the rhythms of the past and the mould of the world left behind.

### **3. Conclusion**

Had Petru Comarnescu's American diary had another historical journey, I believe it would have been as popular and widely read as, for example, Ilf and Petrov's (2006) US travelogue from 1935. But Comarnescu's book followed the destiny of its author and the societal openness which marked the Romanian cultural scene between the two world wars came to a bitter end once the communist regime was installed.

While tracing the symbolical presence of the US in communist Romania, Bogdan Barbu (2006:115) discusses the unhappy destiny of Comarnescu's books which dealt with the American society and culture: they were pulled out from the bookstores or simply banned by The Iron Guard and later on by the communist regime, a testimony in itself for the closing of the Romanian mind.

Petru Comarnescu's continuous efforts to objectively depict US places and personalities turn him into a reliable diarist who can easily establish a bond with his readers so that writing up Los Angeles proves to be a two-edged endeavor which sheds light both on the Romanian intellectual and his native land, and on the city of Los Angeles.

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# THE *PORTRAIT* OF ENGLAND IN HENRY JAMES'S INTERNATIONAL NOVELS

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**Abstract:** *In his international novels, Henry James builds the image of England through the eyes of the American characters that travel in this country. London is the perfect setting for his international novels, as it becomes an integral part of the person or the action he is narrating.*

**Keywords:** *England, history, London, Old World, Other, tradition*

## 1. Introduction

The connection between James and England has biographical, personal and historical, public aspects which are mediated through the literary.

Britain, for James, is a cultural myth articulated through writers from Shakespeare to Dickens and Thackeray, absorbed, emulated, even resented and recast, by an author constructing the reality of his own achievement through the development of his fictional world. The deliberate adoption of a culture at once familiar and inexorably alien assured James the ideal stance for his narrative and critical persona: that of the intimate outsider. (Bradbury 2008:400)

From all the European cities, London generated a high passion for James, which survived with him, renewed itself later on and flowered in his literary works. It actually represents the form into which is poured his richer passion for the race to which he belongs. London was the gate to the European civilization. Besides being a geographical, political power base, it was mainly a cultural construct for James, as it was the home of many sacred names, such as: Shakespeare, Johnson, Wordsworth, Carlyle, Ruskin, Tennyson, Browning, Thackeray, Dickens, George Eliot. It was a personal and professional opportunity, the challenge of a literary career and the site of independence. The immense value given by James to London can easily be seen in one of his *Notebooks* entries:

London is on the whole the most possible form of life. I take it as an artist and as a bachelor; as one who has the passion of observation and whose business is the study of human life. It is the biggest aggregation of human life – the most complete compendium of the world. The human race is better represented there than anywhere

else, and if you learn to know your London you learn a great many things. (James 1947:28)

Henry James chose to settle in England as he wrote to George Abbot James on March 20, 1869: "I have seen a moderate number of people & things & made the most of my small opportunities" (Horne 1999:23) and he met "Leslie Stephen (1832-1904), ... Dickens's daughter Kate, the poet Aubrey de Vere (1814-1902), and most notable perhaps, William Morris and John Ruskin himself. The day after this letter HJ would lunch with Charles Darwin." (Horne 1999:23) After he returned to England in 1875, he took rooms in Bolton Street off Piccadilly, became an honorary member of the Athenaeum Club, so he wrote to William James that:

London life jogs along with me, pausing every now & then at some more or less succulent patch of herbage. I was almost ashamed to tell you thro' mother that I, unworthy, was seeing a bit of Huxley. I went to his house again last Sunday evening – a pleasant, easy, no-dress-coat sort of house...Yesterday I dined with Lord Houghton – with Gladstone, Tennyson, Dr Schiellmann (the excavator of old Mycenae&c) & half a dozen other men of 'high culture'. I sat next but one to the Bard... (Horne 1999:79-80)

His social life was a fruitful and intense one, as he declared in 1879 that he had dined out on 109 nights. After a long residence to London, he changed his preferences and decided to establish himself at Lamb House in Rye on the Sussex coast.

At the climax of his literary carrier, James started to counterpoise the cultural opportunity of England with his sense of the claims of America, as he advised Edith Wharton: "Profit, be warned, by my awful example of exile & ignorance....*Do New York!*" (Horne 1999: 368) As a matter of fact, James formed his own conclusions regarding the Englishmen very early, as he wrote a letter to his mother when he was only twenty-six years old, telling her that: "Englishmen...not only kill, but bury in unfathomable depths, the Americans." (James 1974:152)

In the same spirit he wrote to Edwin Lawrence Godkin on June 5, 1882 that "London seems big & black & actual – it is a brutal sort of place compared with New York. But I revert to it with a kind of filial fondness – which is a proof, I suppose, that I have become brutalized." (Horne 1999:139) James is somehow caught between ambition and rejection, and he seems to have an ambivalent position:

I have not the least hesitation in saying that I aspire to write in such a way that it wd. [sic] be impossible to an outsider to say whether I am, at a given moment, an American writing about England or an Englishman writing about America (dealing as I do with both countries) & so far from being ashamed of such an ambiguity I should be exceedingly proud of it, for it would be highly civilized. (Horne 1999:213)

## 2. The Image of England in the International Novels

In the preface to the novel *The Portrait of a Lady* (1999/1881) that he wrote for the New York Edition, James says about the circumstances of his writing that: “I had, within the few preceding years, come to live in London, and the ‘international’ light lay, in those days, to my sense, thick and rich upon the scene” (James 1962:57-58). *The Portrait of a Lady* (1999) is the novel where James makes the most articulate use of Englishness, in culture, ideology, but first and most memorably, in place. It is the first novel that presents the familiar life of an old English country-house. It starts with the description of Gardencourt, insisting upon the sense of property:

It stood upon a low hill, above the river – the river being the Thames, at some forty miles from London. A long gabled front of red brick, with the complexion of which time and the weather had played all sorts of picturesque tricks, only, however, to improve and refine it, presented itself to the lawn, with its patches of ivy, its clustered chimneys, its windows smothered in creepers. The house had a name and a history; the old gentleman taking his tea would have been delighted to tell you these things: how it had been built under Edward the Sixth, had offered a night’s hospitality to the great Elizabeth (whose august person had extended itself upon a huge, magnificent, and terribly angular bed which still formed the principal honor of the sleeping apartments), had been a good deal bruised and defaced in Cromwell’s wars, and then, under the Restoration, repaired and much enlarged; and how, finally, after having been remodeled and disfigured in the eighteen century, it had passed into the careful keeping of a shrewd American banker, who had bought it originally because (owing to circumstances too complicated to set forth) it was offered a great bargain; bought it with much grumbling at its ugliness, its antiquity, its incommmodity, and who now, at the end of the twenty years, had become conscious of a real aesthetic passion for it, so that he knew all its points, and would tell you just where to stand to see them in combination, and just the hour when the shadows of its various protuberances – which fell so softly upon the warm weary brickwork – were of the right measure.

All these details show the significance of the English ceremony, not a ceremony of innocence but of custom and concord. At the same time, Mrs. Touchett is “not fond of the English style of life”: “She detested bread-sauce...objected to the consumption of beer by her maid-servants; and she affirmed that the British laundress...was not a mistress of her art.” (James 1999:54) Mr. Touchett “had no intention of disamericanising” (James 1999:54). Isabel’s host emphasizes to Isabel the negative aspect of the English conventionality: “They’ve got everything pretty well-fixed...It’s all settled beforehand – they don’t leave it to the last moment.” (James 1999:75) Ralph himself says that:” [O]ne doesn’t give up one’s country any more than

one gives up one's grandmother. They're both antecedent to choice – elements of one's composition that are not to be eliminated.” (James 1999:109)

James's concern with the international social conflict in terms of marriage reflected a historical fact, because intermarriage became a major feature of the social relations between America and Europe after the Civil War. It was the marriage between the European man and the American girl. Henry James makes a distinction between the American and European antagonists of the American girl, between Osmond and Lord Warburton, between their relations to tradition. If Osmond's traditionalism is a calculated attitude which intends to fill in his lack of individual substance, Lord Warburton has deep and secure traditions that he can rely on. That is why Osmond wants him so much as a husband for his daughter.

Osmond is, as well as Madame Merle, not a European but an American expatriate. He is corrupt and false, lacking individual substance. His corruption is not the result of his being an American but it illustrates the danger which Europe exposes Americans to.

It is a danger inherent in the very process of ordering experience significantly – the danger that the order, the form, which results from the action of the spirit on experience, becomes frozen and self-sufficient and finally imprisons the very spirit which gave it birth. It is the danger typical of Europe, where the past lingers not only in the form of ruins and associations but in the form also of institutions which tend to perpetuate themselves even when their reason for being if not their meaning is antiquated. (Wegelin 1958:74-75)

England represents positive values too, as Isabel sees in Lord Warburton, a “specimen of an English gentleman” (James 1999:83) and in the eyes of his sisters: “the peace, the kindness, the honor, the possessions, a deep security” (James 1999:154). Despite these, she refuses his proposal, as she has a different vision on aristocracy than him.

She thinks of it as ‘simply the union of great knowledge with great liberty,’ and it is for her liberty that she fears. Not that Warburton would imprison her as Osmond tries to do. There is no doubt of his consideration, his kindness; there is nothing in the least sinister about him. Yet she regards his proposal somehow as the design of ‘a territorial, a political, a social magnate’ to draw her into a ‘system’, the system of which his sisters are such charming but such ominously pale products. (Wegelin 1958:75)

His only fault seems to be that of being born a nobleman, an English Lord, as Isabel “is used to judging people on the basis of ‘character and wit,’ on the basis of the question whether they please ‘her sublime soul’ – according to rules too simple to serve as a measure of Warburton's qualifications.” (Wegelin 1958:75)



The American tradition of democratic criticism of Europe is dramatized by James through Henrietta Stackpole. It was her desire to come to Europe to report and even if she

is aggressively suspicious of all that smacks of privilege and class, and most of all of American prostration before European standards, her career serves mainly as a kind of comic counterpoint to Isabel's melancholy story, since she ends not only by tolerating all that she at first suspects, but by marrying a thorough British and, unlike Isabel, finding happiness in her marriage. (Wegelin 1958:65)

Isabel Archer's story is about her disillusionment. If the first part of the novel presents Isabel's romantic character, the second one is a picture of what the lesson of Europe has made of it. London inspired James to write about the first adult experience of England.

Gardencourt, Hardwick, England, personal and professional opportunity, and the threat of waste, circling around the figure of the American girl, and marshaled through the discipline of fictional architecture, provide material even richer than this novel can contain: material for more work, throughout James's career, and the subject of reflection in the late phase of the prefaces to the New York Edition. (Bradbury 2008:409)

In *The Wings of the Dove* (1902) and all late novels of Henry James, the international theme is no longer just a tool of social analysis and criticism, it is no longer about Europe and America, but about the American experience of Europe and the European experience of America. The opposition between Americans and Europeans goes beyond the external aspect, it becomes a growth of the individual awareness of foreign modes of living, thinking. It is "both a manifestation of and a metaphor for the gap between the Self and the Other." (Armstrong 1983:144) Europe is obviously the Other, because James has an American identity.

The interior world is described as an uncertain place, as well as the exterior world. Such an example is the commercial world of Lancaster Gate, where "nobody...does anything for nothing." (James 1907-1909:160) James avoids drawing a clear line between the "good" and "bad characters". When Milly Theale comes "to see the places she had read about" (James 1965:99), she recognizes that "the working and the worked were, in London... the parties to every relation... The worker in one connection was the worked in another; it was as broad as it was long – with the wheels of the system, as might be seen, wonderfully oiled." (James 1965:118)

Europe is represented by Aunt Maud Lowder and Lord Mark. Aunt Maud rules this world and is revealed to us as the "Britannia of the Market Place – Britannia unmistakable, but with a pen in her ear". (James 1965:27) With "her florid

philistinism” and “a reticule for her prejudices as deep as that other pocket, the pocket full of coins stamped in her image” is further called “unscrupulous and immoral”. (James 1965:28) Milly Theale steps into this world and thinks that Mrs Lowder “represented ... the world, the world that, as a consequence of the cold shoulder turned to it by the Pilgrim Fathers, had never yet boldly crossed Boston.” (James 1965:107) Not only Milly does understand the substance of this world, but also Kate, as “both Kate and Milly somehow mistake Lancaster Gate as a place where life could flourish” and this “indicates not simply the deceptive appearances of the social world but, more important, the extent to which Kate and Milly have unwittingly absorbed the values inherent in that world.” (Fowler 1993:193)

Henry James chooses London scenes with a very definite purpose: it becomes an integral part of the person or the action he is narrating. This practice can also be found with Balzac, who considered that placing a character in a certain place was similar to placing him on a social graph. The beginning of the novel is a very good example of this method:

Kate Croy visits her father in fictional Chirk Street and sees everything in terms of a lower middle-class environment. The ‘shabby sofa’ and an ‘armchair upholstered in a glazed cloth’ that appears ‘slippery’ and ‘sticky’ create the personality of the man and his reduced circumstances, even down to the blunt-sounding street name that literally means to cheer up. Everything reminds her of his ‘failure of fortune and of honour,’ the fitting next step on the way down from the ‘blighted home in Lexham Gardens’ that they once occupied. The whole pictures contrasts with Aunt Maud’s ‘tall reach house’ at prestigious-sounding and socially prominent Lancaster Gate in Bayswater where Kate has gone to live. Although not among the most exclusive addresses in the city, it is far above ‘the small homely hum of Chirk Street. (Kimmey 1991:10)

Kate and Milly suffer from the constraints of being women. Kate’s father and sister, Miriam Condrip, allow her Aunt Maud to find her a successful marriage. “It was through Kate that Aunt Maud should be worked, and nothing mattered less than what might become of Kate in the process.” (James 1907-9:34) Kate enjoys the experience of life offered by Aunt Maud, but being in love with the penniless Merton Densher, she appreciates more the love than Aunt Maud’s highest marriage bid. In Milly Theale’s desire to find in Europe a sense of having lived and in her approaching Kate Croy and Merton Densher as two more elements of the European scene, she denies the Other’s subjectivity and the possibility of an intimate relation to the Other.

The novel is based again on the international contrast as a part of the theme of the lived life. It is “concerned with the corruption, the perversion of motives attendant upon the process of refinement when social organization becomes subservient to greed.” (Wegelin 1958:106) If Milly Theale is very much idealized, her European

antagonists are not simply condemned. The novel deals with the European experience of America.

The novel *The Golden Bowl* (1904) presents not only the wealthiest Americans but also the most aristocratic European from James's international novels. Henry James dramatizes the incongruities between reality and appearances, which Maggie Verver and Prince Amerigo are forced to discover.

In the Preface to the novel, he mentions that London is a support for his ideas and novel:

The thing was to induce the vision of Portland Place to generalize itself. This is precisely, however, the fashion after which the prodigious city...does on occasion meet halfway those forms of intelligence of it that it recognizes. All of which meant that at a given moment the great featureless Philistine vista would itself perform a miracle, would become interesting, for a splendid atmospheric hour, as only London knows how; and that our business would be then to understand. (James 1962:335)

In *The Golden Bowl*, Book 1 "The Prince" is placed in London, Brighton, and the country house at Matcham, with an adulterous interlude in Gloucester. While the Princess lives in her imagination, the negative characters make free of England: "The Prince had always liked his London...; he was one of the modern Romans who find by the Thames a more convincing image of the truth of the ancient state than any they have left by the Tiber". (James 1995:3) Three protagonists are American and one is Italian, but the image of the European society is realized in British terms. Adam's town house is in "Portland Place, where Mr Verver had pitched a tent suggesting that of Alexander furnished with the spoils of Darius." (James 1995:13)

### 3. Conclusion

Henry James was fascinated with England and he chose London as a place to live and work, and the main setting for his international novels. He also found inspiration and provocation in the English novels. An explanation of his decision to become a British subject towards the end of his life was his fascination with the old England. In 1905, he proposed to Edith Wharton:

This absurd old England is still, after long years, so marvelous to me, & the visitation of beautiful old houses (as to "buy" – seeing them *as* one then sees them), such a refinement of bliss. Won't you come out with Pagello, & a luncheon-basket, & feign at least an intention of purchase – taking me with you to do the lying? (Horne 1999:422)

Even if James knew the social realities and political economy of Europe and especially England, he couldn't avoid a historical comparison and his culturally intelligence of the

observer abroad. Henry James lived in England to work there, but preserved the edge of otherness.

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### Acknowledgements

This work was supported by the European Social Fund in Romania, under the responsibility of the Managing Authority for the Sectoral Operational Programme for Human Resources Development 2007-2013 (grant POSDRU/88/1.5/S/47646).

# THE EMERGENCE OF THE ARCHAIC IN MARGARET DRABBLE'S *THE RADIANT WAY AND A NATURAL CURIOSITY*

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**Abstract:** *Margaret Drabble's novels are set in contemporary England and deal with contemporary issues, but still contain reminiscences of an archaic mentality. The paper will discuss several such reminiscences, like the myth of the good savage, the nostalgia for the lost paradise or the references to the archetype of the Creation.*

**Keywords:** *archaic mentality, Creation, good savage, lost paradise, shaman.*

## 1. Introduction

Margaret Drabble's novels are novels of ideas, rich, complex, allusive and intertextual, exploring the questions of human nature, life and art, or the possibility of political action. Most of them centre on feminine characters, especially independent, intelligent women who are trying to discover themselves. Still, they are not only character studies, but also social and political commentaries.

Drabble's writing has been unfairly classed as 'the Hampstead novel', but her novels have ranged from Yorkshire to Cambodia, from Southern Italy to Stratford, and her social and political terms of reference are among the widest of her generation. Drabble's work displays a sense of the social concerns which has been a strong characteristic of the English novel since the eighteenth century, but which is found in only a few writers today. (Carter, McRae 2001:489)

Because she so frequently tackles political, economic and social issues, while dealing at the same time with marked English characters, Drabble is considered the author one should read in order to get a clear view of what it is like to live in England (cf. Ellam 2007). But even if her novels are set in contemporary England and deal with contemporary issues, they contain certain reminiscences of an archaic mentality.

## 2. The Archaic Mentality

In Mircea Eliade's (1998:17-31) opinion, at the level of social life there is no breach between the archaic and the modern world. The only big difference between them is the presence with most individuals in the modern societies of a personal thinking, which does not appear with the members of the traditional ones. At the collective level, the myth is almost absent in modern societies. But at the individual

level it has never disappeared completely, manifesting its presence in our dreams, fantasies and nostalgias. Certain apparently profane celebrations of the modern world still preserve their mythical structure and functions: the New Year parties, the celebration of a child's birth, of the building of a house, or of the settling in a new apartment betray the necessity of an absolute re-beginning, of a total regeneration. These profane celebrations have as a mythical archetype the Creation, which they repeat periodically. The creation is preceded by a temporary return to chaos, after which there follows a new beginning. The myth is thus no longer dominant in the essential sectors of our life (work, war, love), but it has been exiled to the obscure areas of the psyche or to the secondary or entertaining activities of society.

Among the reminiscences of the archaic mentality that are still present in our subconscious there are two that are strongly connected to each other and whose appearance in Margaret Drabble's novels will be examined further: the myth of the good savage and the nostalgia for the lost paradise. In addition to them, we can also find references to the mythical archetype of Creation, to the ritual of sacrifice, to premonitory dreams, or to fairy-tale-like characters.

### **2.1. The Myth of the Good Savage**

The myth of the good savage originates in the travel notes from the 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries, that described a happy humanity, which, far from being primitive, resumed and prolonged the myth of the Golden Age, when everything was perfect and pure, and man was free and lived in the middle of a maternal and generous Nature. The nostalgia for the Edenic condition was also attested by other paradisiacal images and behaviours: the wonderful landscapes of the islands, the beauty and nudity of the women, the sexual freedom of the natives, etc. The "savages" were aware of the fact that they had lost an original Paradise, as a result of a catastrophe occurred in *illo tempore*. They tried to do their best to keep the memory of what had happened alive, by re-living the respective events.

In many cases, the "good savage" surprisingly belonged to a society of cannibals, practicing however a ritual cannibalism, repeating an original act, meant to grant the continuity of life, as it was considered that the sacrifice assured the circulation of the sacred energy between the various regions of the Cosmos, thus maintaining life (cf. Eliade 1998:33-49).

### **2.2. The Nostalgia for the Lost Paradise**

The nostalgia for the lost paradise is the nostalgia for a time when man was immortal, spontaneous and free, could communicate with animals and could circulate freely between this world and that of the gods, as the Earth was close to Heaven and there was a concrete means of communication between them (a tree, a mountain or a

ladder). Now the shaman is the one that tries to abolish the present human condition and to reintegrate the condition of the primordial man. He can “abandon” his body and travel to various places, but only in spirit. He has special powers and knows things that are inaccessible to others, displaying from time to time a certain madness that is only a return to the primordial chaos, showing that he is a “chosen” person.

The return to the initial state of plenitude is met with not only in the primitive societies, but also in modern therapies. Psychoanalysis uses the memory as a main therapeutic means. It considers that everything that happens to a person in his/ her early childhood is decisive and that the individual can take an important step towards being cured by re-experiencing and facing the event that produced the crisis which brought him to the present state (cf. Eliade 1998: 66-79).

### **3. The Archaic Mentality in Margaret Drabble's Novels**

#### **3.1. The Myth of the Good Savage. Psychoanalysis and the Return to Childhood**

What has become of the myth of the “good savage” in Margaret Drabble's novels? In my opinion, we can identify him with Paul Whitmore, the serial murderer. But within him, the “good” and the “savage” part are separated, there resulting a split, schizoid personality. Apparently he is a normal person, formerly a good boy, who preferred reading to playing with other children and who was interested in ancient history and botany, now a quiet adult, who does not talk to anybody and does not receive visits. This calm façade hides a monster, the author of 8-9 murders, three of which with beheaded victims. His aggressive and criminal impulses are explained by a traumatic childhood.

Traumatic childhood experiences also explain the behaviour of two of the protagonists of the novels *The Radiant Way* and *A Natural Curiosity*: Alix Bowen and Liz Headleand. In her childhood, Alix used to daydream about being arrested and tried for a crime she did not commit and about how elaborate her defence was. Therefore, she feels that by understanding Paul she will completely understand herself. Liz's childhood and actually entire life was marked by her father's disappearance that had occurred when she was four. Because she does not remember him at all, she used to invent all sorts of wonderful things about him. He was a ruler, while she herself was a princess, and her mother, a disguised, bewitched queen or not her mother at all, only a servant that was supposed to take care of the royal child. Then, during puberty, she had sexual fantasies with her father. Afterwards, she dedicated herself to studying and to hating her mother, only to find, when she was in her fifties, that her father was dead, having committed suicide after he had been arrested and acquitted for indecent exposure. Though apparently abused by her father, Liz claims in a panel discussion on TV that people should not be prevented from starting their sexual life, no matter how

young they are. Her opinions shock the live studio audience and the other participants, who consider that this would encourage child sex abuse.

Liz is a psychiatrist in whose family many problems seem to accumulate. It is as if she could treat other people, but not the ones that are in front of her. Her brother-in-law also commits suicide. His wife finds the body, and, without even touching it or telling anybody, runs away. While her strange behaviour may be explained by panic and may be understandable up to a certain point, the behaviour of Celia, their daughter, is even stranger. Celia is so absorbed by her studies at Oxford and so reluctant to go back to her native town (i.e. to an uneventful life) that she pays no attention to her father's death and to her mother's disappearance.

It is to be noted that Paul and Celia, who seem to have lost contact with reality, are also fascinated with ancient history. They plunge into the past to avoid the present.

### **3.2. The Nostalgia for the Lost Paradise**

As far as the nostalgia for the lost paradise is concerned, we can say that it is obvious in the meetings that the three friends have, meetings that take place in spaces that connote an atmosphere of peacefulness and beauty. We have three such spaces in the novels under discussion: Esther's house, her friends' estate in Somerset, and a restaurant in Italy, with a fourth that is expecting them, the garden of the "Queen of Novara" in Pallanza. Every time the atmosphere is idyllic, friendly and warm, inviting the three friends to talk, to share stories both about themselves and about the other characters. At the restaurant,

Esther, Liz and Alix sit at a little table beneath a vine trellis. They tell one another stories, as they watch the little boats put out upon the lake. It is mid-afternoon, and the day is just beginning to revive from its noontide swoon. Esther, Liz and Alix have lunched well. They have devoured varying kinds of pasta, and little mixed fried fishes of the lake and a sublime Gorgonzola, and a salad of green grasses, and they have drunk a litre of Bardolino and a litre or two of fizzy water. The wine was undated, but the water had been bottled in June 1986, the first anniversary of Esther's birthday picnic in Somerset, and the birth month of young Cornelia Headleand. They have commented on these not very near coincidences. Now they are sipping black coffee and deep-yellow Strega. The restaurant does not hurry them. There is no hurry here. They can sit here if they wish until night falls. They gaze across the mild dancing water, through a haze of midges, at a little island with a ruined tower, and at the far mountains with their snowy peaks. They are in a bowl of mountains. That evening, they have an appointment with Beaver's mistress in Pallanza. She has invited them for a drink. Meanwhile, they talk and talk. They all have so much to say, they do not know who should speak first, so their stories intermingle, as they have done for the last two days of their little Italian holiday. (Drabble 1990:300-301)



The landscape in Somerset includes a forest, full of flowers and of animals and birds (a fox, a woodpecker, a snake that seem to coexist peacefully with the human beings), with springs that appear mysteriously and disappear also mysteriously, no matter how hard it rains. In her turn, Beaver's former mistress has a garden worthy of a real queen, who waits for her guests

on her terrace, amidst lichen-gilded baroque statues, and dark carved hedges. White peacocks stray on an emerald lawn beneath a spreading cedar. A fountain plays, its waters tumbling from an upheld shell. A frog croaks, the midges hum and lightly whine. The white azaleas and the white lilac cluster. (Drabble 1990:308)

Both the garden in Pallanza and the forest in Somerset remind us of the Garden of Eden, where all creatures lived in harmony.

Surprisingly, the top-security Porston Prison, where Paul Whitmore serves his life sentence can also be added to the list and can be found positive connotations by virtue of its being an isolated place, inviting to meditation and rediscovery of one's own self. The prison, where Alix pays frequent visits to "her murderer", is so designed that once inside you cannot see the watch-tower and the wall that surrounds it. Therefore, you have the illusion that you are "not imprisoned, but stranded, with all perspectives opening, helplessly, widely, impersonally, meaninglessly, forever." (Drabble 1990:9) Indeed, these visits open the woman's perspectives.

### **3.3 The Figure of the Shaman. An Initiatic Experience**

The figure of the shaman can be identified with Esther's lover Claudio Volpe. Claudio is a married anthropologist with whom Esther is living now and then, a strange person, but a renowned scientist. Claudio Volpe had a strange experience in a small mountainous region near the Greek-Bulgarian border, where he had been researching the medieval superstitions and heresies for several years. He was interested in the place because he had found there witches with miraculous shamanic powers and people still living in a primitive way. At a famous conference that he had been invited to deliver in Rome, he narrates his adventures there, in the world of the supernatural. He even looks as though descended from a story of witchcraft, wearing a dark mantle over his dark suit. He begins in an academic style, discussing sources and documents, achievements and controversies, and unexpected discoveries that he had been afraid to publish for fear that it would ruin his credibility. Still, on this occasion, he had decided to reveal some of the stranger revelations he had while studying the respective region. While he was driving on a distant and isolated road in the south of Bulgaria, towards evening, he saw a werewolf. The upper part of his body was human, the lower part was that of an animal. Claudio was amazed because the werewolves were not a characteristic of the heresies and superstitions of the region. He had managed to

establish a contact with the werewolf and to communicate with him by means of signs and Greek words, and followed him to his village. The village was hidden in the woods and was inhabited by ordinary, though primitive people. After he had eaten something, Claudio was taken to a hut that was a little isolated, in the highest point of the glade. There, he found himself in the presence of two women, one young and the other old. The young woman was half naked and had two breasts and four additional nipples. She was speaking in a language that he understood and told him that she had guessed his intentions and had sent the werewolf to fetch him. The rest of the visit, however, had proved to be frustrating. The woman could not understand him at all. After several hours he had been taken to bed and he slept comfortably. In the morning he had left, after taking photographs of the two women, but not of the werewolf that had disappeared.

It is to be noted that the strange part of this experience takes place in the evening, the magic part of the day, the werewolf disappearing after the sunrise. Both the fox (with which Claudio's last name [Volpe] can be associated) and the wolf are ambivalent symbols, being both civilizing heroes and mythical forefathers, and messengers of hell, guiding the spirits of the dead towards the nether world. Moreover, the fox is a unity of contraries – both creative and destructive, daring and fearful. It is a double of the human conscience and at the origin of demonic possessions. It may be a deity of fertility, but also a Don Juan, a debaucher (Claudio is married, but still lives with Esther, having told her lies about his wife, who proves to be a nice person). Both the wolf and the werewolf are devourers, the wolf's mouth being an initiatic symbol, devouring and throwing back (cf. Chevalier and Gheerbrant 1993:473-475). Thus, we might interpret Claudio's experience as an act of initiation. The extra nipples of the young woman can also connote the idea of fertility, but also of depravation, while the fact that the hut where she and the older woman are found is isolated and placed at a higher level than the rest can point to its sacred character or at least higher importance for the community.

As there was no time for questions, at the end of his conference Claudio disappeared as mysteriously as the werewolf, leaving everybody in shock. Still, they managed to convince themselves that it had been interesting, stimulating and exciting. The next morning the press jumped at Claudio, who gave them the photograph with the woman with six nipples that was not so unusual and strange after all. Esther herself is convinced that Claudio saw nothing and he is self-delusional. But she admits to Liz that she is afraid to disturb Claudio's madness for fear of not maddening him. Moreover, when they are together, she too believes in his hallucinations. But this is too much. She is convinced that the werewolf was actually a Bulgarian woodcutter.

### **3.4. Other Archaic Elements: the Archetype of the Creation, Ancient Rites, the Sacrifice, Premonitory Dreams, Fairy-Tale-Like Characters**

Another fact worth discussing is that the action of both novels begins with the beginning of the year. *The Radiant Way* (1988) opens with New Year's Eve party given by Liz and Charles Headleand. It is the end of a year and the end of a decade (1970-1980), but also, as Liz will unexpectedly find, the end of their marriage. Still, as every ending is a new beginning, both members of the former couple hope that the future has happiness in store for them. Charles looks forward to a new marriage, with Lady Henrietta Latchett, while Liz, though terrified by loneliness, hopes to find peace in a new life by herself. *A Natural Curiosity* (1990) begins on January 2, and only presents in retrospect the way in which various characters had spent their New Year's Eve, but towards the end of this novel we shall find Charles and Liz reunited, not married again (Charles had divorced Henrietta), but enjoying each other's company.

Drabble comments on the fact that various customs are still kept in Britain to bring luck in the New Year. At midnight, somebody – a red-haired man – has to go out and return with a piece of coal in a shovel for good luck. But the Harpers have no coal, therefore Steve, the only member of the family with the right hair colour, goes out with a black pan in a dust shovel, with which he is supposed to return to the house on the last stroke of Big Ben. It is an echo, says the narrator, of something that had once been a significant ritual, but whose significance none of the Harpers or of their guests knows. Similarly obscure, badly remembered reminiscences of rituals are kept all over Britain.

The narrator also mentions the sacrifice at the basis of Charles and Liz's house, bought in 1960 with "blood-stained money", from the parents of Charles's first wife, who had died in a car accident; Alix's future daughter-in-law, Ilse, who has six fingers on her left hand and pretends to be a good witch, who had decorated her and her boy-friend's house by magic, during the dark night; or Esther's premonitory dream of a man's severed head asking her to take care of it, which she connects with Claudio, whom she considers sick, though she does not believe she can save him, but that Liz considers as an instinctive warning connected to the murderer who would prove to be Esther's neighbour.

Last but not least, we should note Margaret Drabble's own comment that, like in the fairy-tales, we have three main characters. But, unlike in the fairy-tales, they are women, not men, friends, not brothers, ordinary people, not royalty (even if Liz dreams of herself as a princess). Still, they are above the average, la crème de la crème of their generation.

#### 4. Conclusion

As we can notice, the two novels contain quite a number of archaic elements. Still, they are not viewed in a serious manner. People laugh at Claudio's strange experience and even his friend cannot take him seriously. The ancient rites are no longer observed literally, but are changed in laughable ways, as nobody is aware of their significance any longer. Even if the postmodernist narration has turned to the past, it has done it again in its characteristic ironic, mocking way.

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# REVENGEFUL VIOLENCE – HANNAH DUSTON’S CAPTIVITY NARRATIVE AND THE PURITAN PARADOX

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**Abstract:** *The story of Hannah Duston brings forth a new image of the captive Puritan woman, one that is bearing the horrifying specter of violent revenge. The essay dwells on the captive’s way of dealing with the experience of captivity by touching upon Walter Benjamin’s approach on the matter and also by analyzing the moral paradox that arises.*

**Keywords:** *captivity, frontier, natural law, Puritan, violence*

## 1. Introduction

The Indian captivity narrative, a genre directly connected with physical as well as psychological violence, has been viewed by critics as a staple of the American letters covering a multitude of purposes, connected to religion and implicitly to morality, politics, and sentimental literature. It is undoubtedly an archetypal expression of the American values and attitudes as its transformation closely followed that of the New World – in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries the colonists’ religious mission and their utter fear of failure, the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries with the shift from religious to secular utopia and finally the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the birth of the sensationalist fiction (Reinwater 2003:566). Interestingly enough, this type of texts was mainly written by women and/or presented a woman victim while encountering a wilderness both physically and spiritually. The model that they generally followed was that given by the movement from sin to redemption of the spiritual autobiography and the jeremiad. A Puritan woman was taken from her familiar context and brought to the unknown land beyond the frontier, into the so-called “devil’s territory”. In such a situation the captive waited for God’s intervention by placing all trust and hope in a just and merciful divinity being aware of the fact that this would help passing the most important test in order to reach the certitude of being one of the elect.

## 2. Hannah Duston’s Story

By the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, after Mary Rowlandson’s famous account [first published in 1682, both in Massachusetts and London ], the work that established in fact the tradition of the Indian captivity narrative in America, there appeared another case which presented the reader with the image of the woman captive, but one of a

different type. Unlike Mary who found a way to survive and cohabitate with the savages despite their initial cruelty towards her, Hannah Duston, also Christian wife and mother, belonging to the Puritan community, takes arms against fate and acts upon her captors with the violence that was specific to them, re-activating the Old Testament law of an-eye-for-an-eye in the imaginary of the readers and fellow countrymen. She thus becomes an acclaimed hero and the first woman in the honor of whom a statue has been erected. The image of the spiritual model of patience and pious resistance is replaced by that of the courageous mother and community warrior-like savior as Cotton Mather, member of the ministerial elite at the time, sees her when writing the first account of the story entitled – *A Notable Exploit; wherein Dux Faemina Facti* (A Woman Leader in the Achievement, 1820). Jay Fliegelman (1982:146) even calls Mather's narrative a "turning point in American intellectual history" as it celebrates self-reliance at the expense of human resignation to God's will.

In short, on March 15, 1697, during King William's War, a group of Canadian Indians, called Abenaki, allied with the French in the before mentioned war, attacked the frontier town of Haverhill, Massachusetts, and killed a large number of inhabitants, set villages on fire and took a dozen of captives. Among them there was a woman named Hannah Duston (also named Dustin in some ulterior text), her newborn baby and Mary Neff the nurse who was taking care of the two. Strangely enough, the husband Thomas ran to save his other children while leaving Hannah helpless in the house. The three that were left with no protection, were taken by the Indians, who stopped on the way to kill the infant by smashing his head against a tree. A few days later, the war party split up and Hannah and Mary were left on an island under the watch of a family of Praying Indians consisting of two warriors, three women, and seven children of various ages. Here they found out that when they reached the village in Maine they were going to be forced to strip and run the gauntlet. On the night of March 30, Hannah, together with Mary Neff and Samuel Lennardson, a boy who had been staying as a captive with the Indian family for almost a year, arose and tomahawked their sleeping captors. Only one squaw, severely wounded, and one boy escaped. After scalping their victims, the whites made their way down the Merrimac River to an outlying settlement, where they were welcomed as heroes. The Massachusetts General Assembly awarded them fifty pounds, and Francis Nicholson, Governor of Maryland, added his own generous contribution to the reward (Mather 1820:552). In later years, Mrs. Duston sought, and was granted by the state, an additional sum of money in recognition of her services as an Indian slayer. A few days after her return, Mrs. Duston journeyed to Boston, where she told her tale to Samuel Sewall, who recorded it in his diary, and to Cotton Mather. The latter regarded Hannah's escape as one of the wonders of the Christian religion and, as Robert Arner (1973:20) underlines, transformed her into a Puritan saint, at once a self-reliant frontier woman and an afflicted Christian saved by God's infinite power.

### 3. Morality on the Frontier

The story has been retold many times, since its entrance into American literature by means of inclusion in Mather's *Magnalia Christi Americana* up to the twentieth century and the variants present different attitudes towards her violent act ranging from great admiration (Cotton Mather 1820), mixed feelings of horror and awe (John Greenleaf Whittier 1965) to neutrality and undisturbed affection for the Indian way (Henry David Thoreau 2003) or total rejection (Nathaniel Hawthorne 1836), to name only some of the ulterior authors and the most important ones. Still, there is no personal account, Hannah does not author a variant of her story except the fact that she herself told Mather about the captivity and the conversion letter that she writes, strangely enough, 27 years after her captivity. In this letter, discovered in 1929 in a vault of the Center Congregational Church of Haverhill, she confesses that the captivity period was the most valuable time of her life, the most comfortable for her soul.

I desire to be Thankful that I was born in a Land of Light & Baptized when I was Young; and had a Good Education by My Father, Tho I took but little Notice of it in the time of it; –I am Thankful for my Captivity, twas the Comfortablest time that ever I had; In my Affliction God made his Word Comfortable to me. I remembered 43d ps. ult – and those words came to my mind – ps118.17....I have had a great Desire to come to the Ordinance of the Lord's Supper a Great While but fearing I should give offence & fearing my own unworthiness has kept me back; reading a book concerning Suffering Did much awaken me. In the 55th of Isa. beg. We are invited to come; – Hearing Mr. Moody preach out of ye 3d of Mal. 3 last verses it put me upon Consideration. Ye 11th of Matthew has been Encouraging to me – I have been resolving to offer my Self from time to time ever since the Settlement of the present Ministry; I was awakened by the first Sacram 'l Sermon (Luke 14.17) But Delays and fears prevailed upon me; –But I desire to delay no longer, being Sensible it is My Duty–, I desire the Church to receive me tho' it be the eleventh hour; and pray for me-- that I may hon'r God and obtain the Salvation of my Soul. Hannah Dustin wife of Thomas Aetat 67. (Hannah Dustin's Letter to the Elders of the Second Church in Haverhill, 1724, <http://www.hawthorneinsalem.org/page/11866/>)

She specifies that her delay was caused by feelings of unworthiness and one may speculate that she felt guilty for having murdered the 10 praying Indians even if the entire community saw her as the embodiment of justice. But one may also speculate that she did not really want or care to enter the Church until old age came upon her with all its hardships.

The question that arises and is directly related to the idea of violence is the real motivation for her act. A variety of suppositions may appear in this respect: revenge, temporary insanity, financial reward, escape from physical injuries or a combination of

all these. What I would like to dwell upon first is the concept of violence in Hannah Duston's story as related to Walter Benjamin's view on the matter. As the German philosopher states in the *Critique of Violence*, the elementary relation of any juridical order is that between means and ends and violence has to be looked for only as regards the means (Benjamin 2007:269). We may consequently say that Hannah committed a genuinely violent act. But to what end? A cause, Benjamin adds, however effective, becomes violent, in the precise sense of the word, only when it bears on moral issues. At this point, it is worth mentioning the juridical motivation that Cotton Mather gives for Hannah's killing and then returning to get the scalps of the ten Indians:

...and being where she had not her own life secured by any law unto her, she thought she was not forbidden by any law to take away the life of the murderers by whom her child had been butchered. (Mather 1820:552).

In other words, she is situated outside the laws of her community; the wilderness accounts for a lawless land not in the sense that it is anti-law, but beyond or without it. What we encounter here is, in Kierkegaardian terms, a teleological suspension of the ethics, but this time the purpose does not seem to be religious. [Søren Kierkegaard, the Danish existentialist philosopher, employs this concept when talking about the significance of Abraham's readiness in killing his son as sacrifice to God and thus not being viewed as a killer but as a worthy worshiper of God.] In Mather's view, her act is morally justifiable because she is outside the boundaries of civilization and she is a mother whose child has been killed. Furthermore, she is the exponent of an entire community. We would assume that the law as a concept is regarded almost as a physical reality that is limited by spatial boundaries. The question arises: could violence be used as a moral means to just causes? Benjamin (2007:269-270) points out the distinction between natural law and positive law. The first concept implies violence as a natural datum; in Darwinian perception, besides natural selection there is only violence as the natural means appropriate to all the vital ends of nature. The second concept deals with violence as a product of history. The former stresses the ends, the latter the means employed to reach a certain aim. By applying this discussion to Hannah's case and Mather's perspective on it, we would conclude that natural law was at work at the moment of the scalping. In "Notes on Walter Benjamin's Critique of Violence", Mathew Abbott (2008:81) shows that in the German philosopher's view, natural law is dependent on a paradox because justice must be found in an alignment between means and ends, where the attainment of one will establish legitimation through the guaranteed attainment of the other – just cause-legitimate means. However, this can only be obtained

through inquiry into one half of the nexus at the expense of leaving the other entirely undetermined. There is a kind of sleight of hand whereby a relation is claimed to be



established between two terms, when what in fact takes place is simply the elimination (or bracketing out) of one of them. Natural law, Benjamin says, is blind to the contingency of means. (Abbott 2008:81)

But what was the moral end that justified Hannah's deed? Is revenge a moral value? Or is she the mouthpiece, so to say, of a whole community affected by Indian cruelty and, therefore, does her act become a symbolical one, bearing communal value towards which all look with fascination? Benjamin points to the figure of the great criminal and explains its historical ability to both horrify and captivate the masses. Such figures confront the violence of law "with the threat of declaring a new law" (Benjamin 2007:273). [Benjamin talks about violence outside/above law but within the state, and the actor becomes an intolerable figure for the state whereas Hannah's case is special.]

Mather compares Hannah to Jael, an Old-Testament woman. In the biblical story, before Jael appears, there is a prophecy stating that God was going to use a woman in order to defeat the enemies of Israel. The Book of Judges, chapter 24 gives the following account: "But Jael wife of Heber took a tent peg, and took a hammer in her hand, and went softly to him and drove the peg into his temple, until it went down into the ground he was lying fast asleep from weariness and he died." (Judges 4:21) While using the same biblical tone, Mather offers a similar image: "at the feet of these poor prisoners, they bow'd, they fell, they lay down; at their feet they bow'd, they fell; where they bow'd, there they fell down dead." (Mather 1820:551) Seen through the lenses of the typological thinking specific to the Puritan community, Hannah is the avenger of the whole people of the so-called "visible saints". Hence, her act as exponent of the natural law is a just one and violence is a natural means for reaching highly moral ends.

Returning to the Biblical character Jael, it is worth mentioning that she is depicted as an independent woman; she takes the decision without her husband's consent and against his wishes. We have here again the case of reverted moral rules with the aim of accomplishing a sacred deed. Moreover, Hannah's story is included in The Seventh Book of *Magnalia Christi Americana* (Mather 1820), which is entitled "Ecclesiarum Praelia" or "a book of the wars of the Lord". Hannah Duston is, then, one of God's warriors on earth. Violence is justified by this special status, by textual authority and by clerical acceptance, and becomes worthy of generous reward.

As we have already mentioned, Cotton Mather insists on the law and his approach on the story becomes more understandable in the light of Duston's violent family history. As Ann-Marie Weis (1998:49) shows, in 1676, Hannah's father was fined for having cruelly beaten Hannah's younger sister Elizabeth Emerson, who was eleven years old at the time. After seventeen years, the sister herself was accused of killing her newborn twins, illegitimate children delivered at home, without her parents' knowledge. She had hidden their bodies in a chest by her bed and later buried them in

the garden. She claimed not to have hurt the infants, and it is possible that they were stillborn (one of them had its umbilical cord twisted about its neck). But the colonial laws had been revised in 1692 to make “concealing of the death of a bastard child” a capital crime (Weis 1998:49). Consequently, Elizabeth was tried by a jury and hanged on June 8, 1693. Interestingly enough, one of the women who examined Elizabeth at the discovery of the dead babies was Mary Neff, the widow who four years later assisted Hannah in killing six Native American children.

Most of the variants of the story belong to the 19<sup>th</sup> century when, it seems, readers’ imagination was ignited especially by such narratives. That was because apparently, under the impetus of the romantic interest of the past, the New England people rediscovered their own colonial history and exploited it in novels and tales. Stories of captivity of the colonists had a wide appeal, not only because they were straight-forward and exciting, but because the ancestors of many New England men and women had been among the captives, as Katryn Whitford (1972:304) points out. One account belonging to this period is that of Timothy Dwight, who included the story in *Travels in New England and New York*, published in 1821. Dwight (1821:413) brings to the reader’s mind the question of the morality of Hannah’s conduct: “Whether all their sufferings, and all the danger of suffering anew, justified this slaughter may be questioned by you or some other exact moralist” – and answers:

A wife who had just seen her house burnt, her infant dashed against a tree, and her companions coldly murdered one by one; who supposed her husband and her remaining children, to have shared the same fate, who was threatened with torture, and indecency more painful than torture, ...would probably feel no necessity... of asking questions concerning anything, but the success of the enterprise. (Dwight 1821:413)

Once more she is placed above any law by mentioning the special situation as annulling all moral limitations.

If we approach other variants like that of John Greenleaf Whittier, entitled *The Mother’s Revenge* and included in his *Legends of New England* (1831), then it seems that the whole violent story stems from Hannah’s being forced to witness the killing of her baby. Transformation is a major sub-theme:

She has often said, that at this moment, all was darkness and horror – that her very heart seemed to cease beating, and to lie cold and dead in her bosom, and that her limbs moved only as involuntary machinery. But when she gazed around her and saw the unfeeling savages, grinning at her and mocking her, and pointing to the mangled body of her infant with fiendish exultation, a new and terrible feeling came over her. It was the thirst of revenge; and from that moment her purpose was fixed. (Whittier 1965:127).

Worth mentioning though is the fact that the author feels the need to give first a description of the 19<sup>th</sup> century woman as being delicate and sensible in order to establish a contrast with the strange fascination that Hannah Duston could exert. Unlike the feminine model endowed with the virtues of “meek affection, of fervent piety, of winning sympathy” and of that “charity which forgiveth often”, there had been “astonishing manifestations of female fortitude and power... of a courage rising almost to sublimity” (Whittier 1965:125), which Whittier sees as belonging to the realm of dark passions, a mark of the collective subconscious that could disturb human existence by being activated. This is however regarded as belonging to a twilight time, when superstitions were often appealed to and in the end the account seems to contain both feelings of admiration for such an amazing overthrowing of the natural order of the gender roles and the idea of the *illo tempore* long gone and not affecting the present anymore, as if a danger has been annihilated by reaching a new and superior level of existence.

Nathaniel Hawthorne instead, in an article published in 1836 in *American Magazine of Useful and Entertaining Knowledge*, expresses his rejection directly, first by ironically justifying Thomas’s leaving his wife alone while the Indians were approaching: “he had such knowledge of the good lady’s character as afforded him a comfortable hope that she would hold her own, even in a contest with a whole tribe of Indians” (Hawthorne 1836:395). Secondly, Hawthorne admits his preference for a Hannah who would have died on her way back than for the one being honored as a hero. His words are rather harsh and angry:

Would that the bloody old hag had been drowned in crossing Contocook River, or that she had sunk over head and ears in a swamp, and been there buried, till summoned forth to confront her victims at the Day of Judgment; or that she had gone astray and been starved to death in the forest, and nothing ever seen of her again, save her skeleton, with the ten scalps twisted round it for a girdle! But, on the contrary, she and her companions came safe home, and received the bounty on the dead Indians. (Hawthorne 1836:397)

Hannah Duston is the “raging tigress” (Hawthorne 1836:396), the awful women descending from what Whittier Greenleaf called the twilight times. Moreover, the illustration that accompanies the text and connects the reader to the original story is fragmentary. We can only see Thomas while rescuing the children. This would be, in fact, what Hawthorne considered the focus, the essence of the episode, while Hannah’s captivity and self-liberation only come to shed an unpleasant shadow upon the idea of courage.

All the variants mentioned depict the captors as “formidable salvages”, “furious tawnies”, “raging dragons” (Mather 1820:551), “furious natives” (Dwight 1821:412), “fierce savages in their hunt for blood” (Whittier 1965:126), “the

bloodthirsty foe” (Hawthorne 1836:396 ). At the same time, Mather, Sewall, Dwight and Hawthorne mention the fact that the praying Indians were of Catholic faith, which portrays them as an even greater danger than that of being excessively violent. The family that Hannah and Mary had to stay with used to pray three times a day, before each meal; they were Christian, but there was not one word of it when Hannah returned with the ten scalps. A new motivation, even if secondary, namely that of being favoring the Catholic faith, seems to justify the killing. If not from Hannah’s perspective, then from the point of view of the authors (except Hawthorne who mentions the fact only to disagree with Mather whom he calls an old-hearted, pedantic bigot) who unveil through their text the dialectic relationship between their writings and the mentality of an entire community and also its reading habits.

Henry David Thoreau, in *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, is the only one who does not dwell on the act itself, but rather on the harshness of life in those times and the precious value of the Indian way of life that had been lost:

These are the only traces of man,— a fabulous wild man to us. On either side, the primeval forest stretches away uninterrupted to Canada, or to the “South Sea”; to the white man a drear and howling wilderness, but to the Indian a home, adapted to his nature, and cheerful as the smile of the Great Spirit. (Thoreau 2003:694)

In such an existential formula, Hannah Duston’s story is one of trespassing, and its consequence is the overthrowing of moral laws. Still, in Thoreau’s words, the reader finds Hannah and Mary as only having done something in order to preserve their lives and be believed by their community – the reward is not mentioned. The former captives are portrayed as overcome with fear and remorse, a more human image than that of the almost mythical figure presented before: “their clothes stained with blood, and their minds racked with alternate resolution and fear (...) they are thinking of the dead they have left” (Thoreau 2003:692). Only subtly does Thoreau touch upon the unrighteousness of their deed: “Every withered leaf that winter has left seems to know their story, and in its rustling to repeat it and betray them.” (Thoreau 2003:692)

#### **4. Conclusion**

Had Hannah left a personal written account, we would have had a clearer image of what and how she felt. Cotton Mather’s text, written after having heard the words from the very mouth of the woman, and each subsequent variant bear signs of each author’s subjective attitudes and are under the dictates of the community meanings at the time of their publishing. Still, the fact remains: violence was paid with violence, a practice that has been perpetuated until the present days. No one would

have expected a Puritan woman to react so harshly just as no one would expect people that voice their belief in peace and justice to act violently.

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### Acknowledgement

This work was supported by the European Social Fund in Romania, under the responsibility of the Managing Authority for the Sectoral Operational Programme for Human Resources Development 2007–2013 (grant POSDRU/88/1.5/S/47646).

# GENDER AND IRONY IN THE EARLY MODERN ENGLISH ROMANCE

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**Abstract:** *The paper discusses the ironic manner in which gender relations are often tackled in the early modern English romance, from Shakespeare's comedies to Sidney's pastorals or Lady Mary Wroth's poetry. Strong female characters, effeminate males and the subversive, often ambiguous, manner in which the theme of love is approached in 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> – century English literature are some of the aspects to be discussed.*

**Keywords:** *agency gender, genre, irony, romance.*

## 1. Introduction

Early romance has much more in common with the popular genre in the 20<sup>th</sup> century than it may seem. Firstly, it was disregarded, for several centuries, as a minor genre. Plato's influence, dominating early Christian thought, triggered a thorough exclusion of this literary mode from the mainstream (Green 2003:16). Aristotle's views, more in favour of fiction, had a belated reception in Western Europe (mainly from the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards). Platonism, with its distinction between poetry and philosophy, adapted by the Church as a distinction between vernacular culture and theology, put the narratives of the secular world in the shade. Secondly, the very name of the genre of romance, deriving from the old French *romanz*, meaning "a vernacular language distinct from Latin", suggested a clear separation between academic and theological discourse, as well as from the rhetoric of official institutions (Cooper 2004:25). Unlike Latin, available only to a limited scholarly – almost exclusively male – elite, the vernacular idioms were accessible to both male and female, lay and clerical, upper and lower classes, and, because they circulated in oral form, to both the literate and the illiterate. These were the languages of communal entertainment, secular practices, and families. When vernacular is used in story telling, the dissemination of the plot and its teachings is immediate and continuous. Vernacular narratives were the stories everybody grew up with, "which they did not need to learn, because they were so deep a part of their culture." (Cooper 2004:25) Being written in vernacular meant that stories, thus separated from academic discourse, did not tax the intellect, even if their accessibility did not make them appealing only to a public with a lower level of intelligence. Moreover, their appeal was not limited to the primitive attraction of a sensational story; besides the subject matter, every romance had to carry an inner

meaning and/or to invite an engaged reception, in the form of debates or other types of active feedback. The vogue of the so-called *demandes d'amour*, love questions, dominated the centuries in which the habit of writing and reading romances was at a premium among the courtly elites of Western Europe (Cooper 2004:29). Such debates were ignited by an adventure story, or a tale of *amour courtois*, providing lay, non-intellectual communities and private individuals with a secular forum that imitated the working mechanisms of public institutions, including law courts, the Church, the king's councils, or universities.

In the Middle Ages, romance was crucial in the development of a culture that headed towards secularization, as well as in securing a continuity into the early modernity of literature and philosophy. Early romance writers always made a point of giving social, national, ideological, or at least didactic relevance. Romance records the secular ideals of an age and a community, passes on the group's need for self-representation, and encrypts civil role models. It accomplishes its mission successfully because it is accessible, due to its narrative form, and stable, due to the employment of invariables. A medieval romance is always anchored in a recognizable society, even if it is set in exotic locations and makes extensive use of supernatural elements. It is predictable in that it focuses on general themes, such as the battle between good and evil, heroic and gallant protagonists, mysteries, love, the quest for an ideal, ethic values, etc. More or less dramatic departures from these guidelines cannot estrange a story completely from the genre of romance: the happy ending, very frequent, can sometimes be absent, the story may take the form of allegory or ballad and still remain a romance, while even the narrative modality can be given up, in favour of poetry or drama, without impeding on the original genre. As Helen Cooper (2004:26) argues, this happens because the principle of selective resemblance is acknowledged in the Middle Ages:

A family changes over time as its individual members change, but equally, those individuals can be recognized through their 'family resemblance': [...] even though no one of those [features] is essential for the resemblance to register, and even though individual features may contradict the model.

These characteristics make the medieval romance survive into the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. And because the English romance of the Middle Ages also included the national dimension, being deeply embedded in the native cultural traditions, the genre is much better preserved here than in other European countries because of the specific history of Englishness during the early modernity, under the Tudors and the Stuarts (Cooper 2004:22). In an age of strong nationalism, of political and religious separation from the Continent, of economic competition with the important European powers of the day, "the writing of England" is achievable by means of continuing and adapting the native romance (and the romance naturalized from the continental lore), such as the

Arthurian cycle or the *Tristan* narratives. Invested with vitality, authenticity, and national pride, old legends and narrative traditions come to be regarded as precious heritage, to be used as a model for future development and change. Consequently, even if it found its best expression in the narrative form, early modern English romance is adopted by the fashionable literary genres – poetry and drama – and permeates political thought when a female monarch, Queen Elizabeth I, is repeatedly represented as a typical romance heroine (Yates 1985).

In Shakespeare's age, "romance" was the name given not only to prose fiction, but a much greater variety of texts (Lamb and Wayne 2009:2). Prose romance consisted of the popular retellings of local medieval heroic tales (such as Guy of Warwick), translations of newer Italian novellas (Bandello's collection) or Spanish *pasos honrosos* of the Reconquista, adaptations of classical Greek tales, sophisticated or mannerist texts of the University Wits, such as John Lyly's *Euphues* (1580), pastorals of Hellenistic inspiration, like Philip Sidney's *Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* (1590), etc. In poetry, the features of romance are most famously illustrated in Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1590-1596), an allegory of the English State in the form of narratives of knights, ladies in distress, and supernatural creatures. Dramatic romance, not entirely distinct from prose and verse, manifests itself in nostalgic recoveries of native myths, as it happens in Shakespeare's early comedies (Bevington 2007), such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1590-1596) or *As You Like It* (1599), and in redemptive plots sprinkled with magic and pagan lore, like Shakespeare's late romances.

## **2. Gender and Agency in Early Modern English Romance**

Shakespeare's romantic comedies display a constant pattern in presenting the effeminacy of male heroes. In *Twelfth Night*, men and women challenge one another for the use (and misuse) of gender roles. Viola (as Sebastian) is rescued in her duel by Antonio, who treats Sebastian as a younger, attractive male in need of protection, whom he rescued from the waves and accompanied through the dangerous streets of Illyria after three months spent together "both day and night" (V, i). Antonio is ironically presented as more male than heterosexual males in the play: Sir Andrew, void of erotic desire, is a vessel in which the others' (Toby's) desires are poured, while Orsino's languid action and hyper-courtly language, narcissistic and homophobic (he is anxious to see Viola' back in maiden weeds before he is ready to acknowledge his love for her) is the epitome of feminization. Orsino, the effeminate lover as Bruce Smith (2000:124) sees him, when switching his affections from Olivia to Viola, has also changed his erotic discourse. While at the beginning, love is something concrete ("food", "surfeiting", "the appetite may sicken", "odour", "hunt"), in the end, it enters the prototypical erotic discourse of medieval romances.



Malvolio's subplot capitalizes both on Viola's carnivalesque game and on the effeminate males in the play. Thinking that Olivia wants him, Malvolio puts on yellow stockings and crosses his garters. His cross-gartering (Callaghan 2000) comes as a collateral comment on Viola's transvestism. Whereas Viola's carnival implies gender inversion, Malvolio's carnival implies social inversion. Wanting to become Olivia's husband, he is actually after a superior social position ("There is example for it; the lady of the Strachy married the yeoman of the wardrobe", II, v), thus flouting the rules of class and hierarchy. He is punished for this by Maria, but his anger in the end, directed at everybody ("I'll be revenged on the whole pack of you", V, i), may be interpreted as a sign that class travesty is even more threatening than gender transvestism. Malvolio's body is no less grotesque, therefore. Callaghan (2000) notes that the pun occurring in the letter Malvolio believes to have been written by Olivia is not only a mockery directed at Olivia as a woman but also at Malvolio as an effeminate man. The ill-wishing Puritan, as his name suggests and as criticism has identified him comments on the letter: "By my life, this is my lady's hand: these be her very C's, her U's, and her T's; and thus makes she her great P's. It is, in contempt of question, her hand." (II, v)

If "her great P's" is a derogatory comment on the most common type of feminine symbolism, which associates femininity with humidity, moist humours, water in general, "her very C's, her U's, and her T's" are, at the same time, a pun for CU/n/T and one for C/o/U/n/T. In the vicinity of a vocabulary for female genitalia, Malvolio's wish to become a count can be regarded as a degeneration into femininity. Like Sebastian who, being taken for Cesario, unwillingly degenerates into womanhood, Malvolio does so more willingly. They both start in a direction opposite to Viola's. What she is trying to do (to become or, at least, pass for a man) is, in theory, considered possible in the Renaissance on the grounds that, nature striving for perfection, the imperfect human is striving to become as perfect as possible. Malvolio's effemination detected in his desire to marry Olivia can also be accounted for by the countess's status and behaviour. From the point of view of class, she is superior to anybody else in the play, except Orsino. She has privileges and makes decisions like no one else in the play. With her independence in decision making, with her erotic initiative both towards Viola and towards Sebastian, Olivia acquires virile qualities that make Malvolio's dream of marriage for an aristocratic name and financial security look more like those of a female upstart, a sort of Samuel Richardson's Pamela *avant la lettre*.

Effeminacy in *As You Like It* is also embodied by Oliver, asleep, threatened by a snake wreathed around his neck and by a lioness "with udders all drawn dry" (IV, iii). Orlando banishes the snake and battles with the lioness while his emasculated brother, unconscious as his position as maiden in distress, sleeps on. Their sibling rivalry is displaced onto and mediated by gender conflict (Traub 1992:129). Oliver is both the feminized object of male aggression (the snake threatening to penetrate the

vulnerable opening of his mouth is an apparent phallic threat) and the effeminized object of female desire, embodied by the aging lioness.

The heroine in this comedy is even more masculine than her counterparts in *Twelfth Night*. Rosalind decides to run away from the constraints of an aristocratic household where she has to obey the rules of a tyrannical uncle ("Now we go in content,/ To liberty, and not to banishment." I, iii). When choosing a Bohemian lifestyle, rising against the social rules of her class, Rosalind becomes a Robin Hood, corresponding to the same pattern of defiance as the legendary outlaw. (Traditional representations of Rosalind, both on the stage and in paintings, actually show her wearing essentially the same costume as in the visual tradition of Robin Hood). In terms of the well-known dichotomy between classic and romantic, Rosalind can be argued to adopt the latter style in her clothes and disguise. Aware of one's smallness in comparison with the greatness of nature, the romantic individual adopts a vestimentary style that displays natural forms impossible to control by the human being: the wave, the flame, the growing branch (Nanu 2001:28).

In comparison with Viola, who remains stuck in between genders, Rosalind adopts an entirely masculine new identity:

Alas, what danger will it be to us,  
Maids as we are, to travel forth so far!  
Beauty provoketh thieves sooner than gold.  
[...] Were it not better,  
Because that I am more than common tall,  
That I did suit me all points like a man?  
A gallant curtle-axe upon my thigh,  
A boar-spear in my hand; and – in my heart  
Lie there what hidden woman's fear there will –  
We'll have a swashing and a martial outside; (I, iii)

Being favoured by anatomy (she is taller than a woman usually was at that time), she is encouraged to take over insignia of masculinity (trousers and weapons) and to adopt a male occupation (a shepherd but also a protector of a maiden, Celia, who is going to preserve a feminine attire). Weaker and more submissive, Celia chooses to remain a woman; however, she has some power to defy rules as she goes for a social disguise, allowing herself more freedom in clothing, behaviour and mobility as a shepherdess. It is not far fetched to think of the two princesses' disguise in terms of giving up the corset. The heavy dresses, complicated hairstyles and the corset imposed by the fashion of upper classes are as many physical constraints, limiting their bearers' movements, ultimately their freedom.

*A Midsummer Night's Dream* continues the story of gender relations, complicating it even further, in a mythological key. As it begins with Duke Theseus'

declaration of love for Hippolyta made in martial terms ("Hippolyta, I wooed thee with my sword,/ And won thy love doing thee injuries" (I, i), it reminds its readers of the Amazon narratives from the Greek Antiquity through the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance epic poems.

The men involved in love affairs with the Amazons are presented, in most such literary productions, as slightly effeminate heroes, boys who have been raised far away from their fathers only by their mothers or among girls, like Theseus or Achilles. Even in Shakespeare's play about the Trojan War, *Troilus and Cressida*, Achilles is presented as a 'soft' character, with whims and weak points. In Ulysses' description, the man to whom others attribute martial values lets himself prey to ignoble inclinations such as vanity and laziness. Symbolically masculine body parts (forehead, sinew) are opposed by actions traditionally associated with women (talking, saying jokes, listening to other people's words, praises, gossips) and with an indoor décor (the tent). At the same time, his close relationship with Patroclus is indirectly labelled as gay: "With him, Patroclus, Upon a lazy bed, the livelong day/ Breaks scurril jests" (I, iii).

Shakespeare's mythological characters in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen* follow the same pattern. For the first play, the Bard had probably found a source of inspiration in the story of the Amazon taken prisoner by king Theseus from Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*. Here, Theseus is presented as the typical conqueror, who, together with Hercules, makes an expedition to the Euxine Sea to defeat the Amazons. The female warriors are presented as easily conquerable because of a feminine weakness, that of being 'naturally' attracted to Theseus, who was a handsome man. *Two Noble Kinsmen* shows an affiliation with Chaucer's *The Knight's Tale*, acknowledged from the play's *Prologue*, which insists on privileging the idealistic modes of thought and behaviour claiming a Chaucerian paternity: by endlessly aspiring and failing to measure up to the inherited images of romance perfection, the Jacobean imitations deconstruct the very business of image-making (Hillman 1992:140). They are Renaissance constructs trapped by their own appropriation of a fantasized medieval past. Shakespeare enters into a dialogue with Chaucer by presuming a satirical reading of the precursor's romance. Shakespeare's later Theseus, in contrast with Chaucer's figure of moral authority, is undecided, struggling comically to keep on top of unfolding circumstances. Torn between duty and sexual temptation (in Chaucer, he is already married, while in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* he is impatient to consummate his marriage), he is hypocritical in rejecting the validity of Hermia's desire when threatening to sentence her to death or send her to the nunnery. His authority is, consequently, undermined when he condemns Palamon and Arcite, but he cannot stick to his decision under the women's pressure (Emilia calls his decisions rashly made and he starts wavering). The subversion of the Duke's status as a model of authority and stability is clear, with the male leader contaminated by effeminized qualities.

Shakespeare summarizes all legends about amorous duels and love affairs between heroes and Amazons, as well as historical data about the female warriors' violent defeat in Theseus's promise, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, to make amends, turning sexual and military aggression and cruelty into "pomp, [...] triumph, and [...] revelling". Hippolyta's reaction is ambiguous. When Theseus complains that the four days left before their wedding seem too long, she repeats his lament in almost the same words, but what is not clear is whether she wants this time to go faster or slower. Furthermore, at the end of the play, when the court is attending the interlude about Pyramus and Thisbe, she interrupts the players who are arguing with Theseus about the way in which Moonshine should present itself (as a lantern with horns or as the man in the moon): "I am a-weary of this moon; would he would change" (V, i). The Amazon cannot stand this trivial discussion about the moon transformed into a plaything or an ordinary, every-day domestic instrument. Later during the performance, when each spectator praises one aspect of the acting ("DEMETRIUS: Well roar'd lion. THESEUS: Well run, Thisbe. [...] Well moused, lion", V,i), Hippolyta chooses to emphasize the part of Moonshine in the tragedy: "Well shone, moon. – Truly, the moon shines with a good grace" (V, i).

### 3. Desire, Politics, and Irony

16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century romance is reminiscent of medieval chivalric romance, with knights, heroic and erotic quests, as it imitates older models in its formal technique. Although it features themes from the past, the genre is divested of real content, since the aristocratic ideology was already obsolete during the early modernity. It continues the old tradition of self-deprecation, from the ancient tradition of distrusting fiction, from the stigma against print in elite literary culture, as low material for uneducated masses, especially women, whose tastes were believed to slide towards the fantastic realm. At the same time, authors use the genre to address early modern anxieties about the ethics of political agency (Zurcher 2007:13). To read romance in that period, therefore, is to understand early modern political thought, to see the relation between genre and political, ethical philosophy, with the typical tension between divine providence and human agency. This is favoured by the emergence, from Italian and French courts, of a political ideology of self-interest (Renaissance egoism, skepticism and reason of state theory), which permeated discourses from history, philosophical essays and romance). Romance thus contains an element of ironic critique: irony justifies romance's suitability for embracing political ideas. While epic has the hero harmonize his will with his nation's providential destiny, romance has the hero surrender his desire to the accidental.

Philip Sydney's *Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* (*The Old Arcadia*, 1570s, *The New Arcadia*, unfinished, towards the 1580s) reworks continental romance traditions for a new English context. It contains coded political rhetoric and outlines

the usefulness of romance's ironic treatment of agency for negotiating the gap between virtue and self-interest. At the same time, it revisits the role of Providence, in a Protestant context (providence and love that cemented social alliances at the end of romances were only last-minute rationalizations for desire – a synonym of self-interest). Love and Providence are pictured as ideological fictions. The early modern romance in the spirit of Sidney presents self-interest as a primary passion: not single-minded brutishness, but not reason, either. It is, rather, *cupiditas*, acquisitive desire, seen as *eros* (Zurcher 2007:20). It also sets the terms in which romance presents love, virtue, and social life. In the romance of this type, political ambition is similar with the impulse to lay sexual claim (elope, abduct, seduce, consummate love, rape). Seizing the prize – a beautiful woman – has both sexual and political overtones. The seducer/rapist is like a tyrant, appropriating rather than negotiating as required by the social system with mutual obligations and responsibilities. The result of acquisitive desire is the devaluing of the object (the raped maiden loses her price as a potential wife). At the same time, acquisitive desire, like miserliness, is self-destructive, just like the tyrant's power over people, whose inability to govern himself and others always surfaces eventually. Self-interest and acquisitive desire are degrading in the men pursuing them: the effeminate males mentioned in the previous section are an ideal illustration. In Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* (2011), the noble princes follow a pattern which brings them close to Shakespearean heroes like Orsino or Duke Theseus. Pyrocles and Musidorus, falling in love, take on a disguise in order to gain access to the beautiful daughters of Arcadia. The disguise forces them to transform themselves into lesser beings – Pyrocles takes the disguise of a woman, while Musidorus pretends he is a shepherd. Their desires and transgressions make them vulnerable: Pyrocles, as a woman, becomes the object of another man's desire, when Basilius falls in love with him and tries to pursue him, while Musidorus, like Sebastian in *Twelfth Night*, accepts marriage to the woman of high rank, here the heiress to the throne of Arcadia, thus marrying into the royal family and taking over, woman-like, all the courtesy titles and attributes of his new position.

William Shakespeare's *Rape of Lucrece* (1594) also displays a political dimension of acquisitive desire on the model of Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*. The ravished body of Lucrece is aristocratic property, Tarquin's lust for it being ignited by the husband's boasting about the assets of his distinguished possession. Tarquin's desire is targeted less at the beautiful body of a woman, but at the connotations of power embodied by Lucrece's social position in Rome. After the rape, Lucrece's body is paraded in the Roman forum, as a symbol of Tarquin's power and tyranny. The gesture ignites the crowd's dissatisfaction with Tarquin's political regime, the ultimate result being the installation of the Roman Republic. Besides this direct manifestation of his failure, the self-destructive character of acquisitive desire is manifest in Tarquin's realization that the victim of the assault is his own soul, inflicted with a wound that

won't heal. Ironically, in a play that evokes the brutality of the male assault on the female body, the ultimate weak link in the chain is the male aggressor himself.

Mary Wroth's *Urania* (1621) tackles even more complex gender issues with a touch of irony. Agency in the fictional world is extended to authorship. In fact, Lady Mary Wroth was considered radical, in her lifetime, merely for writing a work intended for public consumption, thus violating the ideals of female virtue (silence, obedience, as evidence of her chastity). In doing this, she acted against the accepted ideals of patriarchy, by writing a text intended for a public audience. In Mary Wroth's poem (Roberts 1995), Pamphilia, the author's alter ego, is herself a creator struggling for the protection of her creation and, indirectly, for the survival of her work. She carries her secret compositions in a cabinet and is finally rewarded for her creation by becoming queen, despite – the poem implies – the fact that her preoccupations make this woman unworthy of society's appreciation: as a female poet, she embodies one of the aberrations of the age. The poem further discusses, in an ironic, subversive key, the virtue of erotic constancy (although virtue is a male attribute, constancy is expected of women). *Cupiditas* (gendered masculine) is set here in opposition to self-sufficiency. The constant Pamphilia is encouraged to govern her passions like a self-sufficient queen. Because the poem implies that the preservation of Pamphilia's beauty and powers of judgment are more important than a lover, *Urania* operates a revision of feminine constancy – a fake passivity. (In women, self-interest is regarded as morally inadmissible because it destroys the humility and self-abnegation on which women's characters are supposed to be founded.)

*Urania* echoes prevailing ideas about the weakness of women by diagnosing inconstancy as a fundamental feminine drawback. The heroine must defend herself against the implicit charge of inconstancy: by magic (Providence) she gets over her inappropriate love and falls again for a more suitable man, who is her future husband. She confesses she has received her change by means of Providence (here suggesting a passive attitude of acceptance), but also mentions resolution and choice. Thus, human will and agency are at odds with the power of providence. Inconstancy is not gendered feminine, though, like in many other early modern authors. It is extended to men (Amphilanthus, with his superficial treatment of women, is the best example). Lady Mary Wroth is, thus, progressive in arguing inconstancy is a human, genderless, rather than feminine failing. In political ideology, inconstancy is represented not as an absence of self, but as too much self; in love, inconstancy is metaphorized as political – it is a primary political sin: "Uncertain tyrant love", sighs *Urania* (Roberts 1995). The response to inconstancy (in female and male characters like *Urania* and Amphilanthus) is resistance (embodied by Pamphilia). To match her lover's inconstancy with her own would be to accept her love/desire as self-interest, therefore Pamphilia chooses loyalty. The implication intended by Lady Mary Wroth is that vulnerable categories (women, mostly, in this poem, but other categories, like the poor, the children, etc. could also be envisaged) had every right to their self-interest as a

minimal compensation for their oppression. If the allegorical realm of romance deprives the underprivileged group's self-interest of legitimacy, it is unethical (Cavanagh 2001).

In romance, the irony extends to the manner in which the unruliness of women is punished. In Shakespeare's romantic comedies, the women who transgress the norms of obedience, constancy and moderation are subjected to derision. Olivia, who rejects the man with the highest rank, falls in love with a cross-dresser, while Titania, who tires of her husband's royal attentions, falls in love with an ass. Same-gender love between women is also comic and results from the same logic. In *Twelfth Night* (Traub 1992:92), the play displaces the anti-theatricalists' concern with the potential of male sodomy onto women (to note the homoerotic exchanges entailed by the phenomenon of the boy actor). The object of desire in Shakespeare's cross-dressed heroines is the potentially rapeable boy, who, in his submissiveness, passivity and beauty echoes feminine attractions. The boy actor's role is so evidently a role, a representation of woman conceived, interpreted and acted by males (Jardine in Traub 1992:93). The boy actor works as the basis upon which homoeroticism can be safely explored, working for both actors and audiences as an expression of non-hegemonic desire within the confines of conventional, comedic restraints (Traub 1992:118).

The homoerotic significations of *As You Like It* are first intimated by Rosalind's adoption of the name Ganymede, with mythological connotations of sodomy. By means of her male improvisation, Rosalind leads the play into a mode of desire neither heterosexual, nor homoerotic, but both homosexual and homoerotic (Traub 1992:124). As much as she displays her desire for Orlando, she also enjoys her position as male object of Phoebe's desire and of Orlando's. She thus instigates a deconstruction of the binary system by which desire is organized, regulated and disciplined. She encourages Phoebe's desire and rejoices in Silvius' jealousy (she puts Silvius through the torment of hearing Phoebe's love letter in order to magnify her own victorious position as a male rival). Her sense of power over her male counterpart is so complete that she commands Silvius' and Phoebe's love: "If she love me, I charge her to love thee." (IV, iii)

Orlando also displays a willingness to engage in love-play with a young shepherd, his ability to hold in suspension a dual sexuality that feels no compulsion to make arbitrary distinctions between kinds of objects. Rosalind takes the lead in their courtship with a degree of homoerotic irony: through the magic of if (reduplicated in *Twelfth Night*: "If I did love you in my master's flame [...] / In your denial I would find no sense", I, v); "I will marry you, if ever I marry a woman [...] / I will satisfy you, if ever I satisfied man" (V, ii). The boy actor can offer and elicit erotic attraction to and from each gender in the audience. Similarly, Viola uses the language of conditionals toward male and female objects. Viola's erotic predicament threatens her with destruction when she is challenged to pull out the sword and she laments "the little thing [that] would make me tell them how much I lack of a man" (III, iv).

#### 4. Conclusions

Romance provided a useful space for negotiation with the culturally pressing problem of self-interest, desire, Renaissance egoism. Resistant to the ethical hypothesis challenging the culture's dominant acceptance of the political ideology of the day and of assigned gender roles, romance opened a venue for moral exploration that history and philosophy could not.

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# THE TRUTH OF ART IN DAVID JONES AND HANS-GEORG GADAMER

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**Abstract:** *I shall examine the theory of art developed by David Jones, the twentieth-century Anglo-Welsh poet and artist (especially in his essay "Art and Sacrament"), in the light of a comparison with the theory of art propounded by Hans-Georg Gadamer, the twentieth-century German philosopher in the phenomenological tradition (especially his essay "Die Aktualität des Schönen"), not claiming influence, but highlighting striking parallels.*

**Keywords:** *Art, phenomenology, sacramentality, symbol, truth.*

## 1. Introduction

Artist and poet David Jones and philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer, working without reference to each other and possibly without knowledge of each other during the twentieth century, both developed theories of art which propose the controversial idea that art can and does express truth, albeit in its own way. This can be seen as either a departure from, or a refinement of, the aestheticist 'art for art's sake' doctrine of the fin de siècle, which stressed art's purposelessness, even if a purposelessness with an appearance of purpose, following Kant. I shall explore how, bringing different backgrounds to bear on the problem, both Jones and Gadamer find that art, while not governed by the pragmatic forms of purpose directed to outside ends, does nevertheless express and embody truth in a way that only it can, untranslatable into conceptual language.

## 2. The Truth of Art

David Jones was an artist and poet from London, with a Welsh father, who is known for long the long poems *In Parenthesis* and *The Anathemata*, written in a modernist style but informed by religious content, and he is also known for his watercolours, engravings and calligraphy. Besides his artistic activities, he wrote extensively in the form of essays on subjects such as Welsh history, and British culture in its Western European context, as well as expounding a view of the theory of art which emphasised notions such as the sacramentality of art, and the human being's distinctive identity as an artist. Jones' philosophical background is Thomist, he being a Catholic convert, and his thinking on art being influenced by the neo-Thomist philosopher Maritain – see, for example, Dilworth (2000) "David Jones and the

Maritain Conversation". An additional important ingredient to his thinking on art theory is constituted by the theoretical discussions generated by the post-impressionist movement in painting, a movement much talked about at the art school Jones attended after returning from the First World War, as he relates himself. Hans-Georg Gadamer, by contrast, was a career philosopher, who is known for creating a grand theory intended to provide a foundation for the social sciences and humanities, a theory which is principally presented in the major work *Wahrheit und Methode*, and his theorising on art takes place as part of that project. Gadamer stands squarely in the German tradition of philosophy, could be said to belong to the phenomenological school, and was strongly influenced by his mentor Heidegger. In order to compare their approaches to explaining how art means I shall be concentrating on one important essay of each writer. For Jones I shall be referring to his 1955 essay "Art and Sacrament", and for Gadamer his 1977 essay "Die Aktualität des Schönen" – this essay can be found in English in Gadamer (1986) *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*.

Jones and Gadamer both see representation as the key to how art means, and explore in depth how art represents, Jones through the concept of sacrament and Gadamer through the concept of symbol. It is through representation, in the way they expound it, that art is the vehicle of truth. I shall be particularly concentrating on how they explain this phenomenon and noting the striking overlaps in the resultant theories.

David Jones' essay "Art and Sacrament", was written as part of a collection meant to discuss the carrying out of various daily occupations as a Catholic, as Jones (1959:143) explains on the first page, but he initially denies that there is such a thing as a Catholic way of being an artist (Jones 1959:143-144). During the rest of the essay, however, he explains how Catholic thinking has helped him to understand what art is for any artist, explaining that a religion committed to sacrament is one committed to art, sacrament being a kind of artistic sign-making. Jones builds up to what I shall regard as the key passage, where he discusses Hogarth's painting, *The Shrimp Girl*, by introducing various concepts on which his theory is built. These concepts include the Aristotelian-scholastic distinction between transitive and intransitive activities, which Jones uses to put art on the intransitive side of the distinction, as a gratuitous activity (see e.g. Jones 1959:149). He also identifies art, a gratuitous, sign-making activity, as what distinguishes human beings from the rest of creation, since animals can make, but not gratuitously, and pure spirits, such as angels, cannot make, not being material (Jones 1959:149-150). He discusses the sacrament of the Eucharist, and argues that the notions of sacrament, sign-making anamnesis are closely similar – thus even non-Catholic understandings of the Eucharist cannot escape its nature as a sign, any more than they could reasonably deny that making a cake for someone's birthday is a sign-making activity (Jones 1959:164-168; see also, for example, Staudt 1994:36-37 on the centrality of the analogy between sacrament and artistic activity in Jones' theory). As a further ingredient, he mentions his art-school discussions on post-impressionist theory, from which he drew the idea that "a work is a 'thing' and not (necessarily) the

impression of some other thing.” (Jones 1959:172) He views the argument between proponents of rival schools of abstract and representational art as missing the point “that all art is abstract and that all art ‘re-presents’.” (Jones 1959:173)

It is as an attempt to explain why he writes “re-presents” rather than “represents” that he undertakes his analysis of how representation happens in a work of art, using as his example Hogarth’s painting *The Shrimp Girl*. He chooses this painting as his example because it is, as he says, “highly realistic” (Jones 1959:173), so he can show how in a representational painting representation works in the same way it would in a more abstract work. He specifies what he sees the painting as: “It is a ‘thing’, an object contrived of various materials and so ordered by Hogarth’s muse as to show forth, recall and re-present, strictly within the conditions of a given art and under another mode, such and such a reality.” (Jones 1959:173) He goes on to explain what the “reality” is: while, it appears to be “a female street-vendor’s mortal flesh and poor habiliments seen under our subtle island-light in the gay squalor that was eighteenth century low-life England”, the reality represented by the painting is not a physical shrimp-girl, as “the ‘flesh and blood’ reality” ... “did but supply the raw material for whatever concept the sight of it set in motion in the mind of the painter.” (Jones 1959:174) So “whatever the material and immaterial elements of that reality may have been, the workings of Hogarth’s art gave to the world a *signum* of that reality, under the species of paint.” (Jones 1959:174-175) It is to be noted here that Jones is using theological language used to explain the Eucharist in the expression “under the species of paint”, substituting “paint” for “bread and wine”. He points out that “It is this objective sign that we can apprehend and enjoy in the National Gallery provided we have the right dispositions” (Jones 1959:175) – this again echoing Catholic understandings of the Eucharist, in which the sacramental reality is objective, although those without the right disposition may be unable to benefit. He restates, again using theological language, while cautioning that he is using it by analogy (a term often used in theology):

So long as there is not a serious disintegration of the ‘matter’ (the paint) we have whatever is denoted under ‘Shrimp Girl’ really present under the form of paint, remembering that ‘Shrimp Girl’ is but a label only for a complex of realities. Not, needless to say, ‘really present’ in the particular sense used by the theologians, but in a certain analogous sense. (Jones 1959:174)

Here the “matter” is analogous to the bread and wine, in the Eucharist, or water or oil in other sacraments, and the term “really present” reminds the reader of the Catholic doctrine of the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist. As Jones clearly expounds, according to his theory, a reality, created in the mind of the artist, is really present in the work the artist created. This embodiment of a reality in a

work does not depend on the reaction of an audience, who may or may not bring what would be needed to appreciate the embodied reality.

Jones concludes the essay by drawing attention to what he sees as being the tendency of the culture phase he is living through to focus on extrinsic activity to the exclusion of the intrinsic dimension. Thus Jones fears that in the future human beings may be alienated from their natural sacramental instincts, and will find the Catholic Church's commitment to sign-making incongruous with their everyday expectations for activities to be subordinated to what Jones calls "the utile", or, as he explains in a note, the "merely utilitarian" or "simply functional" (Jones 1959:176, 176 note 1). He explains that this problem also affects him in his everyday artistic work, as he has to struggle to find signs which will be "available and effectual" (Jones 1959:177), which will communicate in a society less attuned than earlier societies to sign-making activity.

Hans-Georg Gadamer's long essay "Die Aktualität des Schönen", a reworking of what was originally a set of lectures, is also concerned to demonstrate the objectivity of the art work, and to explain how it can present truth. (MacIntyre 1976: 43 points out, in commenting on Gadamer's discussion of art in *Truth and Method*, that Gadamer departs from Neo-Kantians' unspoken assumption that truth and art belong to mutually exclusive realms. For a detailed exposition of Gadamer's aesthetic theory, but in relation to poetry, see Baker 2002.) Gadamer sees a split between the traditional religious-humanistic art of the Western world and an alienated modern art, and wants to explain how they both bear significance in the same way (Gadamer 1977:11-12). Gadamer introduces the problem in the context of the German philosophical tradition, crediting Kant with being the first to recognise the issue of the experiencing of beauty and art as a philosophical question, but seeing Kant's emphasis on the "meaningless beauty" (*bedeutungslose Schönheit*) being found above all in nature, rather than in art, as needing to be adjusted in favour of seeing the art work as the primary locus of aesthetic significance (Gadamer 1977:23-24). Kant also frames taste, Gadamer (1977:25-6) notes, as communal rather than subjective. As Gadamer expresses this insight,

A purely individual-subjective taste is clearly something senseless in the area of the aesthetic. ("Ein nur individuell-subjektiver Geschmack ist auf dem Gebiet des Ästhetischen offenkundig etwas Sinnloses." Gadamer 1977: 26 – all translations from "Die Aktualität des Schönen" are mine)

Gadamer gives his solution to the problem by presenting his theory of art with the help of three concepts: "play" (*Spiel*), "symbol" (*Symbol*) and "festival" (*Fest*). What I regard as the key passage for the purpose of comparison with Jones, in which he discusses representation, and the Eucharist, occurs in the section on "symbol".

The section on “symbol” follows the section on “play”, which is analogous to Jones’ discussion of the gratuity of the work of art, and Gadamer begins the “symbol” section by reminding the reader of the origin of the concept “symbol” in the ancient Greek practice of breaking a piece of crockery, and conserving a pair of fitting shards, one in the possession of a host, and one in that of a guest, so that they or their descendants may recognise each other on a subsequent occasion. Thus a symbol, when it is an artwork, is the individual fragment of being which promises that there is something corresponding to it which, with it, will constitute a whole, or that it itself is a missing life-fulfilling fragment:

The symbol, by contrast, the experience of the symbolic, means that this individual, special thing represents itself as a fragment of being, which promises to complete something corresponding to it, to make something whole and healthy, or also, promises that it is the missing piece, always searched for, to make whole our fragment of life. (“Das Symbol, dagegen, das Erfahren des Symbolischen, meint, daß sich dies Einzelne, Besondere wie ein Seinsbruchstück darstellt, das ein ihm Entsprechendes zum Heilen und Ganzen zu ergänzen verheißt, oder auch, daß es das zum Ganzen ergänzende, immer gesuchte andere Bruchstück zu unserem Lebensfragment ist.” Gadamer 1977:42-43)

The experience of the beautiful, especially in the context of art, he argues further, is the “evocation of a possible wholesome order” (“die Beschwörung einer möglichen heilen Ordnung”, Gadamer 1977:43). He takes the opportunity here to argue against Hegel’s understanding of art as “the sensible appearance of the idea” (“dem sinnlichen Scheine der Idee”, Gadamer 1977:43), on the basis that this understanding leads to the expectation that the meaning of the work or art can be translated into concepts, whereas, given Gadamer’s understanding of the art work as symbol, its unique presence is part of its meaning, and cannot be translated into concepts (“The meaning of an artwork, rests rather on the fact, that it is there.” – “Der Sinn eines Kunstwerks beruht vielmehr darauf, daß es da ist.” Gadamer 1977:44). He suggests the word “Gebilde” (“formation”) as an alternative to “Werk” (“work”) for the art work, in order to emphasise that once it has come to be, it is independent of its maker, and is an objective and unique reality – he interprets Benjamin’s notion of the aura of the artwork as another way of stating this insight (Gadamer 1977:44).

Gadamer, in an important paragraph, expands on his idea of the work of art as an embodiment, rather than just carrier of meaning, with the help of ideas he takes from Heidegger, according to whom the human experience of the world is one of disclosure (“Entbergung”) as well as, at the same time and inseparably, enclosure and veiling (“Verbergung und Verhüllung”) of truth (Gadamer 1977:45). Thus the art work means by simultaneously disclosing and enclosing meaning, resisting any attempt to translate its meaning into a statement, and works rather through its audience “being

knocked over” (“ein Umgestoßen-Werden”) by it (Gadamer 1977:45). In the following paragraph Gadamer states that he wishes to deepen Goethe’s and Schiller’s conception of the symbolic, by specifying, “The symbolic does not only point to meaning, but makes it present: it represents meaning.” („Das Symbolische verweist nicht nur auf Bedeutung, sondern läßt sie gegenwärtig sein: es repräsentiert Bedeutung.” Gadamer 1977:46) This statement leads to further exploration of what representation (“Repräsentation”) means. What is represented is not a replacement for anything, but is present in the representation in the way it can be (“Das Repräsentierte ist vielmehr selber da und so, wie es überhaupt da sein kann.” Gadamer 1977:46) He uses as an example the situation where a portrait of a public person is hanging in the main room of a town hall, or somewhere similar – the portrait, Gadamer argues, is not a replacement for the personality depicted, but what is represented is a “piece of its [the public person’s] presence” (“ein Stück ihrer Gegenwart”, Gadamer 1977:46) and it is there in the representation. At this point, Gadamer introduces the Eucharist, and his conviction, as someone who has grown up as a Protestant, that Luther’s understanding of its meaning was correct, and consonant with the traditional Catholic belief, i.e. “that the bread and wine of the sacrament *are* the Christ’s body and blood.” (“... daß Brot und Wein des Sakramentes das Fleisch und Blut Christi *sind*.” Gadamer 1977:46) Gadamer explains that he has introduced this comparison in order to emphasise the point that in an art work it is not so much that something is indicated, but that what is indicated is in the art work (“daß im Kunstwerk nicht nur auf etwas verwiesen ist, sondern daß in ihm eigentlicher da ist, worauf verwiesen ist.” Gadamer 1977:46) – thus an art work constitutes an “increase in being” (“Zuwachs an Sein”, Gadamer 1977:46). This quality of being an “increase in being” distinguishes the work of art from articles which are merely a “means and tool” (“Mittel und Werkzeug”, Gadamer 1977:47), which cannot be described as a work (“Werk”) but merely as a piece (“Stück”), and are, unlike art works, not irreplaceable (Gadamer 1977:47). Mimesis, he goes on to point out, should be understood as the bringing of something to representation, which could not be grasped in any other way (Gadamer 1977:47-48; Warnke (1987:59) notes that in Gadamer’s philosophy the original is seen in the light of the truth that the representation reveals about it, after the representation has been seen, thus the representation contributes to how the original is understood). He moves on from these issues, in the latter part of the section on “symbol”, to discuss the task of the audience in responding to the art work, whether of a traditional or modern type, finding that any art work creates a community of interpreters if its interpretative community does not already exist (Gadamer 1977:51-52).

The key parallel between the two thinkers is the way they focus on the concept of representation, and find that representation is constituted by the represented reality being present in the art work. They use different language to explain this, Jones using scholastic language to describe, for example, a particular reality conceived by a painter being present in the painting under the form of paint, whereas Gadamer, borrowing

from Heidegger, talks of the art work disclosing but also enclosing a truth, and an “increase in being” resulting from the reality that is each art work. Both find the Catholic understanding of the Eucharist a useful parallel for their concept of the art work. The consequence of their theories of the way that art works can objectively mean, is that interpretation of an art work cannot be a purely subjective activity: there is something objectively present in each art work, a meaning embodied in it, and the beholder of the work of art may or may not bring to it the disposition or background needed to discern something of what is objectively present, and may bring this to a greater or lesser extent, as Jones and Gadamer both stress. (See Nichols (2007:135), who notes that Jones, like Maritain, but unlike Kant, sees intelligibility through the sensuous in art work.) Both Jones and Gadamer distinguish between artistic and non-artistic activity, using, again, different terms, Jones talking of intransitive and transitive activities, and Gadamer using various other terms, including the “work” (“Werk”), for an art work, and a “piece” (“Stück”) for the object of utilitarian character. Both see a change in how art works work in Western society occurring in the nineteenth century, such that there is a break between traditional Western art and twentieth-century Western art – Gadamer emphasises the change from an art which supports a communal understanding, to an art which challenges pre-existing understandings, but needs to create its own smaller communities to understand it, while Jones emphasises a tendency in modern society to reject intransitive activity altogether, and thus be less responsive to the intentions motivating gratuitous acts, such as the making of art works, or performing of rituals. (Blamires (1971:22) notes that this concern about a breakdown in the functioning of symbols in his contemporary society is a “constant theme” in Jones’ writings.)

Given this high degree of overlap in the theories, some differences of emphasis can still be pointed out. For example, in their discussions of how one responds to an art work, for Jones the reality represented is on offer, and the disposition of the audience may or may not enable an appreciation of the reality (this view is analogous to the Catholic understanding of the disposition necessary to benefit from a sacrament), whereas Gadamer emphasises the need for the audience to build up a community of understanding, stimulated by the jolt given by the artwork, but also bringing whatever each individual has in terms of knowledge and experience to the interpretative activity, so that the interpretation achieved involves an element of negotiation, a working up, different every time. On the division between artistic and non-artistic activity Jones sees most types of activity as involving both artistic (intrinsic) and non-artistic (extrinsic) elements, whereas Gadamer seems to draw a clear boundary between art works and non-artistic objects. In their attitudes to the ‘break’ in the artistic tradition, they differ in emphasis, as mentioned above: Gadamer believes that all kinds of art works work in the same way, creating a community of interpreters if one does not already exist, and does not highlight the idea of an artistic crisis (though he does mention in passing, in the introduction, the difficulties of finding an audience for

modern classical music, see Gadamer 1977:8); while Jones, through his analysis, like Gadamer's, is that modern art works work like traditional art works, worries more that in the future the potential audience will lack the disposition to understand, or even seek, sign-making.

### 3. Conclusion

Nevertheless, the central position they take up on art's truth is substantially the same. Coming from different backgrounds and traditions, on the one hand a mixed Anglo-Saxon and Catholic scholastic background, on the other hand a formation steeped in the German tradition, a Protestant religious background and an adherence to the phenomenological strain in philosophy, both take the art-for-art-sake tradition as in need of refinement, and specify that, although artistic activity does not directly serve an external practical end, that does not mean that it is meaningless, or that responses to it should be seen as belonging to the realm of pure subjectivity. On the contrary, each art work signifies by uniquely embodying a truth, a reality which is related to other realities found in other forms, but which cannot be exactly translated into a conceptual expression, and which can only be experienced by a direct encounter with the work.

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# REINSCRIBING SEXUALITY: MANGA VERSIONS OF *ROMEO AND JULIET*

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**Abstract:** Designed to familiarize the younger audience with the Bard's work, while at the same time catering to their tastes and interests, not only have Shakespearean adaptations moved the original plots to unusual milieus and exotic cultures, but have also 'translated' them to new media. This paper analyzes the portrayal of sexuality in two transmediations of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. The paper compares and contrasts two manga versions of the play (a British and a Japanese one), aiming to highlight the ways in which the "star crossed lovers'" relationship has been adapted and appropriated by the two cultures in the twenty-first century.

**Keywords:** gender, manga, *Romeo and Juliet*, sexuality

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, critics (Lanier 2002:3-4, Shaughnessy 2007:1-2) have argued that popular culture is a powerful force, which has created a broader audience not only for highbrow Shakespeare, but also for a multitude of lowbrow Shakespeares. In their opinion, popular culture constantly recycles Shakespeare, appropriating, readapting and reinventing his work at the crossroads of cultural studies, literature, and theatre/cinema studies.

Given the intensification of visual culture in Western countries, coupled with the fact that the younger generation nowadays shows little interest in the classics, a new publishing house was set up: "SelfMadeHero". Their main goal was to introduce teenagers or first-time readers of Shakespeare to the Bard's work via a medium they easily understood and enjoyed: *manga* (Hayley 2010:267-268), the Japanese version of a graphic novel. Thus, drawing on the conventions of the manga genre (to be explained in the next section) and Shakespeare's language, "Manga Shakespeare" was born. Much like *Shakespeare: The Animated Tales*, broadcast in the early 1990s, the "Manga Shakespeare" series seeks to educate the audience into appreciating Shakespeare by presenting his work as "a cultural artifact available to all" (Holland 2007:44).

What this paper aims to explore is how two such transmediations adapt Shakespeare's famous *Romeo and Juliet* in terms of sexuality and depiction of gender from two very different cultural viewpoints: British versus Japanese.

## 2. “Manga Shakespeare”

In 1996 the film *Romeo + Juliet*, directed by Baz Luhrmann, recorded a tremendous box office success, preserving Shakespeare’s poetic language but modernizing the socio-cultural reality from 16<sup>th</sup> century Verona to late 20<sup>th</sup> century Verona Beach, replacing swords with firearms, and touching on other sensitive issues such as transsexuality and queerness through the character of Mercutio. This film opened the door to an influx of modern adaptations and spin-offs of Shakespeare’s work, and “Manga Shakespeare” seems to have followed in its footsteps.

In the context of the intensification of visual culture and the constant increase of manga popularity outside Japan’s borders, the new and innovative concept of “Manga Shakespeare” became famous in Britain and worldwide once with the 2007 launch of a new graphic novel imprint – “SelfMadeHero” (Hayley 2010:267). Even if the main aim of these mangas was for them to be read for entertainment rather than educational purposes, “Manga Shakespeare” soon enjoyed such great popularity that they became teaching tools and were considered for inclusion in the national curricula of Malaysia (Hayley 2010:278).

Today, Shakespeare’s greatness is often attributed to the artistic value, the poeticity and sophistication of his language. As Weissbrod (2006:49-51) remarks, this is one of the reasons why many adaptations modernize the socio-cultural reality but preserve the original text, which is often abridged and reorganized. The transfer of the plots and messages to another genre and medium – such as the manga – encourages creativity and deviation, an ‘updating’ to our contemporary values and ideas.

Given that Shakespeare’s work is meant to be seen, manga functions as a partial intersemiotic translation or, in other words, as reversed ekphrasis (Brînzeu 2005:247-248). However, manga is not entirely visual, but contains words organized into sentences and even renderings of onomatopoeic sounds. The manga illustrator thus acts as a mediator between two different codes, transferring verbal information into visual signs, which complete each other. The manga illustrator has to perform three operations: selection, description and interpretation of information, which makes him a visible ‘translator’/ conveyor of message, since the reader is biased by the illustrator’s interpretation of the message. Despite being incomplete processes, argues Brînzeu (2005:253), both ekphrasis and reversed ekphrasis shape an experimental translational strategy, generating a feeling of unexpectedness that stems from the creative combination of words and images.

Here is an overview of manga characteristics. Usually drawn in black and white, manga also brings on its own aesthetics and conventions (Johnson-Woods 2010:5-12, Cohn 2010:192-194), some of which are easily identifiable, particularly with regard to *shōjo manga* (targeted at girls): characters usually have large eyes, big perfect hair, elongated limbs and pointy chins, while male characters are highly feminized. The focus is on sensibility and emotions, which can sometimes be highly

encoded; for example, a gigantic sweat drop appears on top of a character's head when s/he is embarrassed, or, when the character is angry or frustrated, s/he becomes a *chibi*, i.e. deformed in size, with stylized features and pointy teeth. Although the narrative flow may often be simplistic, the frames usually contain a lot of details that dwarf the character. Moreover, the number of frames varies from one page to another, providing the reader with cinematic angles ranging from long shots to close-ups, and from aerial view to high or low-angle shots, which are impossible to achieve in a theatre performance. Unlike films, the manga shows the moving object statically, with lines streaming behind it (Cohn 2010:193), its power coming from the sequence of frames which "window the attention" to various parts of the narrative through a combination of "macros" (presenting the entire scene), "monos" (showing individuals), "micros" (focusing on details), and "polymorphic panels" (representing whole actions by showing the character at various points in the event) (Cohn 2010:197).

A significant characteristic of manga is its treatment of sexuality. As explicit references to sexual intercourse and description of genitalia are forbidden in Japanese culture, they are touched upon by means of non-conventional visual symbols or metaphors, which appear in the background and suggest mood (Cohn 2010:192). For instance, sexual intercourse may often be insinuated through falling blossoming flowers, usually cherry flowers, or their petals. Other, more obscure, graphic signs are: bloody noses – connoting lust –, or the lengthening of the area between the nose and the lips – suggesting sexual thoughts (Cohn 2010:192).

As mentioned above, unlike a mere reading of Shakespearean texts, manga allows readers to actually experience the plot visually. Although frozen in still images, Shakespeare's characters contribute to the reader's illusion that s/he is watching a (somewhat broken) film. With a focus primarily on the entertainment of younger generations, the manga versions chosen for analysis emphasize once again the contemporary nature of Shakespeare's plays, creatively (and critically) adapting the cultural capital of the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the 21<sup>st</sup>.

The two transmediations proposed for discussion here – *Romeo and Juliet* (Appignanesi and Leong 2010) and *Romeo x Juliet* (COM 2010), respectively – have been chosen for two main reasons: on the one hand, they convey two different perspectives on, as well as genre approaches to, Shakespeare's work: drama vs. fantasy/ fairy-tale. On the other hand, they represent two culturally encoded ways of reading a classic, yet worldwide famous, English story.

The starting point for both mangas is Shakespeare's original written text, which is adapted both in terms of language and socio-cultural reality, as the transfer to another medium encourages deviation from the original setting and/or plot. Thus, if the British *Romeo and Juliet* shows from the very title that it remains faithful to Shakespeare's words in an abridged version, preserving its literariness and poetry, the Japanese *Romeo x Juliet* indicates a looser adaptation of Shakespeare's play, with only

a slight influence of early modern language and a great deal of intertextual references to other Shakespearean texts.

The only colourful pages in both mangas – the *dramatis personae* section – introduce us to two different socio-cultural realities: the British version locates the story in modern-day Tokyo, with Romeo and Juliet belonging to warring Yakuza clans, whereas the Japanese version places the narrative in the fantasy city of Neo Verona, on a magical floating island recalling Prospero's realm. Otherwise, the black and white images complete the story, increasing the tension and dramatic effect. If the reality conveyed is different, why should the narrative pattern remain the familiar one? Let us explore in the next section the things that differ in the two mangas as compared to Shakespeare's original storyline.

### **3. *Romeo and Juliet*: From the 16<sup>th</sup> Century to the 21<sup>st</sup>**

The most striking difference between the two mangas discussed here is that, unlike the British version, which reads from left to right, in Western-like fashion, the Japanese one follows its own traditional script and reads backwards (for a Westerner), from right to left, i.e. from the end of the book towards the beginning. Also, whereas the British manga has numbered pages, the Japanese one does not include page numbers but divides the plot into nine sections: eight acts plus a final one.

Sonia Leong (*Romeo and Juliet* 2010), the illustrator of the British manga, moves the action from the 16<sup>th</sup> century Italian cities of Verona and Mantua to the 21<sup>st</sup> century Shibuya and Mantua districts of Tokyo; yet, while the former district is real, the latter is (to the best of my knowledge) fictional. The very first page of the *dramatis personae* section shows the two warring families actually pulling the two star-crossed lovers apart: on the left there is fashionable Juliet held back by her frowning, kimono-wearing mother and her authoritarian, threatening, Western suit-clad father, while on the right there is rock-star-looking Romeo pulled back by his accusing, conservatively dressed father and his blond, pink miniskirt-wearing mother. Although the majority of the characters observe Japanese etiquette (e.g. bowing to the elder) and use traditional samurai swords, the authority figure of Prince Escalus is transformed into the city mayor, who looks more like an American detective, wearing a suit and trench coat and holding a coffee cup. Unlike the rebel Romeo, Paris is conveyed as a glasses-wearing accountant, standing for the conventional, rules-abiding lover.

On the other hand, COM (2010) – the artist of the Japanese version [which is actually inspired from the homonymous 24-episode anime (Japanese cartoons)] – sets the story on an aeropolis, in an indefinite future, creating a fairy-tale atmosphere. The story begins with a focus on Juliet, but it shifts between her and Romeo as the narrative progresses. The book opens with an image of Juliet dressed as the Red Whirlwind, a vigilante who protects the citizens of Neo Verona against the oppressing rule of the ruthless Prince Montague, Romeo's father. Fourteen years before, when

Juliet was only a two-year-old, the Montagues slaughtered her entire family, and she was raised as a boy (Odin) by the Capulet servants and loyal allies. When she turns sixteen, Juliet finds out her true identity and takes over the fight to regain her legitimate right to the throne. Romeo appears as the rebellious crown prince, dissatisfied with his father's ruling. Disappointed by her husband's ruthlessness, lady Montague has joined a convent and lives her life as an ordinary nun, whom Romeo occasionally visits.

The two warring houses are also colour-coded: Juliet wears red, standing for passion, courage and sacrifice, but also for blood and aggression (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 1993b:171-174), whereas Romeo wears a blue princely outfit, suggesting wisdom and coolness, stability and loyalty (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 1993a:79-82). Yet the colours are somewhat complementary, indicating that Romeo and Juliet are two parts of a whole, completing each other. Their noble sounding names – Juliet Fiammata Ars de Capulet and Romeo Candore de Montague – allow insights into the characters' personality traits (Juliet is passionate and unpredictable, while Romeo is candidly honest), as well as into the responsibilities they have not only towards their families but also towards the whole community of the floating island.

As mentioned earlier, intertextual and metatextual elements are pervasive in the Japanese *Romeo x Juliet* manga. Besides the city of Neo Verona reminding us of Prospero's magical island, a few more references are worth recording: Shakespeare himself appears as a character – Will –, a theater owner and playwright; the police of Neo Verona are called *Carabinieri* (the Italian word for 'police'), giving the story a note of real life authenticity; the Nurse is a young woman named Cordelia (reminiscent of the character in *King Lear*); Lady Montague is identified as Portia (a hint at *The Merchant of Venice*); Tybalt Capulet turns out to be Montague's illegitimate son and his murderer; Escalus is a sort of 'tree of life', supporting the entire island, while its guardian is called Ophelia (a nod to *Hamlet*). Nonetheless, the most significant deviation is Juliet herself: similar to all Shakespearean comedy heroines, she cross-dresses as Odin to protect her identity, does amateur acting in Will's theater house, and further masquerades as the Red Whirlwind.

#### **4. Reinscribing Sexuality**

In the original play, Shakespeare has many of the characters use many bawdy innuendoes and witticisms. For example, Mercutio often jokes about sexual intercourse, especially when he exchanges witty insults with Romeo; Juliet's father tells Paris that death has deflowered his daughter; the Nurse tells a story about three-year-old Juliet falling and hurting her forehead when, in her husband's opinion, she would have been smarter falling backwards; Romeo and Juliet's marriage is consummated before his departure, etc.

An interesting study in terms of early modern sexuality and desire, which steps away from the medical and juridical framework, is Menan's *Wanton Words* (2004). The book explores the connection between rhetorical language and figurative sexuality, providing us with new insights into the concept and nature of desire in early modern England. Organizing her analysis on figures of speech (e.g. metalepsis, the missing link between two other tropes) in such plays as *Romeo and Juliet*, Menan (2004:78) demonstrates that it is not a tragedy of fate, but of a failed rhetoric expressed in the scene of love's figural consummation (Act III, scene 5). Menan (2004:78-82) further argues that metalepsis equates the missing sex scene in the play with Romeo and Juliet's discussion over the lark and the nightingale; for her, this discussion actually represents the consummation of the marriage but simultaneously a violation of it: no link is forged and the world of the play keeps turning as if no marriage took place.

Sexuality is, therefore, a delicate issue that cannot be easily overlooked by any adaptation or transmediation. In order to explore its treatment in these two manga versions, I have chosen four key moments in the plot which contain such allusions: Romeo and Juliet's first meeting, their first kiss, the marriage ceremony and wedding night, and the outcome.

#### **4.1. The First Encounter**

In the British version when Romeo sees Juliet at the Capulets' ball, there are two flower vines in the background, reaching towards each other and foreshadowing the relationship between the two youngsters. By contrast, in the Japanese version, Romeo first saves the life of the Red Whirlwind from his pursuers but does not receive the gratitude he expected. He meets Juliet later the same day at the Montagues' masked ball while she, dressed as a girl, is running away (COM 2010, Act 1) in a Cinderella manner, leaving the mask behind. Wondering why the palace is so familiar to her, she runs into Romeo and loses her mask, as he holds her to prevent her from falling. In the background of the alternating sequence of micros and monos, there are crashing flower petals. In both mangas then the presence of vines, flowers or flower petals indicates sexual attraction and budding romance.

#### **4.2. The First Kiss**

In *Romeo and Juliet* (Appignanesi and Leong 2010:37), the first kiss takes place at the ball, as they are dancing, with stars surrounding them in a gentle whirlwind against a background of bubbles. The half-hug they exchange during the dance and the flush on Juliet's face suggest intense emotions and an increase in sexual tension. At the same time, the stars are a visual reference to the "star-crossed lovers" and their fate-ruled lives. On the contrary, in *Romeo x Juliet* (COM 2010), the protagonists

experience their first kiss only in Act 5, soon after they have learnt each other's true identities and Romeo has confessed his love. The panel of micros renders the kiss from three different angles, recording the intensity of the moment, while a fourth frame focuses on Juliet's response, as she is fighting her own feelings but finally gives in to love, and tightens the embrace. In both versions, Romeo's kiss takes Juliet by surprise and her mild reluctance is soon overcome. Their kiss comes to represent the power of love and a symbolic engagement.

#### **4.3. The Marriage and Wedding Night**

Interestingly, each manga appropriates the setting of the marriage, relocating it in the other culture and religion. Thus, in the British manga the lovers get married in what looks to be a Buddhist temple, with the ceremony run by a Buddhist monk (Appignanesi and Leong 2010:75). Dressed in traditional Japanese clothes, with happiness exuding from their body language, Romeo and Juliet are depicted in a panel of micro frames against a background of several bunches of blossoming cherry flowers, suggesting once more their love and youth. Contrasting with these micros, their wedding night, which takes place after Romeo has killed Tybalt, is depicted in panels of macro frames that gradually turn into tear-ridden micros as Romeo's departure draws near. Unlike the original play, where we are not allowed into Juliet's boudoir, the British illustrator bends the manga conventions and presents the lovers in the intimacy of Juliet's room, with her sitting on the bed and Romeo leaning against her legs on the floor. Romeo's casual wear and Juliet's decent nightgown convey a highly private (postcoital even) scene, when the two kiss and caress at ease, love in their eyes, revelling in each other's presence. The change in the background is also noteworthy: the initial alternating stars and peonies – symbolic of fulfilled dreams, love and honour respectively – are replaced by ink drops that actually stand for blood stains. All these, together with a very suggestive micro frame of Romeo and Juliet's hands desperately reaching for each other as they do not want to separate, foreshadow the all-too-familiar tragic ending (Appignanesi and Leong 2010:110-111).

Comparatively, in the Japanese manga, the wedding takes place in a Christian (Catholic-looking) church, with the ceremony conducted by a priest (COM 2010, Act 6). Romeo wears another princely outfit, while Juliet is clad in a white Victorian dress with a wreath of white irises on her head, reminiscent of their second meeting in a field of such flowers. As the ceremony ends, some flower petals fall from Juliet's wreath, suggesting again an increase in sexual tension but simultaneously foreshadowing a tragic ending as the sealing kiss is interrupted by a search party for the runaway lovers. The wedding night is completely expurgated from the Japanese version and replaced by the kiss that seals the couple's religious union right before Romeo fights the pursuers and Juliet leaves for more help. The panel of micros rendering the kiss (COM 2010, Act 7) centers on the lovers' determination and their decision to remain together

for all eternity. Yet the clench they have on each other also bespeaks their desperation and fear of losing each other.

#### 4.4. The Outcome

Although the British version reinforces the tragic ending, with Romeo drinking the poison and Juliet committing seppuku with Paris' blade in the Capulets' skyscraper tomb, the final frame shows Juliet on top of Romeo, eyes closed as if sleeping. The sleep atmosphere is further conveyed by the presence of floating white feathers not only in the background but also over their bodies. The star-crossed lovers are thus forever reunited, having finally found their peace in the eternal sleep of the dead.

In a similar way, *Romeo x Juliet* (COM 2010, Final act) ends with Juliet's sacrifice to the Escalus Tree, as is the Capulet women's tradition, in order to save the island, while Romeo dies too so they can be together. Their deaths may also be read as suicides, since they choose to sacrifice themselves so that the rest of the community may survive. The final page of the story, a macro frame shows Romeo and Juliet's hands tightly joined above a field of white roses and irises and floating petals, with the lovers in the very centre of the image, heading away from the reader. The atmosphere of peace and tranquility and the happiness that exude from this picture reassure the reader that the couple will live happily ever after in a paradisiacal realm.

These illusory happy-ends, coupled with the irregularity of frame sizes and shapes, contribute to the intense emotions we experience while reading both stories. Targeted at girls in particular and in accordance with *shōjo manga*, as well as with Japanese cultural conventions, both *Romeo and Juliet* and *Romeo x Juliet* minimize such sensitive issues as sexuality and violence, focusing instead on emotions and valorizing love, friendship and loyalty over hatred, greed and treason. Both mangas make use of vegetal symbolism – such as cherry flowers, white irises, peonies or roses – to convey love, sexual attraction and tension. But they differ in the rendering of violence and aggression: whereas the British illustrator, fairly faithful to the original plot, minimizes the fighting scenes and uses big blood stains to foreshadow the tragedy, the Japanese artist – who loosely adapts Shakespeare's plot – includes a great deal of fighting scenes and onomatopoeia of weapons clashing, but – surprisingly enough for the number of violent scenes – there is almost no rendition of blood.

As concerns the depiction of teenage behaviour in the two mangas analyzed, the conventionally rebellious adolescent behaviour in *Romeo and Juliet* contrasts with both protagonists' responsibility of leadership in *Romeo x Juliet*. In the British version, both teenagers protest against the authority of their parents and are punished by them (e.g. Juliet for refusing to marry Paris) or the highest authority figure (e.g. Romeo's banishment by Prince Escalus). By contrast, in the Japanese manga, both Romeo and Juliet fight for their love and the abolition of tyranny. They both wish for a better and happier world of sharing and understanding, which they can only achieve through self-



sacrifice. Thus, the conservative British storyline renders the young couple's love against their parents' vanity and ignorance of what is best for their children or, in other words, against an unexplored root cause of the blood-feud. On the other hand, the Japanese plot draws on the thirst for power as the principal cause of the feud, while both Romeo and Juliet, neglected or abandoned by their parents grow up to be much more responsible and less selfish, aiming not only for personal, but universal, happiness.

## 5. Conclusions

The two mangas analyzed here propose two new ways of refashioning Shakespeare's work, making it accessible to the modern young generation through a medium they can easily understand and relate to, while simultaneously showing him as (still) our contemporary. Although both *Romeo and Juliet* (Appignanesi and Leong 2010) and *Romeo x Juliet* (COM 2010) operate at the crossroads of two cultures, the Japanese version is more observant of the manga conventions, while the British version seems to play more on sexuality. Yet even if the changes in the socio-cultural realities trigger the reader's feeling of defamiliarization with the story, and even if the conventions of the subgenres developed in the two mangas – British drama versus Japanese fairy-tale – should foretell a twist in the narrative pattern, it does not ultimately occur. Both transmediations reinforce the well-known schema – Romeo and Juliet both die in the end – but successfully create the illusion of a 'happily ever after', with the two star-crossed lovers finally united somewhere in heaven. This happy-end illusion seems in accordance with human optimism and wish for goodness to be rewarded.

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#### **Acknowledgement**

I am very grateful to my colleague Valentina Mureşan for introducing me to the wonderful and compelling world of "Manga Shakespeare", as well as for our inspirational discussions on the multitude of Shakespeares in popular culture.

# WHAT DID SHAKESPEARE KNOW ABOUT COPERNICANISM?

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**Abstract:** *This contribution examines Shakespeare's knowledge of the cosmological theories of Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543) as well as recent claims that Shakespeare possessed specialized knowledge of technical astronomy.*

**Keywords:** *Shakespeare, William; Copernicus, Nicolaus; renaissance astronomy*

## 1. Introduction

Although some of his near contemporaries lamented the coming of “The New Philosophy,” Shakespeare never made unambiguous or direct reference to the heliocentric theories of Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543) in his drama or poetry. Peter Usher, however, has recently argued in two books *Hamlet's Universe* (2006) and *Shakespeare and the Dawn of Modern Science* (2010) that *Hamlet* is an elaborate allegory of Copernicanism, which in addition heralds pre-Galilean telescopic observations carried out by Thomas Digges. Although many of Usher's arguments are excessively elaborate and speculative, he raises several interesting questions. Just why did Shakespeare, for example, choose the names of Rosenskrantz and Guildenstern for Hamlet's petard-hoisted companions, two historical relatives of Tycho Brahe (the foremost astronomer during Shakespeare's *floruit*)? What was Shakespeare's relationship to the spread of Copernican cosmology in late Elizabethan England? Was he impacted by such Copernican-related currents of cosmological thought as the atomism of Thomas Harriot and Nicholas Hill, the Neoplatonism of Kepler, and the heliocentrism of John Dee and William Gilbert? Does the language of Shakespeare's plays support the idea that Shakespeare had an in-depth knowledge of technical astronomy on the order of Chaucer (who wrote an instruction manual for an astronomical instrument, the astrolabe), or that Shakespeare understood the implications of Copernican astronomy? The answers to these questions reveal important relationships between Shakespeare and science and technology, the subject of two recent monographs by Adam Cohen based on earlier work by Marjorie Hope Nicolson (Cohen 2006, 2009; Nicolson 1956).

## 2. Shakespeare and Copernicanism

Shakespeare lived through an unprecedented age – the beginnings of England's imperial expansion, and the still unexplained confluence of printing, a new ethos of precision, standardization, and quantification, and the triumph of public over

hermetic knowledge that would later fuel both the industrial and scientific revolutions. In retrospect, it is easy to apply modern categories to the period, specifically the 19<sup>th</sup> century idea of progress (positivism) found in Comte, Marx and Darwin; there is little evidence, however, to suggest that the Elizabethans believed themselves to be living in an extraordinary era of scientific or technological change and furthermore, the Victorian middle class ideal that a responsible citizen should keep abreast of modern scientific developments was not a feature of Elizabethan or Jacobean intellectual life. For the vast majority of the populace, specialized new knowledge in natural philosophy was out of their reach as it first appeared in Latin monographs and only slowly filtered into the vernacular, primarily via almanacs.

The Elizabethan period was too early to have fully digested several continental insights and discoveries in physics and cosmology. Plattard has demonstrated that French Renaissance writers in the latter half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century—with the exception of Montaigne, Pontus de Tyard, and Jacques Peletier du Mans—generally either ignored or were ignorant of Copernicus's theories (Plattard 1913; Ridgely 1962).

Similarly in England, Copernicanism is rarely discussed in popular English literature before 1630. As Nicolson points out, "so far as popular imagination was concerned, the theories of Copernicus had little or no effect until after the observations of Galileo's telescope. They remained mere mathematical theories, important to the technical astronomer and mathematician, but neither disturbing nor enthralling to the lay mind" (Nicolson 1939:32-33; Hetherington 1975). Astronomer and literary scholar David Levy, the co-discoverer of Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9, makes the insightful comment: "at the time of most of Shakespeare's writing, the real impact of Copernicus' ideas had yet to be felt....had Shakespeare's prime writing years ended a decade later, his plays might have reflected a vastly different situation" (Levy 2000:65-66). Respected and widely used astronomical textbooks based on Ptolemy such as Riccioli's *Almagestum novum* were being published as late as 1651, and in 1680, James Bowker would seriously attempt to refute Copernicanism in a popular almanac (Bowker 1680).

There was significant interest in Copernicanism in England in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century among a small coterie of learned mathematicians, many influenced by the same hermeticism, Stoic/alchemical materialism, and Pythagoreanism which also may have led Copernicus to his original insight into the structure of the heavens (the Pythagorean astronomers Philolaus of Croton and Aristarchos of Samos had likewise identified the center of the universe as the sun or a 'central fire'). Robert Recorde's dialogue *The Castle of Knowledge* (1556) had cast doubt on Ptolemy's and Aristotle's arguments against the rotation of the earth, a central thesis of the Copernican system. Recorde promises to explain the Copernican system to the young scholar in his dialogue when he has become more advanced in his studies. Thomas Digges (1546-95) later translated the first book of Copernicus's *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* in 1576 as an appendix to a reprint of his father Leonard Digges's *Prognostication*

*Everlasting*. Also, Thomas Digges in his *Stratoticos* (1579) claimed to be writing a commentary on Copernicus which, however, never appeared. John Field (1520-87) published an *Ephemeris Anni 1557* revising the Prutenic tables of Rheinhold based on Copernican calculations. John Dee, another English Copernican, wrote a Latin preface to Field's work indicating his support for the mathematical superiority of the Copernican hypothesis (Russell 1972).

The road to acceptance of Copernicus's sun-centered universe in England, however, was uneven, since he had little physical data to support the superiority of his system over the Ptolemaic. As astronomer Owen Gingerich has demonstrated, the two world systems are virtually mathematically equivalent. In the past ten years, scholarship on the reception of Copernicus has revealed that truly committed supporters of heliocentrism were few before Galileo: "[earlier] scholars took statements made in praise of Copernicus to be implicit endorsements of his heliocentric cosmology. Gradually this view has been supplanted by the acknowledgement that many supposed partisans of Copernicus only endorsed the use of his astronomical models for the calculation of apparent planetary positions, while rejecting or remaining silent on the reality of heliocentrism" (Tredwell 2004:143). Copernicanism did not come fully into the spotlight until Galileo published an astonishing illustrated monograph in 1610 called the *Siderius nuncius* or *Starry Messenger*, announcing the first telescopic discoveries of lunar mountains, the moons orbiting Jupiter, and the resolution of stellar nebulae into individual stars.

In two recent monographs *Hamlet's Universe* (2006) and *Shakespeare and the Dawn of Modern Science* (2010), and series of articles, Peter Usher, Emeritus Professor of Astronomy at The Pennsylvania State University, has claimed to have uncovered in *Hamlet* an elaborate allegory of the competing world systems of Shakespeare's day – Tychonic, Ptolemaic, and Copernican. He has also argued for similar structural patterns in *King John* (Usher 1995). Henry Janowitz also finds Copernican references throughout Shakespeare (Janowitz 2001). Usher is not without precedent since elaborate cosmic symbolism has been clearly demonstrated by John North in Chaucer's poetry (particularly the *Compleynt of Mars*), a source for several of Shakespeare's plays. Also, Weber has demonstrated how the context of alchemy and Neostoicism can inform our understanding of *Antony and Cleopatra* as a meditation on the nature of the universe (Weber 1996). Usher further proposes that through his friendship with Thomas Digges, who along with his father Leonard possibly built a working telescope long before Galileo and made astronomical observations with it, Shakespeare alludes to such phenomenon as Jupiter's red spot, the milky way (resolution of its galaxies), and craters on the moon.

Although Usher does not make it entirely clear what the motivation for such an overarching cosmological allegory would be or how it fits with the other obvious themes of the play, he has assembled several interesting observations. In addition, at least one commentator and three textual editors have also detected a Copernican

reference in Hamlet's piece of doggerel to Ophelia: "Doubt that the sun doth move" (Bevington 2009:2.2.117). The line seems to entertain the possibility that the sun may not move, remaining fixed in a heliocentric cosmos. A.J. Meadows believes it to be "an oblique reference to heliocentric ideas" (Meadows 1969). T.J.B. Spencer calls it "a clever epitome of some of the poetical tendencies of the 1590s: cosmological imagery, the Copernican revolution, moral paradoxes, all illustrating amorous responses" (Spencer 1980:249). Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor in the Arden *Hamlet* of 2006 have annotated the passage more boldly – "The second line [Doubt that the sun doth move] has given editors trouble since it refers to the Ptolemaic belief that the sun moved around the earth – a belief that Shakespeare (if not Hamlet) knew to be outmoded" (2006:246). Thompson and Taylor, however, offer no explanation for why Shakespeare would have known or believed the Ptolemaic system to be outmoded, since reputable astronomers, theologians and poets in England, as established above, continued to cogently defend Ptolemy well into the late 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Christopher Marlowe (born in the same year as Shakespeare), who as a Cambridge undergraduate would have studied basic astronomy, demonstrates no acquaintance with the Copernican system in his drama. Very few of the astronomy textbooks in use in 1580 at Corpus Christi college attended by Marlowe – Apian, Frisius, Sacrobosco, Finé, Giuntini, Clavius and Maestlin – mention Copernicus even in passing (Johnson 1946:243). Marlowe's devil catechises Faustus on the structure of the heavens and the devil responds to Faustus's questions by expounding an idiosyncratic and non-conventional geocentric theory (8 sphere system versus the traditional 10) which Marlowe had read about in either Ricius' *De motu octave sphaerae* (1513), or in works by Finé and Agrippa. Thus, if a Cambridge graduate and exact contemporary of Shakespeare in a play about the boundaries of knowledge does not employ Copernicanism to represent theological or natural philosophical unorthodoxy, then clearly the Copernican system was not being widely debated outside of a small handful of mathematicians and astronomers.

Another possible allusion to a Copernican cosmic allegory is Hamlet's studies at the University of Wittenberg, which became a center of Copernican learning. Copernicus's pupil Georg Joachim Rheticus (1514-74) was professor of astronomy and mathematics at Wittenberg. In 1540, he published *Narratio prima de libris revolutionum Copernici*, an epitome of Copernicus's *De revolutionibus*. Why did Shakespeare have Hamlet study at Wittenberg along with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, the names of two important relatives of Tycho Brahe?

A portrait of Tycho with names of his current relatives and ancestors, including Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, appears in *Tycho's Epistolae* (1596) – did Shakespeare possibly see an advance copy in possession of Thomas Digges, as astronomer Owen Gringerich has suggested (Ashbrook 1984:395)? Digges was certainly known to Tycho. A Dec. 1, 1590 letter to English astronomer Thomas Savile from Tycho offers greetings to Dee and Digges, and included two copies of Tycho's

*De recentioribus phaenomenis* (1588); and with typical Tychonic narcissism, 4 engraved portraits of himself (surrounded by family crests). Among the crests are those of 'Rosenkrans' and 'Guldensteren'.

Shakespeare may have learned of the visit to England in 1592 of Frederik Rosenkrantz (1569-1602) and Knud Gyldenstierne (1575-1627), two cousins of Tycho, who had both studied at Wittenberg (Srigley 2002:178-80; Simpson 1926:28). A later descendent of Rosenkrantz, author Palle Rosenkrantz, indicates that the pair of cousins were almost inseparable and frequently found in each other's company in public. They may have therefore had a reputation among the small circle of courtiers who met them as the archetypal 'tweedle-dum' and 'tweedle-dee,' which is their role in *Hamlet*. Thus the use of their names should not necessarily invoke Tycho Brahe or his world system (Rosenkrantz 1910; Swank 2003:12-15). Although the possibility exists that Shakespeare was well aware of the emerging new world systems, his references to cosmological systems often refer to his known reading in Greek and Roman Stoic texts and Neopythagorean concepts such as the music of the spheres: above all, Shakespeare was always interested in the relationship between man and cosmos and how this relationship impacted ethos and behavior, and human motivation.

Leonard Digges's *Pantometria* (1571) edited by his son Thomas, claims that Leonard had experimented with 'perspective glasses,' possibly an early telescope; William Bourne in *A treatise on Properties* also asserts that Leonard had built perspective glasses and further claims were made in Bourne's *Inventions or Devises* (1578). Unfortunately, the word 'perspective' can refer to mirrors, simple convex magnifying lenses, or early telescopes ('perspective trunks' or 'perspective cylinders'). These scattered references indicate that mathematicians in England were attempting to work out the details, either theoretically or practically, of a telescope, probably for military and navigation purposes. But some of the claims for the devices made by Thomas Digges of the power of magnification were clearly extravagant exaggerations, and the absence of high quality optical glass in England makes it highly unlikely that telescopes of sufficient power, clarity and field of view to observe the heavens were present before Hans Lipperhey's (1608) and Harriot's and Galileo's models (1609). And given that none of the English authors ever considered combinations of two or more lenses, neglected concave lenses that would have served their purposes, in addition to the technical difficulties of obtaining optical grade glass and adequate mirror coatings (not to mention the extreme difficulties of grinding the lenses and mirrors), their claims must be taken as hypotheses and speculation (Van Helden 1977:12-15; Turner 1991).

The two references to "perspectives" in Shakespeare are clearly not to "perspective glasses" (telescopes) as Usher has claimed, but to paintings created with oblique anamorphosis, i.e. containing distorted images unless viewed from a particular angle (*All's Well*:5.3.48; *Richard II*:2.2.18). Usher, however, believes that either Leonard or Thomas Digges had invented a telescope almost 30 years before Galileo's

*Siderius nuncius* and that Digges had trained it on the heavens. He cites a number of celestial objects and phenomena alluded to in *Hamlet* that could only have been resolved with a telescope. For example, Horatio mentions the ‘disasters in the Sun’ that appeared before Caesar’s death. But these are undoubtedly naked-eye sunspots which can be seen without a telescope when the sun is veiled by clouds or through a camera obscura, and therefore do not imply the discovery of the telescope. Chinese astronomer Gan De had commented on naked-eye sunspots in 364 BC.

Also, was Digges able to resolve with his alleged telescope the Great Red Spot (GRS) of Jupiter (Jove) before Hooke’s and Cassini’s reports of 1664-65 and did he pass this information on to Shakespeare? Hamlet describes his father as possessing “the front of Jove himself,/ An eye like Mars, to threaten and command” (*Hamlet*:3.4.57-58). At times the colors and apparent sizes of Mars and the GRS are similar at 3-10 arc seconds. Usher lists several other tantalizing possible references to telescopically resolved solar and stellar features and objects such as lunar craters (a blemished moon, which he links to Ophelia, *aphelion* or opposite to the ‘sun’ Hamlet), the individual stars of the milky way, and the phases of Venus. However, Usher does not provide convincing explanations for why these phenomena were first introduced into a play by an English dramatist. It is highly improbable that the Diggeses would not have immediately published their telescopic observations as did Galileo who obviously feared competitors, since shortly after the publication of *Siderius nuncius* other astronomers began feverishly building telescopes.

Leslie Hotson and A.L. Rowse have demonstrated several links between Shakespeare and the Digges family and it seems likely that he crossed paths with at least one of the Digges family. Leonard Digges the Younger (son of Thomas Digges, grandson of Leonard Digges the Elder) wrote prefatory verses to the *First Folio* and Shakespeare lived near the Diggeses in London. Thomas Digges’s widow Anne married Thomas Russell, one of the overseers of Shakespeare’s will. Richard Whalen cautions, however, from the Oxfordian viewpoint, that there is no recorded evidence of Shakespeare knowing any of the Diggeses (Whalen 2001).

Usher takes his arguments concerning the Diggeses too far, although Thomas Digges’s primary contribution to astronomy, his promotion of the idea in *A Perfit Description* (1576) that Copernicanism necessarily implied infinite space in the heavens, may have stimulated Shakespeare’s interest in infinity, nothingness and void, and even atomism. The ancient atomists as well as Aristarchos had proposed an infinite void which appears as an explicit theme in *King Lear* (i.e. the repetition of the word ‘nothing’).

Hamlet attempts to dream of infinite space: “O God, I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space...” (2.2.55-56). Copernicus knew that no one had yet been able to detect stellar parallax, which to him implied two hypotheses: either the stars are immensely far away from the earth, or that the earth



does not move. He concluded that the earth moved. He left it to the philosophers to determine if the universe was actually infinite.

Although the infinity of the universe was a classical idea discussed by the ancient atomist school, the concept was first firmly linked to the Copernican system in English thought by Digges in the *Prognostication everlasting* (Johnson 1934). Also, Bruno had been in England from 1583-85 espousing the infinity of worlds and published *De l'infinito universo e mondi* in 1584. The concept of infinity is also expressed in Spenser's *Hymn of Heavenly Beauty*:

Far above these heavens which here we see,  
Be others far exceeding these in light,  
Not bounded, not corrupt, as these same be,  
But infinite in largeness and in height,  
Unmoving, incorrupt and spotless bright. (64-70)

Scholastics had split hairs and spilled many pots of ink over the materiality or non-materiality of the world and heavens, and whether or not they were distinct, divided entities, and sources such as Spenser quoted above could be read as support for an infinite cosmos. So Hamlet's dream of infinite space does appear to arise from the resurgence of this idea in both technical astronomy and literature during Shakespeare's career.

In the end, however, Usher's arguments, though interesting, are based on circumstantial evidence and ultimately represent variations of the old view of bardolatry: i.e. Shakespeare was the most advanced, knowledgeable and modern of the Elizabethans, therefore he would have possessed the most advanced knowledge of cosmology, even secret and unpublished scientific data only known to a few.

A quick glance at the use of Copernicanism in John Donne provides an important point of reference. In the "First Anniversarie," his traducian meditation on the death of Elizabeth Drury, Donne writes:

And new Philosophy calls all in doubt,  
The Element of fire is quite put out;  
The Sun is lost, and th'earth, and no man's wit  
Can well direct him where to looke for it. (205-208)

In the poem, Donne never confirms or denies Copernicanism, but Donne's lament that the sun is lost in the New astronomy simply reveals for him the old imperfection of the world, since men are forced to look for new worlds in the firmament because new arguments for heliocentrism have cast old cosmological arguments in doubt. This passage underscores the infirmity of human reason, as do many of the other laments in the poem, expressing the *contemptus mundi* philosophy

that can be found throughout Donne's poetry and sermons. Instead of a new *organon* to comprehend nature, Donne thus views the new developments in cosmology as a confirmation that human knowledge is unable ultimately to understand the heavens without divine guidance. In his view, new science breeds confusion and skepticism – a far cry from the later modernist view of progress.

So we are left to ponder Shakespeare's relationship to Copernicanism. But we must accept the possibility that it had little impact on his imagination, since Copernicanism's later role in ultimately dismantling the Aristotelian-based Catholic theology of natural phenomena was probably not fully appreciated in England until the very end of Shakespeare's career, as it was Galileo who ultimately and finally dismantled Aristotelian physics between 1610-1630.

### 3. Conclusion

Copernicanism did not sweep Europe by storm after the publication of *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* in 1543; knowledge of it was restricted to a few academics, and it did not come into the spotlight until near the end of Shakespeare's life when Galileo refuted several tenets of Aristotelian physics such as the natural place of the elements. Ironically, non-Copernicans such as Tycho Brahe had further demonstrated that related Ptolemaic-Aristotelian concepts such as the crystalline spheres were physically impossible. But technical astronomy aside, Shakespeare's later plays are certainly permeated with the philosophical ideas that were indirectly generated by newly emergent theories of cosmology: void, nothingness, infinity, new worlds, and most importantly, man's relationship to the cosmos.

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