

## CONTENTS

### *IMAGES OF LITERARY LIFE*

- ISTVÁN D. RÁCZ** The Popularity of poetry: Light Verse in Post-1945 British Literature
- ARMELA PANAJOTI** Language: Anarchism, Class and Sexuality in D. H. Lawrence's *The Daughter-in-Law*
- KAĞAN KAYA** *Via Dolorosa*: Faith and Fidelity
- ELISABETTA MARINO** Traveller vs. Tourist: Exploring Italy in *Pictures from Italy* (1846) by Charles Dickens
- FARUK BAJRAKTAREVIĆ** Timothy Mo's *Sour Sweet*: Diasporic Identity and the Claims of Reality
- SANAE UEHARA** What the Manuscript Tells Us: Grace Melbury in *The Woodlanders*
- NATALIA GONCHAROVA** Sub Rosa Dictum: *A Rose for Emily*, *Something Special*, *Wild Swans*. The Tacit Intertextuality of love Discourse

### *A JOURNEY THROUGH LITERARY AMERICA*

- INGRIDA ŽINDŽIUVIENĖ** Elements of Trauma Fiction in the 9/11 Novel
- CRISTINA CHEVEREŞAN** Steps across the Color Line
- MATEA BUTKOVIĆ** The Ambivalent Role of the Black Family in Richard Wright's Major Writings
- DANIELA ROGOBETE** Negotiating Desire in Joyce Carol Oates's *Fair Maiden*
- ALEXANDRU BUDAC** The Pyrrhonist Pynchon
- ATTILA MÓCZA** The Issue of Identity in Mario Acevedo's *The Nymphs of Rocky Flats*
- ANA KOCIĆ** Puritan New England in Nathaniel Hawthorne's Short Stories

**MÁRTA ÓTOTT**

The Intersections of American Experimental  
Theatre and Absurd Drama

***WORDS IN CONTEXT AND CULTURAL IDENTITY***

**J. IGOR PIETRO -ARRANZ**

SLA as Identity Formation: Evidence from  
Study Abroad and CLIL Contexts

**ALINA BUGHEȘIU**

English Names of Pubs, Clubs and Cafés in  
Romania

**BLEDAR TOSKA**

Connectivity in the Structural Organization of  
Argumentation

**NADEZHDA P. TODOROVA**

Typed of Absolute Constructions in Modern  
English

**SIMONA ȘIMON**

Thematic and Rhematic Semantic Reference in  
Written Advertisements

**CRISTINA-MIHAELA  
ZAMFIR**

Mapping across NLP Meta Program Clusters  
for Maintaining Business Rapport

**ÉVA KOVÁCS**

On Collocations in English

**DUŠAN STAMENKOVIĆ and  
MILOŠ TASIĆ  
NATASA STOJAN**

English Verbs of Motion and Prototype Theory

Ergative and Middle Constructions in English  
and Croatian

**ROMAN ALEXEYEVICH  
VORONIN**

Quantitative and Structural Characteristics of  
English Proverbs with the Components “good”  
and “bad”

**ZHIVKO HRISTOV**

Specific Institutional Concepts of the Bulgarian  
National Revival in an English Context

**MIHAELA COZMA**

Assessment in Translator Training: from  
Linguistic to Professional Criteria

# **IMAGES OF LITERARY LIFE**

# THE POPULARITY OF POETRY: LIGHT VERSE IN POST-1945 BRITISH LITERATURE

ISTVÁN D. RÁCZ

University of Debrecen

**Abstract:** *Light verse is a well-known but rarely defined term in poetry studies. In my paper, I explore some possible definitions on the basis of handbooks of literature and Hans Robert Jauss's reception theory; then, I discuss the main features of light verse through some examples of contemporary British poets (Wendy Cope, Carol Ann Duffy, Fleur Adcock, and Roger McGough). I pay special attention to how popular poetry is related to serious verse and conclude that light verse plays an important role not only in making poetry popular but also in displaying the mechanism of poetry.*

**Keywords:** *contemporary poetry, horizon of expectations, light verse, parody*

## 1. Introduction

Light verse is a well-known but rarely defined term in poetry studies. The word "light" is usually used to mean 'not serious', 'unimportant' or 'not causing any harm' in contemporary culture: we hardly need any definition to understand what *light music* means as opposed to serious or classical music, what *cola light* is in comparison with the classic soft drink, and many of us would not hesitate to label anything that we do not find serious enough to satisfy our intellectual expectations as "light".

Of course, handbooks of literature, these extremely optimistic publications, do offer definitions of light verse. According to one of these, light verse treats "its subjects gaily, or comically, or whimsically, or with good-natured satire" (Abrams 1985: 96). Another defines light verse as "poetry to entertain" (Beckson and Ganz 1986: 130). A third one suggests that such verse "displays obvious formal characteristics of METER, RHYME, and STRUCTURE" (Myers and Simms 1989: 161). It is easy to see that all of these possible definitions provoke us to ask the question: does not serious poetry do the same? If light verse constructs good-natured satire, does that mean that serious poetry can only construct a different kind of satire (possibly ill-natured)? Is serious poetry forbidden to entertain? Aren't formal elements often displayed in serious poetry?

In W. B. Yeats's "The Symbolism of Poetry" (2004: 34) we read that "[t]he form of sincere poetry, unlike the form of the 'popular poetry,' may indeed be sometimes obscure, or ungrammatical". Yeats's remark tacitly implies that popular poetry (probably a synonym of light verse) is always clear and grammatical. However, this is not always true: if we accept this distinction, nonsense poetry and much of the poetry for children would fall into the category of serious verse.

The definitions mentioned above, including Yeats's statement, are remarkably varied. Nevertheless, they share a common feature: with different

emphases, they suggest that light verse relies on the reader's *expectations*. We expect something "good-natured" rather than disturbing (even if it is in the form of satire), we want to be entertained, and we want to recognize something familiar in tone and meter. In sum, we want to be oriented rather than disoriented when we are ready to accept what light verse offers.

In an essay about literary reception Hans Robert Jauss (1990: 74) wrote:

[...] a literary work with an unusual aesthetic form can shatter the expectations of its reader and at the same time confront him with a question which cannot be answered by religiously or publicly sanctioned morals. [...] The literary work can also – and in the history of literature this possibility characterizes the most recent period of modernity – reverse the relationship of question and answer and in an aesthetic medium confront the reader with a new 'opaque' reality which can no longer be understood from the previous horizon of expectations.

Since light verse aims at satisfying its readers' demands, using Jauss's theory as a context, we can ask the question: is light verse the kind of poetry that deliberately rejects any ambition to *change* the horizon of expectations, and intends to *come up* to expectations instead? This seems to be true in the majority of popular poems, but most definitions of light verse also emphasize that such poetry is based on the interplay between the comic and the serious rather than on something "light" in isolation.

## 2. Light Verse in Contemporary Poetry by Women

In the title poem of Wendy Cope's volume, *Serious Concerns* (1992: 15), we read this:

Write to amuse? What an appalling suggestion!  
I write to make people anxious and miserable and to  
worsen their indigestion.

The title is not a joke: Cope's hilarious texts give evidence that the seemingly most ridiculous factors of human life are the most serious matters. The title poem of another volume, *Making Cocoa for Kingsley Amis* (1986: 61), creates poetry out of nothing. Its subject matter is Kingsley Amis's "not being there", his non-presence:

It was a dream I had last week  
And some kind of record seemed vital.  
I knew it wouldn't be much of a poem  
But I love the title.

It is a poem about the absence of reality and the presence of unconscious motivation in a dream. But it also implies that such philosophical or psychoanalytic readings are ridiculous, too. To make it even more ironic or parodistic, this poem in

itself forms the last sequence of the book, following a brilliant series of literary jokes: parodies of the male canon of post-1945 British poetry. Refusing to say anything either for or against the emblematic figure of Kingsley Amis and putting the emphasis on entertaining the reader becomes a rebellious gesture in the context of contemporary British poetry.

Another woman poet, Carol Ann Duffy, said in an introduction to her book *The World's Wife* that she intended those poems as “entertainment for women” (Adcock et al. *The Poetry Quartets* 2). Duffy’s usage of the word “entertainment” (similarly to Cope’s “amusement”) is significant for at least two reasons. On the one hand, it suggests that her texts are meant to undermine patriarchal forms of entertainment, and they subvert the mainstream of male tradition. On the other hand, Duffy’s poems (although most of them could not be labeled as light verse) aim at achieving immediate success. Duffy is not a performance poet, but her frequent public readings have definitely shaped her recent poetry. This brief poem from *The World's Wife* (1999: 20) is a typical performance piece, and definitely a text most people would call light verse:

### **Mrs Darwin**

*7 April 1852*

Went to the Zoo.  
I said to Him –  
Something about that Chimpanzee over there reminds me of you.

This is not simply a joke: finding a well-known form (that of a diary entry) definitely makes it a poem (particularly in the context of the volume, in which one third of the titles start with “Mrs”). A scientist’s wife keeping a diary sounds natural enough in 1852, as does the capital initial of “Him”. Three kinds of consciousness are dramatized in this short text: that of the wife respecting her husband and laughing at him at the same time, that of Charles Darwin himself, and that of the implied reader in the 20<sup>th</sup> or 21<sup>st</sup> century, who knows that in seven years’ time *The Origin of Species* would be published. The basis of our laughter is our feeling of superiority: we know what the actors in the situation do not know. The reference to a well-known historical person satisfies our demand for seeing something familiar as a point of reference, and the way Duffy turns the husband’s and wife’s relationship upside down also fits our horizon of expectations: we expect to be surprised by something that we can still understand. Darwin fails to be serious in the same way as Kingsley Amis does in Cope’s poem: the two women poets use these fictitious figures as parts of domestic life. The setting of the two poems and the male figures mentioned in them are both familiar. The method of light verse in these poems works as a combination and contrast of two stereotypes: the male tradition of forming iconic heroes and the domestic atmosphere of family life.

A similarly dramatized situation can be discerned in a third woman poet's, Fleur Adcock's text (2000: 166):

**Halfway Street, Sidcup**

'We did sums at school, Mummy –  
you do them like this.' I showed her.

It turned out that she knew already.

This charming piece, Adcock's shortest poem, demonstrates the previously mentioned interplay between the serious and the light again. The subject matter is as serious as one can wish to find in poetry: the knowledge about one another and the epistemological system that succeeding generations construct in their everyday discourse. As in Duffy's "Mrs Darwin", one can easily spot three agents in this poem, too: the child, the mother, and the adult narrator. The child wants to boast of her knowledge, and the narrator-I laughs at the irrelevance of this knowledge; this is tacitly implied in the last line, which is spoken by the adult poet. The tone is not that of the child any more: it is the tone of an adult person imitating the tone of a child.

I have referred to this tone as "charming". This charm suggests innocence and ignorance at the same time: out of the three agents in the poem the child is the only one who does not know anything about the consciousness of the other two. The mother in the past knows what the child does not, and the narrator-I knows both the ignorance of the child and the knowledge of the mother. However complicated the structure just outlined might sound, the poem provokes laughter exactly because this is a familiar situation to most people, but the way it is represented surprises us the same way any utterance by a young child would. Nevertheless, it is light verse not only because it is funny, but also because it uses a well-known stereotype openly; moreover, it makes the structure of the stereotype explicit.

**3. The "Patron Saint" of Poetry: Light Verse in Roger McGough**

So far I have discussed some texts by women poets and pointed out how the interplay of various contexts and the construction of dramatic situations construct light verse. But using "serious" forms to surprise the reader with something domestic is also characteristic of the Liverpool poets, particularly Roger McGough. This also shows that the kind of light verse I am talking about is extremely literary: such poems usually respond to a well-established convention. In other words, many pieces of light verse are "light" because the form is easy to identify, and the tension between a supposedly sublime tradition on the one hand and the ironic, satirical or parodic attitude to it on the other hand is easy to grasp. We can notice this in McGough's haiku, "Love Cycle" (2003: 386):

Up against the wall  
Locked in passionate embrace  
our two bicycles

The comic effect of this poem is based on the ambivalence of the word “cycle”, used in the title. The domestic meaning of the word becomes dominant in the last line only. I have suggested that McGough contrasts sublime formal tradition and trivial meaning. This can well be observed in this poem: formally speaking, it is a perfect haiku (the number of syllables in the three lines is 5—7—5). But what it actually does is to violate the basic idea of the haiku, particularly according to Ezra Pound’s imagist credo: instead of opening up the meaning of the image, McGough narrows it down. By writing an “anti-haiku” and focusing on mere formal features (the number of syllables and the length of lines), he also says something about this Japanese form. In other words, his light verse unveils the mechanism of poetry precisely because it cannot function in the same way as highbrow verse does: after the potential sublimity of serious poetry is removed, the skeleton becomes clearly visible.

The literariness of McGough’s light verse is also shown in his texts focusing on the act of reading poetry as a subject matter. A characteristic example is this poem (McGough 2003: 305):

#### **This is One of Those**

Poems in which the title is, in fact, the opening line.  
And what appears to be the first line is really the second.  
Failing to spot this device may result in the reader,  
Unnerved and confused, giving up halfway through,

And either turning to another poem with a decent title  
That invites him in, or (and this is more likely),  
Throwing the book across the room and storming out  
Into the voluptuous night\* vowing never to return.

\*‘The Voluptuous Night’, for instance, would make a decent title.

McGough’s own ironic footnote explains why he used this rather bombastic phrase in the closure of a poem written in a colloquial tone and based on self-reflection. The title and the first line state something about themselves. (If you wish to find this poem in McGough’s *Collected Poems*, the irony will be complete: in the “Index of First Lines” you will need to look for the line that is stated to be the second line in the poem.) From the third (if you like: fourth) line onwards, however, the main character is the imagined reader (not identical with Wolfgang Iser’s implied reader: it is much more a fictitious actor). In this poem two clowns seem to be playing the roles of the poet and of the reader. Consequently, this is not only a self-reflexive text, but also self-ironic. The poet-clown creates the reader-clown, and he will punch his own creator by refusing to read what he has written.

Meanwhile, however, it dawns on the actual reader that this is not at all the point. The point is that I am actually reading this poem and find it funny. The solemn statement that has been said so many times in serious poetry, namely that reading can never stop, is now declared from the sawdust floor of the circus constructed in light verse.

Laughter also becomes an act of cognition in such poems by McGough that are close to concrete poetry. A case in point is “Pure Jaguar” (2003: 223). This is a combination of two found texts, probably two leaflets or brochures: one is about jaguars (animals); the other is about the car named Jaguar. (The fragments from the former are italicized.) The basis of the comic effect is the well-known method of incongruence:

*Using urine, tree scratches calls to mark their boundaries  
jaguars are not, and never will be commonplace.  
A jaguar is special and the X-type is more special still.  
It will feed on almost anything including lizards, snakes,  
turtles, front, side and curtain airbags.*

This text is also based on the formal coincidence of two words, but not in the same way as one can see it in “Love Cycle”. To be precise: in this case it is not two words, only one with two meanings since the car has been named after the predatory animal. McGough’s found poem contrasts the new meaning with the original. The incongruence I have mentioned is based not only on the contrast between an animal and a mechanical construct, but also on the discrepancy between the literal and the metaphorical meanings. When a particular car was named after the jaguar, it was only the aggressive and masculine features that got emphasized: the speed it can gather, its muscular power, and the wild beauty it is supposed to have. However, the meaning constructed this way, as an important part of manipulating customers, widens again once the original meaning is referred to. The description of an animal feeding on lizards and marking its boundaries with his urine sounds factual and stylistically neutral in a text about zoology, but becomes base and grotesque once it is used in the context of a customers’ society. Once again, the poem unveils the mechanism of various texts by separating them from their original contexts.

This “revealing” function is a general feature of light verse at the mimetic level, too. Finding and directing the reader’s attention to something that has always been there in the world, removing “the film of familiarity” is much more important in this poetry than condensation, metaphorical structures, or conventional rhetorical figures. To quote John Keats, “The poetry of earth is never dead” for McGough, even though his earth is not Keats’s idealized and idolized nature. What his light verse focuses on is the familiar, even the commonplace. Significantly, one of his volumes is entitled *Everyday Eclipses* (2002). The epithet in this title domesticates and extends the astronomical meaning of eclipse: in the poems it signifies the gradual diminishing or disappearance of anything we experience in everyday life.

But these are all related to the original, cosmic meaning (such as the eclipse of the moon). This is the first stanza of the title poem (2003: 365):

The hamburger flipped across the face of the bun  
The frisbee winning the race against its own shadow  
The cricket ball dropping for six in front of the church clock  
On a golden plate, a host of communion wafers  
The brown contact lens sliding across the blue iris  
The palming of small change  
Everyday eclipses.

McGough's method is based on variation, and this includes both the multiplication of images and the modification of grammar (including morphology as well as syntax). In the stanza just quoted every image is derived from the sight of a cosmic eclipse; in stanza three, however, the grammatical function of the words changes: "Every day eclipses another day". This modification of the syntax precedes the complex image of objects and units of time devouring each other in the closure of the poem:

One death eclipses another death.

The baby's head, the mother's breast  
The open O of the mouth seeking the warm O of the nipple  
One birth eclipses another birth  
Everyday eclipses.

The last poem of the book is entitled "The End" (2003: 357). This, again, shows the tendency in light verse to make its form and function explicit. McGough's text returns to the opening text, the poem I have just discussed. This poem is also based on variations, namely those of the phrases "What I love about" and "What I hate about". The objects of love and hate are interchangeable, what can be loved can also be hated. The end of the poem also suggests self-referentiality:

What I love about birth  
is the universal surprise, on the dot, everyday  
What I hate about everyday  
is The End, the beginning of eclipses.

"The End", it says, that is, this poem; and the only possible way to understand it is by going back to the first poem again.

As I suggested above, light verse usually uses stereotypes. The ones McGough uses here are the constant presence of both birth and death in human life (a commonplace) and the ambivalence of *odi et amo*. But if one reads the book as a coherent whole, its form also creates a meaning. The first and the last poem are variations on a theme themselves, and the rest of the poems can be read as further

variations on these. This way, variation itself appears as a coercive power in the process of writing. It is a technique determined by visions of birth and death. This technique, however, has also become the central subject matter of the volume: the images as well as the grammar of the texts are derived from it.

#### 4. Conclusion

The four poets I have discussed in this paper have created different forms of poetry, but the similarities these poems show suggest that light verse, as a distinct category, should be reckoned with. It is a type of poetry based on recognizing the familiar, but also containing elements of surprise rooted in incongruence. Two of the poets, Cope and McGough, are mainly known as authors of light verse; Duffy and Adcock are poets who also write light verse, apart from serious poetry. But Duffy's celebration of McGough as "the patron saint of poetry" demonstrates how highly she thinks of him. So do I. The pleasure of recognition, which McGough's, Duffy's and the others' light verse is based upon, has played a central role in gaining reading public (or audience) for poetry. I hope I have shown that this is not the only value we can see in light verse – although an extremely important value.

#### References

- Abrams, M.H. 1985. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 5<sup>th</sup> edition. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.
- Adcock, F. 2000. *Poems 1960—2000*. Newcastle: Bloodaxe.
- Adcock, F. et. al. 1998. *The Poetry Quartets 2*. Audio cassette. Newcastle: Bloodaxe.
- Beckson, K. and A. Ganz. 1986. *Literary Terms: A Dictionary*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Cope, W. 1986. *Making Cocoa for Kingsley Amis*. London: Faber.
- Cope, W. 1992. *Serious Concerns*. London: Faber.
- Duffy, C. A. 1999. *The World's Wife*. London: Picador.
- Jauss, H. R. 1990 (1967). "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory". Dennis Walder, ed. *Literature in the Modern World. Critical Essays and Documents*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 67-75.
- McGough, R. 2003. *Collected Poems*. London: Viking.
- Myers, J. and M. Simms. 1989. *The Longman Dictionary of Poetic Terms*. New York: Longman.
- Yeats, W.B. 2004 (1900). "The Symbolism of Poetry". J. Cook, ed. *Poetry in Theory. An Anthology 1900—2000*. Oxford: Blackwell, 29-34.

## LANGUAGE: ANARCHISM, CLASS AND SEXUALITY IN D. H. LAWRENCE'S *THE DAUGHTER-IN-LAW*

ARMELA PANAJOTI

University of Vlora "Ismail Qemali"

**Abstract:** *The paper focuses on one of D. H. Lawrence's plays, "The Daughter-in-law", now often considered his best and restored to the world of theatre after Lawrence's reputation as a dramatist was reevaluated in the 1960s. One of the striking features of this play is the use of dialect, which makes it at times difficult to follow. I argue that language and linguistic variation serve Lawrence to deal with matters of human relations in a 'kitchen-sink' type of context, where son-mother and husband-wife relationships are revisited, thus revealing issues of class and sexuality in an anarchic, external atmosphere enveloping the events in the play.*

**Key words:** *anarchism, class, D. H. Lawrence, dialect speech, family tension, sexuality.*

### 1. Introduction

Thought to have been written in January 1913 and rediscovered after D. H. Lawrence's death by Else, Frieda's sister, *The Daughter-in-Law* is in many ways coincidental with *Sons and Lovers* in temporal and paradigmatic terms. Written in "kitchen-sink" fashion and caught in the atmosphere of the 1912 miners' strike, the play captures family tensions to such an extent that the physical strike out there becomes a metaphor for tense family relationships, which are finally released at the end of the play. It centers around two male characters, Luther and Joe, brothers and sons to the overbearing Mrs Gascoigne and three female characters, Mrs Gascoigne, Minnie, wife to Luther and Mrs Purdy, mother of Bertha, who is reported to be expecting a child from Luther. The revelation of this pregnancy after Minnie and Luther have been married for six weeks brings about a tension in the husband-wife, mother-son and mother-in-law – daughter-in-law relationships.

Although the play and the novel share almost the same family paradigms - an overbearing mother, the collier background, classless relationships - still it seems that the play follows up what the novel initiated in a more lively way and apparently brings to conclusion what the characters in *Sons and Lovers* could not - liberation from an imposing motherly figure. Matters of class and sexuality are more emphatically conveyed here owing to the dialogue of the play. Often considered his best, the play is written "wholly in the dialect he [Lawrence] had left so far behind him" (Poplawski 1996: 31).

Although the use of dialect speech makes it at times difficult for the reader to follow the play, it very much accounts for its success in conveying ideas in a genuine way. It should be briefly recollected here that although it was written as early as 1913, the play was never performed while Lawrence was alive. It was actually found by coincidence after his death, among the several manuscripts he

had left behind while in Germany. The manuscripts went forgotten until they were rediscovered by Else in 1931 who then returned them to Frida in 1933. Frida tried to have the play put on stage, but was told that it needed adapting if it were to be produced. After some failed attempts for the adaptation of the play, the job was handed down to Walter Greenwood, who altered the structure of the play, from four to three acts, changed its ending and “modif[ied] the dialect to make the play more comprehensible” (Sagar and Sklar 1982: 298). The play was finally performed as *My Son's My Son* in 1936. It was not until Peter Gill's productions of D. H. Lawrence's plays that they received their missing acclaim (cf. Sagar 1982; Wilcher 1996).

If one considers some history of the play's production in 1936 by Leon M. Lion, its 1967 production by Peter Gill and other later productions, one would soon notice that comments, negative or positive, point in the same direction. Its failures, if any, or success, revolve around the use of dialect speech in the play. Back in 1936 the reviewer of *The Times* would speak of loss “when the tension that had ‘bound together the rest of the play’ gave way to a radically different kind of tension and the situation created in the first two acts was resolved with ‘a melodramatic flourish’” (Wilcher 1996: 255), a remark which clearly alludes to the alterations made to the play by Greenwood, among which, the most important, the modification of the dialect. Reviews following the several productions of the play in the years 1967-1985 focused mainly on Lawrence's naturalism and on the homely atmosphere present in the play, two aspects which, in my view, are ascertained by the use of dialect in the play. Others would clearly mention the use of the dialect:

Wardle [2] was ‘amazed that such a work could have been neglected’ and declared that ‘the Derbyshire dialect rings with a common humanity which is the most precious sound in the theatre.’ [...] while Woddis, in spite of reservations about Lawrence's sexual politics and the unfamiliar dialect, acknowledged that it was the work of ‘a masterly playwright and a painfully honest analyst of his own obsessions.’ (Wilcher 1996: 256)

As it can be seen, the fault and merit of this play stand exactly in its use of the Nottinghamshire dialect. My intention in this paper is to focus on the language of the play as the framework which foregrounds all sexual, social and family tensions in the play.

## **2. Language: anarchism, class, sexuality**

In what follows, I shall discuss how language and linguistic variation serve Lawrence to deal with human relations in a “kitchen-sink” type of context where son-mother and husband-wife relationships are revisited, revealing issues of class and sexuality in an anarchic external atmosphere enveloping the events in the play. Anarchism, class and sexuality should not be seen as separate from each other. In the context of changing social norms, anarchism, through its promotion of

individual freedom, lends itself to questions of class and sexuality or gender. I will try to demonstrate how the language of the play frames and emphatically conveys all three issues.

Before considering anarchism in the play, I find it necessary to sum up the link between anarchism and Lawrence in order to point out what characterizes Lawrence's anarchist stance and move on to how the language of the play features his stance. Casey (2003:3) warns us not to consider anarchism "an absolute category for Lawrence's political thought." He (2003: xix) advises considering spontaneity as "one of the key words of anarchism", which he borrows from Marshall Shatz's observation, as "central to Lawrence's thought as well; it is at least as important as (if not inseparable from) his much remarked upon opposition to the 'organized structure' of modern industrial society" (Casey 2003:2). He (2003: 10) also suggests that "Lawrence, [...], did not believe in an anarchical world either, and behind his emphasis on 'spontaneity' is an idea of natural law that is clearly consistent with anarchistic doctrine." As it can be noted, contradiction is at the core of Lawrence's anarchist thinking.

Anarchism in the play can be traced in what I call anarchist discourse, a discourse that is maintained through blaming authority and is acted out by spontaneity. So, Mrs Gascoigne, her sons and Mrs Purdy blame the company for not paying their workers' insurance, Minnie blames Luther for being still tied to his mother's apron, for keeping their house untidy and for not being hard-working, Mrs Gascoigne blames Minnie for not taking enough care of Luther, whereas Minnie blames Mrs Gascoigne for dominating her sons. Important decisions characters make are acts of spontaneity, such as the letter Minnie writes to Luther asking him to marry her and his instant reply to do so, Joe's decision to go to Australia, or Minnie's outburst against Mrs Gascoigne.

This discourse moves between correct English and dialect speech, thus creating a contradiction between two worlds, the orderly and the chaotic, the intellectual and the primitive. It builds up the atmosphere of the play. Although anarchism stands in the background, it actually governs family relations. The family tension increases, as the strike escalates with Luther coming home in blood in the final act. The strike becomes then a metaphor for the anarchic nature of these relations. So, when Minnie goes to Manchester and then returns home after having spent all their savings, Luther remarks: "Housework--yi! But we dunna on'y keep th' roof from comin' in. We get as well. An' even *th' housework tha went on strike wi'*. Tha skeddaddled off ter Manchester, an' left me to't." (Act III; emphasis added)

In the end, spontaneity is brought to natural law after Minnie reacts against Mrs Gascoigne and decides to stay with Luther. Her bold accusation against Mrs Gascoigne is an act of linguistic defiance. Thus she can be seen as the pronounced anarchist who undermines Mrs Gascoigne's authority by proclaiming individual freedom, hers and Luther's, to build up their life on their own.

On a personal or individual level, to use Lawrence's word, the writer himself was caught between these two contradictions, represented in his life by the well-ordered intellectual world of his mother and the crude and natural collier world of his father. In *The Daughter-in-Law* this contradiction is featured in the

language of the play. Minnie's refined English contrasts the dialectal English of the three other characters. The two worlds are brought together by spontaneity in the marriage between Luther and Minnie. There is much fuss in the play over how the two got married. Although the couple had known each other since Luther was twenty-three, they did not marry until Minnie had the impulse of writing a letter to Luther asking him to marry her. Minnie's letter, so much discussed in the play, especially by Luther's mother, is in my view, a form of discourse, which actually allowed Lawrence to lay down the "ghost", a metaphor used by Worthen to refer to Lawrence's internal conflict regarding his two parental figures (cf. Worthen 1992). Worthen (1992: 458) also reports that "drama was a liberating genre for him." Thus here he created what he could not create in *Sons and Lovers*, "the most powerful and dangerous of all motherly-figures" (Worthen 1992: 458) and an equally dominating daughter-in-law, Minnie. The letter Minnie wrote to Luther is below reproduced by Mrs Gascoigne. The contrast is amazing, especially when Minnie's correct English is put into Mrs Gascoigne's mouth. The embeddedness of Minnie's discourse in Mrs Gascoigne's Nottinghamshire dialect affirms Minnie's directness and firmness:

MRS GASCOIGNE: [...] Then all of a suddin, three months back, come a letter: "Dear Luther, I have been thinking it over, an' have come to the opinion that we'd better get married now, if we are ever goin' to. We've been dallying on all these years, and we seem to get no further. So we'd better make the plunge, if ever we're going to. Of course you will say exactly what you think. Don't agree to anything unless you want to. I only want to say that I think, if we're ever going to be married, we'd better do it without waiting any longer." Well, missis, he got that letter when he com whoam fra work. I seed him porin' an' porin', but I says nowt. [...] He gen me that letter, an' says: "What's think o' that, Mother?" Well, you could ha' knocked me down wi' a feather when I'd read it. I says: "I think it's tidy cheek, my lad." He took it back an' puts 's pocket, an' after a bit, 'e says: "What should ter say, Mother?" "Tha says what's a mind, my lad," I says. So he begins unlacing 's boots. Sudden he stops, an' wi's boot-tags rattlin', goes rummagin' for th' pen an' ink. "What art goin' to say?" I says. "I'm goin' ter say, 'er can do as 'er's a mind. If 'er wants ter be married, 'er can, an' if 'er doesna, 'er nedna." So I thinks we could leave it at that. He sits him down, an' doesna write more nor a side an' a haef. I thinks: "That's done it, it'll be an end between them two now." He niver gen th' letter to me to read. (Act I, Scene I)

Luther responds to the letter out of spontaneity or out of a desire for liberation from the motherly figure. His not showing her the letter should suggest that. Spontaneity does not bring together only Minnie and Luther, but also Luther and Bertha, that is, people of the same class. It also accounts for Joe's desire to go to Australia.

Woven in a "kitchen-sink" atmosphere, with descriptions at the beginning of each act hinting at household chores, the dialogue pointing to family conflicts, and set at the outbreak of the 1912 miners' strike, the play has much to suggest that

class is a sensitive issue in the play. The stage directions before each act or scene contain “kitchen-sink”- like details:

*A collier's kitchen*--not poor. Windsor chairs, deal table, dresser of painted wood, sofa covered with red cotton stuff. Time: About half-past two of a winter's afternoon. (Act I, Scene I)

The kitchen of LUTHER GASCOIGNE'S new home.

It is pretty — in “cottage” style; rush-bottomed chairs, black oak-bureau, brass candlesticks, delft, etc. Green cushions in chairs. Towards five o'clock. Firelight. It is growing dark.

MINNIE GASCOIGNE is busy about the fire: a tall, good-looking young woman, in a shirt-blouse and dark skirt, and apron. She lifts lids of saucepans, etc., hovers impatiently, looks at clock, begins to trim lamp. (Act I, Scene II)

The setting is described following the conventions of “kitchen-sink” drama - a quite ordinary domestic setting, with the women characters performing household chores - and the family tensions growing out of husband-wife relationships, mother-son relationships, mother-in-law - daughter-in-law relationships, but all of which despite their apparent mundaneness reveal class and gender conflicts. The tensions in Minnie's marriage to Luther seem to be rooted in the differences between the two, notable in their discourse, Minnie's correct English and Luther's dialectal English. The tensions between the two are even more inflated by Mrs Gascoigne, whom Minnie strongly and boldly accuses by the end of Act III for keeping her sons tied to herself. Standing out from the other characters as “a stuck-up piece” or “haughty” (Act I, Scene I) and as a woman who has been “a nursery governess up i' Manchester” (Act I, Scene I), Minnie comes to represent a socially ambitious middle-class woman, who constantly criticizes her husband. Her critics concern not only Luther's laziness, his inability to provide for himself and his family, but above all his manners. Although she is critical of Luther's mother, Minnie is as possessive as she is:

MINNIE: Don't notice of the mess we're in, shall you? [...] (Act I, Scene II)

MINNIE: Don't let the dust all go on the hearth. Why didn't you clear away? The house was like a pigsty for her to come into. (Act I, Scene II)

MINNIE: Why — you don't know. You don't know how hard it is, with a man as — as leaves you alone all the time.

JOE: But — he niver hardly goes out.

MINNIE: No, but — you don't know — he leaves me alone, he always has done — and there's nobody ... (Act I, Scene II)

Luther's class representation is also evident in the descriptions of his washing habits. He most often smells of sweat:

During this time, LUTHER has come hurrying out of the scullery into the kitchen, rubbing his face with a big roller-towel. He is naked to the waist. He kneels with his knees on the fender, sitting on his heels, rubbing himself. His back is not washed. He rubs his hair dry. (Act I, Scene II)

Another element which alludes to class concerns the use of many food expressions in the play. Put in the mouth of characters like Mrs Gascoigne, Mrs Purdy, Luther and Joe, these expressions testify to the richness of folklore and the wisdom of the simple people:

MRS GASCOIGNE: [...] Marriage is like a mouse-trap, for either man or woman. You've soon come to th' end o' th' cheese.

JOE: Well, ha'ef a loaf's better nor no bread.

MRS GASCOIGNE: Why, wheer's th' loaf as tha'd like ter gnawg a' thy life? (Act I, Scene I)

MRS PURDY: He'd seen th' blossom I' flower, if he hadna spotted the fruit a-comin'. (Act I, Scene I)

LUTHER: I've boiled my cabbage twice a'ready, hanna I? (Act II)

The issue of class is inherently linked with that of gender, more particularly sexuality: "Lawrence was unable to see the conditions of the working class except as they affected both sexes in all aspects of life. [...] it is impossible to find a worker in the foreground without being led to consider the character's sexuality and the relationship between class and gender." (Kiely 1990: 91).

Several sexual roles are actually discussed in the play: man, woman, wife, husband, son, and mother. The disturbing sexual triangle in the play is mother - son - daughter-in-law. Mrs Gascoigne's possessive discourse alludes to her responsibility for her sons' lack of initiative and independence. Although she proclaims that "My son's my son till he takes him a wife" (Act I, Scene I), she views marriage as a menace for her sons. She manages to keep both her younger sons, the married Luther and the unmarried Joe tied to herself. In this respect, her bullying is linguistic:

MRS GASCOIGNE: Nasty or not, it's hers now, not mine. He's her husband. "My son's my son till he takes him a wife," an' no longer. Now let her answer for it. (Act I, Scene I)

MINNIE: Pah! — you're not fit to have a wife. You only want your mother to rock you to sleep.

LUTHER: Neither mother, nor wife, neither thee nor onybody do I want — no - no. (Act II)

Luther's last remark is dismissive of several roles. The denying series of "neither"s, the specification of "mother", "wife", "thee", the indefiniteness of "anybody", obviously meant for some other female role, most probably that of

Bertha and the repetition of “no” account for Luther’s frustration at all these imposing women around him. As Worthen (1992: 458) suggests, “In this astonishing play, Lawrence not only gave full release to his hatred of the dominant mother — of Gertrude, whoever she might be — but at last showed in Minnie [...] a young woman potentially every bit as dominant as her mother-in-law.” Although Mrs Gascoigne builds her world by keeping men tied to herself and by despising men and women alike, it is her who later recognizes the fragility of her certainties:

MRS GASCOIGNE: [...] My lads ‘ud do it to spite me, an’ our Luther ‘ud do it to spite thee. Yes — and it’s trew. For they’d run theirselves into danger and lick their lips for joy, thinking, if I’m killed, then she maun lay me out. Yi — I seed it in our mester. He got killed a’ pit. An’ when I laid him out, his face wor that grim, an’ his body that stiff, an’ it said as plain as plain: “Nowthen, you’ve done for me.” For it’s risky work, *handlin’ men*, my lass, an’ niver thee pray for sons — Not but what daughters is any good. Th’ world is made o’ men, for me, lass — there’s only the men for me. An’ tha’rt similar. An’ so, tha’lt reap trouble by the peck, an’ sorrow by the bushel. For when a woman builds her life on men, either husbands or sons, she builds on summat as sooner or later brings the house down crash on her head — yi, she does. (Act IV; emphasis added)

These issues are more emphatically discussed around two questions: “being a man” and “handling a man”, the first brought up by Minnie and the second by Mrs Gascoigne. Minnie’s constant criticism of Luther is that he is not a man. Although Joe tried to prevent Minnie from knowing about Bertha’s baby by Luther, it is Luther himself who later reveals the truth to Minnie, as if to counterpoise her remarks and paradoxically answer her accusations and prove he is a man. Mrs Gascoigne, on the other hand, poses the question in terms of handling a man. When mother-in-law and daughter-in-law finally come close together, Mrs Gascoigne’s possessiveness is brought loose and despite her overbearing manner she accepts her failure to handle men:

MRS GASCOIGNE: [...] Oh, my lass, I’ve had a husband an’ six sons. Children they are, these men, but, my word, they’re revengeful children. Children men is a’ the days o’ their lives. But they’re master of us women when their dander’s up, an’ they pay us back double an’ treble — they do — an’ you mun allers expect it. (Act IV)

These two ‘philosophies’ about men are finally confronted by the end of Act III when Minnie boldly defies Mrs Gascoigne’s motherly authority and accuses her in front of her sons. Minnie’s courageous confrontation with Mrs Gascoigne completes what Miriam in *Sons and Lovers* did not dare to.

MINNIE: I’m a woman, and that’s enough. But I know now, it was your fault. You held him, and persuaded him that what he wanted was you. You kept him, like a child, you even gave him what money he wanted, like a child. He never roughed it — he never faced out anything. You did all that for him.

MRS GASCOIGNE: And what if I did! If you made as good a wife to him as I made a mother, you'd do.

MINNIE: Should I? You didn't care what women your sons went with, so long as they didn't love them. What do you care really about this affair of Bertha Purdy? You don't. All you cared about was to keep your sons for yourself. You kept the solid meal, and the orts and slarts any other woman could have. But I tell you, I'm not for having the orts and slarts, and your leavings from your sons. I'll have a man, or nothing, I will. (Act III)

### 3. Conclusion

What can finally be said is that this play is another piece that demonstrates Lawrence's mastery in the use of language and in exploring all its potentialities. Written soon after he had finished *Sons and Lovers*, the play departs from some of the novel's concerns and seeks to find a resolution to them. That he should have done this in the Nottinghamshire dialect is at the same time significant and liberating. It allowed the author to charge each character with the blame for their respective position and finally find relief in this discharge, which he could not have done had he written in Standard English. It would have lacked the vigour of dialect speech. That he kept the play unpublished while alive is ambiguous, but at the same time suggests that it served its own end of self-relief. Although escaping from one possessive woman and moving on to another is rather ambiguous, the love pronouncements at the end of the play between Minnie and Luther are suggestive of a union that obeys natural laws and that Lawrence himself proclaimed valid, that between man and woman.

### References

- Casey, S. 2003. *Naked Liberty and the World of Desire: Elements of Anarchism in the Work of D.H. Lawrence*. New York: Routledge.
- Kiely, Robert. 1990. "Out on strike: The language and power of the working class in Lawrence's fiction" in *The Challenge of D.H. Lawrence*. M. Squires and K. Cushman (eds.). Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, pp. 89-102.
- Lawrence, D. H. 1912. *The Daughter-in-law*. A Project Gutenberg of Australia eBook. <http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks04/0400871h.html>.
- Poplawski, P. 1996. *D. H. Lawrence: A Reference Companion*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Sagar, K. M. and S. Sklar. 1982. "Major Productions of Lawrence's Plays" in *A D.H. Lawrence Handbook*. K. M. Sagar (ed.). Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp. 283-328.
- Wilcher, R. 1996. "D. H. Lawrence (1885 – 1930)" in *British Playwrights, 1880-1956: A Research and Production Sourcebook*. W. W. Demastes and K. E. Kelly (eds.). Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, pp. 251-268.
- Worthen, J. 1992. *D.H. Lawrence: The Early Years, 1885-1912*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

## VIA DOLOROSA: FAITH and FIDELITY

KAĞAN KAYA

Cumhuriyet University, Sivas

**Abstract:** *David Hare is one of the most fulgent figures of the global theatre who peculiarly places national and international political issues and their effects on the individual and society in his non-fiction drama. The political struggle between Palestinians and Israelis has been brought into debate through the imagination of several leading dramatists so far. Hare presents the purest ideas about this issue throughout his work, Via Dolorosa. However, his main concern is the corruption of faith and the meaninglessness of life, chiefly in the western world. In this respect, the playwright deals with the notion of faith in a universal point of view in this monologue play.*

**Key words:** *David Hare, faith, Israel-Palestine, non-fiction drama, the West.*

### 1. Introduction

Since the 1990s, and particularly after the events of 9/11, it is highly popular among theatre-goers to see a play that covers national and international issues. It seems that the popularity of political plays will carry on in the first quarter of the twenty-first century. This paper presents a literary analysis of *Via Dolorosa*, which is one of the hottest political plays by David Hare. Billington (2009:387) delineates the play as “a brilliant piece of subjective reportage... so moving”. It is not only authentic with its technical style and rendition, but also with its vivid and gripping subject matter.

In fact, David Hare, who is one of Britain’s most prolific political playwrights, has been using national and international fresh political material in his multi-coloured drama to meet the demands of theatre-goers for forty years. As a pioneer social commentator, Hare displays that the stage is a kind of place where playwrights give political lectures. According to him, a playwright must reject being didactic on current politics and their effects on the human beings, because the audience merely needs to hear the pure facts from a dutiful and responsible playwright. He simply aims at keeping his audience aware about what happens in and out of Britain. Thus, he is against a kind of drama without socio-political concerns. He states that:

To be interested in politics is just part of being grown up. I hate the childishness of the theatre. A lot of people love the theatre as a sort of play pen, or a sort of kindergarten for the psychiatrist. I *hate* those kinds of evenings. I believe history has a great effect on who you are and how you think... it mystifies me why so many playwrights write in bell jars, where there is no sense of what society is like outside, where there is no sense of which historical events affect the emotions and thoughts of the characters on the stage. (Gaston 1993:217-218)

Hare believes that over the past fifteen years there is a common sense all around the world that unlike theatre, the media is not a trustful establishment. Moreover, he asserts that “theatre is not journalism. The mistake is to imagine that simply because it can incorporate real-life material, so it can be judged by similar criteria” (Luckhurst 2008:210). For this reason, David Hare’s “dramaturgical strategies reflect his political interpretations of his environment. His body of work reflects his method of theatricalising politics” (Oliva 1990:155) without journalism. As he always involves himself in very contemporary political issues, he considers himself as a dramatist of political history plays.

Therefore, this paper also focuses on political issues between Israel and Palestine through the lens of David Hare. The playwright seems to inform his audience about the current political issues of the Middle East through his play, *Via Dolorosa*. In this respect Billington (2009:387) summarizes the political background of the play saying that:

As a good reporter, Hare told us a lot about life in the Middle-East. About the conflicts within, as well as between, the Israeli and Palestinian communities. About the gulf between secular, liberal Jews and those families living in the Occupied Territories... About the contrast between the epidemic corruption of Yaser Arafat’s PLO and the intellectual rigour of Arab intellectuals.

But, it is restrictive and illusive to analyse the subject matter of *Via Dolorosa* just within its political background. Behind the pure and valuable social and political information that Hare shares with his audience, the play is exceptional with its thought-provoking and humanistic rhetoric on the notion of faith and the meaninglessness of life, especially in the West. In that sense, the paper particularly concentrates on what faith and fidelity mean for both Israelis and Palestinians. Therefore, this paper separates *Via Dolorosa* technically from the former non-fiction or documentary works of the playwright and focuses on its outstanding themes of faith and fidelity.

## **2. David Hare’s Political Stage and Revelations**

David Hare has turned his face to the Middle East for fifteen years. The Middle East, in which Jerusalem, the most important religious city in the world for Christians, Muslims and Jews is located, has been a centre of attraction for a lot of playwrights. Dramatists do not regard their journeys to Jerusalem as merely pilgrimage journeys. They have travelled around the Middle East, as they consider that the holy land can powerfully form the most enchanting background of their art. It is known that, in the late twentieth century, the British Drama deals with a lot of controversial international political issues and interrogates them intensely for its audience. David Hare is among these playwrights who use socio-political conflicts about the land. For him, the Middle East constructs both one of the main sources of his international political drama and the global subject matters attached to these issues.

In this respect, David Hare was asked to pen a play which is thought to be dedicated to the fiftieth anniversary of the State of Israel in 1997. The International Department of Royal Court Theatre projected the play as a material telling the story of the British Mandate in the 1930s and 1940s in the Middle East. An Israeli and a Palestinian playwright also would assist Hare in writing the play according to the project details. However, *Via Dolorosa* emerges as a one-man demonstration, written and performed by the dramatist on his own and directed by Stephen Daldry after Hare's visits to the holy land in 1998. Thus, it is thought that the play is a diary or travelogue of the playwright, like the former plays that take the Middle East as their background of the subject matter, at the beginning of the twentieth century. However, the playwright "seeks to add authority and weight to his account by positioning it within a broader literary/journalistic tradition" (Bar-Yosef 2007:264). In fact, Hare's ninety-minute solo-show not only includes the vivid literary and journalistic descriptions of the holy land, but it also includes his personal researches, observations, thoughts and feelings, compiled like a colourful and useful history lecture on the Middle East, with minimum British pedantry.

It is certain that David Hare's many plays reveal that he works like a journalist, historian and lecturer before he puts his ideas on the stage. There is a parallel dimension with his lectures given before the plays are ready for the stage. Similarly, there is a parallelism with the play and the raw material the playwright gave at Westminster Abbey, called *When Shall We Live?* It is also conceived that the play "emerges naturally from an earlier play about the Church of England, *Racing Demon*, about the bankruptcy of religious belief" (Gleick 1999), but *Via Dolorosa* is an original play both in text and performance, telling the old story of the polarised people living in the Middle East.

*Via Dolorosa*, a monologue play, is unconventional in its textual structure. Oliva (1990:163) notes that "Hare is an innovator willing to experiment with all the dramatic elements" in his theatre career. Many critics share the similar idea that the playwright likes to push the boundaries both in the frame of art and in the use of the theatrical material. In *Via Dolorosa*, Hare actually distracts his audience from both the basic and serious political clashes and from a kind of art form based on mathematical formulas. Thus, the play is defined as "the theatre without fiction, but much more In-Yer-Face" (Boireau 2003:34). In this respect, Hare "abandons theatrical representation almost entirely in *Via Dolorosa*" (Soto-Moretti 2005:314) unlike the offers of the traditional drama. *Via Dolorosa* has an odd construction, without an actual plot, any actors or actresses, dialogues, costumes and even any furniture, except for a chair of the playwright, because "with this particular subject matter, the artistic logic was so compelling" (Hare 1999:75). Although verbatim plays "rely wholly on others to provide the material" (Luckhurst 2008:215), *Via Dolorosa* is just full of quotations and indirect speeches of "a very few of many, many meetings" (Hare 1998:2) as the playwright says.

Through such methods Hare wishes to achieve maximum sense and simplicity which should clearly reflect the social, cultural, economical, political, moral and religious contradictions between Israeli and Palestinian Middle Easterners on his stage. However, he does not take a side or intend to evaluate the

political matters and the distortions within the two communities in such a stormy area. The play is internationally a new level for the playwright, because he mirrors both sides of the present argument in a dialectical way that demonstrates he always enjoys dialectic. Hare focuses that “to keep writing about the present day is the job” (Zeifman 1994:16) and argues that “a play is not comprised of the text or actors, nor of the opinions and ideological convictions of the playwright” (Megson and Rebellato 2007:240). According to him it “is what happens between the stage and the audience. The play is in the air” (Hare 1999:118).

Yet, the playwright receives negative criticism for being purely objective and sceptical on such a world-wide political issue. In his open letter to David Hare, Arnold Wesker (2003) criticizes the playwright for being “the genuine, troubled artist himself conducting and playing his own concerto with no distorting intermediary”. Although Hare enjoys turning his stage into a political arena, for him, it is a kind of insult to impose any ideological ideas on the audience.

### **3. The Faith and Fidelity in *Via Dolorosa***

At first sight, the playwright seems to be giving an objective lecture merely on the political dilemmas between the Israelis and the Palestinians. However, his main concern is to demonstrate to the audience how huge the diversity in the East and the West is in terms of religious faith. As all codes were discredited after the World War II, it is inevitable that the religious system was negatively affected by it as well. Thus, David Hare brings to forefront the view that the human being was lost spiritually after the war.

Having been brought up in an Anglo-Catholic school, the playwright is well aware of the spiritual part of the human nature. According to Hare, *Via Dolorosa* is the universal story of a Westerner “trying to understand two societies where belief is at the centre of the way of life. It is about the wrenching effects on a person apparently without faith meeting a whole lot of people who have only faith” (Hare 1999:7). As a result of diminishing the significance and the effects of the rules that religion, law, custom and moral determine, the individual loses all his values. In the background of the play, on the one hand there is the out-of-sight western world which is gradually corrupted politically, morally and religiously, and on the other hand, there is a world of two communities whose members are strictly bound to their beliefs in spite of huge inefficiencies, political problems and their fear of being killed everyday.

David Hare thinks that he has to be in Israel to meet those believers, because one of the subject matters he has been expressing through his quintessential drama is faith for a long time. He clarifies that “It’s only ten years later that I realize, almost without noticing, that for some time my subject as a playwright has been faith. My subject is belief. And so it comes to seem appropriate – no, more than that, it comes to seem urgent” (Hare 1998:6). Therefore, visiting the fifty-year-old Israel, the fifty-year-old British dramatist shows his main concern. In one of his interviews he declares that:

The metaphor of the play was not about Israel and Palestinian territory, it was about the contrast between lives of people in certain parts of the world for whom everything is at stake in every daily decision, as opposed to those who live in the West who face no such daily pressure, namely myself. (Hammond and Steward 2008:67-68)

David Hare also exhibits his main intentions on writing such an international play via the statement above. The playwright criticizes so called western man, his civilization and even himself negatively. He clarifies why he has visited Israel, making a charming distinction between the life in the West and the East:

People always say that in England we lead shallow lives. Our lives must be shallow because we live in a country where nobody believes in anything anymore. My whole life, I've been told: 'Western civilization? An old bitch gone in teeth.' And so people say, go to Israel. Because in Israel, they're fighting for something they believe in. (Hare 1998:4)

After explaining how he builds his own project, Hare points out that one of the main failures of the Middle East is that Arabs and Jews are not successful in living together in peace. David Hare's various plays can be regarded as the works which put a signature on modern political history. *Via Dolorosa* is one of these works; actually, it not only puts forward the historical and political conflicts between Israel and Palestine which go back to the first half of the twentieth century in the modern sense, but it is also a play which perpetually searches for the possible ways for people to share the holy land in concord. In that sense, throughout his play, the playwright does not increase the tension on the political issue; on the contrary, he tries to turn up the soft voices of both communities.

One of the soothing voices of the play belongs to his Jewish novelist friend David Grossman. Although David Hare was formerly misled by the idea that "Israelis are loud and argumentative" (Hare 1998:7), he realizes that Grossman is not such an extremist Israeli intellectual. Hare expresses his anxieties about whether Israel will "one day have to become a modern country, multicultural, like any other" (Hare 1998:7) or not. The playwright is aware that Israelis and Arabs have lived together for more than two thousand years on the holy land. However, it is a pity that they cannot succeed in sharing their cultures. Yet, for Grossman, there is always a lot of hope that they can live together peacefully. Many Israelis state that it is probably vital to worship in Jerusalem or in other holy places in Israel, but they do not need to own the Wailing Wall. The idea of owning any of the holy places is really conventionally "un-Jewish" (Hare 1998:7) according to Grossman.

Being a citizen of the modern world, Hare believes that all individuals should collaborate and try to establish harmonious relations because they have the right to live under equal circumstances. These are the requirements for an acceptable community system. Nevertheless, the playwright seems to picture a kind of desperate, gloomy but non-utopic world in *Via Dolorosa*. Depicting such a

dreary world, the playwright makes his audience ponder over the ways to get rid of the worldwide social problems.

In that sense, Hare mentions a cooperative theatrical play, which is a sample of a multicultural project, and reveals the hope that the conventional conflicts of the land may possibly be overwhelmed one day. In this project, a successful secular Israeli theatre director, Eran Baniel together with a marginal Palestinian playwright, George Ibrahim, produce a modern version of *Romeo and Juliet*. In the play, the Palestinians play the Capulets and the Jews play the Montagues. Thus, the play is not considered about love but about dislike. It is one of the little social projects indicating that there is always hope to become multicultural - for the future of two communities.

After the interview with Eran, the playwright spends the Sabbath in the Jewish settlement of Sheri Tikva one Friday afternoon. One of Hare's distinctive characteristics is his enthusiasm about the journalistic investigation on the holy land. He meets a Jewish couple, Danny and Sarah Weiss, to show them that there are many Jewish settlers that seem prosperous in Israel. The playwright shares their thoughts, discussing their religiously unshakeable life style in the West Bank. Hare gives details about Danny and wife's life back in Israel: "Years ago they tired of America as a place without any spiritual values, and where life is completely empty and meaningless" (Hare 1998:14). Danny makes a comparison between the Israeli and the American culture and attitude towards religion:

Memorial Day here is a day where we all get out of our cars, wherever we are, in the middle of the road and stand for two minutes remembering the dead. In the US it's a day when you have a mattress sale. Memorial Day Sale! Mattresses cheap! That's all it means. Here whether you were secular or religious, you wept that day when the Biblical land was returned. (Hare 1998:15)

David Hare deduces from Danny's words that life is dull and shallow in the West in the eye of an Easterner. It is clear that the symptoms of decadence and corruption in the western culture are not new. According to Danny's story, there is always a spiritually absurd and dull life in the USA. Hare believes that the religious system is declining in the West because many people can no longer make any honest sense of it. Thus, the playwright practically points out how the couple is fed up with that empty and materialistic American world and wishes to go on living on the holy land, henceforth.

As Hare "carefully contrasts and orchestrates the individual voices to create a vivid mosaic of people with strong beliefs" (Pavelkova 2010:34), he has to drive from Israel into the Gaza strip to conduct an interview with some Palestinians. Hare expresses his despair at the journey with the words that "nothing prepares you for the physical shock of the passage" (Hare 1998:24) and gives the details of this passage:

[It] is like moving from California into Bangladesh. You become so used to the broad highways and the easy sensuality of Israel that it is the sight of dust, sudden

dust, an unholy big brown storm of pure dirt, nothing else, which alerts you to the fact that you are about to enter a society where people earn precisely eight per cent of what their opposite numbers earn in Israel. (Hare 1998:24)

Putting forward the difficulties of being a Palestinian in the Middle East, the playwright tries to show what strong belief, patriotism and courage Palestinians have in spite of their rigid and unequal life conditions, in comparison with those on the other side of the holy land. The statement above also demonstrates Hare's extraordinary ability to form the background of his plays as both a social theorist and a political theatre master. He defines a political writer as "one who is likely to have an analysis as well as a view" (Fielding 2009:371), with a story including his purposes.

Being aware of the religious importance of the land, the playwright aims at telling about the historical and religious background of the Middle East. He reveals the views of a Palestinian historian, Albert Aghazerin, according to whom "in some terrible way [they are] both bound up in each other's unhappiness. [They] cannot be separated." (Hare 1998:31) Beyond the existing chaos in the area, Hare considers that the main problems of the land originated in the history of the human being:

I'm happy in Ramallah, it's less desperate, less disturbing than Gaza, but every night I travel back to Jerusalem, where not only half of the world's religions started but also – hardly by coincidence – where the world first started collecting crime statistics. Yes, Crime Number One. Cain killed Abel. It happened in Jerusalem. And ever since, the story is of massacre and of bloodshed. (Hare 1998:35)

It is clear that to survive in the Middle East has always been hard and fearful throughout the history. *Via Dolorosa* reflects the tragic and well-known story of the vigorous people who live in the Middle East. The people of two communities have strong aims to achieve, connected to what they believe in; they mean to stick to their principles throughout their lives. On the one hand, the Israelis, who were offered the holy land as an alternative to Uganda after the war, have owned the land thus far. On the other hand, the Palestinians "are willing to die for their beliefs," (Hare 2005:215) and for the holy land as well.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Throughout the play, Hare cannot hide his bewilderment at the motivation of the people who have strong beliefs to live on the same land. He implies that both Israelis and Palestinians have much more spiritual power than the western man. The playwright questions the western materialistic ideas, principles and faith, saying that "most of us, indeed, do have little idea of what we believe, and are also extremely confused on the subject of whether we would be willing to die for it" (Hare 2005:215). The playwright clarifies that "although you might feel the question of God's nature and existence *ought* to be obsessively important to each

and every one of us, the simple fact of the modern world is that it is not felt to be” (Hare 2005:216).

For Hare, the case is very different in the Middle East. He refers to the power of the religious feelings on the holy land, quoting from a Jewish poet, Yehudah Amichai: “The air over Jerusalem is saturated with prayers and dreams. It’s hard to breath” (Hare 1998:36). Though the playwright is aware that there is a certain amount of deterioration of the religious architecture in Jerusalem, he clearly indicates that it is meaningless to establish a parallelism with the stones and the air of belief in Jerusalem:

Nobody knows where the city walls were. Nobody agrees. Where was Calvary indeed? So for now – look, is anything certain? – let’s just do as the family next to me and drop alarmingly to our knees, on the working assumption – let’s just *assume* – X Marks the spot, and kiss the Stone. After all, does the literal truth of it matter? Does the literal truth matter? Aren’t we kissing an idea? Stones or ideas? Stones or ideas? (Hare 1998:37)

David Hare’s voyage ends in his returning home, feeling that most Israelis and Palestinians really ‘kiss’ ideas not stones, although his play “celebrates belief, even if no agreement is in sight on what belief is the one true faith” (Kuchwara 1999). According to Billington (1998), Hare overtly “shows he has been changed by his Middle Eastern experience” - most probably a type of intellectual enlightenment. While most Britons find themselves in mental emptiness, without any value system, David Hare cannot hide his excitement at the struggle of faith of those Israelis and Palestinians throughout his play. According to the playwright, the play is a “successful witness to the complexity of the hopes and beliefs of so many individuals who meanwhile wish to be allowed to get on with their lives” (Hare 2005:200).

Like a social analyst, the playwright, always stresses that his plays “argue that the main reform needed is moral; at present, people know that they are damaging themselves by their behaviour, and need to change” (Kerensky 1977:185). Therefore, *Via Dolorosa*, the little memory of the Middle East, is basically a piece of fascinating criticism of the western man who loses his faith. It is also a form of moral discourse, a play demonstrating the meaningless of life to its audience, asking them what they live for.

## References

- Bar-Yosef, E. 2007. “‘I’m Just a Pen’: Travel, Performance, and Orientalism in David Hare’s *Via Dolorosa* and *Acting Up*” in *Theatre Journal*. Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, (59), pp.259-277.
- Billington, M. 1998. “Not the whole truth, but...” in *The Guardian*, 9 Sept., p.3.
- Billington, M. 2009. *State of the Nation: British Theatre since 1945*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Boireau, N. 2003. “Re-routing Radicalism with David Hare” in *European Journal of English Studies*, London: Routledge, 7(1), pp. 25-37.
- Fielding, S. 2009. “David Hare’s Fictional Politics” in *The Political Quarterly*, 80( 3), pp.

371-379.

- Gaston, G. 1993. "Interview: David Hare" in *Theatre Journal*, 45(2), pp. 213-225.
- Gleick, E. 1999. "The Year of Hare" in *Time*, 153(10).
- Hammond, W. and Steward, D. 2008. "Interview with David Hare" in *Verbatim Verbatim: Contemporary Documentary Theatre*, London: Oberon Books, pp.67-68.
- Hare, D. 1998. *Via Dolorosa & When Shall We Live?* New York: Faber and Faber.
- Hare, D. 1999. *Acting Up: A Diary*, New York: Faber and Faber.
- Hare, D. 2005. *Obedience, Struggle and Revolt*, New York: Faber and Faber.
- Kerensky, O. 1977. *The New British Drama.*, London: Hamish Hamilton; New York: Taplinger.
- Kuchwara, M. 1999. "'Via Dolorosa' Is Masterful Play" in *The Associated Press*, 03/18/1999.
- Luckhurst, M. 2008. "Verbatim Theatre, Media Relations and Ethics" in *A concise Companion to Contemporary British and Irish Drama*. N. Holdsworth and M. Luckhurst (eds.). Ames, Iowa, USA: Blackwell Publishing, pp. 200-245.
- Megson, C. and Rebellato, D. 2007. "'Theatre and anti-theatre' David Hare and public speaking" in *The Cambridge Companion to David Hare*. R. Boon (ed.). UK: Cambridge University Press, pp.236-249.
- Oliva, J. L. 1990. *David Hare: Theatricalizing Politics*. Ann Arbor, London: UMI Research Press.
- Pavelkova, H. 2010. "Give Us the Facts": Constructing Cultural Identities in David Hare's *Via Dolorosa*" in *Litteraria Pragensia Studies in Literature and Culture*, 20(39), pp.30-40.
- Soto-Moretti, D. 2005. "Trouble in the House: David Hare's *Stuff Happens*" in *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 15(3), pp. 309-319.
- Wesker, A. 2003. "Open Letter to David Hare about his Play *Via Dolorosa*". [Online] Available: <http://arnoldwesker.com/openletters/davidhare.htm> [2012, February].
- Zeifman, H. 1994. *David Hare: A Casebook*. New York, London: Garland Publishing Inc.

# TRAVELLER VS. TOURIST: EXPLORING ITALY IN *PICTURES FROM ITALY* (1846) BY CHARLES DICKENS

ELISABETTA MARINO  
University of Rome “Tor Vergata”

*Abstract:* In June 1844 Dickens began his 11-month tour of Italy, which gave him the chance to visit the most renowned cities of the Grand Tour. This paper aims at showing that, far from displaying the detached, superficial and patronising attitude of many British tourists, in his controversial and ironic travelogue entitled *Pictures from Italy* Dickens approached Italy with authentic sympathy.

*Keywords:* Charles Dickens, Italy, Picturesque, Tourist, Traveller, Travelogue

## 1. Introduction: Traveller vs. Tourist

Thomas Cook, a formidable entrepreneur often heralded as the “father” of mass tourism, began to organize shorter and less expensive group tours of the Continent in 1841, prompted by the fast development of railroads (which led to a significant reduction of travel times), and encouraged by the more reasonable train fares offered to parties of people sharing their journey (Von Buch 2007:252). Given its affordable cost of living, and its dazzling reputation as the birthplace of the picturesque, as a land of perpetual sunshine and outstanding antiquities, Italy continued to be one of the most popular key destinations of what may be termed as the “Petit Tour”, which progressively replaced the traditional, elaborate itinerary across Europe designed, at the end of the seventeenth century, to enlighten and entertain the high-born youth. Budget and time restrictions also triggered the publication of a huge number of (supposedly) dependable and trustworthy travel books, which could rapidly and effectively direct the puzzled gaze of the unaware, middle-class tourist towards the main sites and attractions, without having to hire a local guide. Consequently, over 240 accounts of Italy were published in Great Britain between 1800 and 1850: they strongly contributed to codifying a set of behavioural rules to be observed in the foreign context, as well as establishing customary routes along which not-to-be-missed locations were highlighted, and hierarchically ordered according to their assumed importance. Besides, as Eleanor McNees (2007:211-229) elucidates, the authoritative verification provided by such volumes somehow *validated* the experience of the otherwise stumbling and inadequately informed visitors.

Needless to say, this increasing democratization of travel deepened the existing gulf between *knowledgeable travellers* and *simple tourists*, a distinction that Mary Shelley had already investigated in her 1826 essay entitled *The English in Italy*. Humorously comparing most of her compatriots – blindly eager to pour themselves into the fashionable peninsula – to “Norwegian rats, who always go right on” (Shelley 1990:341), the writer ridiculed their dull presumption, their “utter ignorance of the Italian language” (Shelley 1990:347), their longing “not to

see, but to say that [they had] seen” (Shelley 1990:343), and their emotional and physical detachment from the newly explored territory and its inhabitants. Their superficial understanding of *the other* was further filtered through the stereotypical conventions of travel guides. Conversely, the *authentic traveller*, whom Mary Shelley called the *Anglo-Italian*, approached the Italians with unfeigned sympathy, and naturally conversed with them in their language; he shunned the beaten track, and, with eyes wide open, in the words of James Buzard (1993:35), “roam[ed] free of imposed borders and limitations”.

This paper sets out to demonstrate that, following in the steps of Lord Byron and the Shelleys, Charles Dickens belonged to this second category, and that *Pictures from Italy*, his much maligned travelogue (harshly criticized, as it will be shown, by both the author’s contemporaries and modern scholars), was actually aimed at disclosing channels of communication, bridging the existing gap between the British and the Italians, and challenging the fixed, clichéd, and narrow-minded perceptions of Italy that were so frequently repeated in well-known handbooks from major publishers such as Murray. Before delving into the analysis of the multifaceted strategy employed by the writer to foster the *mental metamorphosis* of his readers (and future travellers), it will be necessary to sketch a brief account of Dickens’s itinerary throughout the country, followed by some relevant information on the genesis of the volume, and the response to its publication.

## **2. Charles Dickens’s Tour of Italy**

Exhausted by his demanding and hectic activities as a writer and editor, disappointed at the cold reception of *American Notes* (1842) and *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843-44), in 1844 Dickens resolved to “fade away from the public eye for a year”, as he remarked in a letter to his biographer and friend John Forster, “and enlarge [his] stock of description and observation by seeing countries new to [him]” (Forster 1872-74). For his sabbatical, he chose Italy, a land renowned for its mild climate, where he and his family could enjoy a pleasurable period of relaxation, without indulging in expenses beyond their means. Before leaving, he took Italian classes from a political exile, Antonio Gallenga (also known by the pseudonym of Luigi Mariotti), thus proving his respect and his willingness to integrate in the texture of the host country. Travelling through France, the Dickenses reached Genoa on July 16<sup>th</sup> 1844. After three months of misery spent at the dreary Villa Bagnarello, in Albaro (a suburb near Genoa where, strikingly enough, both Lord Byron and Mary Shelley had sojourned), they moved to the delightful Palazzo Peschiere, where the writer’s wife and their five children settled, while Dickens began his rambles about the peninsula. Between November 6<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>, he visited Parma, Modena, Bologna, Ferrara, Venice, Verona, Mantua, and Milan, on his way to London where, early in December, he read *The Chimes*, his newly composed novella (inspired by the constant tolling of the church bells in Genoa), in front of a group of close and enthusiastic friends. Back in Italy before Christmas, he began to move southward a month later, reaching the Eternal City via Pisa and Siena. His first stay in Rome was very short (just one week), but his

second residence, after twenty days spent in Pompeii and Naples, gave him a better chance to discover and appreciate the new environment. Passing through Florence, he eventually returned to Genoa on April 9<sup>th</sup> 1845 and, two months later, the Dickens left for England.

### 3. Pictures from Italy

While abroad, the author wrote quite a number of detailed letters to his friends John Forster, Lady Blessington and Count Alfred D'Orsay; he wished to create "a new and attractive book" (Forster 1872-74), drawing material from his correspondence, once returned to his motherland. He first of all released a series of articles – known as the *Italian Letters* – on the *Daily News*, from January to March 1846. Then, he decided to collect them, and to polish and expand the resulting narrative, by including additional episodes and reflections: *Pictures from Italy* was eventually published in May 1846. Once again, the volume was not warmly welcomed by contemporary critics: the anonymous reviewer of *The Times* (June 1<sup>st</sup>, 1846) contemptuously dismissed it as thoroughly unsatisfactory: "the book has been written as a task;...certainly without love, without inspiration, and without the healthy motives that actuated Mr. Dickens in his early achievements" (Collins 1995:143). The *Dublin Review* strongly disapproved of the author's anti-Catholic feelings (particularly evident in his description of the Vatican), besides portraying him as a "light-headed, giggling person, rambling about in quest of mere amusement and excitement" (Anonymous 1846:184). The most (in)famous derogatory remark, however, was expressed by Gilbert Keith Chesterton (<http://www.cse.dmu.ac.uk/~mward/gkc/books/CD-2.html>) in his 1906 notorious biography of the Victorian writer; Chesterton bitterly regretted that Dickens had not actually travelled *in Italy* but in an imaginary, fictional land, humorously called "Dickensland", thus severely questioning his ability to penetrate beyond the surface of the phenomena he was contemplating. His disparaging opinion has been frequently reiterated and strengthened by several scholars, up to recent times. Kate Flint (1998:xiii) has pointed out that, in *Pictures from Italy*, "Dickens is constructing not just a version of the country, but of himself"; in her view, outside of England, he adopted the attitude of a *flaneur*, "an observer [...] standing back from actual contact with individuals" (Flint 1998:xiv). Clotilde De Stasio (2000:6) has even compared the author to an ordinary, superficial tourist, following the usual track, and quickly crossing villages and towns in his protected and "sterilized" coach: "His experience remained on the whole surface-level and highly subjective, based largely on a well-established system of values".

On the contrary, it could be argued that, in *Pictures from Italy*, Dickens strove to undermine the very *well-established system of values* De Stasio makes reference to in her essay, perfectly exemplified by Murray's shallow travel guides, often mentioned in his volume. Their assertive and patronizing tone, their prescriptive intention of offering readers "matter-of-fact descriptions of what *ought to be seen* at each place" (Anonymous 1853 [1836]:v), quoting *A Handbook for*

*Travellers on the Continent*, published in 1836, are compellingly turned by Dickens into strictly personal visions, into elusive perceptions, into “faint reflections – mere shadows in the water – of places to which the imaginations of most people are attracted” (Dickens 1998:5), quoting the author’s introductory note. Hence, the title chosen for his travelogue sounds both ironic and provocative: bi-dimensional, static, immutable *pictures* of the Italian landscape are systematically rejected by the writer, in favour of a complex, dynamic, fluid reality, often associated or identified with “a bewildering phantasmagoria” (Dickens 1998:40), a “magic lantern” (Dickens 1998:77), and “a rapid diorama” (Dickens 1998:162), as in the title of the last chapter of the book, devoted to Naples and its surrounding areas. Clashing features and mixed feelings characterize Dickens’s depictions of the Italian cities, clearly aimed at unsettling deeply-ingrained, stereotypical views of the country, thus prompting his readers to begin their journey with an actively open mind, untainted by preconceived assumptions. Just to cite some of the most remarkable instances of this technique, “[Genoa] abounds in the strangest contrasts; things that are picturesque, ugly, mean, magnificent, delightful, and offensive, break upon the view at every turn” (Dickens 1998:38); the much romanticized “House of the Capulets” in Verona is “now degenerated into the most miserable little inn” (Dickens 1998:86); Venice is both a dream-like lagoon, with its “Cathedral, gorgeous in the wild, luxuriant fancies of the East” (Dickens 1998:80), and a gloomy nightmare, a “ghostly city” (Dickens 1998:78) with its ominous “black boat[s]” (Dickens 1998:78), “dark mysterious doors” (Dickens 1998:79), and a “murky prison” (Dickens 1998:81). The Eternal City, in its oxymoronic “awful beauty” (Dickens 1998:117), “was no more [*his*] Rome, the Rome of anybody’s fancy, man or boy; degraded and fallen and lying asleep in the sun among a heap of ruins: than the Place de la Concorde in Paris is” (Dickens 1998:116). The customary contours of the Roman landscape are stretched and blurred to such an extent that, from afar, the city reminds him of London: “the Eternal City appeared, at length, in the distance; it looked like – I am half afraid to write the word – like LONDON!!!” (Dickens 1998:115). Apparently, this statement might support Chesterton’s disdainful judgment on the volume: as it would happen in the limited mind of a conventional tourist, the persistent image of Dickens’s much beloved mother-country seems to overlap and reassuringly replace the unfamiliar scene unfolding before his eyes. Conversely, this bold and thought-provoking connection actually enabled his readers to ponder upon the conspicuous similarities between Rome, Paris, and London, three fast-growing metropolises facing comparable problems, such as social inequalities and exploitation, overcrowding, and uncontrolled urban development. By casting light on the *present* of a nation that was not so distant from his own, therefore, Dickens succeeded in shattering the idealized and anachronistic *picture* of the Eternal City – as *frozen* in its celebrated past, immune from the passing of time and current issues – that was noticeably recurrent in popular travel guides, beside fostering true sympathy towards Italy and its inhabitants. Adopting an analogous strategy, the author constantly belittled the importance of antiquities: from the very beginning of his narration, he never indulged in the description of monuments or statues which, in

any event, “could be easily buried under a mountain of printed paper devoted to dissertations on [them]” (Dickens 1998 [1846]:5), as he underlined, with a sardonic reference to standard, repetitive handbooks. When he happened to linger on the relics of the ancient glory, he simply viewed them as pathetic: the magnificent scenery of the Appian Way was nothing but “broken aqueducts [...] broken temples; broken tombs. A desert of decay, sombre and desolate beyond expression” (Dickens 1998 [1846]:118). Even the well-known portrait of Beatrice Cenci, supposedly painted by Guido Reni the night before her beheading, dramatically lost all its romantic allure, since it was mentioned just after the gruesome account of a public execution. Through this ingenious succession of related images, Dickens managed to shift his readers’ attention from the cold and sterile contemplation of the famous canvas, to the desperate circumstances and the unutterable pain that had caused two innocent people to turn into murderers.

In *Pictures from Italy* the writer also employed the tool of irony to highlight the many faults of the tourists he had the chance to meet along his journey, such as Mrs. Davis and her company of British friends. Visiting Rome, “they were in every tomb, and every church, and every ruin, and every Picture Gallery [...] deep underground, high up in St. Peter’s, out on the Campagna, and stifling in the Jew’s quarter” (Dickens 1998:129); yet, as he disconsolately noticed, he didn’t think “[Mrs. Davis] ever saw anything, or even looked at anything” (Dickens 1998 [1846]:129), due to her constant concern for her absent-minded husband, whose “antiquarian habits occasioned his being frequently in the rear of the rest” (Dickens 1998:130). The celebrations of the Holy Week at the Vatican offered him an extraordinary opportunity to observe the weird and superficial behaviour of his compatriots. Apart from struggling to get the best seats in the church, as if they were about to assist to a performance, the British tourists were not remotely interested in the true meaning of the ceremonies they were so eagerly attending. On the contrary, they focused their obsessive attention on the most trivial details, such as the presence of English mustard on the table, during the commemoration of the Last Supper (Dickens 1998:155).

#### **4. Conclusion: Dickens’s New Picturesque**

In his effort to mould knowledgeable, unprejudiced, and responsible travellers, Dickens also had to deal with the Victorian use of the *picturesque* to describe Italian beggars and slums: “the so-called aesthetics of poverty” (2009:53) (quoting Francesca Orestano’s definition), which the writer severely disapproved of. While social and moral degradation, filth, and hapless wretchedness were universally pitied or deeply condemned if detected in England, they were perceived with utter detachment by the British tourists visiting the peninsula, as an attractive and merely decorative aspect of the novel *picturesque* environment. As Nanako Konoshima (2010:27) has elucidated, in *Pictures from Italy* Dickens poignantly “state[d] that we should not regard poverty or misery, no matter how new and striking it looks, as something ‘picturesque’”. Accordingly, the Italian beggars featured in his travelogue always stir deep emotions in his readers, who are not

allowed to remain indifferent: they either remind of the touching, distressing characters of *The Chimes* – the novella he significantly composed in Italy, considered by the author as “a great blow for the poor” (Forster 1872-74) – or they are hideous and repulsive, far from the tiny, ornamental, human figures typical of picturesque paintings. The guide Dickens hired in Bologna surely belongs to the first category; after pointing at the most splendid funeral monuments of the graveyard they were visiting, he could not refrain from wistfully glancing at a bare plot of land: “‘The poor people, Signore’, he said with a shrug and a smile [...] ‘there are five of my little children buried there, Signore’” (Dickens 1998:70). Most of the Italians, however, belong to the second group: they are either crippled and grotesque “birds of prey” (Dickens 1998:112), insistently begging for charity and scraps of food, or shrewd thieves, or even idle and dirty vagrants, “hunting in each other’s heads” (Dickens 1998:47) in the most unromanticized fashion. In one of his letters from Italy included in Forster’s biography, Dickens openly expressed the urgent need to redefine the concept of the *picturesque*, as it was intended and formulated in his days: “The condition of the common people here is abject and shocking. I am afraid the conventional idea of the picturesque is associated with such misery and degradation that a new picturesque will have to be established” (Forster 1872-74). Consequently, in the final section of *Pictures from Italy* (in Naples), the author launched a heartfelt appeal to the “lovers and hunters of the picturesque” (Dickens 1998:166), to his compatriots and fellow-travellers, to look at Italy beyond its gilded surface, in all its “miserable depravity, degradation, and wretchedness” (Dickens 1998:166), in order to eventually create a fresh category. The *new picturesque* promoted and endorsed by Charles Dickens involves sympathy, communication, understanding, responsibility, and moral duties towards the underprivileged: despite the different setting, one must not be insensitive to the very same tragedy of poverty that is usually staged in London slums and suburbs. Hence, as a true heir of the *Anglo-Italian* race, the writer can finally say:

It is not well to find Saint Giles’s so repulsive, and the Porta Capuana so attractive. [...] Painting and poetising for ever, if you will, the beauty of this most beautiful and lovely spot on earth, let us, as our duty, try to associate a new picturesque with some faint recognition of man’s destiny and capabilities. (Dickens 1998 [1846]:166-167)

## References

- Anonymous. 1853 (1836). *A Handbook for Travellers on the Continent*. London: John Murray.
- Anonymous. 1846. “Dickens’s *Pictures from Italy*” in *The Dublin Review*, XXI:184-201.
- Buzard, J. 1993. *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature and the Ways to Culture, 1800-1918*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Chesterton, G.K. 1906. *Charles Dickens*. Available: <http://www.cse.dmu.ac.uk/~mward/gkc/books/CD-2.html> [1998, July 6].
- Collins, P. (ed.). 1995. *Charles Dickens: The Critical Heritage*. London: Routledge.

- De Stasio, C. 2000. "The Traveller as Liar: Dickens and the 'Invisible Towns' in Northern Italy" in *The Dickensian*, 96:5-13.
- Dickens, Ch. 1998 (1846). *Pictures from Italy*. London: Penguin.
- Flint, K. 1998. "Introduction" in *Pictures from Italy*. Charles Dickens. London: Penguin, pp. vii-xxx.
- Forster, J. 1872-74. *The Life of Charles Dickens*. Available: <http://www.lang.nagoyau.ac.jp/~matsuoka/CD-Forster-4.html> [1998, May 7].
- Konoshima, N. 2010. "The Picturesque and Reality in *Pictures from Italy*" in *The Japan Branch Bulletin of the Dickens Fellowship* 33:19-37.
- McNees, E. 2007. "Reluctant Source: Murray's Handbook and *Pictures from Italy*" in *Dickens Quarterly* 24(4):211-29.
- Orestano, F. 2009. "Charles Dickens and Italy: The 'New Picturesque'", in *Dickens and Italy*. Little Dorrit and *Pictures from Italy*. M. Hollington and F. Orestano (eds.). Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, pp. 49-67.
- Shelley, M. 1990 (1826). "The English in Italy" in *The Mary Shelley Reader*. B.T. Bennett and C.E. Robinson (eds.), Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 341-357.
- Von Buch, A. 2007. "In the Image of the Grand Tour: Railway Station Embellishment and the Origins of Mass Tourism" in *The Journal of Transport History*, 28(2): 252-271.

**TIMOTHY MO'S *SOUR SWEET*:  
DIASPORIC IDENTITY AND THE CLAIMS OF REALITY**

**FARUK BAJRAKTAREVIĆ**  
University of Sarajevo

***Abstract:** Widely used in discussions of processes of migration and exchange across national borders in the present-day, postcolonial world, diaspora and diasporic identity have come to occupy a central position in discourses that view multiple and fluid social, cultural, ethnic and racial belongings among the key outcomes of these processes. The article discusses the development of diasporic identity as depicted in Timothy Mo's second novel *Sour Sweet*. Adopting Satya Mohanty's postpositivist realist theory of identity as its basis, the paper proposes that the diasporic identity depicted in the novel is a process of negotiation of meanings and values determined by social reality as experienced by its main characters.*

***Keywords:** diaspora, home, identity, reality*

## **1. Introduction**

The migrant experience being among its major themes, postcolonial writing has used *diaspora* as a key concept which, according to Avtar Brah (2005:16), reexamines the notions of fixed origins and unchangeable identities in a world defined by, among others, the processes of migration and transculturation. In the context of literatures of the European nations with colonial histories, diaspora constitutes a concept in relation to which the ideas of nation and national are redefined through the processes whereby, as Homi Bhabha (1994:243) writes, the former metropolis is forced to face the migrant as a reminder of its colonial past and incorporate the narrative of the former periphery (s)he embodies into its own narrative; this has made the multicultural project fundamental in present day discussions of the nation and national in post-imperial Europe. One such example is the United Kingdom, where the processes of facing its colonial past and redefining Britishness have been taking place in various fields. Literature has produced numerous diasporic voices that have expressed their own vision of Britishness as a multicultural concept.

One such figure on the British literary scene is Timothy Mo, who added the 'Chinese contour' (Ho 2000: 2) to the already diasporized literature, facing the former center with the "fears, joys, biases and aspirations" (Ramraj 1991: 481) of the immigrants; the presence of the latter not only transformed the demographic image of Britain, but also pointed towards new perspectives and ideological positions from which the concept of Britishness was to be redefined within the multicultural framework. "A novelist of two empires" (Bradbury 2001: 473), the Chinese and the British, Mo sees his identity as not only marked by his own migration from the 'periphery' to the 'center', but also by his bicultural origins: he comes from a Chinese-British family. He speaks about this double identification in

his autobiographical essay *Fighting Their Writing* (1996), highlighting his experience of constant balancing between two traditions – rigid Confucianism, epitomized by the Cantonese nuns at the Convent of the Precious Blood, and the Western free-mindedness he found in works by R.L. Stevenson, Graham Greene or Bruce Lee's films; these were crucial in the development of his awareness of the necessity to adapt and of the danger to adhere rigidly to a single pattern of fighting, called by Lee a state of 'vertical death', of 'unreflective reverence for style and master' (Mo 1996: 316). In his second novel, *Sour Sweet* (1982), Mo approached the postcolonial diasporic experience in a balanced way, considering it essential for reexamining and adjusting the normative ideas of one's cultural and national identity in an intercultural context.

In so far the only monograph on Timothy Mo, Elaine Yee Lin Ho (2000: 4) points out that the concepts of identity and difference occupy the central position in Mo's writing. Their uneasy relationship, as Ho identifies it, could be viewed in the context of migration, networking and consequential erosion of the categories of organic and self-contained collectivities, on which contemporary narratives of culture are based. The relationship can be explored, Ho argues, using Stuart Hall's approach, through the prism of conceptions of identity that view it either in an essentialist way as 'one, shared culture, a sort of collective' (qtd in Ho 2000: 4) or an anti-essentialist one, acknowledging not only, as Hall puts it, 'ruptures and discontinuities' (qtd in Ho 2000:5) effected by global dispersion and heterogenization of identities but also an absence of natural or other essential guarantees of identities (Hall 1995: 257), approaching them as mere discursive constructs. This article, however, takes a third approach, contending - along the lines of Satya P. Mohanty's postpositivist realist theory of identity - that, although always discursive, identity is inevitably determined by social and historical realities within which it is conceived and shaped as a hermeneutic narrative that interprets and explains them. The theoretical framework of approaching the diasporic identity in Timothy Mo's *Sour Sweet* in this paper is thus based on the relation Mohanty proposes between the objective extradiscursive social location of its characters and their individual choices of interpreting their experiences of it (Mohanty 1997: 202). Approaching Mo's *Sour Sweet* as a record of the diasporic experience of the Chen family and the chronological development of their identities from their arrival in England to the end of the novel and Chen's death at the hands of the Chinese Triads, the paper purports to argue that diasporic identity as portrayed in this novel is a process of negotiation of meanings and values determined by social reality as experienced by the Chen family, inevitably involving chronologically developed adaptive strategies of modification and rejection of discourses with insufficient hermeneutic and explanatory capacities and adoptions of new ones, better equipped to explain it.

As already stated, works of postpositivist realist theory of identity will constitute the theoretical foundation of the paper. Writings by Satya P. Mohanty and Rosaura Sanchez will be combined with those of renowned scholars of diaspora, such as Avtar Brah, as well as writings on nostalgia by Dennis Walder and domesticity by Thomas Foster, to discuss the diasporic experience of the

novel's main characters, the Chen family, through, as Avtar Brah (2005: 180) suggests, “multiple modalities [...] of gender, race, class, religion, language and generation” modified in relation to their real conditions.

## **2. *Sour Sweet*: Diaspora between Myth and Reality**

From the very beginning of the novel the experience of the Chen family is defined by their diasporic positioning between the contexts of homeland and host country, as well as the state of their uprootedness/nonbelonging and their desire for the very opposite.

The Chens had been living in the UK for four years, which was long enough to have lost their place in the society from which they had emigrated but not long enough to feel comfortable in the new. They were no longer missed; Lily had no living relatives anyway, apart from her sister Mui, and Chen had lost his claim to clan land in his ancestral village. He was remembered there in the shape of the money order he remitted to his father very month, and would truly have been remembered only if that order had failed to arrive (Mo 1999: 5).

Evident in this excerpt is the dual character of diaspora, marked, on the one hand, by the experience of separation from home and homeland as the contexts of established narratives of social and cultural values and facing an alien one, on the other. The diasporic experience is, therefore, characterized by a dual orientation: towards the past in the form of nostalgic desire for what is left behind that figures as the primary reference in the formation of the narrative of identity and the future in the form of what Brah calls 'homing desire' (Brah 2005: 16) for building a home in a new context, thus combining the processes of restoration of what is lost and the development of an awareness of the present locality and challenges diasporic subjects such as the Chens have to face.

The nostalgic desire of the Chens, as a reaction to the traumatic experience of exile, is, to use the terminology of Svetlana Boym as provided by Dennis Walder (2011: 11), only partly reflective and is, in that sense, mainly reduced to narrative departures into the past, but primarily restorative in the sense of their attempts to revive the past in the present context. This restoration is, however, set within a comfort zone inhabited by familiar people one identifies with, whose practices are regulated by a common and equally familiar set of codes brought from home. The zone thus becomes a simulacrum of home where (re)construction of own identity takes place through ritualistic maintenance of traditional practices as sources of meaning upon which the narrative of identity is built. The diasporic experience of the Chens makes the home as the most natural point of reference, which needs to be differentiated from the current location and which, as Brah (2005: 188) points out, in the diasporic context figures as an imaginary construct or “a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination”, or what is seen as primordial, dehistoricized and naturalized. John Rothfork (1989), in his discussion of the role of Confucianism in *Sour Sweet*, highlights the ritualistic restoration of

the ideology of Confucianism as the key manifestation of the Chens' desire for the mythic homeland, whereby the individual is necessarily subordinated to the collective. Thus Lily, as the most vociferous protector of traditional values, continues thinking in Cantonese where 'there was no distinction between plural and singular' (Mo 1999:95), subordinating her and Chen's personal identity to the family, addressing Chen as 'Husband' (45), considering any address by personal names as threatening to the unity.

The diasporic desire for home in *Sour Sweet* becomes most obvious at the micro level of the Chen household and the ways in which traditional codes and values regulate the dynamics of it. For that reason, it is mostly equated with what Thomas Foster in his analysis of domesticity describes as 'a claim to a gendered identity' (Foster 2002: 11), making the household a stage where gendered roles are played out in accordance with the tradition of the mythic homeland. For the Chens that means maintaining patriarchal hierarchy with Husband as the epitome of the superior and dominant male principle, making Lily's life completely focused on Chen as 'the point around which she organized herself and through which her activities took on meaning' (Mo 1999: 45). Male and female separate spheres are determined by their fixed roles, Lily's social circle remaining restricted to her family and a couple of neighbors she encounters running her daily errands, while Chen, although never fully open to it, gets to meet the outside world of commuters and customers in the restaurant where he works. Moreover, this involves practices of masking the reality and maintaining the illusion of the order, so despite the fact that '[u]nknown to Chen, whole new outlooks were developing behind his back, potentially disruptive of family harmony and his hitherto unchallenged position as leader of the unit [...]' (Mo 1999: 45), Lily's skillful moves maintain the illusion of 'domestic inferiority' in relation to Chen, leading the 'poor male' (20) to believe that he is 'the dominator rather than the dominated' (20). Domesticity thus also has a double character, playing, on the one hand, the restorative role, but also, as Foster points out, constitutes a 'source of agency' or 'sentimental power' (Foster 2002: 7), including the 'reformist ethos' (7), made visible by revealing Lily's 'steely will behind her demure exterior' (Mo 1999: 6), thanks to which in the sphere of her and Mui's life she manages not only to perform the duty of sending regular financial help to the family in Hong Kong, personally taking care the remittances are sent in spite of Chen's demands that she should stop that, but also to save the money needed for their move into a new house and starting a new family business, bringing Chen face to face with 'whole new regions of female psyche, not only unexplored but [...] hitherto unsuspected' (90).

Parallel to the processes of home restoration are the ones whereby home gets marked out from what is seen as non-home or the space beyond the boundaries, identified as otherness in social, cultural and psychic senses. That other space is primarily identified as threatening due to its incomprehensibility, thus calling for close guarding of the boundaries against any sort of perceived menace. Lily's sister Mui, for instance, is so shocked upon the arrival in London that she reduces her physical encounters with the new environment outside the house to an absolute minimum. Instead, she learns about it from TV programs like *Crossroads*

or Coronation Street she experiences 'with a fascinated interest that bordered on a special kind of horror' (Mo 1999: 14), leaving the house only a couple of times in two years, experiencing a similar sort of horror whenever Lily tries to show her the outside world through the window, to which she reacts 'in a fair approximation of the evasive behavior of one threatened by a maniac sniper on the rooftops' (13).

The other, placed in the unknown and threatening non-home and experienced vicariously, without any meaningful contact, thus gets identified as non-identity, to use Rosaura Sanchez's term (Sanchez 2006: 40), by being opposed to everything the Chens view themselves to be. Lily, whose contacts with people outside are mere 'nodding acquaintances' (Mo 1999: 47) thus grows to see the white customers at the new family restaurant as mere 'non-person[s]' (142) who 'looked all the same to her' (143) and whose identification she finds upon the very negation of her own, in her case primarily rooted in Confucian principles of filial and social responsibility. Opposed to the values of home, the English for Lily are 'strange, [...] indifferent, [...] careless of the consequences of their own deeds! And as for their attitude to their old people it was nothing less than shameful neglect, a national disgrace' (91).

### **3. Diaspora and Claims of Reality**

The processes of building diasporic identities, however, necessarily involves, as Brah points out, the processes of joining and overlapping of discursively separated identity narratives, which results in a need of reexamining identities as pre-given categories and insights into the nature of their constitution as constant processes of negotiation and concession making within 'the materiality of everyday life' (Brah 2005:180). Satya Mohanty (1997:240-41) sees the processes of identity building in a similar manner, describing cultures in multicultural contexts as laboratories where particular value systems get tested and modified in contact with others. Mohanty approaches identification as a process catalyzing new modes of identification in relation to different others, as well as the awareness of, as Sanchez (2006: 43) points out, 'discursive insufficiency' of particular narratives when it comes explaining the reality in which an individual or a collectivity is situated. In the case of *Sour Sweet*, the processes of realizing the incompatibility between the discursive and the real are comparable to Lily's modification of original recipes in the absence of particular ingredients, when 'in a great improvising tradition, worthy of the host country, [she] stuck to the originals where she could and where this was not possible she included something she considered similar' (Mo 1999: 12), and thus should be seen as adaptive practices of overcoming the traumatic experience of exile and making a future home in the new environment.

The concept of diaspora space, combining the already mentioned homing desire and the desire for home as a myth rather than a real possibility, best reflects the adaptive processes of facing the change by intertwining the narratives of 'dispersion with those of staying put' (Brah 2005: 178). The Chens are similarly

forced to face the real circumstances of the host country, to which they grow to react, as Mo writes, like an amoeba:

[...] presented with change and challenge, shuddered like jelly on impact with the obstacle but jelly-like suffered no damage, pored itself around the problem, dissolved what it was able to and absorbed what it could not. And went on its amoeba way (Mo 1999: 236).

Such processes of adjustment are in fact led by Lily and Mui, who are the first to realize the inadequacy of the rigid discourse of Confucianism in the face of not only experiences of migration, but also the objective conditions of their family burdened by financial problems that jeopardize their ability to perform all the prescribed filial duties. Thus Lily not only decides to not agree to Chen's demands to stop sending money to Hong Kong, but completely rejects the feminine and passive principle of yin, becoming 'an initiator rather than an accomplice' (Mo 1999: 19) at home as well as out of it when faced with challenges such as starting and maintaining the family business. Together with Mui, she was:

Always two moves ahead of [Chen], adept at anticipating any suggestion or objection he might make, for his ideas were increasingly at variance with those of the girls. He wanted a modest, unobtrusive living; they wanted to get on, expand, make as much money as they could [...] Chen would stand between them like poor piggy in the middle, tormented by older schoolgirls, as they batted ideas to and fro to each other, trying desperately to intercept his bundle – his business, after all – as it flew overhead and back again just out of his reach (Mo 1999: 114).

Having moved to the new house and started the family business, Lily and Mui are also forced to step out from the domestic sphere and face the public one. This constitutes an important moment in the process of revising the established boundaries between home and non-home, as well as the gendered spheres and identities, which results in their final collapse. The process of adopting a new 'narrative of unlearning' (Foster 2002:13) of the accepted constructs within the new social location once again proves identity a fluid and generative process of adjustment to objective circumstances. The other thus becomes someone impossible to treat as a 'non-person' or a monodimensional image on TV, but someone who is for the first time 'flesh and blood' (Mo 1999: 109) such as Mr Constantinides, with whom the Chens share a common business interest that leads them to reexamine and unlearn the established narratives and look for others that, as Sanchez (2006: 43) writes, offer 'more satisfactory accounts of reality', or customers for whose business it is necessary to adapt original recipes or the restaurant name that turns from DAH LING into Darling, better adjusted to English customers, highlighting the fact that every diaspora space is inhabited not only 'by those who have migrated [...] but equally by those who are constructed and represented as indigenous' (Brah 2005: 178).

Leaving the domestic sphere is not only to be seen as a chance of unlearning old narratives, but also of learning new ones, which, in Lily's case,

means employing her skills of private manipulation in public communication, especially when it comes to dealing with 'unwelcome visitors' (Mo 1999: 169), such as the tax officer or the representative from the electoral register. Aware, like Mui, that Husband cannot live up to his patriarchal task 'to fend for them all' (170), Lily finds her own ways to deal with challenges her family faces every day. Similar to the martial moves she teaches Man Kee, intending to prepare him to defend himself when needed, Lily's moves in the face of the threatening reality are 'contrary to the conventional, self-interested teachers of any kind [...]' (241) always modified according to a particular occasion.

Chen's tragic end is a result of his inability to adjust thinking that the Triads, as representatives of 'the old and true way' (76) are the only ones to count on in times of trouble. It, however, is not seen as tragedy by the rest of the family, who, unaware of his death, continue to face the new reality of living without him. For Lily Chen's disappearance is sour and sweet at the same time, for although it is a loss – a temporary one, as she is convinced – it is also a true chance for her to find herself or 'a balance of things for the first time' (286) without the ritualistic camouflaging of the reality behind the facade of gendered roles imposed by the tradition. Chen remains 'a household deity to rival god' (282), similar to the statue Lily buys at the beginning of the novel, remaining mythically idealized as the tradition is throughout the novel, but also 'black with smoke' (187) of reality to which it is exposed.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Just like sour and sweet combine in order to make a new taste, the lives of those who survive by the end of the novel will have to balance between influences of the old and the new homes and build new identities, reflective of their present circumstances, rather than adhere to idealized and universalized ones that turn into smothering monsters of rigidity, and kill those who decide to blindly follow them. The life of Man Kee remains influenced, but not burdened, by the past and the future and points towards a way in which the life of Chinese diaspora is to develop. Combining the English tradition of jelly, tarts and pudding, as well as his parents symbolized by the garden he and Chen plant together and the martial moves he learns from Lily, Man Kee is a figure that deconstructs binaries and melts them within his own space, creating a future that remains a mystery to all, just like his cousin, Jik Mui, whose mixed racial origins pave a new destabilizing way of viewing identities and non-identities. The two of them become the novel's personages that lead towards the final dismantling of the established perceptions of Britishness and Chineseness, opening the paths along which characters of novels by Hanif Kureishi and Zadie Smith, to name just two, would walk, and showing the direction contemporary diasporized Britain would have to take.

#### **References**

Bhabha, H. 1994. *The Location of Culture*. London and New York: Routledge.

- Bradbury, M. 2001 (1993). *The Modern British Novel*. London: Penguin Books.
- Brah, A. 2005 (1996). *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Foster, T. 2002. *Transformations of Domesticity in Modern Women's Writing: Homelessness at Home*. Houndsmills, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hall, S. 1995 (1992). "New Ethnicities" in *'Race', Culture & Difference*. J. Donald and A. Rattansi (eds.). London: Sage Publications Inc, pp. 252-259.
- Ho, E.Y.L. 2000. *Timothy Mo*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Mo, T. 1996. "Fighting Their Writing" in *New Writing 5*. C. Hope and P. Porter (eds.). London: Vintage, pp. 299-318.
- Mo, T. 1999 (1982). *Sour Sweet*. London: Paddleless.
- Mohanty, S. P. 1997. *Literary Theory and the Claims of History: Postmodernism, Objectivity, Multicultural Politics*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Ramraj, V.J. 1991. "Timothy Mo", in *International Literature in English, Essays on the Major Writers*, Robert L. Ross (ed.). New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc., pp. 475-485.
- Rothfork, J. 1989. "Confucianism in Timothy Mo's *Sour Sweet*" in *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, vol. 24, no. 1, pp. 48-64.
- Sanchez, R. 2006. "On a Critical Realist Theory of Identity" in *Identity Politics Reconsidered*. L.M. Alcoff, M. Hames-Garcia, S.P. Mohanty, P.M.L. Moya (eds.). New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 31-52.
- Walder, D. 2011. *Postcolonial Nostalgias: Writing, Representation, Memory*. New York and London: Routledge.

## WHAT THE MANUSCRIPT TELLS US: GRACE MELBURY IN *THE WOODLANDERS*

SANAE UEHARA  
Nagoya University

**Abstract:** *This article focuses on Hardy's attempts to give Grace Melbury in The Woodlanders a new direction so that her story ultimately revolves around a dangerous subject for Victorian family magazines - that of a married woman being sexually attracted to two different men. Although it is believed that Hardy once expressed his indifference to Grace because of her being 'commonplace and straitlaced', a close examination of the surviving manuscript of this novel will reveal his attempts to add a subversive dimension to her character.*

**Keywords:** *Hardy, manuscript, textual alterations, variants, Victorian family magazines, The Woodlanders*

### 1. Introduction

For the past ten years, I have been working on Hardy's holograph manuscripts and have found that an understanding of his (re)writing process provides essential clues for the interpretation of particular texts. This article is concerned with what we can gain by examining the manuscript of *The Woodlanders*, which was originally written for serialisation in *Macmillan Magazine*. This novel is particularly interesting because, if you examine the early version of the manuscript, you can see that Hardy made specific adjustments to the character of Grace Melbury, and grasping his alterations is valuable in understanding her story.

In his essay, Dale Kramer (1971:195-230, 248-82) first outlined the revisions that Hardy made within the manuscript of *The Woodlanders*; what I hope to do here is to further explore the evidence Kramer presented and to illustrate Hardy's attempts to shape Grace's complex experience as a married woman. Although it is believed that Hardy once expressed his indifference to Grace because of her being 'commonplace and straitlaced' (Weber 1939:332), a close examination of the surviving manuscript will reveal his attempts to add the subversive dimension to her character. The purpose of my article is to focus on the revisions which enabled him to depict a married woman who is sexually attracted to two different men, a taboo subject for the Victorian family magazines.

At the outset, a note about quotations from Hardy's holograph manuscript is necessary. Throughout this article, added words and phrases within the manuscript are placed within strokes / / and cancellations are run through. All wording, spelling, and interior punctuation correspond with the original, even where unconventional (e.g. Hardy frequently omitted quotation marks enclosing dialogue and quotations).

## 2. Hardy's compositional changes

Let us begin with a brief overview of Grace's story. After finishing her education at a 'fashionable' school, Grace returns home to the woodland. Her father is no longer satisfied with the idea of her childhood sweetheart, Giles Winterborne, becoming her husband, for she has received a 'good' education. When a new doctor - an aristocratic and attractive young man named Edred Fitzpiers ('Edgar' in the manuscript and serial versions) - moves to the woodland, Grace's father persuades her to forget Giles and encourages her to marry the doctor. Although she loves her fiancé, Grace is nevertheless sexually attracted to Fitzpiers and eventually marries him. A few months after the honeymoon, however, he starts visiting Mrs Felice Charmond, a rich, beautiful widow.

In Chapter 28, there is a poignant scene in which Grace sees her husband riding off, and she is quite certain about the destination of his journey. The moment she can no longer see him, however, she re-encounters her former lover Giles 'with two horses and a cider-apparatus'. Fos. 278-79 detail Grace's spontaneous response to the sight of her onetime lover, who 'looked and smelt like Autumn's very brother, his face being sunburnt to wheat-colour', 'his hands clammy with the sweet juice of apples':

Her heart rose ~~like~~ from its late sadness like a released spring; her senses revelled in the sudden lapse back to nature /unadorned/. The consciousness of having to be genteel because of her husband's profession, the veneer of artificiality which she had acquired at the /fashionable/ schools, were thrown off, & she became the ~~mere~~ /crude/ country girl of her latent, /earliest/ instincts.

Nature was bountiful, she thought. No sooner had she been starved off by Edgar Fitzpiers than another being, /impersonating bare & undiluted manliness,/ had arisen out of the earth, ready to hand. (fos. 278-79)

As you can see, the surviving manuscript leaves of *The Woodlanders* are fair copy, but many of them contain Hardy's revisions at the later stages of writing. On fo. 278, for instance, Hardy added 'unadorned' after 'nature' and 'fashionable' after 'schools', and he replaced 'mere' with 'crude', increasing the contrast between what Grace used to be and what she is, between what she used to value and what she values now, and thus highlighting her transformation into a 'crude country girl'. On fo. 279 he added 'impersonating bare & undiluted manliness' after 'another being', emphasising Giles's erotic dimension in Grace's eye and making explicit why her heart has risen 'like a released spring'. The final version of the manuscript firmly stresses the causal relationship between her (newly acquired) perception and her illicit feelings for Giles. Here, Hardy made an important feature of the episode more explicit in order to help the reader understand the nature of Grace's experience - the sexual arousal she feels at the sight of her former lover.

In terms of the narrative, this episode seems to be a decisive moment. After the re-encounter with Giles, Grace realises that ~~she took a violent~~ her early

interest in Giles Winterborne had become revitalized ~~with her widening perceptions~~ into luxuriant growth by her widening perceptions of what was ~~truly~~ great & little in life.' (fos. 296-97). She says to her father, 'I wish you had never sent me to those fashionable schools you set your mind on. [...] If I had stayed at home I should have married—' (fo. 300). The narrator stresses Grace's awareness of her own illicit sexual feelings, noting that she is 'too conscious of the late pranks of her heart' and 'could not behold him calmly' (fo. 317). (It is worth noting parenthetically that Hardy at first wrote 'knowing the late pranks of her heart' and later replaced 'knowing' with 'too conscious of'.) At the same time, the narrative brings to the fore her growing indifference to her husband; she is shown to be 'amazed at the mildness of ~~her~~ the passion ~~at~~ which the suspicion /engendered in her:/ She was but little excited, & her jealousy was languid /even/ to death' (fo. 275). The narrator goes out of his way to mention that she is mortified, rather than wounded, upon learning the sexual nature of her husband's relationship with Mrs Charmond, for 'Fitzpiers's hold upon her heart was slight' (fo. 330). The narrator also comments on the 'absence of hot jealousy' when she realises that her husband, spending the night with Suke Damson, had lied about her (fo. 283). It is then understandable that the re-encounter episode has been generally interpreted as a moment of 'epiphany' for Grace, 'a moment of truth' for her (Lodge 1975:20).

Yet, the matter becomes complicated, for Hardy revised Chapter 35 in such a way that Grace's feelings for Fitzpiers and Giles become bewilderingly complex. In Chapter 34, we have seen Fitzpiers learning with much surprise that Grace has abruptly left home without letting him know, and deciding to go out himself, as he is unable to remain alone. Fos. 346-47 have Grace returning home by the carriage her father has hired for her. The original version of the manuscript read:

Mrs Melbury had told her as soon as she arrived that her husband had returned from London. He had gone out, she said, to see a patient as she believed, & he would soon be back, since he had had no dinner or tea. Grace would not allow her mind to harbour any suspicion of his whereabouts, & her step-mother said nothing of Mrs Charmond's fright that day.

So the young wife sat by the fire, waiting silently. (fos. 346-47)

In revising this part, Hardy may have realised that he did not depict Grace's feelings and reasons behind her sudden visit to her acquaintance at Shottsford-Forum. In the final version, he added the following passage after 'So the young wife sat by the fire waiting silently':

She had left ~~home~~ /Hintock/ in a turmoil of feeling, after the revelation of Mrs Charmond, intending not to be at home when her husband returned. But she had thought the matter over, & had allowed her father's influence to prevail and bring her back; & now somewhat regretted that Edgar's arrival had preceded hers. (fo. 346v)

Although the narrator (in the manuscript and serial versions) says

'Fitzpiers's hold upon her heart was slight' (fo. 330), it is difficult to take his words at face value, and indeed, Hardy (1887b) rightly added 'just now' after 'her heart' for the first edition (vol. II, p. 327). In Chapter 35, Grace admits that she has left home impulsively because of 'a turmoil of feeling' or her 'aversion' to his infidelity, which suggests that she is far from being indifferent to her husband. And, this in turn suggests that 'Fitzpiers's hold upon her heart' is still strong; thus, she regrets that she did not come home earlier to receive him. Although Hardy's additions on the verso leaf of fo. 346 comprise only two sentences, they delicately convey her inner realities. This is a good example of the subtlety with which Hardy approached Grace's feelings for Fitzpiers.

Chapter 35 ends with an extra-numbered leaf (fo. 352a), and it is fairly clear from their state that fo. 352a should be what was once fo. 352, and that it was replaced by the current fo. 352, which was inserted between fo. 351 and fo. 352a. In the preceding pages (fos. 347-50), Mrs Charmond and Suke, alarmed by the news of Fitzpiers's injury, make secret nocturnal visits to Grace. Fo. 351 to fo. 352a describe Grace's strong emotions for Fitzpiers - feelings which possibly arise from her meeting with her rivals - and her anger against her father, who has quarrelled and assaulted her injured husband. In the earlier cancelled version, however, none of these emotions was mentioned:

"Yes - it was as we were coming home together," he said. He was inclined to say more to tell her the whole story of the encounter; but it would have distressed her greatly, & he desisted. "You had better lie down - you are tired," he added, & with that he left her.

The household went to bed, & a silence ~~came over~~ fell upon the home, too, broken only by the occasional skirr of a halter from Melbury's stables. Despite the father's advice Grace still waited up. But nobody came. (fo. 352a)

This is not clearly appropriate as an episode following the highly charged, emotional scene in which Grace cannot help but feel sympathy towards Mrs Charmond and Suke as she contemplates their relationships with Fitzpiers, which are as close, and as unhappy, as her own. For the final version, Hardy rewrote and expanded this part:

"Yes - it was as we were coming home together," he said.

Something had been swelling up in Grace while her father was speaking. "How could you want to quarrel with him!" she cried suddenly. "Why could you not let him come home quietly, if he were inclined to? He is my husband; & now you have married me to him surely you need not provoke him unnecessarily. First you induce me to accept him; & then you do things that divide us more than we should naturally be divided!"

"How can you speak so unjustly to me, Grace!" said Melbury, with indignant sorrow. "I divide you from your husband, indeed! You little think—"

He was inclined to say more - to tell her the whole story of the encounter, & /that/ the provocation he had received /had lain entirely/ in hearing her despised. But it would have greatly distressed her; & he forebore. "You had better lie down - you are tired," he said /soothingly/ "Good-night."

The household went to bed, & a silence fell upon the dwelling, broken only by the occasional skirr of a halter in Melbury's stables. Despite her father's advice Grace still waited up. But nobody came.

It was a critical time in Grace's emotional life, that night. She thought of her husband a good deal, & for the nonce forgot Winterbourne. "How these /unhappy/ women must have admired ~~him~~ /Edgar/!" she said to herself. "How attractive he must be to everybody - &, indeed, he is attractive." The ~~probability~~ /possibility/ is that, piqued by rivalry, these ideas might have ~~modulated~~ /been transformed/ into their corresponding emotions ~~at~~ /by/ a show of the least reciprocity in Fitzpiers. There was, in truth, a love-bird ~~in course of~~ /yearning to fly~~ing~~ from her heart; & it wanted a lodging badly. (fo. 352)

This is completely different from the earlier cancelled version: anger against muteness, sensual feelings against subdued feelings. Although the last sentence - 'a love-bird yearning to fly from her heart; & it wanted a lodging badly - is rather obliquely expressed, its sexual implication is clear enough. We now see Grace forgetting Giles and craving her attractive husband. The final version of the manuscript makes a decisive difference, for the reader can no longer be comfortable with the traditional interpretation of the re-encounter episode, which implies that if she had married Giles, all would have been well in their relationship. There is now room for doubt whether that moment is really a moment of 'epiphany' for Grace, given the fact that she cannot help but yearn for Fitzpiers and his charm. The final version of the manuscript delicately suggests the nature of 'a critical time in Grace's emotional life': while she has illicit feelings for her faithful lover, she is nonetheless sexually attracted to her unfaithful husband.

### 3. Conclusion

Briefly, by way of conclusion, I would like to reflect on how Hardy's revisions directly relate to our interpretation of Grace's story. As I have pointed out, Hardy made changes to Chapter 28 in order to emphasise Grace's illicit feelings at the sight of her old lover; at the same time, he also made additions to Chapter 35 in order to convey her sensual feelings for her husband. Significantly, Hardy went out of his way to make both revisions in order to depict Grace's complex female sexuality and her bewildering experience: a married woman could have sexual feelings for two different men at one time - undoubtedly a dangerous subject for the Victorian family magazines. *The Woodlanders* offers a good example of the kind of changes and adjustments Hardy was able to make: a series of alterations whose cumulative effect is, as we have seen, the subversive dimension added to Grace Melbury.

### References

Hardy, Th. [exact date of composition unknown] 'The Woodlanders'. The holograph manuscript of *The Woodlanders*. Held by the Conservation Unit, the Dorset History Centre, Dorchester, Dorset.

- . 1887a. 'The Woodlanders'. Serialised monthly in *Macmillan Magazine* from January to December 1887.
- . 1887b. *The Woodlanders*. 3 volumes. London: Macmillan.
- Kramer, D. 1971. 'Revisions and Vision: Thomas Hardy's *The Woodlanders*'. *Bulletin of New York Public Library* 75, pp. 195 – 230, pp. 248 – 82.
- Lodge, D. 1975. 'Introduction'. David Lodge (ed.), *The Woodlanders*. London: Macmillan, pp. 13 – 32.
- Weber, C. J. 1939. 'Hardy and *The Woodlanders*'. *Review of English Studies* 15, pp. 330 – 333.

# **SUB ROSA DICTUM: A ROSE FOR EMILY, SOMETHING SPECIAL, WILD SWANS. THE TACIT INTERTEXTUALITY OF LOVE DISCOURSE.**

**NATALIA GONCHAROVA**

Institute of Linguistics, Russian Academy of Sciences

***Abstract:** Wild Swans by Alice Munro, Something Special by Iris Murdoch, and A Rose for Emily by William Faulkner, share a metaphorical system built around the rose. Its conceptual area includes supportive imagery that falls squarely into the scheme of the basic Indo-European myth about the fight between the Thunder god and the Devil, aimed at completing the task of "squaring the circle", a human effort to become divine. Each of the female protagonists - Emily, Yvonne, and Rose - is identified with the rose as the principle of life, their epiphany both triumph and defeat. The method employed to iconically capture the Thunder god's victory is reverse chronology.*

***Key words:** basic Indo-European myth, chronology, epiphany, short story, rose, "squaring the circle."*

## **1. Introduction**

There are three roses in this bunch: Emily, Yvonne, and Rose. Subject to critical evaluation, they provide a methodological tool: what is sub rosa is beyond mere morphology. Moreover, taken chronologically, these stories show the rose grow, bud, and flourish into what transcends time itself.

Put through a love ordeal, the three protagonists are initiated into the adult world, an experience that proves both disastrous and eye-opening (e.g., the Sumerian goddess Inanna's rosette can be identified with an eye, the third eye, as it were). Analyzing the metaphorical systems that evolve around the rose, the controlling image of the three narratives, I am looking for patterns that could help interpret similar stories and even single out the "flower" discourse as a special type of coming-of-age narratives.

A prominent stratum in the stories' subtext is the basic Indo-European myth, which features the fight between the Thunder god and the Devil, a binary that appears to be formed as a result of the "cosmic" rosette's swirl (cf. the conceptual metaphor LOVE IS WAR).

In this paper, I make use of linguo- and mythopoetic methods of analysis with elements of conceptual analysis.

## **2. Wild Swans by Alice Munro (Munro 1995:1049-1055).**

A common experience: viewed from outside the cathedral, the rose window is material, "a handle stuck to a pot"; viewed from inside, "what is torn up by drunken men," in Flo's words, turns spiritual. What is seen through a glass, darkly, or through a "filthy window," as the minister points out, is almost a

sacrament, an intimate affair between priest and penitent in the confessional of a train compartment, newspaper palaver (or lace dress, for that matter) as the grid. Transforming into a regular Roman Catholic symbol of silence, Rose, instead of being defiled, is, on the face of it, purified (the swan as the symbol of purity) and given spiritual guidance. Cela McKinney's husband, a hotel manager, also chooses to keep to his room - or his "mother"-wife - *Cela* (of Greek and Latin origin, 'blind; the moon'), cf. "Old English \**cella* (attested in inflected forms), from Latin *cella* 'chamber, small room, compartment' (Online Etymology Dictionary)); *McKinney* is connected with the Celtic god of fire. Flo(rence) the shop assistant, with her varicose veins, is the one who is truly reduced, nipped in the bud, as it were: "She never saw sunlight. . . ." These are the white slaves whereas the White Slavers, or the souls' guides through the underworld, are the vendor on the train, who sold Rose sour chocolate milk; the conductor, who wakes her up at the end of the trip; the undertaker, who drives a hearse; the driver-salesman, who brought bread to Flo's store; the French teacher; and the minister.

Not unlike Eliza from the fairy-tale and her brothers - dumb and bird-like - Rose lives through her initiation story. The Canadian Leda meets the devil, "father of lies" (in alchemy the swan symbolizes M/mercury) to see "the rosy sky" under her eyelids. Mavis the shop girl, who forms the other part of the story's frame, has her eyelid (also known as filiform) warts removed--*papilloma* (from Latin, literally "nipple"), through *Frances Farmer* (under whose name she booked herself in at a resort), is connected with *papillon*, the French for *butterfly* (from Latin *papilio(n)*). Although over one of Mavis's eyes "dips" a hat (note the informal dated meaning "baptize (someone) by immersion in water" (OED)), she only imitates Florence Farmer, instead of flourishing. (Actually, it all started with a man's stomach cut with a knife "as if it was a *watermelon*"; snow melting and Flo receding; the *bank* of Cela McKinney's house and the train filling up at *Brantford*; or maybe even with sour chocolate milk, ginger ale, and vomit on the previous trip--through the swan pond; the minister's waves of grey hair and his dark blue suit; ferns rustling and streams flowing; the pulsating pipes of oil refineries--up to the Niagara of orgasm, the shores of Lake Ontario, Toronto - from the Iroquois word for "place where trees stand in the water" - and "the cold wave of greed" (with the verbs *diddle* and *dawdle* describing the way of moving (see below)).) As a result, Mavis learns to "sing," her name meaning "song thrush." *Thrush* (placed by H. Ch. Andersen (1997:132-148) "beside the bars of the window" of Eliza's cell) is also "infection of the mouth and throat by a yeast-like fungus, causing whitish patches" and "infection of the genitals with the same fungus" (OED). Loss of teeth (cf. the myth of the vagina dentata)--and hair--is connected with the sun's loss of heat in winter and thus the Thunder god's inability to conquer the Devil. It is mentioned repeatedly, namely, in reference to the prisoners "in the White Slave place"; two "bad women", fighting with "their fists full of each other's hair"; the undertaker, who is "a little bald man" driving a hearse that is *plush* inside (cf. Vulgar Latin \**piluccare* 'remove hair', Online Etymology Dictionary); and the vendor on the train, an old man in a *red* jacket, "with no teeth." (No wonder Rose wants to buy a hair-remover - Emily's hair, too, gets short after her father's death.)

The black sun, which stands for impure gold (tainted by original sin) in alchemy, is manifested through money (or Mammon) both overtly and implicitly: the verb *hustle* was used to refer to shaking money in a cap in the game of hustle-cap (cf. LOVE IS A GAME); *Flo* sewed the little bag with money to the *strap* (cf. "a now-obsolete sense of 'financial credit') of Rose's slip (later Rose sets her purse on the *floor* to give room to the minister); *pot* (n. 1) has the slang meaning "large sum of money staked on a bet" (Online Etymology Dictionary); Cela Mc Kinney's house "was dark and narrow and smelled like a bank"; it is cool outside--*cool* can be referred to a large sum of money, and *cooler* has the slang meaning "jail"; all the men in the story are somehow connected with money (the French teacher through "rubbing"); Rose could not reject the minister's hand, "take *charge* of it [*emphasis added*]"; her legs are "pinched together" - cf. the meaning "to be stingy"; her actions are "beggary," and she rides "the cold wave of greed, of greedy assent." Rose also likes being a "pounded" object. The pun is built on the interplay of the meanings "measure of weight" (Rose wants to reduce her hips and thighs); "unit of money"; "crush"; and "enclosed place for animals" (in her erotic visions, she mentions "pink snouts," cats, and, implicitly, horses and reptiles (*creep* refers to plants as well)), "late Old English *pundfald* "penfold, pound," related to *pyndan* "to dam up, enclose (water)," and thus from the same root as *pond*" (Online Etymology Dictionary). This is the "extension" of the LOVE IS A GAME metaphor, with the minister as the "master" (Latin *dominus*) in the game Flo wants to have--*domino*, "perhaps from the meaning "hood with a cloak worn by canons or priests" (1690s)" (Online Etymology Dictionary).

Due to a lack of sunshine, the waters of spring are candy-type crystallized, *locked* by Cela McKinney, as it were; what has been an orchard turns Glassco's Jams and Marmalades rather than a fairy-tale hedge covered with roses. Crystallization also has pseudo-erotic implications: Rose's nausea is induced by the minister's hand - and the ginger ale (cf. "Sanskrit *srngaveram*, from *srngam* 'horn' + *vera-* 'body', so called from the shape of its root") sold on the train by the *toothless* vendor - (the White Slavers' drugged) candy is "from Tamil *kantu* 'candy', *kattu* 'to harden, condense' (Online Etymology Dictionary). Plants do not take root in ice. Hence there is no air in the story: a prospective White Slave's sickness is allegedly caused by a lack of fresh air; a child, its face "black as ink", dies of a fit--cf. the ironically "pink and shiny" face (earlier it was "square ruddy") of the *short* minister who gets even *shorter* at the end of the aborted "squaring the circle"; the police, according to Flo, would be "the first ones to diddle" Rose, *diddle* probably originating from the name of Jeremy Diddler in the farce *Raising the Wind* (1803), who is in constant need of money (Online Etymology Dictionary); the undertaker finds Rose pale and says "young girls need fresh air" - on her previous trip to Toronto, she was also "lacking color" to match the pale bark of the trees and bushes in the south; the vendor on the train has "the tray hanging around his neck"; the minister wears a tie, which will be removed by Emily; in her orgasm, Rose "was careful of her breathing"; Mavis's cigarette holder was "black and mother-of-pearl" (Rose wanted her complexion to turn pearl). We are placed at the beginning of Genesis that fails through (consider the binaries of the two "bad

women” (pronounced by Flo like "badminton" as part of the LOVE IS A GAME metaphor) that are “egged on” [*emphasis added*] and the cut watermelon of a stomach, which reappears as the bread-truck driver's belly)). Singing gives way to silence--or, rather, men sing whereas women do not. Among the singing men are the undertaker (even the verb *dawdle*, which characterizes his manner, can be influenced by the (sluggish) daw (Online Etymology Dictionary); and the minister who uses a poetic word (“fat tongues. . . lolling” associated with his caress) - both of them “sing” of snow. Rose, on the contrary, could not say a word: “She shaped the words in her mind, tried them out, then couldn't get them past her lips.” Singing is substituted with the written word (cf. Rose's essay, which earned her the money for the trip; the minister's newspaper, a ‘net’ that makes the world illusory and dream-like (see below)), which brings about the dissociation between the senses (tasting, smelling, seeing, hearing, touching are implied (and mentioned) repeatedly in the three stories (see below)). Time, conceptualized as *river*, hardens as *money*, clock hands likened to the fuzzy forearms of a bread-truck driver (note the powder-blue angora sweater (a garment originally worn in rowing) that Rose intends to buy, which symbolically represent the clouds of winter, whereas the silver bangles will *chain* the sun into “the silver-wooded rubble of little hills” - or pounds).

The rose appears to grow through the three women (or three toads, as was the case in the fairy tale) like the proverbial yeast . . . to feed no one. Both Rose and Mavis are but mute swans in their mock-epiphany: you cannot buy the gifts of the Magi in a gift shop. Rose's breast, inside which the true transformation is to take place, has changed externally - by the rubbing (used in reference to the French teacher, fingers, and cats) of the little bag with ten dollars it grows “spotted”, like that of the thrush, whose subfamily includes robins, subject of Yvonne Geary's hatred. Rose's “crossing” (mentioned repeatedly in the story) was botched up as soon as she uncrossed her legs. Here bread turns sties. Instead of the good grain, Cela McKinney, who was very stingy, sowed her wild oats that sprouted up as wild swans: her oatmeal porridge was served with raisins, *sty* being “from Old English *stigend* ‘sty’, literally ‘riser’, from prp. of *stigan* ‘go up, rise’, from Proto-Germanic *\*stig-*” (Online Etymology Dictionary) (Rose looks at the minister “not raising her head”, whereas he keeps his eyes closed most of the time, the windows looking filthy to him). Not unlike Gilgamesh, Rose loses her chance of immortality (the minister's clock (hand) ticking away her lifetime) when the serpent “steals” the boxthorn-like plant and sheds its skin: the “refreshed”, “dressed up” minister folds his paper and tries to help Rose with the coat whereas, at the beginning of her trip, Rose felt “her own weary self discarded”, her essay future-oriented.

Mavis's taking the name of Frances Farmer is another act of dressing up. Replacing *Florence* with *Frances* evokes the image of Mr. McLaren, the French teacher, whose name bears resemblance to the Latin *laurus* "laurel." Besides, he is described as "sallow" ("from Old English *salu* 'dusky', of Germanic origin" (OED)), also a *pussy willow* ("mid 19th cent.: originally a child's word, because of the resemblance of the soft fluffy catkins to a cat's fur" (OED)); willow bark was used to weave a *net* to carry Eliza (cf. Mavis's lace dress, Rose's little cloth bag (cf.

*strap*, "ultimately from Greek *strophos* "twisted band," from *strephein* "to turn" (Online Etymology Dictionary)), and Flo's stockings - the three of them represent the omphalos stone covered with a net which failed to develop into cosmic order (flower). Rose saw her teacher, the Serpent, "lapping and coiling his way through slow pleasures." In the immediate context, she is said to spread her epitrachil-like coat "over herself, like a lap robe"; she takes it down off the *hook*--the teacher's nose is *hooked*. The name *angora* (see above) was also given to a cat whose fur resembles wool whereas the eponymous city itself (modern Ankara) got its name "from the Greek word for "anchor, bend," a diminutive form from PIE root *\*ang-/\*ank-* being *angle*" (Online Etymology Dictionary). Cats are also mentioned in Rose's erotic vision.

*Lap* has the archaic meaning of "a hanging flap on a garment or a saddle" (OED). In his *Description of Greece*, Pausanias recounts a story of Daphne as a mortal pursued by Leucippos ("white stallion"); according to Ovid, the nymph Daphne, chased by Apollo, was transformed into a laurel tree, the horse and the serpent being "enemies-cum-friends" of the basic Indo-European myth--note "trotting" and "creeping" of the minister's fingers (Homer Barron's buggy is drawn by the matched team of bays.) Ironically, a wreath of bay laurels was given as the prize at the Pythian Games (Rose won her prize for "swallowing a dictionary"). Rose's memories of the minister "slip into place at a critical moment." *Slip* is employed as both a noun and a verb in the story. *Slip* (n.), apart from 'woman's sleeveless garment', 1761, from *slip* (v.), is probably derived from Middle Low German or Middle Dutch *slippe* 'cut, slit', possibly related to Old English *toslifan* 'to split, cleave'; sense of 'sprig for planting or grafting' first recorded in late 15c." (Online Etymology Dictionary). Having slipped on Rose's slip, the whole world "falls down": "...the world is tumbling with innocent-seeming objects ready to declare themselves, slippery and obliging".

### 3. *Something Special* by Iris Murdoch (Murdoch 1995:1056-1067)

Yvonne Geary is fascinated by a Christmas card, which she holds aloft in her "bony brown hand", - "a frame of glossy golden cardboard enclosed a little square of white silk on which some roses were embroidered." "Squaring the circle" signifies human efforts to get rid of things material and become divine, *something special*. However, the terrestrial world bursts in as the square face of an ugly minister on the train or the squarish frame house, "an eyesore among eyesores."

Squares are numerous in this story, the principal being Sam ("short-haired" Samson) Goldman the boyfriend ("no fancy worker" vs. special Christmas card as "the fancy thing"). Sam is the one who is supposed to accomplish the proverbial task and bring the diamond wedding ring, which he never does (*rock* (v.) is from "late Old English *roccian*, probably from a Germanic base meaning 'remove, move'; related to Dutch *rukken* 'jerk, tug' and German *rücken* 'move'" (OED)). Like the minister from *Wild Swans*, Sam is short, *portly*, and unhandsome; even his suit is dark (midnight) blue. Cf. "Old Church Slavonic *pariti* 'fly'; Late Latin

*portarius* 'gatekeeper' (Online Etymology Dictionary) - the young man is the "owner" of port, an intoxicating drink, who "makes" Yvonne *fumble* for the phallic latch(Lynch)key to the "Christmas card" life with a picture and a verse that "have a universal appeal" (the poet, who gripped Sam by the arm like he did Yvonne, *fumble* in his pocket in search of a *poem*.)

Sam does not live up to his name either - of Hebrew origin, it probably meant "sun": he frowns in the electric light, has a pale moonface (cf. the name *Cela* from *Wild Swans*); his eyes are dark and his hair is "like the brave plume of a bird," which tends to "bob" as he "trots": *bob* (v. 1) is "probably connected to Middle English *bobben* "to strike, beat," and *bob* (n. 2) is "attested in sense of "a horse's tail cut short," from earlier *bobbe* "cluster" (as of leaves), mid-14c., a northern word, perhaps of Celtic origin...Used over the years in various senses connected by the notion of "round, hanging mass," e.g. "weight at the end of a line" (1650s)" (Online Etymology Dictionary). As we know, Yvonne is reproached for "hanging around acting the maggot" (the "bait") (see below) - a person described as "acting in a play" is her English ex-boyfriend with a "mouth all prissed up" (cf. "Middle French *précis* "condensed, cut short" (14c.), from Medieval Latin *precisus*, from Latin *praecisus* "abridged, cut off," pp. of *praecidere* "to cut off, shorten"), who "won" the Sweep(stakes) ("prize won in a race or contest," 1773, from Middle English *swepestake* "one who sweeps or wins all the stakes in a game" (late 15c., as the name of one of the King's ships)" (Online Etymology Dictionary)) and brought Yvonne flowers to be replaced with Sam's diamond ring "in the pot" ("potty" is Yvonne's mother)) - his *palms* are mentioned repeatedly, apparently, as a symbol of victory. The only light spot - light yellow silk tie - makes Sam similar to the robin in the regular Christmas card ("a traditional theme") identified with the pervading stuffy atmosphere--which makes people "shrink." To Yvonne's parents, Sam Goldman will make a perfect frame for the girl (and provide a house "built on a rock"). Before going out, Yvonne, like Rose, puts on her coat - another frame of the would-be tailor.

However, Yvonne's wish is to break through to England. No wonder she is always *cross*; her last name, *Geary*, makes Yvonne attracted to everything that moves - trams, which rattle like a baby's toy and a rattlesnake, Maya's symbol of transformation; mail boats; noisy companies; rocking chairs - or grows, like a flower (even her ex's name *Tony* is commonly, but incorrectly, associated with Greek *anthos* "flower"). Yvonne's legs are emphatically long (nevertheless, she wears high-heeled shoes) and are opposed to Sam's "small feet" - though, at the end of the story, she "thrust" them "down under the clothes" (and also "*snuggled* her head under the sheet" [*emphasis added*] (cf. *snug* (adj.) "1590s, "compact, trim" (of a ship), perhaps from a Scandinavian source, cf. Old Norse *snoggr* "short-haired," Swedish *snygg*, Danish *snøg* "neat, tidy". . . . Meaning "fit closely" is first found 1838" (Online Etymology Dictionary)). Yvonne's manner of walking is described with the verb *prance*, which, again, evokes the "horse-serpent/cat" metaphor (*Ivo* was an occupational name for "archer"), associated with the controlling image of "squaring the circle." There are supporting details: Yvonne rocks the "rocking-horse" of a chair (cf. the rocking movement of the boat and the verb *brace* in the

immediate context (*brace* is "a rope attached to the yard of a ship for trimming the sail" (OED)), "rubbing her small head animal fashion" ("Who's she? She's the cat!"); she "wants" to marry the Sheik of Araby (a hero of a song and *fox trot* - Sam "trotted behind her" and "whined" (cf. German *wiehern* "to neigh" (Online Etymology Dictionary))); a shiny *horsehair* sofa takes up half of the inner room in the Gearys' house; Yvonne's high-heeled shoes are also a pretext not to walk by the sea and "sit on the rocks", inducing the mail boat's sad sound and "the racing breeze." At the end of the story, she is "destroyed walking in these shoes", that appear to turn "high cold edge of the bed".

The frame theme is further developed through a number of images. The mail boat, its lights on, metonymically "glowed like a coloured postcard", with "roses" and "roses" of people agitating white handkerchiefs - the *sub rosa* scene is definitionally silent but for two lighthouses, whose beams were kindled when "a curly plume of black smoke gathered upon the metallic water" (cf. the description of Sam's hair and his hedgehog-like posture at Kimball's) and "hid the ship". Flowers in *metal* baskets along the Liffey are *hanging* suspended from the street lamps (Sam's "lamps of the moon") like the "bait" (see above), so is the banner announcing Ireland At Home for visitors. (The druggist, to whom the barman in the saloon lounge is compared, imagines Emily's face looking like that of a light-keeper.)

The pop shop window thickens into the frosted glass in the Gearys' inner room, which melts, for a while, into the golden windows of *Ross's* Hotel and glows outside the Shelbourne, narrowing, through the chink of the glass in the hands of a clumsy barman and the hole in the railings of Stephen's Green (Yvonne's bed also has rails), into the lights of the coffin-like bar in the basement and a fallen tree as the axis mundi, traditionally associated with light, which functions as the "wrong" omphalos. The frame metaphor is further materialized as the Liffey, the river of life (which is opposed to the sea as having "not far to go"), the gilded mirror beside a *fat* chintz (from Hindi *chīmt* 'spattering, stain' (OED)) sofa at Kimball's - a bar, a drugstore, a church, or a mousetrap? - in which Sam's head is reflected and which turns black (cf. the door of the bar in the basement), as the lake in the public garden - another imitation along with the moon as compared to the sun or tailor-made romantic escapism as compared to life.

What is the habit of placing robins (or thrushes) inside golden frames? Roses can transcend; robins cannot. Who is Sam? Yvonne's parents are quite hopeful: the clothes presser-turned-tailor of their imagination, the clothes press a mock-steamer; a buyer of a Drumcondra house (almost a portmanteau word 'combining' a drum, a cobra, and an anaconda, to create a composite monster to rival that of the fallen tree) to address "a man in Macmullan's shop", of Scottish origin, a former nickname for a bald (tonsured) person; a magus - but the young people met at Mr. Stacey's sale (no hope for regeneration).

Nevertheless, Sam and Yvonne leave Kingstown ("When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the King--") for "Abyssinia" - a flight to Egypt, i.e., the underworld, with the oily and glistening Liffey as the Serpent. Down in the well of the bar, Yvonne gets her drink from the publican who is "an

infernal version of his upstairs colleague” (the bouncer's name is Patsy, a diminutive of Patrick; St. Patrick is the patron saint of Ireland), which makes her eyes bright and the bar look like a Christmas card mail boat (but without "the upholstered stillness" [*emphasis added*] of the saloon lounge above (cf. *upholden* ‘to repair, uphold, keep from falling or sinking’ (Online Etymology Dictionary)), with its white tiled walls (the “great” quilt on her “mountainous” double bed is also white) and a round bar in the centre, “circled” by ironwork pillars (cf. the railings surrounding Stephen's Green), with the poet waving, his fist flourishing, to get a jab in the stomach (cf. the man with a cut stomach from *Wild Swans*), and the drama unfolding, herself in the middle (at the end of the story, the deep centre of the bed will be taken up by her mother) - the rose - and women "lurking" (cf. *lower* (v. 2) ‘to look dark and threatening’ (Online Etymology Dictionary)) in the alcoves, one of them a prostitute with a red carnation in her hair, Yvonne's ‘infernal’ double.

It is the flowers that have initially attracted Yvonne to Kimball's, with their ability to break boundaries, including social ones: “She refused to sit down, but stood there swaying slightly. . .”; “Upon the confused flood of noise and movement she was now afloat”; “. . . Sam shouted back, propelling Yvonne fussily into a space in the middle of the floor”. She gets one - a prostitute's carnation - and also a punch from a man as brown as she is, which pins her Christ-like to the tiles, the English poet, a delighter in trite metaphors (like the undertaker and the minister from *Wild Swans* and like Sam, his and the poet's (another example of "enemies-cum-friends")--and Yvonne's--actions described respectively with *stumble* and *fumble* - ‘onomatopoeia from a sound felt to indicate clumsiness’ (Online Etymology Dictionary)), who thrusts the flower into the bosom of Yvonne's *frock* (cf. her uncle's words: “Sensible people marry because they want to be in the married state and not because of feelings they have in their breasts”), being, ironically, the “infernal inversion” of her ex-lover, a singer (note the following words: “I thought the flowers were all *falling*, but here is a rose in the bud!” [*emphasis added*]).

The slap of the “quick as a flash” carnation owner (Sam tried to “catch Yvonne's eye” by “flashing his wad around”, *wad* evoking a mythic rain cloud, followed by the verb *lay*, realized polysemically as “*vulgar, slang* have sexual intercourse with”; *nautical* “follow (a specified course)”; “trim (a hedge) back, cutting the branches half through, bending them down, and interweaving them” (OED); and Yvonne's symbolic “deflowering” provokes the dragon-slaying. As a result, the scene is drenched with “water” diction (before that the poet is “frozen”; Yvonne “stiff”, “rigid”, and “stony”- and, later, upon seeing the fallen tree, crying): the poet "keeled over," "plunged" his fingers into the basket; rose petals "rain down" on Yvonne; geraniums together with earth *engulf* Yvonne's shoes (due to which the stroll by the sea, beyond the Baths, was aborted) - that prompts *swaying* and *shaking* on her part - and, finally, giving in. Caught up by Sam at Hannah's bookshop (books being the primary source of her *savoir vivre*), Yvonne turns in the direction of Westmoreland Street, her hand “limp”. Sam, “his plume of black hair bobbing over his eyes”, like Mavis's hat, overtook her “well up the street” (*Grafton*

Street) and “kneaded” her hand in his palm (cf. Cela McKinney's wild oats). Hence the sun would not appear, giving way to the moon, which started its rise as soon as the mail boat vanished in the open sea to witness Sam's hand “creeping” about Yvonne's waist, and, when almost full, from the lake, to see him persuading the girl to marry him. Now Yvonne, cat-turned-hare, is in the power of the self-styled good Samaritan, whose moonface and manners become cat-like, the Samson-Delilah opposition reversed. No wonder the girl gets "weary" (as if from the White Slaves' drugged candy: ‘Old English *werig* ‘tired’, related to *worian* ‘to wander, totter’, from West Germanic *\*worigaz* (cf. Old Saxon *worig* ‘weary’, Old High German *wuorag* ‘intoxicated (Online Etymology Dictionary)), as her fingers are *locked* through Sam's. He *slinks* (cf. Middle Dutch and Middle Low German *slinken* ‘subside, sink’(OED), *paws* at her arm, and *ducks* in the golden glow of a fashionable hotel (with a *square* nearby) to land, after *crossing* the road, in a tangle of damp undergrowth and then near a lake with a fallen tree close by - *Yvonne* meaning ‘yew’.

That was Sam's "something special" – “a dirty rotten maggoty old tree”. As was mentioned above, Yvonne *plays maggot* at the start of the story where *something special* is identified with a diamond ring *on loan* - the late Mrs. Taylor is a “faggot” (Middle English, in the sense 'bundle of sticks for fuel', from Old French *fagot*, from Italian *fagotto*, based on Greek *phakelos* 'bundle' (OED)). In Mr. Lynch's words, who cuts off the *Kimball's* of lunar Sophia, pale- and stumpy-handed Sam-hedgehog (a solar animal, symbol of fertility, its spikes identified with the rays of the sun) “curling into himself”: "We are as grass which today flourisheth and tomorrow it is cast into the oven". (Or Mr. Leech's (?), a bloodsucking worm and a healer, a ‘cane’/card man ("from Greek *khartes* "layer of papyrus," probably from Egyptian"), who mends broken "ship" chairs, Charon – “the surname is perhaps from Ir. *Loingseach* ‘sailor’ (Online Etymology Dictionary). Yvonne's reaction is predictable: her voice "rose," as the special Christmas card did earlier, when Sam (whose *clock* hands are also described as *fugitive* (used as a noun meaning ‘runaway, fugitive slave, deserter’ (Online Etymology Dictionary)) trades the fallen beauty of the tree against a pair of Christmas card robins up in its branches (from the start of the story, we have the binaries of Yvonne's *two eyes* . . . *worn away by reading*; her mother and uncle - the uncle's name, of Irish origin, having to do with ‘hill’ and ‘eminence’; Betty Nolan (of Irish and Gaelic origin, ‘chariot-fighter, champion’) and Maureen Burke, her married co-students, the latter's first name, of Irish and Gaelic origin, meaning ‘star of the sea’ and the last one ‘abstracted from William *Burk*, executed in Edinburgh 1829 for murdering several persons to sell their bodies for dissection’, ‘murder by smothering’ (Online Etymology Dictionary); the "two rounds" Sam, who ‘was for catching Yvonne's eye’, paid for in Sullavan's (‘black-eyed’) bar; Julia Batey (*bate* (v.1) ‘to reduce, to lessen in intensity’, c.1300, Online Etymology Dictionary) and Polly's (pet name of Mary) sister, “who married Jews the pair of them”; two lighthouses; and, finally, Sam's two eyes that “gleam almost cat-like” and his two hands).

“The poor tree” seems to evoke the parable of the trees (Judges 9:7-15), a bramble mentioned in the immediate context (cf. ‘And the bramble said to the trees, ‘If in truth you anoint me as king over you, *then* come *and* take shelter in my shade; but if not, let fire come out of the bramble and devour the cedars of Lebanon!’”). This is where Yvonne begins turning into Eve. The verb *touch* is used twice in the story - the prostitute's bare arm touches the girl's sleeve in the bar, and the branches of the fallen tree touch the water - for the same reason, to recover after the ‘battle’, panting Yvonne runs to the river, leans against the parapet, and *droops* her head down (the verb is used poetically in reference to the setting sun). However, as she raises her voice, the sleeve “goes down” until, stockings torn, bramble (wild shrub of the *rose* family) *trailing* from the skirt (note ‘the trail’ of the mail boat's “smoke taken up into the gathering night”), neck (cf. “a narrow piece of land or sea, such as an isthmus or channel”, OED) having turned red with whisky and now “overgrown” with leafy twigs, she, not unlike Inanna, descending to the underworld, strips herself naked at the end of the story. The runes have told the same old story of *change and decay*, *smell* turning to *odour*, despite Yvonne's efforts to cause a storm with her “whipping a flurry of foliage across Sam's round moon-lit face” and “blubbing” (late Middle English, denoting the foaming of the sea, also a bubble on water, OED), the adjective *sad* used repeatedly to point to a parallel with “a sonorous booming sound, very deep and sad” of the departing mail boat (Old English *sæd* 'sated, weary', also 'weighty, dense', of Germanic origin; related to Dutch *zat* and German *satt*, from an Indo-European root shared by Latin *satis* 'enough', OED).

Yvonne takes a *lurching* tram (the tipsy poet moved in the same manner), gets to the top, back to *Upper* George's Street (St. George the dragon-slayer), and in on *tiptoe*. Sam seems to be left on the quay - but his “gesture of dereliction” points to the opposite - “1590s, ‘abandonment’, formerly with a wider range than in modern use, e.g. of the sea withdrawing from the land,” (Online Etymology Dictionary), to the heavy breathing of Mrs. Geary, we might add. Irony is pervading - like the familiar smell of wood and old paper in the shop. No high hopes, no roses, no more sun for Yvonne - now she will have to learn to stand still for a long time. The swan remains mute - “the cat got her tongue”, as the girl's mother put it (and so are the “little listening animals” on the shop's shelves (and the brass animals on the mantelshelf, which *rose* when Yvonne (herself *petulant*) held aloft the special Christmas card) - the ox and the ass at the manger, as it were - which ‘jumped’ and ‘tinkled’ at the start of the story when the tram for Dublin rattled by (the *tinkling* of a piano came from the bar in the basement - as well as an uproar of male voices and applause, which replaced that of the boat) - the prostitute in the bar called Yvonne, who had just crossed *O'Connell's* bridge (of Irish origin, having to do with a hound or a wolf), “little pet” - another mock-epiphany has taken place). The ironic vocative “your Majesty” in the immediate context evokes a truism. Yvonne Geary of Kingstown, the first letter of the name a cross, is on board the rocking bed of her mother, a fine frame, buried alive. The world turned out tougher than the rocks by the sea. It takes the *nerve*, Flo would say. . . .

#### 4. *A Rose for Emily* by William Faulkner (Faulkner 1995: 400-406)

Emily Grierson is, perhaps, the most perseverant of the three. Through a mystical conversion, which was implied in *Wild Swans* and once materialized in *Something Special*, a *rose* has turned into a verb, *rose*, another story-scaffolding gesture. The ups and downs of Emily's fortune, manifested persistently at the linguistic level, are leveled when the uroboros (or the rat) is eaten to induce a pregnancy with a corpse. In Gnosticism and in the Cabbala (the word *cabal* is mentioned in the text), Sophia is both a virgin bride and a womb. In *Aurora consurgens*, the seed that falls into it produces a threefold fruit, which is . . . the tripartite Caduceus, the Christ-Mercury, the healing serpent, the curing water that flows into Hades to awaken the dead bodies of the metals and free his mother bride. This is the beginning stage of the "whitening": her clothes are now "purer than the snow", and to her husband she will give wings like those of a dove, to fly away with him in the sky (Roob 2001:238).

The sowing motion is performed by the four Aldermen, three greybeards and a youngster (a perfect square!), who "slink" ("Old English *slincan* 'crawl, creep'; compare with Middle Dutch and Middle Low German *slinken* 'subside, sink'" (OED)) Sam's way, "like burglars" (cf. Hermes-Mercury), to sprinkle lime, which is to become the dough of Emily's face, the bread in the truck of Flo's supplier, and Yvonne's hand "kneaded" in Sam's palm; then they *recross* the lawn and hide in the *locusts* from her, a "motionless" Christ-like idol in the rose window, the same adjective employed in the extended metaphor above: "She looked bloated, like a body long submerged in motionless water..." However, her eyes are "like two small pieces of coal pressed into a lump of dough..." At the end of the story the old Negro servant, a sphinx-like character ("a combined gardener and cook"), the one who killed the "snake-rat," disappears through the back door, the black lunar Sophia giving way to the solar celestial one (cf. the swan's double nature). But the parallel doesn't cease there. Homer Barron is described as a dark man who drives a glittering buggy, so is the "watchful" Mr. Grierson, who "robbed" his daughter - a silhouette-turned-crayon portrait ("from French, from *craie* 'chalk', from Latin *creta*" (OED))--both armed with a horsewhip. Twice the man, Homer Barron (*baron* is "from Old French, from medieval Latin *baro*, *baron* 'man, warrior', probably of Germanic origin" (OED)) constructs twice the home for Emily who is, in fact, a man (English feminine form of *Aemilius*, from Latin "rival"). In that case she is the virgin earth who gives birth to a new sun in the single combat of the old sacred king and a rival claimant to the throne, described by James Fraser (Fraser 1994), North and South, Winter and Summer. In the same manner the right to the hand of the princess is determined by a race--cf. the famous "love chase" in the story of Pelops and Hippodamia. In *Wild Swans*, Rose imagines herself an object in the (clock) hand of the masturbating French teacher, the domestic Creator; Homer Barron is said to like men and was not a marrying type.

Another composite monster is Ganesha. According to the druggist, arsenic "can kill anything up to an elephant", which is also an attribute of Hermes-Mercury, whereas lime does away with the smell of a killed rat, the mount of

Ganesha (or that of a killed snake, which is wrapped round Ganesha's neck). Ganesha, who protected Parvati from Shiva, was made of the dirt left after his mother's ablutions and worshipped with red flowers, his lost and recovered head representing the sun. Arsenic is "of Greek origin *arsenikon* 'yellow orpiment', identified with *arsenikos* 'male', but in fact from Arabic *al-zarnīk* 'the orpiment', based on Persian *zar* 'gold'" (OED). When, following Homer Barron's death, not unlike the sun in winter, Emily failed to appear on the streets for six months, she was said to be under the influence of her father's quality, too "virulent" to die--"late Middle English (originally describing a poisoned wound): from Latin *virulentus*, from *virus* "poison" (Online Etymology Dictionary).

The rat is a chthonic creature, which can stand for the human soul; lime that covers up the crime is "used in traditional building methods to make plaster, mortar, and limewash" (OED). Not unlike Shiva the destroyer, the rat (transformed Gajamukha Asura) represents lightning inside the elephant-cloud, which releases the waters of spring from winter's embrace (and also the "embrace" of *cotton* gins and wagons that "obliterated even the august names"), Ganesha referred to as the master of obstacles and producer of wealth, patron of merchants and travelers. Homer Barron is associated both with the elephant and the rat, a vehicle supposed to take Emily to "England," in Yvonne's terms. In the East, the rat that nibbles is said to be "counting money" (Biedermann 1996:279). Hence the remission of taxes--no death in Emily's Garden of Eden. Ironically, Yvonne, who is said to be leading Sam up the garden, finds in her enclosed garden, which she entered through the truly narrowest of the gates, a hole (her own place a "poky hole"), but a fallen tree. Homer Barron (or "barren," we might say) happened to nod and is "eaten" (according to J. Fetterley's feminist reading, Emily "feeds off" Homer Barron, hence her suspicious fatness (Fetterley 1978)) along with the watch on the gold chain, to become a virtual vahana, a dove born by the mother bride, his silver toilet set oxydized over time lunar Sophia's way (the one intended to cut the sun-rays of the bristles); Emily leans on "an ebony cane with a tarnished gold head"; "tarnished" is the *g(u)ilt* easel by the fireplace with Mr. Grierson's crayon portrait.

No wonder the suitors in the three stories are represented as vehicles. In *Wild Swans*, Rose is attracted to a bread-truck driver and an undertaker driving a hearse; the minister drives to the pond to see a flock of swans and represents a wild swan; the French teacher, although a local, belongs to another world; besides, most of the scene is set on the train. In *Something Special*, Sam represents a mock-mail boat. In *A Rose for Emily*, Emily, "humanized" to the degree of refusing to get free mail delivery, prefers "pigeon post."

However, Homer Barron is cuckolded by death. *Cuckold* is "from Old French *cucuault*, from *cucu* 'cuckoo' (from the cuckoo's habit of laying its egg in another bird's nest)" (OED). The archaic meaning of the verb *lime* is "catch (a bird) with birdlime" or, figuratively, "entrap by clever deception; inveigle" (OED). Emily herself is associated with a boat. In the arsenic-buying scene, her face is first compared to that of a lighthouse-keeper, then to a strained flag, the Jolly Roger, as it were (cf. the rose-cross as a symbol of spiritual regeneration of the flesh, the rose representing the femininity and the cross masculinity; a mouse appears on

Ganesha's flag); a rat killed seems to point to "rats leaving the sinking ship." Emily even seems bloated through Homer's mock-steamer of a cigar (*bloat* is "from obsolete *bloat* 'swollen, soft', perhaps from Old Norse *blautr* 'soft, flabby' II [with obj.] cure (a herring) by salting and smoking it lightly" (OED)).

At Thann, in Alsace, a girl called the Little May Rose, dressed in white, carries a small May-tree, which is gay with garlands and ribbons. Her companions collect gifts from door to door, singing a song...In the course of the song a wish is expressed that those who give nothing may lose their fowls by the marten, that their vine may bear no clusters, their trees no nuts, their field no corn...(Fraser 1994:92).

The old May-tree is burned at the end of the year. So is Emily, the rose, sacrificed for the regeneration of the town, for the townsfolk are associated with the underworld: they are socially inferior; they hide from the sun behind jalousies ("from French *jalousie* "jealousy," from notion of looking through blinds without being seen" (Online Etymology Dictionary)); after Mr. Grierson's death, some ladies have the "temerity" to call ("from PIE base *\*temes-* "dark" (Online Etymology Dictionary)); when they enter Emily's house, they speak in "sibilant" ("chthonic") voices (employed twice).

Emily, pregnant with Homer's love, who is the real tribute (from Greek 'hostage, pledge'), is the pot-bellied Ganesha Lambodara, pregnant with all the universes of all the times. The very old men know what the young do not: they confuse time with its mathematical progression. The number of rose leaves on the stem increases in accordance with arithmetic progression. The same principle applies to rose windows. Hence to these Confederate soldiers "all the past is not a diminishing road but, instead, a huge meadow which no winter ever quite touches, divided from them now by the narrow bottle-neck of the most recent decade of years."

The story is framed with Emily's funeral. When the snake bites its tail, the cycle is over. The serpent Vasuki, occasionally a throne, is wrapped round Ganesha's neck and, as a sacred thread, round the stomach and coils at the ankles. Likewise, Emily pervades Jefferson--as a Negro woman apron, for example, in the same manner as a net covers an omphalos stone. The town is not only "tied to her apron-strings," in the meaning of "wife's business," (*money* is "from O.Fr. *monie*, from L. *moneta* "mint, coinage," from *Moneta*, a title of the Roman goddess Juno ("the young one" (perhaps as goddess of the new moon)" (Online Etymology Dictionary)), but is also protected by her veil as the Virgin Mary or Hera, "protectress" (Emily is referred to as "the carven torso of an idol"). (Remission of taxes, "the dispensation dating from the death of her father into perpetuity", is contextually connected with the edict "fathered" by Colonel Sartoris that "no Negro woman should appear on the streets without an apron" (*sartor* 'pertaining to a tailor', 1823, from Mod.L. *sartorius*, from L.L. *sartor* 'tailor', lit. 'patcher, mender', from L. *sart-*, pp. stem of *sarcire* 'to patch, mend'. *Sartorius*, the name of the long leg muscle, is used in crossing the legs to bring them into the position needed to sit like a tailor" (Online Etymology Dictionary).

Another feature, characterizing Emily, is her hair (and also her servant's hair). Connected with it are the brushes used by Emily's china-painting students. She gave her lessons when her hair was turning gray in a downstairs room for six or seven years (for almost six months after Homer Barron's death she did not go out) - the half-year when the sun is not active. China-painting lessons resemble church-going on Sundays - Emily's awkward attempt to color the angels in the church windows to whom she is likened by the narrator - or sweep the dust that began settling on the furniture till it becomes pervading, an acrid pall of the tomb. At Emily's funeral old Confederate soldiers wear "brushed" uniforms. Emily's squarish frame house that "was left, lifting its stubborn, coquettish decay above cotton wagons" (the "square" is the place where Homer Barron was heard laughing in the center of the group) is reflected at the end in the collar and tie, "which, lifted, left upon the surface a pale crescent in the dust" - "squaring of a circle" is accomplished. The heiress's strand of hair on the pillow is a sun-ray thwarted due to a lack of love - but lifted by somebody at the moment of epiphany. Another meaning of *strand* is "the shore of a sea, lake, or large river" (OED) whereas *heir* is from L. *heredem* (nom. *heres*), from PIE base *\*ghe-* 'to be empty, left behind' (cf. Gk. *khera* "widow") (Online Etymology Dictionary).

Tobe disappears because the job is done: in the apocryphal *Book of Tobit*, there is a tale "Tobias and the Angel," according to which Tobias, through the help of the archangel Raphael, collected a debt for his father, got a wife, and cured his father's blindness. (Ganesha has the third eye or the mark of the crescent on the forehead.) When the townsfolk see the strand of iron-gray hair, they transcend what is offered by the five senses, or "five material faculties" guided by the "chariot-driver" of the mind in Buddhism. Sight is represented by Emily's house as "an eyesore among eyesores" and also by her perception as a tableau--her father a silhouette and a crayon portrait--as an angel in colored church windows, as a carven torso of an idol in a niche, in the window frame - and, finally, on the frame of the bier. Smell, "another link between the gross, teeming world and the high and mighty Griersons", is connected with taste: "Just as if a man - any man - could keep a kitchen properly..." Touch, among other things, could be represented by taxes (money "has no smell" either), "from O.Fr. *taxer* "impose a tax" (13c.), from L. *taxare* "evaluate, estimate, assess, handle," also "censure, charge," probably a frequentative form of *tangere* "to touch" (Online Etymology Dictionary). As for hearing, there is no other music in the story apart from the ticking of the invisible watch, the clop-clop-clop of the matched bays, the rustling of gossips' silk and satin, their sibilant voices, and the harsh and rusty voice of the Negro servant. The five senses, identified with the five petals of the rose and the five wounds of Christ (that makes up ten, symbol of completion and unity, mentioned in all the three stories), are transcended in the cedar-bemused cemetery where both Union and Confederate soldiers lie side by side. At the end of the story the narrator mentions the crayon portrait of Emily's father "musing profoundly" above the bier of his daughter. *Muse* and *bemuse* ("from be- (as an intensifier) + *muse*, M.Fr. *muser* "ponder, stare fixedly"; Pope (1705) punned on it as "devoted utterly to the Muses"

(Online Etymology Dictionary)) form a kind of synesthetic metaphor, knowledge that confuses like a giant-turned-mouse.

## 5. Conclusion.

In the Sino-Japanese tradition, the *Flower Sermon* story is referred to as *nengemishō* “pick up flower, subtle smile”. Mahākāśyapa, who smiled when not unlike Yvonne from *Something Special*, Buddha, held up and admired a flower, is enlightened through direct experience, as was the case in the Eleusinian Mysteries when a mown ear of grain was silently shown (Kerenyi 1991). In Hindu tantrism, this happens when Kundalini, due to the purification of the nadis, rises from the four-petaled Muladhara, its deity being Indra, mounted on the white elephant Airavata, or Ganesha, to Sahasrara, or the thousand-petaled lotus. Vegetation is the symbol of human ability to go beyond oneself during the celebration of Succoth. Whereas the walls of the succah are made of a solid immovable material, its roof is built of cut vegetable matter. Marc-Alain Ouaknin (Ouaknin 2000) points out the entire month of Tishri, in which Succoth takes place, is under the sign of *lamed*, the semantic root of all things related to study and teaching and the only Hebrew letter that, when written, goes beyond the top line. No wonder the Oriental tradition developed *selam*, a secret language of flowers; the term can well be applied to the figurative vistas of the analyzed stories. The coded bouquet of meanings acquires a cosmic dimension as love transcends time. The fact is captured iconically through reverse chronology, which is most blatantly manifested in *A Rose for Emily*, where the first scene is the conclusion to the plot, and in *Wild Swans* with its digressions (which slow down the plot and, in a way, cause Rose's orgasm to abate): the story of the undertaker; Cela McKinney and her husband; Mavis. *Something Special* employs flashback. When analyzing Ivan Bunin's short story *Gentle Breathing*, Lev Vygotsky (Vygotsky 2000) emphasized reverse chronology served to purify the “turbid water of life” and keep the reader's breathing gentle despite the tragic nature of the material (and the vacuum it leaves behind).

Along with this compositional device seeking to bring out the best in the reader, we can pinpoint other means that make this task practicable. Let us look at the protagonist. This is a fatherless (young) woman whose name has to do with vegetation and who is in search of love. The metaphor is quite conventional, but the way it is developed in the story could make a difference: the heroine stands no chance of growing, her epiphany always a fake and an opportunity for us (or/and the narrator) to find out why. The *flower* discourse reveals a world of binaries (in accordance with the metaphor LOVE IS WAR), which springs from the symbolic complex of the flower, the rose, in this case, materialized as female vs. male (slave vs. master), virgin vs. whore, daughter vs. mother, Thunder god (horse) vs. Devil (serpent/cat), winner vs. loser, father vs. husband, dynamics vs. statics, inner sun vs. outer black sun (moon), spring vs. winter, water vs. ice, plant vs. stone, air vs. vacuum, rich vs. poor, greedy vs. generous, love vs. lust, human vs. animal, absence of hair/teeth/vision vs. presence of hair/teeth/vision, words/poetry/singing vs. silence, oral tradition vs. written tradition, given vs. stolen, good grain vs. “wild

oats," poisonous vs. healing, dressed vs. naked, artificial vs. natural, life vs. death, and the task of "squaring the circle" is assigned to the protagonist, who, both "victim and accomplice," must descend into the underworld. The stories' sine qua non is the motif of weaving, which gives the protagonists the status of the Fates and makes the poetics of the story itself a crazy quilt of allusions, reminiscences, and intertextuality that covers a deeper truth.

## References

- Andersen, H. Ch. 1997. *The Complete Fairy Tales*. Ware: Wordsworth Editions.
- Biedermann, H. 1996. *Dictionary of Symbolism*. Ware: Wordsworth Editions.
- Faulkner W. 1995. "A Rose for Emily," *Fiction 100*. Eaglewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Fetterley, J. 1978. *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Fraser, J. G. 1994. *The Golden Bough*. London and New York: Oxford University
- Eleusis: Kerényi, C. 1991. *Eleusis: Archetypal Image of Mother and Daughter*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Munro, A. 1995. "Wild Swans", *Fiction 100*. Eaglewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Murdoch, I. 1995. "Something Special", *Fiction 100*. Eaglewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Online Etymology Dictionary*. Available: <http://etymonline.com> [2012, May 14]
- Ouaknin, M.A. 2000. *Symbols of Judaism*. New York: Assouline Publishing.
- Oxford English Dictionary* 2005 (for ABBYY Lingvo x3), Revised Edition. © Oxford University Press.
- Roob, A. 2001. *The Hermetic Museum: Alchemy and Mysticism*. Köln: Taschen.
- Vygotsky, L. 2000. *Psychology of Art*. Saint-Petersburg: Academia.

**A JOURNEY THROUGH  
LITERARY AMERICA**

## ELEMENTS OF TRAUMA FICTION IN THE 9/11 NOVEL

INGRIDA ŽINDŽIUVIENĖ  
Vytautas Magnus University

***Abstract:** The tragic events of September 11, 2001, and the aftermath resulted in the new genre – “9/11 literature.” The aim of the paper is to examine features of a trauma novel and to disclose elements of trauma fiction in some of 9/11 novels. The trauma of the United States of America, the main focus of these novels, often involves the personalized dimension. The article surveys different types of trauma narratives, questions the relationship between Fact and Fiction and discusses effects of this national trauma on the life of an individual and society.*

***Keywords:** 9/11 novel, trauma fiction, terrorism, destructive binary thinking, collective trauma, American society.*

### 1. Introduction

The representation of trauma in fiction often faces the danger of falling into the “Fact versus Fiction” trap. The readers of this type of fiction may search for the exact representation of his/her traumatic experience, expecting to find the discussion of the similar emotions and consequences. Thus, authors who take up the topic of collective traumas, face many challenges: these novels examine transpersonal dimension of collective memory that spreads beyond the individual and across an entire culture. A trauma novel includes a definite realistic and historical dimension, and is often based on documents and testimonies. The reader of this work of fiction, Dori Laub (1992:57) argues, becomes “a participant and co-owner of the traumatic event”. Literary representation of massive trauma evokes “mutual recognition of a shared knowledge” (Laub 1992: 64). According to Anne Whitehead (2004:3), “the desire among various cultural groups to represent or make visible specific historical instances of trauma has given rise to numerous important works of contemporary fiction”. In the trauma novel, the reconstruction of massive trauma becomes a process of restatement, during which the response to the work of fiction contains both, a personal and transpersonal dimension.

It is difficult to exactly predict the true scope of the ongoing and future effects of this traumatic experience or foresee the end of this so-called “transgenerational haunting” (Whitehead 2004:29). The “collective memory”, including both flashbulb memories and fiction, can in itself become a valuable object of history (Nora 2011: 303). Dominick LaCapra (2001: 15) observes that trauma fiction can “offer significant insights [...], suggesting lines of inquiry for the work of historians”. Reader-response criticism remains of significant value in the interpretation of trauma fiction. The “community of witnesses” includes several possible types of readers, when a present-day reader becomes “a learning witness” (Whitehead 2004: 8).

Grounded in the trauma theory of Cathy Caruth (1995, 1996), Dominick LaCapra (2001), Laurie Vickroy (2002), E. Ann Kaplan (2005), Anne Whitehead (2004, 2009), Pierre Nora (2011) and others, the article examines the representation of massive trauma in these 9/11 novels: Frédéric Beigbeder's *Windows on the World* (2003/2004), John Updike's *Terrorist* (2006), Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* (2007), Laila Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land* (2007), Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), Edward Rutherfurd's *New York* (2009) and Amy Waldman's, *The Submission* (2011). The selection of the novels was based on the international aspect of the representation of 9/11 events; however, *Windows on the World* by Frédéric Beigbeder, a French author, one of the first major works on this theme, was chosen because of its highly influential character: many of the later works on 9/11 (in the English language) included similar narrative techniques. Laila Halaby's and Mohsin Hamid's novels demonstrate the attitude of the Muslim community, while the narrative of a British author, Edward Rutherfurd, demonstrates a typical realistic dimension of trauma narratives. The chosen novels, different in their narrative form and style, demonstrate diverse fields of fictional representation of September 11, 2001 events.

## **2. Features of the Trauma Novel**

Trauma fiction is often based on the memories of experiencing a personal or collective traumatic event; thus, usually, the fictional narratives of collective traumas explore both personal and collective dimensions. A trauma narrative always includes both the reader, whose role may be that of a person in whom the victim/narrator confides or one with whom the victim/narrator shares the traumatic experience. Dori Laub (1992: 57) discusses the acknowledgement of the password, which signals the mutual recognition of shared knowledge. Often a direct reference to the setting (time and place) serves as a unifying password in the recognition of trauma.

The term "trauma novel" refers to a work of fiction that represents an emotional and/or cognitive response to profound loss, disaster, disruption, or devastations on the individual or collective level. Laurie Vickroy (2002: 4) states that trauma narrativists "sharpen victims' pain with readers, shifting between what can and cannot be revealed". Vickroy determines different approaches undertaken by trauma fiction writers: transfer of traumatic responses, an *informational* approach, or an *empathic* approach, since "literary texts can provide pathways for reader empathy" (2002: 21; emphasis mine). Analyzing stylistic devices in trauma fiction, Vickroy (2002: 30-32) emphasizes the use of symbols, metaphorical language, flashbacks, and elaboration of "the dynamic relationship between individual and collective memory" (2002: 33). Symbols, when carefully chosen, become a powerful tool in disclosing different dimensions of trauma. A trauma novel is based on different levels of the "affective memory" (Nora 2011: 307). Although different types of readers may possess different emotions, the degree of empathy is one of the factors in better understanding the scope and effects of the

traumatic event. Vickroy (2002: 183–185) points out dialogism (especially, the narrator-reader dimension) as a structural element of trauma fiction, which becomes particularly significant in describing historical traumas. Making a reader experience, or rather re-experience, a traumatic event, a trauma novel, in this case, turns a reader not only into a witness, but also into a victim of a wide-scope collective trauma.

An accurate representation of trauma can never be achieved without recreating the event. Tom Toremans (2003: 339) observes that the reference to a traumatic event is an “ethical charge” present as a code in the process of rethinking or restating trauma. Facts, or elements of referential truth, are emphasized in trauma fiction. In this way, readers and critics can gain access to extreme events and experiences.

In trauma fiction, the protagonist becomes “a historical marker to unspeakable experience” and “a marker for potential change if healed” (Vickroy 2002: xiii), who expresses a unique personal traumatic experience and may also function to represent and convey an event that was experienced by a group of people. The traumatized protagonist brings to awareness the specificity of individual trauma that is often connected to larger social factors and cultural values. Often the fictional figure magnifies a historical event in which thousands of people have suffered similar violence.

Consideration of the multiple models of trauma and memory presented in the trauma novel draws attention to the role of place, which functions to portray trauma’s effect through metaphoric and material means. Descriptions of the geographical place of traumatic experience may express a larger cultural context, while the physical environment offers an opportunity to examine both the personal and cultural history attached to the described landscape. Thus, in the trauma novel, the setting becomes a structural element that organizes the memory and meaning of trauma.

### **3. September the 11th as the Collective Trauma**

September 11, 2001 started a new period in literature and history: even current events have a tendency to be viewed through the prism of 9/11. The trauma that the United States of America experienced on September the 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 made a strong impact on the world community. The tragic events of that day and difficult aftermath have altered almost all the spheres of life, making everyone divide their lives into BEFORE and AFTER. The United States and the world entered the era of binary opposition: Us and the Other – “the sense of disarticulation we hear in the term ‘US and Them’ has never been so striking, at either end” (DeLillo 2001:2). People wanted to find coherent explanation of the catastrophe, which, according to Jeremy Green, resulted in “tragic realism” (2005: 94).

After the 9/11 attacks, US government and the President’s Administration established many agencies organizations, the main purpose of which was to fight with terrorism. However, often the ambiguity of political actions frightens the society, which results in psychological instability and social disintegration. Frank

Furedi (2006: 1) states that people “continue to live in a culture concerned with a multitude of fears. Anxiety about terror competes with fear of crime, incivility, global warming and various other routine, ambient worries”. This situation has resulted in the seclusion of ethnic communities and, especially, the isolation of Muslim communities or even inter-ethnic violence. The American society was confused and bewildered; it could not comprehend the catastrophe, despite the fact that mass media provided wide-ranging discussions about the tragic events. The trauma of the country has turned into the trauma of the whole world, becoming an ever-lasting stigmatic phenomenon.

#### **4. 9/11 Novels as Responses to Traumatic Experience**

September 11, 2001, a “universally shared [traumatic] event” inspired writers to “express their feelings about what had occurred”, so that readers could relate to the books “on a highly personal level” (Rufle 2008: 1). The fact that two prominent American authors, John Updike and Don DeLillo, one indirectly and the other directly, took up the task of discussing September the 11<sup>th</sup>, searching for possible answers and interpretations of the event, is in itself an important sign. Don DeLillo (2001: 7) observed that the event “was outside imagining even as it happened”. The world entered the era of moral and/or physical executions: designs for punishing the evil forces have been continuously elaborated, elements of binary opposition and segregation appeared in many societies, and instead of making attempts to understand, discuss or explain, the extremism of Islamic fundamentalists was echoed in the form of the so-called “western extremism” – demonizing Islam and Muslim traditions. A. G. Noorani (2002: 23) observes that “the Spectre of Islam continues to haunt very many in the media, in academia, in the arts and in scholarship [and] few care to free themselves from its thrall”. Interestingly, many contemporary authors have chosen this issue as a challenge: some tended to politicize their novels, while others expressed their wish to personalize the tragic event by placing the tragedy of the country within the boundaries of a single social unit, the family, and the microcosm of each person.

Frédéric Beigbeder, a French writer and literary critic, was one of the first to venture an international contribution to 9/11 fiction: his novel *Windows on the World* (2003; the English translation by Frank Wynne, 2004) deals with the multidimensional tragedy of the World Trade Center (WTC). Two plot lines and fragmented narration emphasize the fragility of human life and focus on the existential issues. Each chapter of the 120 short chapters of the novel represents a minute from 8:30 am, just before the moment the building is hit at 8:46 a.m., to 10:29 a.m., after the collapse of the WTC North Tower. “Windows on the World” was a famous 40,000 square foot restaurant near the top of the North Tower on the 107<sup>th</sup> floor. Thus, the restaurant “Windows on the World” becomes the main setting in Frédéric Beigbeder’s novel, which also keeps the name of the restaurant in the symbolic title of the novel (retained in the translated versions in many languages). The main character, Carthew Yorston, comes to the restaurant with his two sons for

breakfast just before the catastrophe. The tragic sense is reinforced at the very beginning of the novel: “You know how it ends: everybody dies. [...] The novelty of this story is that everyone dies at the same time in the same place” (Beigbeder 2005:1).

Frédéric Beigbeder uses the metaphor of the collapsed twin towers to describe the end of life as it had been before the events; in numerous flashforwards, he projects the aftermath – the situation often described in later *9/11* novels and discusses the society’s reaction to the tragic event. Belonging to a group of the first *9/11* novels, Beigbeder’s text, although much criticized for obliging the readers’ desires (Versluys 2009), complicated in genre, form and style, contributes to a better understanding of the features of the *9/11* genre.

John Updike’s novel *Terrorist* and Don DeLillo’s novel *Falling Man* represent the most distinct features of *9/11* novel, the most significant of which is the theme of destruction. The novels discuss similar problems, yet from different angles. Although stylistically different, both novels undertake the task of explaining and describing the nature, reasons and consequences of human destruction. The novel by John Updike presents a portrait of a young terrorist, trying to focus on the reasons for a terrorist act, its causes and outcomes (both physical and psychological). Similarly to many other Americans, John Updike searches for the answers to the questions: Who is guilty for the tragic event? Who or what makes people, like the main character of this novel, commit crimes? Updike admits that he “felt he could understand the animosity and hatred which an Islamic believer would have for our [American] system. Nobody’s trying to see it from that point of view” (in McGrath 2006: 1). With an astonishingly sensitive portrait of a terrorist, John Updike introduces a new character type in American fiction: a young inexperienced, but determined, terrorist.

Don DeLillo, a contemporary American author, directly discusses the tragic event and its consequences on a person’s life, putting emphasis on the visualization of the ruined area and drawing parallels between the ruined outer space and the destroyed inner world of the main character. In the novel *Falling Man*, the main character tries to regain his identity, which was shattered on September the 11<sup>th</sup>. He is a lonely brooding figure, walking along the debris of the traumatized New York: the rundown area represents his traumatic psychological state.

Laila Halaby, an American author of two novels (*West of Jordan* (2003) and *Once in a Promised Land* (2007)), belongs to a group of writers who demonstrate an opposite point of view, focusing on the aftermath of the traumatic event. Born in the mixed family of a Jordanian father and American mother in Beirut, Lebanon, Laila Halaby must have been aware of the estrangement that immediately after September 11 became a feature of the American society. In her novel *Once in a Promised Land*, the author describes the end of the American Dream for a couple from Jordan, whose idyllic American life finishes on September 11, 2001. Their family relationship and professional careers gradually deteriorate; they experience the American society’s antagonism; and, finally, they start questioning the purpose and essence of their life in the United States of

America in the turmoil of the 9/11 aftermath. In the novel, Laila Halaby raises social issues, discusses cultural displacement, denounces prejudices and sensitively describes an immigrant's life in post-9/11 America. In fact, the author personalizes the trauma of the country, showing the multilayered aspects of the event and its aftermath.

Similarly to Laila Halaby's portrayal of the aftermath situation, another author, Mohsin Hamid personalizes the traumatic event. His second novel, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), written in the monologue form of confession, explores the fear and suspicion that followed the 9/11 terroristic attacks. Using the method of "flashbulb memories", the author also presents the point of view of the Other and discusses the impact of 9/11 events on Arab identity, portraying a Pakistani man, Changez, who ardently confesses his immediate reaction to what has happened. In a straightforward way, the author of the novel discusses the outcomes of the "borrowed identity" (Mishra 2007: 5): the main character ponders on the duality of his identity in the aftermath of 9/11. Having chosen the form of a dramatic monologue, Hamid explores the deterioration of the American Dream and fight against American idols, discusses the strained relationship between East and West, discloses prejudices that rule the American society, speaks of inward transformation and, finally, questions the reversed forms of real fundamentalism.

Edward Rutherfurd's novel *New York* (2009) chronicles the existence of the city and describes in detail various events, 9/11 being one of them. Although this large-scope historical novel can only be partly linked to the group of 9/11 novels, the episode of the event demonstrates the informational approach. The journalistic style of the description of different moments of the memorable day and its aftermath is one of the significant features of the novel; Rutherfurd pays attention to the scene and the people's immediate reaction. Through his third-person narrator, the author conveys every world-wide known detail of the event and scrupulously recreates the scene, known both from the reminiscences of the witnesses and from numerous non-fictional representations of the day. Thus, Rutherfurd's novel offers an objective point of view, supplies the reader with information and rejects the personalized dimension.

Amy Waldman's novel *The Submission* (2011) appeared a decade after 9/11 and may be considered as a reply to the critics of 9/11 fiction who keep announcing the "death of the post-9/11 novel" (Shivani 2010: 1). Waldman, a former reporter for *The New York Times*, has picked up a recent topic: the decision of the authorities to build a memorial at the site of the tragedy. The main focus of the novel is the selection of the design for this memorial to the victims of September 11, 2001. Ironically, the author of the design who wins most of the jury's voices belongs to an American-born agnostic architect Mohammad Khan. Thus, the author seems to comply with the readers' expectations: alongside direct references to the event (the husband of the main character, Claire, was one of the victims), the aftermath and flashbulb memories, the discussion of the estrangement that rules the society, the consideration of the "Otherness", prejudice and hypocrisy – topics previously researched in earlier 9/11 novels – are the issues tackled in *The Submission*. The author concentrates on the still-existing wound of the country and

speaks of the country's loss: "They'd had all lost, of course – lost the sense that their nation was invulnerable; lost their city's most recognizable icons; maybe lost friends or acquaintances" (Waldman 2011: 3). The objective point of view intermingles with the recognizable subjective one, thus, illustrating the contradicting opinions and separatism in society: "The longer that space stayed clear, the more it became a symbol of defeat, of surrender, something for 'them,' whoever they were, to mock." (Waldman 2011: 4).

Similarly to earlier *9/11* novels, Waldman denounces the immediate reaction of many people in the aftermath of the event, and questions the still-existing vices of contemporary society – so recognizable and so frightening – discussing the impact of the 9/11 on the Americans' attitudes toward the Muslim and immigrant communities all over the United States. Although Amy Waldman may be accused of falling into the usual trap of complying with the reading audience's demands (something that many contemporary authors have been accused of), her novel reveals the emotional upheaval in the society that seems to be still lasting and exposes the still-bleeding wound of the country or the world.

## **5. Features of *9/11* Fiction**

Different literary interpretations of 9/11 and its aftermath demonstrate the scope of the impact of this period on the development of the novel. Emory Elliott (2006: 446) points out the fact that "American literature in the twenty-first century will be influenced by the events of that terrible day and by the ways that the United States government responded". Many critics agree that after the 9/11 events, a new era of literature has started. For example, in the article "Postmodernism and Islam: Where to after September 11," Akbar S. Ahmed (2007: 140) notices that "ideas and practice of multicultural harmony, eclecticism and juxtapositions [...] were halted in their tracks on 11 September 2001". The critic points out the symbolism "of the attack on the heart of the financial center of the Western world" and "the strike on the Pentagon, the heart of the military might of America," drawing a shocking conclusion: "postmodernism lay buried in the rubble on that fateful day" (Ahmed 2007: 140). Although the latter idea may be considered rather controversial, such opinion may demonstrate the significance of the event for different spheres of life and art. On the other hand, Ahmed's (2007:140) statement that "In many important ways September 11 was the day the new century began" is true: the tragic event initiated many irreversible changes in the American society and culture. The frustration and loss felt in the American society echoed in various forms of literary texts and crossed the boundaries of one country.

Adam Kirsch (2008: 1) points out that "The most powerful novels about September 11, 2001, in fact, may be those that treat the entire event in terms of parable, never mentioning the World Trade Center or Al Qaeda at all". Various forms of representation of the 9/11 demonstrate the necessity to cope with the outcomes of this traumatic event. According to Michael Rothberg (2009: 2), "what we need from *9/11* novels are cognitive maps [of] how US citizenship looks and

feels beyond the boundaries of the nation-state". In other words, readers expect to read about how Americans identify themselves with and how they understand "the Other". Authors of *9/11* fiction seek to present the reality of post-9/11 America without any embellishment, so that the reader is given a possibility to analyze the causes of 9/11 attacks, to comprehend the magnitude of the tragedy or even identify with the victims. Emphasizing the significance of personal surroundings, authors discuss human consciousness, moral values and attitude towards life and death, which may be approached in various ways: a description of the death of innocent people, who appeared in the wrong place at the wrong time; the focus on the emotional state of the victims' relatives, their thoughts and explanations; the death of terrorists, their reasons for choosing such destiny and their contemplations or detailed preparations for an act of terrorism.

One of the features of the *9/11* novel is the author's attempt to disclose a global conflict, which deals with the distinction between two different cultures, between obedience and faith versus American modernity and consumerism. A great number of novelists disclose the conflict between the American way of living and morality and the Islamic attitude towards culture, religion and jihad. Others choose to describe the contrast, focusing on the magnificence of modern buildings versus new images of run down areas. It can be stated that the *9/11* novel has been inspired by the social curiosity to understand what reasons led to the 9/11 catastrophe. Nadia Christelle (2007: 3) observes that readers of *9/11* literature "expect to read a meaningful story" and suggests that the readers expect to get answers to all their questions, as they believe that the book will solve all the problems and misunderstandings and would heal the wounds.

The theme of self-destruction often dominates in the *9/11* novels: the confusion felt in the society is transferred to the novel. The main character is sad, feeling lost in the society and disappointed by its moral values. The main hero is often lonely, misunderstood, seeking for answers to all his questions; he is different from the rest of society. Consequently, the inner conflict leads to self-destruction, which takes various forms: the outer destruction of the buildings becomes a replica of the inner destruction or identity crisis. However, the main character is usually described as having strong personal beliefs, and, in some texts, may even acquire a heroic dimension.

The *9/11* novel often includes criticism of the consumerist society and the overpowering role of the mass media. Novelists discuss social inequality, the lack of morality and harsh real-life situations. Thus, the aim of the *9/11* novel is to reveal the tragedy not only of one character, but of the society in general, that is to expose collective trauma. The images of the falling Towers and, later, their absence build up the imagination of the society and determine the possible attitudes to future events. The horrifying wound – the absent Twin Towers – was replaced, as Ann Kaplan (2005: 13) states, by "other images – of burning people jumping out of the Towers, of firemen rushing to rescue people [...] of the huge cloud of smoke". Mainly, these images become a part of the recollections of the witnesses and the relatives of the victims. Direct representations of the 9/11 attacks often appear in the novels – these representations are similar to the TV reports and documentaries.

The horror of watching the latest news (on September 11<sup>th</sup> and afterwards) is a frequent feature of the *9/11* novel.

The personalization of the 9/11 events – the emotional/empathic approach undertaken by the authors – contributes to the sense of reliability. Readers encounter narratives about losses and tragedies, very similar to their own. Alienation, doubt and estrangement in family, community and society relations are significant features of *9/11* literature. In *9/11* novels, family relationships are often stressful: family members cannot communicate with each other and are lonely and spiritually wounded.

The *9/11* novels create a sinister atmosphere: many of them offer a direct and realistic representation of 9/11 events. The fictionalization of the tragic events is prone to obvious dangers: readers expect truthful recounts of the events, exactly like those that they have experienced and would like to find in the novels. Thus, the dimension of referential truth still remains an unquestionable prerequisite for a *9/11* novel.

## **6. Conclusion**

The traumatic events of 9/11 have resulted in *9/11* fiction that contains both direct and indirect references to September 11, 2001. All the post 9/11 literary texts can be described according to their “closeness” to the events of 9/11. Issues described in the *9/11* novels demonstrate urgent problems of contemporary society: the novels expose the overall egocentricism of the American society, described in many ways and forms by contemporary authors, and disclose the present-day reality. Alongside the themes of terrorism or the degradation of the American society, the authors of the *9/11* novels often choose an informational approach.

By constructing different plot lines, characters and their identities, raising different issues and trying to solve urgent problems, some contemporary authors do not depart from the stereotypical recounts of the events or clichés of both victims and the representatives of the “Others” – which may be the result of meeting the reading audience’s expectations and complying with the readers’ demands. However, the attempts to solve seemingly still-unsolvable questions, emphasizing social, psychological and religious paradigms contribute to the long-lasting process of coping with this universal trauma. The personal dimension of the aftermath includes the ever-lasting search for one’s identity and the meaning of life. Ruins of the two towers may become the ruins of the personal life, when nothing is stable and everything is put on a chance, just as in a poker game in Don DeLillo’s novel *Falling Man*: two minutes of destruction turn into the never-ending state of deterioration.

The *9/11* novel has gone through significant transformation: from the central topic, September 11, 2001 has become a frame or a single occurrence in the plot, or even only an assumed reference. The novelists have emphasized the scene or have put a conscious distance between the historical events and literary forms, trying to build a counternarrative to the destructive narrative of the post 9/11 decade. Novels as the ones briefly discussed in this article demonstrate the

interplay between reality and fiction, emphasizing the existing fragile link between the two notions.

The following features stand out in the characterization of the 9/11 trauma novel: the author's approach (informational, emotional/empathic); the role of the protagonist, which symbolizes personal and collective trauma; a nonlinear and fragmented plot and language of the 9/11 novels, which echo the fragmented flashbulb memories and describe the present state of the country; a large amount of the referential truth and the fact-fiction dimension; and, lastly, the significance of the setting, which may serve as a password among the witnesses and readers.

## References

- Ahmed, A. S. 2007. "Postmodernism and Islam; where to after September 11?" in *Postmodernism. What Moment?* Pelagia Goulimari (ed.), Manchester: Manchester University Press, 140-145.
- Beigbeder, F. 2005. *Windows on the World*. Trans. Frank Wynne. London: Harper Perennial.
- Caruth, C. 1995. "Trauma and Experience: Introduction" in *Trauma. Explorations in Memory*. Cathy Caruth (ed.). Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 3-12.
- Caruth, C. 1996. *Unclaimed Experience. Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Christelle, N. 2007. "9/11, Literature, DeLillo, and Meaning". [Online]. Available at: [http://www.globalclashes.com/2007/05/911\\_literature\\_.html](http://www.globalclashes.com/2007/05/911_literature_.html) [2011, September 10].
- DeLillo, D. 2001. "In the Ruins of the Future." 22 December 2001. *Guardian*. [Online]. Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2001/dec/22/fiction.dondelillo> [2011, September 20].
- DeLillo, D. 2008. *Falling Man*. New York: Scribner, 2008.
- Elliott, E. 2006. "Society and the Novel in the Twentieth-century America" in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern American Culture*. Christopher Bigsby (ed). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 430-449.
- Furedi, F. 2006. "Five Years after 9/11: The Search for Meaning Goes on." [Online]. Available at: <http://www.spiked-online.com/index.php?/site/earticle/1603> [2012, February 11].
- Green, J. 2005. *Late Postmodernism. American Fiction at the Millennium*. New York: Palgrave.
- Halaby, L. 2007. *Once in a Promised Land*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Hamid, M. 2007. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. London: Penguin Books.
- Kaplan, E. A. 2005. *Trauma Culture. The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Kirsch, A. 2008. "Demons Inner and Outer." [Online]. Available at: <http://www.nysun.com/arts/demons-inner-and-outer/83262/> [2012, February 11].
- LaCapra, D. 2001. *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Laub, D. 1992. "Bearing Witness or the Vicissitudes of Listening" in *Testimony. Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub. New York: Routledge, 57-74.

- McGrath, Ch. 2006. "An Interview with John Updike. In 'Terrorist,' a Cautious Novelist Takes on a New Fear." *The New York Times*. May 31, 2006. [Online]. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/31/updi.html> [2011, September 20].
- Mishra, P. 2007. "The End of Innocence." *The Guardian*. 19 May 2007. [Online]. Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2007/may/19/fiction.martinamis> [2011, November 11].
- Noorani, A. G. 2002. *Islam and Jihad*. Prejudice versus Reality. London: Zed Books.
- Nora, P. 2011. *Présent, nation, mémoire*. Lonrai: Éditions Gallimard.
- Rothberg, M. 2009. "Netherland and the Notion of the Post-9/11 Novel." [Online]. Available at: [http://alh.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/pdf\\_extract/21/1/152?source=mfc&rss=1](http://alh.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/pdf_extract/21/1/152?source=mfc&rss=1) [2011, November 26].
- Rufle, L. 2008. "9/11 Fiction from Three Different Perspectives" [Online]. Available at: [http://literaryculture.suite101.com/article.cfm/911\\_fiction\\_from\\_three\\_different\\_perspectives](http://literaryculture.suite101.com/article.cfm/911_fiction_from_three_different_perspectives) [2012, March 10].
- Rutherford, E. 2009. *New York*. London: Arrow Books.
- Shivani, A. 2010. "Announcing the Death of the Post-9/11 Novel" 5 April 2010. [Online]. Available at: [http://www.nuffingtonpost.com/anis-shivani/announcing-the-death-of-t\\_b\\_525805.html](http://www.nuffingtonpost.com/anis-shivani/announcing-the-death-of-t_b_525805.html) [2012, September 11].
- Toremans, T. 2003. "Trauma Theory – Reading (and) Literary Theory in the Wake of Trauma" *European Journal of English Studies*, 7 (3): 333-351.
- Updike, J. 2007. *Terrorist*. London: Penguin Books, 2007.
- Versluys, K. 2009. *Out of the Blue. September 11 and the Novel*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009.
- Vickroy, L. 2002. *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.
- Waldman, A. 2011. *The Submission*. London: William Heinemann.
- Whitehead, A. 2004. *Trauma Fiction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Whitehead, A. 2009. *Memory*. London: Routledge.

# STEPS ACROSS THE COLOR LINE

CRISTINA CHEVEREȘAN

West University of Timișoara

**Abstract:** *In terms of blurring boundaries and defying social and cultural norms, (racial, class, even gender), “passing” stands out as a most interesting phenomenon. While acknowledging the fact that Charles Waddell Chesnut, James Weldon Johnson, or Jessie Redmon Fauset rank among the most prominent names to have captured it in their novels, the present paper will explore this problematic issue by focusing upon one of the most famous 20<sup>th</sup> century cases of fictional (de/re)construction of racial identities - Nella Larsen’s Passing.*

**Keywords:** *color(-line); identity; mulatto; passing; race.*

## 1. Introduction

In his 1997 *Neither Black, Nor White, Yet Both. Thematic Explorations of Interracial Literature*, among other equally fascinating topics - like the Curse of Ham, the calculus of color, the “tragic mulatto” -, Werner Sollors dedicates an entire chapter to the study of *passing* as a social phenomenon, which greatly influenced the literary production of a particular American epoch and milieu. In order to emphasize its importance, he starts by clarifying the term and its special use in the context of official and unofficial discourses as to the ongoing plight of the “near-white” population of the United States (but not necessarily restricted to this territory).

While Sollors does acknowledge the initial - rather general and neutral - meaning of the term ([it] “may refer to the crossing of any line that divides social groups”), he refers the reader to an entire line of seminal works on the African-American experience, which employ the term in a narrower, more specialized sense. Thus, he provides the working definition we shall use in the present paper and the necessary background to our analysis:

“Passing” is used most frequently as if it were short for “passing for white”, in the sense of “crossing over” the color line in the United States from the black to the white side [...] Though the camouflaging of aspects of one’s identity is probably a human universal, racial passing is particularly a phenomenon of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century. It thrived in modern systems in which, as a primary condition, social and geographic mobility prevailed, especially in environments such as cities or crowds that provided anonymity to individuals, permitting them to resort to imaginative role-playing in their self-representation (Sollors 1999: 247-248).

In accordance with Sollors’ argument, *passing* will be regarded in what follows as an integral part of the larger discourse on racial difference, involving both the ideas of veiling and pretense, and those of impersonation, performativity,

purposeful construction of the self to a profitable end. Ambivalence, ambiguity, doubling appear to be quasi-inevitable side effects of the African-American burden of “double consciousness”. The dilemmas of transgression, the inherent anxieties of racial constrictions and the difficulties which arise in the subjects’ efforts to comply with or defy social expectation, the gains and dangers of assuming a (not altogether) different persona all require careful examination, as they form the axis around which the plot of Nella Larsen’s unambiguously-entitled novel, *Passing*, revolves.

## 2. The (In)Visibility of Race

In order to better understand the topics addressed by Larsen’s second novel, one must bear in mind a whole range of issues connected to the history of African-Americans in the United States and to the fact that race, ethnicity and color have long been reasons why the members of this community have been treated as second-class citizens (if legally granted citizenship at all). The ineffectiveness and blatant injustice of such distinctions have made the object of innumerable essays and studies pointing at the ineffability and subjectivity of such criteria. Emotional or rationalizing, impulsive or thoroughly documented, reactions to the abasement, exploitation, denigration and discrimination of an entire community on account of its racial givens have grown throughout the centuries, culminating in the clearly articulated theses of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century thinkers, writers, social activists and politicians.

The issue of passing as presented in Nella Larsen’s novel has made the object of numerous critical debates, a considerable number of scholars having focused on its racial, class, and gender connotations. On June 5, 1929, an early review of Nella Larsen’s *Passing* put things into relevant perspective by placing the novel from the very beginning within a context that was evidently not new or unknown, but less frequently discussed than should have been the case. Aubrey Bowser pointed out that:

Mankind is divided into races by differences of color, features and hair. This is about the best that science can do, for science is concerned only with material things. Society is not satisfied with scientific distinctions, for it classes as Negroes many people who are whiter than those classed as Caucasians [...] Thus society makes a fool of itself. The ethnological distinction of race, though accurate enough in a physical sense and serviceable as a generalization, is a poor guide in dealing with questions of race as they are. Race is a matter of mind rather than body, of background rather than foreground (Bowser, qtd. in Kaplan (ed.), 2007: 94).

Thus, the reviewer called into question several essential elements of a long-lasting ideological confrontation, among which the fact that white dominant discourse had long resorted to presumably ‘scientific’, quantitative argumentation in order to secure and preserve its hegemonic position in an increasingly fragmented and questionable social hierarchy. Such approaches had been supported

by laws and regulations that facilitated the enforcement of a system based on otherness and difference, presented in terms of 'menacing alterities'. Springing from white attempts at countering any equal status claims on the part of the (former) subject population, many such rules illustrated the sheer absurdity of a mentality that equated individuals and numbers, and officialized the substitution of quantity for quality.

Many instances of the aforementioned kind have entered a large body of fiction and non-fiction works, and testify to the American nation's lingering resistance to a most necessary change of mentality. Nevertheless, we shall only refer to the most notorious cases. References to the "one-drop rule" go back to the post-Civil War era and the heyday of the Jim Crow laws, when the principle of "invisible blackness" was used to assign a lower social status to the offspring of mixed families. Gayle Wald's *Crossing the Line* talks about

the set of social and legislative practices that condition racial passing as both a social enterprise and a subject of cultural representation. Codified in the late nineteenth century, particularly in the years following Reconstruction, this rule designated as "black" any person seen as possessing even a single "drop" of "black blood," as determined by ancestry extending back (in theory, at least) an indeterminate number of generations [...] The binary logic of the one-drop rule mandated that if he were not "white", then he had to be "black" [...] By representing "whiteness" as the absence of the racial sign, it has perpetuated the myth of white purity (a chimera that colors contemporary liberal language of the "mixed-race offspring" or "interracial" marriages) (Wald 2000: 10-14, passim).

It is against this particular background that the story in Larsen's *Passing* is projected and meant to be understood and interpreted. Published in 1929, the novel plays heavily upon its contemporary readers' knowledge of recent history. As it presents the story of two African-American women whose lightness of skin allows each of them to embrace the racial affiliation of her choice, it retraces a whole vocabulary of bloodlines, which supposedly define and describe strict racial appurtenance. At a time when William Faulkner was working on some of his most dramatic characters – the famous octoroons that populate his best known and most accomplished stories of the Deep South -, Larsen equally meditates upon the "visibility" of race.

Such fictional interrogations of American realities at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century capture and debate upon the unreliability of the very governmental procedures that should have clarified matters. Emilie Hahn's 1929 analysis of the epoch's growing appetite for passing strategies ('Social and Economic Ambitions Lead Negroes to "Pass" at a Rate of 5,000 a Year to White Fold') outlines some of the policies that deepened the nation's confusion as to 'the color line':

In 1910 the Department of Commerce report stated: "The census's classification is necessarily based upon perceptibility, qualified by the ability of the enumerator to perceive." In other words, it is up to the census-taker to decide offhand just how much blood runs in the veins of a suspiciously high-yellow

citizen. The problem seems to have developed in complexity in the last few years, for, in 1890, the Government had much more definite ideas. "Be particularly careful," read the directions, "to distinguish between blacks, mulattoes, quadroons and octoroons. The word 'black' should be used to describe those persons who have three-fourths or more black blood; 'mulatto,' those persons who have three-eighths to five-eighths black blood; 'quadroons,' those persons who have one-fourth black blood, and 'octoroon,' those persons who have one-eighth or any trace of black blood [...] It all looks very pretty and scientific, but as a matter of fact the proposition is not so simple (Hahn, qtd. in Kaplan 2007: 118).

It is, in fact, the complexity of issues stemming from such intricate and completely superfluous categorizations that triggers the kind of fictionalization which Faulkner and Larsen made famous. By playing upon a set of stereotypical ideas and behaviors which had solidly inscribed themselves into the mental structures of the American nation, both authors choose protagonists whose fate is decided by the devious interplay of 'race' and 'color'. If Faulkner is more concerned with the evolution of male characters, whose racial ambiguity triggers individual, familial and communal misfortune (Charles Bon in *Absalom, Absalom!*, Joe Christmas in *Light in August*), Larsen chooses to bring to the fore female protagonists, whose interaction is all the more complex, as gender comes to complicate the social equation.

### **3. Protagonists, Antagonists**

Before investigating the text proper, one must acknowledge its belonging to a whole series of writings which, in time, brought to the fore the reality and illusion of passing as a social phenomenon. As Catherina Rottenberg emphasizes in her 2007 study on *Passing: 'Race, Identification and Desire'*,

In the second half of the nineteenth century, African-American writers such as William Wells Brown and Frances Harper began invoking the phenomenon of passing in their texts as a way of investigating the complexities and contradictions of the category of race in the United States. The light-enough-to-pass Negro (but usually Negress) would play a central role in the imagination of African-American writers for the next fifty years. Charles Chesnut's *The House behind the Cedars*, Jessie Faucet's *Plum Bun*, and James Weldon Johnson's *The Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man* are perhaps the best-known examples. Nella Larsen's 1929 novella [...] can thus be seen as inheritor and perpetuator of a long tradition of such narratives (2007: 490).

Descending from such solid and distinguished ancestry, the novel takes all the possible opportunities to expose and debate upon the dilemmas of passing, from various angles and perspectives. Larsen's protagonists are two African-American women of similar origins, yet different evolutions. Childhood friends, they are reunited after years of separation; as both their skins are light enough for them to pass for white, they have had the opportunity to build their identities, their

paths in life and society, their families and circles of friends and acquaintances accordingly. In terms of definit(iv)e choices, they have gone their separate ways. Clare Kendry has opted out of her race, married white, enjoyed all the benefits, yet craved for her roots and found herself discontent on 'the other side'. Irene Redfield identifies with the black community she is still immersed in, whose interests she seems quite concerned with.

Larsen labels her entire novel as a meditation upon community issues by opening with the Countée Cullen motto, "One three centuries removed/ From the scenes his fathers loved/ Spicy grove, cinnamon tree, What is Africa to me?" This is, indeed, "the double edged question both Clare Kendry, who is passing for white, and Irene Redfield, who is living a model life as a 'race woman' in Harlem, must face" (Rabin 2004: 125). Although each of them seems to have settled for a particular answer, ambiguity lingers and the book comes to gradually deconstruct the idea of binary opposites and clear-cut appurtenances.

Although many reviewers have seen Irene and Clare as antagonists, they are protagonists of the same story, whose power lines are dictated by cultural, legal and mental constraints. As Claire is the one whose passing is permanent and foregrounded as such, other minor instances or moments of temptation tend to go unnoticed. However, surprisingly enough given her rhetoric, the first one to be caught 'passing', no matter how briefly, is Irene herself. On the day she meets Clare again, she is having tea at a fancy downtown Chicago hotel, feeling uneasy under the supposed stranger's insistent gaze. Not only does she ask herself nervously whether anyone might suspect her being a Negro, she also meditates upon the paradoxical nature of her own condition:

Absurd! Impossible! White people were so stupid about such things for all that they usually asserted that they were able to tell: and by the most ridiculous means, finger-nails, palms of hands, shapes of ears, teeth and other equally silly rot. They always took her for an Italian, a Spaniard, a Mexican, or a gipsy. Never, when she was alone, had they even remotely seemed to suspect that she was a Negro. No, the woman sitting there staring at her couldn't possibly know. Nevertheless, Irene felt, in turn, anger, scorn, and fear slide over her. It wasn't that she was ashamed of being a Negro, or even of having it declared. It was the idea of being ejected from any place, even in the polite and tactful way in which Drayton would probably do it, that disturbed her (18/19)

By plunging into Irene's consciousness and allowing the reader to partake in her inner thoughts, Larsen offers insight into an ongoing history of cliché and abuse. She derisively outlines the physical arguments which supporters of 'visible blackness' were likely to use at the time and points out that such clues could easily be misleading, deeming judgment incorrect, if not altogether ridiculous. Moreover, reference is clearly made to the overwhelming pressure that Jim Crow laws exerted upon American citizens, by imposing the 'separate but equal' status to African-Americans for almost a century after the Civil War (approximately 1870s-1960s). Placed in such a context, passing stands out as a kind of resistance, a predictable outcome of unfair social treatment.

One of the things that are clear from the very beginning in the two women's conversation is the fact that passing, no matter how obvious or well-known, is and must be treated as a taboo subject. Irene very clearly remembers Clare's departure from the black community after her father's death, just as she recalls the rumors after her disappearance from her West Side relatives' home. They all spoke of the young woman being seen in fashionable urban locations, in the company of well-off and, more importantly, *white* men. Her former peers' reactions to such allegations are quite telling, as they cannot help but judge such behavior quite harshly. Although the society of the time does not allow any straightforward remarks, allusions to the immorality of Clare's sudden upward mobility are transparent: "Working indeed! People didn't take their servants to the Shelby for dinner. Certainly not all dressed up like that"(26).

While Irene shares with Clare every notable thing about her adult life – her marriage, her two sons, her relocation to New York -, she initially gets no information from her former friend and thinks it best not to require any: "If things with Clare were as she – as they all – had suspected, wouldn't it be more tactful to seem to forget to inquire how she had spent those twelve years?" (32). The implicit silence and the complicit forgetfulness indicate the potential dangers of being found out and exposed as a social 'fraud'. Clare's reaction to Irene's impulsive invitation to visit her and her family falls into the same pattern of desire and repression imposed by the illicitness of her situation: "I couldn't. I mustn't, you see. It wouldn't do at all. I'm sure you understand. I'm simply crazy to go but I can't" (35).

#### **4. Fabricated Lives**

The length to which the character goes to protect her fabricated identity is illustrative of the extent of racial passing during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Sociologist Juanita Ellsworth analyzed the profile and motivation of '*White Negroes*' in a 1928 article, considering that the individuals' informal claims to membership in a different race had clear-cut explanations: "The economic advantage that comes from 'passing' is great; it is sometimes the chief reason for deliberately seeking the transition from one race to another" (2007: 109). Similarly, Elaine K. Ginsberg emphasizes the essential part discrimination played in the whole mental and physical process of transition:

In American history, race, sex, and gender have been inextricably linked, first through a system of slavery that placed white men in control of the productive labor of black men and the productive and reproductive labor of both black and white women, and then nationally through an economic and political system and a cultural ideology that established a fundamentally racist and sexist hierarchy of privilege and oppression (1996: 5).

Privilege and the lack of it lie at the basis of inequity and the various kinds of attempts to supplant it. Larsen does not content herself with presenting the mere

existence of such social experiments; the two friends' exchanges, increasingly casual as the conversation unfolds, offer her the perfect opportunity to voice the dilemmas of both passing and non-passing Negroes. On the one hand, Irene is curious as to the practical aspects of "this hazardous business" (36) which involves severing all ties to a past that, once discovered, will inevitably equal disgrace and loss of the fraudulently acquired status. "What, for example, one did about background, how one accounted for oneself. And how one felt when one came into contact with other Negroes" (37).

On the other hand, Clare seems surprised that many of her peers, who could have easily passed for white, have never chosen to do so, although it is "such a frightfully easy thing to do [...], all that's needed is a little nerve" (37). Larsen proves a true connoisseur of the mechanisms and rhetoric of passing, having her protagonists articulate a whole range of issues connected to plausibility, authenticity, respectability, imagination, poise as necessary elements in what ends up being a masterful game of illusions. Identity as performance is central to the (de)construction of race which Clare embodies.

Her personal story is as fascinating as it is appalling, given the fact that it is based on a string of lies told to the closest people around: the aunts that took her in and the boy next door, whom she hastily ran off with and married. When Irene bluntly states that she has never thought of passing, as she has everything she wants, save for, perhaps, "a little more money", Clare points out that it is precisely financial advantages that make the process appealing to a considerable number of people: "That's what everybody wants, just a little more money, even the people who have it. And I must say I don't blame them. Money's awfully nice to have. In fact, all things considered, I think, 'Rene, that it's even worth the price" (44).

While talking about expectation and compromise, Larsen distinguishes herself from other African-American writers by the playful undertones of her text, by the characters' awareness of the fact that, although determined by concrete social factors and easily blamable on them, passing remains an instance of impersonation. This quiet crossing of the racial border, this shortcut to social acceptance and its subsequent benefits, is most certainly double-edged: simultaneously a gesture of courage and a betrayal, a defiant step across the line and an acknowledgement of the line's very existence.

The true dimension of social prejudice and discrimination is brought to the reader's attention when Clare's husband steps into the picture. Not only is the New York businessman strikingly white ("unhealthy looking dough-coloured face" – 66), but also outspokenly and bluntly biased when it comes to skin color and the "flaws" it, supposedly, entails.

This assumption of whiteness is dramatically exposed when Irene first encounters Jack Bellew, Clare's racist husband. The tea party to which Clare invites Irene after their reencounter includes three women: Clare, Irene, and Gertrude. All three women are light enough to pass. Although Clare is the only one who has completely 'passed over', Bellew, who claims to know a 'nigger' when he sees one, does not for a moment entertain the idea that one of the women

sitting with his wife might be 'black'. He therefore feels perfectly comfortable acknowledging that he doesn't dislike niggers but rather hates them. 'They give me the creeps', he admits, adding, 'the black scrimy devils'. It appears that American racial classification assumes 'that racial identity marks the subject in the form of absence or presence of color.' In other words, racial identity and classification seem to be constituted through skin color (Rottenberg 2007: 494).

Larsen successfully combines the suspense that Clare's nickname ("Nig") creates (her friends begin to wonder whether her husband actually knows about her black ancestry and does not mind it), with the inherent humor of the situation. Apart from the fact that John is completely unsuspecting of the undesirable company he finds himself in and exhibits his prejudices at ease, the absurdity of his behavior echoes the frequently encountered and already mentioned discourses of race:

When we were first married, she was as white as – as – well as white as a lily. But I declare she's getting' darker and darker. I tell her if she don't look out, she'll wake up one of these days and find she's turned into a nigger" [...] Clare handed her husband his tea and laid her hand on his arm with an affectionate little gesture. Speaking with confidence as well as with amusement, she said: "My goodness, Jack! What difference would it make if, after all these years, you were to find out that I was one or two percent coloured?"

Bellew put his hand in a repudiating fling, definite and final. "Oh, no, nig," he declared: nothing like that with me. I know you're no nigger, so it's all right. You can get as black as you please as far as I'm concerned, since I know you're no nigger. I draw the line at that. No niggers in my family. Never have been and never will be." (67/68)

Larsen obviously mocks the widespread rhetoric of race and the color line, and she goes even further than that when she has Irene ask the determined detractor of African-Americans whether he has met any representatives of the community he discretionarily abhors. His answer is all the more remarkable as it expresses a sad reality: "Thank the Lord, no! And never expect to! But I know people who've known them, better than they know their black selves. And I read in the papers about them. Always robbing and killing people" (70). One can easily recognize the patterns of stereotypical thinking that have – disturbingly often - shaped the modern world; particular attention is drawn to the importance of the media and public discourse in the steering – or, more often than not, manipulation – of public opinion.

John Bellew is the proud representative of white supremacists who base their attitudes on hear-say and the alleged superiority of one race as compared to another. To complicate things even further, Larsen draws a love triangle, making Irene and Clare compete for the affection of the former's husband. While the suspicious wife would want nothing more than to have her childhood friend out of her life, she cannot reveal the terrible secret. It is at this point that race comes forth as the true topic, around which everything in the story revolves. It is what defines and constrains the protagonists, what critically unites and separates them:

She was caught between two allegiances, different, yet the same. Herself. Her race. Race! The thing that bound and suffocated her. Whatever steps she took, or if she took none at all, something would be crushed. A person or the race. Clare, herself, or the race. Or, it might be, all three [...] She was unable to disregard the burden of race. It was, she cried silently, enough to suffer as a woman, an individual, on one's own account, without having to suffer for the race as well. It was a brutality, and undeserved. Surely, no other people so cursed as Ham's dark children (181).

## 5. Conclusion

By exposing Irene's hesitations and moral dilemmas in such a manner, the author makes allusion to the burden of "double consciousness" that W.E.B. du Bois had earlier described as typical of African-American consciousness.<sup>1</sup> While Du Bois deplored the plight of the "American Negro", forced to reconcile an African heritage with an American upbringing, Nella Larsen chooses to take things one step further than the mere color-line, also introducing gender and romance into her intricate story of passing. The outcome is, quite predictably, tragic, as it is predicated on the complex challenges of what the society never fully ceases to label as "otherness".

Nella Larsen exposes the traps of institutional discourses: those of marriage, race, gender, sexuality, class, and the nation. Each is only a temporary solution for the radical alterity of her characters (Keresztesi 2005: 49).

By resorting to a variety of characters and situations, the author crosses lines, challenges clichés, forces the reader to think outside the box of binary oppositions and expands the existing paradigms of racial determinations. Taking into account the moment at which the novel was published, one cannot help but emphasize its boldness and insightfulness, as well as its value insofar as it attracts attention to a phenomenon that had transformed the age into a risky, fascinating and questionable game of masks and identities.

## References

- Bowser, A. 2007. 'The Cat Came Back' in *Nella Larsen. Passing*. C. Kaplan (ed.). New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, pp. 94-96.
- Cutter, M. J. 1996. 'Sliding Significations: Passing as a Narrative and Textual Strategy in Nella Larsen's Fiction' in *Passing and the Fictions of Identity*. E. K. Ginsberg (ed.). Durham and London: Duke University Press, pp. 75-100.

---

<sup>1</sup> W.E.B. du Bois: American sociologist, historian, civil rights activist, author of a series of essential works in African-American literature. The essays in his 1903 *The Souls of Black Folk* revolve around the twofold nature of African-American identity, seen both as a historical burden and as a potential cultural advantage.

- Ellsworth, J. 2007. 'From White Negroes' in *Nella Larsen. Passing*. C. Kaplan (ed.). New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, pp. 109-111.
- Ginsberg, E. K. (ed.). 1996. *Passing and the Fictions of Identity*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Ginsberg, E. 1996. 'Introduction: The Politics of Passing' in *Passing and the Fictions of Identity*. E. K. Ginsberg (ed.). Durham and London: Duke University Press, pp. 1-18.
- Hahn, E. 2007. 'Crossing the Color Line. Social and Economic Ambitions Lead Negroes to "Pass" at Rate of 5,000 a Year to White Fold' in *Nella Larsen. Passing*. C. Kaplan (ed.). New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, pp. 117-120.
- Hutchinson, G. 2006. *In Search of Nella Larsen. A Biography of the Color Line*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Kaplan, Carla (ed.). 2007. *Nella Larsen. Passing*. A Norton Critical Edition, New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Keresztesi, R. 2005. *Strangers at Home. American Ethnic Modernism between the World Wars*. Lincoln and Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Larsen, N. 1990. *Passing*. Salem, New Hampshire: Aver Company Publishers.
- Rabin, J. G. 2004. *Surviving the Crossing. (Im)migration, Ethnicity, and Gender in Willa Cather, Gertrude Stein, and Nella Larsen*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Rottenberg, C. 2007. 'Passing: Race, Identification, and Desire'. *Nella Larsen. Passing*. C. Kaplan (ed.). New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, pp. 489-507.
- Sollors, W. 1999. *Neither Black, Nor White, Yet Both. Thematic Explorations of Interracial Literature*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Stringer, D. 2010. *"Not Even Past". Race, Historical Trauma and Subjectivity in Faulkner, Larsen, and VanVechten*. Fordham University Press.
- Wald, G. 2000. *Crossing the Line. Racial Passing in Twentieth-Century U.S. Literature and Culture*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

# THE AMBIVALENT ROLE OF THE BLACK FAMILY IN RICHARD WRIGHT'S MAJOR WRITINGS

MATEA BUTKOVIĆ  
University of Rijeka, Croatia

*Abstract:* In the early twentieth century, the legacy of slavery greatly contributed to the problem of social dislocation of African Americans and it affected the bonds between family members. The family social structure shifted from the nuclear to the extended family, as single parents struggled under the burden of racism. In this article, Richard Wright's portrayal of the black family in his novels will be analyzed as a place of refuge from the oppressive environment but also as a source of destruction and restriction.

*Keywords:* African-American family structure, poverty, racism, social invisibility

## 1. Introduction

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the burden of racism and the social restrictions deeply affected the relationship between husbands and wives as the feeling of inequality and limited opportunities undermined men's roles as fathers and husbands. When compared to the white families and in relation to the turn of the century African-American family structure, "African-American women were more likely to become parents, bear children as teenagers, have out-of-wedlock births, remain single, experience marital disruption if ever married and remain unmarried if separated or divorced" (Morgan et al. 1993:799), and as a direct result of this, "African-American children were much more likely than white children to live in female-headed households or in a household without either parent" (Morgan et. al. 1993:800). According to an analysis of the 1910 census, "black mothers with children were more than three times as likely to be living without a male partner in the household as were white mothers with children, [and] black children were more often raised by kin other than their parents, even when the parents were still alive" (Cherlin 1992:109-110). Inevitably, the relatives became a support system as well as a form of replacement for the missing parent. Research showed that extended households were more common among families headed by single females (Anderson and Allen 1984:11), which was attributed to the mother's greater economic needs.

It is these tribulations of everyday African-American life that Richard Wright, the first black best-selling author in American history and one of the leading writers of a powerful protest fiction of the World War II era, portrayed in his major writings which won him international acclaim. In his novels *Native Son* (1940), *Black Boy* (1945) and *The Outsider* (1953), he portrayed the discrimination which was deeply rooted in the American everyday life during the first half of the twentieth century and, by covering the period of two largest migratory movements to the North, he depicted the fragility of family bonds which were deeply affected

by the seemingly unavoidable discrimination, making the family both a refuge from social oppression and the very center of the loss of family values. This is an aspect which is crucial for the understanding of the complex familial relationships within the African-American community as well as of its impact on the overall African-American literary production during the Jim Crow era. However, this has not been emphasized enough in the case of Richard Wright's novels. Instead, scholarly research has placed an emphasis on the existentialist philosophy which influenced his fictional writing (Elkholy 2007, Carson 2008, Hogue 2009), as well as on his harsh criticism of racism in the United States (Wilson 2005, Davis 2009, Tuhkanen 2010).

## **2. Psychological alienation as a means of overcoming social invisibility**

Published in 1940, *Native Son* was an immediate success. It was the first novel written by an African American to be designated the book-of-the-month and has since then often been considered as "the foremost work of African-American fiction and one of the key American novels of the century" (Brivic 1974:231), as well as "a document of social protest" (Tuttleton 1992:267), and "the finest novel yet written by an American Negro" (Poore 1995:25). The naturalistic approach to *Native Son* provides an account of how economic and social obstacles directed at specific ethnic groups can lead to the destruction of family values - inability of accepting other men as father figures or even forming stable relationships with women. Here, Wright managed to evoke sympathy and understanding for the hardships of the black families who struggled to make ends meet in the poverty stricken slums of Chicago. When compared to his later works of fiction, *Native Son* can be considered as an introductory attempt at depicting the black family's sufferings, one of the crucial themes in Wright's fiction, which was further elaborated on in greater detail in his subsequent major novels, *Black Boy* and *The Outsider*.

*Native Son*, written entirely from the perspective of the protagonist using the stream of consciousness technique, which provides "a richer illusion of reality," as Wright (1972:36) noted in his introduction to the novel, tells the story of Bigger Thomas, a deprived young man, living in a rat-infested tenement in the Black Belt of Chicago, with his mother and siblings. He is a product of the segregationist Southern policies, his life being characterized by utter poverty, fear of their oppressive environment and violence, which resulted in his father being killed in a riot in the South.

What virtually all of Wright's protagonists demonstrate is a harsh discrepancy between their inner world and the impression they give of themselves when openly expressing their feelings. On the surface, Bigger is aggressive and selfish, pretending not to be interested in providing moral comfort or financial aid to his family. The inescapable poverty in which his family found itself and its dependence on public charity, due to the social and mobility restrictions imposed on African Americans after the first great migratory movement to the North, make

Bigger feel bitter and reserved towards his family members. The inability to help his family as well as to help himself is what drives him further away from them. Home is not a place of refuge or comfort, but a painful reminder of the deeply rooted poverty and limited opportunities:

[H]e hated his family because he knew that they were suffering and that he was powerless to help them. He knew that the moment he allowed himself to feel to its fullness how they both lived, the shame and misery of their lives, he would be swept out of himself with fear and despair. (Wright 1972:48)

His relationship with his mother and siblings is a superficial one and verbalizing the compassion for the same fate that his mother and siblings share seems out of the question. However, on the inside he is suffering greatly, and is struggling to come to terms with his fate as a social outcast. His description of his sister proves his recognition of the effect poverty had on his sister:

she seemed to be shrinking from life in every gesture she made. The very manner in which she sat showed a fear so deep as to be an organic part of her: she carried the food to her mouth in tiny bits, as if dreading it's choking her, or fearing that it would give out too quickly. (Wright 1972:147)

At the age of twenty, Bigger is faced with a death sentence for having killed a rich young white girl. The burden of racism appears unbearable and the only plausible coping mechanism seems to be violence. The murder might not have been planned, but it seems to have been inevitable, since his hatred of the Whites is profound enough to go through with it without feeling remorse. The murder was both an accident and also a subconscious reaction to a life spent in misery. In the final hours of his life, Bigger realizes just how much his actions have affected not only his own life, but his family as well. His sister Vera drops out of school because her classmates make her feel ashamed of Bigger's actions and the family loses the public charity.

However, in his end, Bigger finally realizes that in a family, one is never alone:

He had lived and acted on the assumption that he was alone and now he saw that he had not been. What he had done made others suffer. No matter how much he would long for them to forget him, they would not be able to. His family was a part of him, not only in blood, but in spirit. (Wright 1972:336)

Despite all he had done, his family is still hopeful that his life will be spared and that one day, they will be together again.

No matter what happens to us here, we can be together in God's heaven. (Wright 1972:337)

### 3. Absence of a father figure

In the opening pages of his autobiographical novel, *Black Boy: A Record of Childhood and Youth* (1945), which is to this day considered as one of the most important accounts of the black experience in the United States, Wright focuses on the impact which the absence of the father had on the black family and he sets the tone of the relationship between children and their parents of that time. According to Green (2009:47), this work seems to be Wright's "attempt to address his feelings about his father as the foundation for the feelings that emerge in his life after his father leaves." It is in these opening pages that we notice a recurring motif: the absent father and the strict yet always present mother. It is the mother who is mentioned repeatedly as being the one who worries, scolds and punishes. The father, on the other hand, partakes rather reluctantly in his children's upbringing, being neither the punisher nor the supportive parent. Throughout the novel, the father's absence is not the dominant motif but rather the effect of his absence on the family.

Little Richard's descriptions of his father are hardly ever detached from the context of a food provider who should be respected at all costs:

He worked as a night porter in a Beale Street drugstore and he became important and forbidding to me only when I learned that I could not make noise when he was sleeping in the daytime. He was the lawgiver in our family and I never laughed in his presence. (Wright 2005:10)

At the same time, his words contain profound scorn and bitterness which reflect his attitude towards the high authority that a man in the house seems to represent but also towards the entire social structure which provides the grounds for his hunger – both physical and emotional. He used to stare at his father in awe as the latter

gulped his beer from a tin bucket, as he ate long and heavily, sighed, belched, closed his eyes to nod on a stuffed belly. He was quite fat and his bloated stomach always lapped over his belt. (Wright 2005:10)

The correlation between food and the father figure in Wright's accounts of his childhood is clearly traceable. Here, the socially accepted role of a father is that of food provider. The role of the mother, on the other hand, is to raise the children and to be dependent upon her husband. Little Richard clearly states his feelings towards his father when he says that "he was always a stranger to me, always somehow alien and remote." (Wright 2005:10) A close father and son relationship is virtually non-existent in the family and it leaves Richard feeling bitter and alone. Nathaniel Wright is never mentioned in the context of a loving father who voluntarily spends time with his children nor does he interact with them, unless utterly necessary. In fact, the only communication he seems to have with Richard is when he scolds or beats him.

Young Richard's feeling of emotional rejection from his father is likely the beginning of the "I" that always seems alone and at odds with his family. (Green 2009:47)

Wright introduces the absence of the father subtly through Richard's hunger, i.e. lack of food in the household. The father has abandoned the family, but no reason is given for it, no foreshadowing so as to understand why this has occurred, and now the family needs to find new ways to survive.

Hunger had always been more or less at my elbow when I played, but now I began to wake up at night to find hunger standing at my bedside, staring at me gauntly" (Wright 2005:14),

Although he was used to never having enough to eat even with the father present, this time it is different, the hunger is physical and permanent just like the abandonment by his father is.

I would grow dizzy and my vision would dim. I became less active in my play, and for the first time in my life I had to pause and think of what was happening to me. (Wright 2005: 15)

Gary and Leadshore (in Hudgins et al. 1990:13) consider the institutional racism to be responsible for such a turn of events. Although the father's absence is not uniquely attributed to the African American community, but is rather one which affects families regardless of their ethnic background, in this novel Wright clearly states that it was a common occurrence in his childhood and that he wasn't the only child to be growing up without his biological father. From his accounts it is observable that entire groups of children were roaming the streets aimlessly, without proper supervision, abandoned by their parents or mothers for the day. Nathaniel Wright, a freed sharecropper, son of enslaved parents, abandoned his family for another woman, but possibly also because he could no longer carry the burden of a family man struggling to survive in a racist environment, saturated with economic barriers for African Americans. He turned his back on his wife and children and permanently dislocated himself from their lives.

Since the father is gone, Ella Wright is now the one who has to take over the responsibility to provide for the family, she is now the mother and the father to her children and has no man in her life who could complement what she does. Regardless of the fact that Richard repeatedly mentions the mother in the context of punishment, it is her presence that he could always rely on and she represents the only reliable constant in his childhood and a tight bond which seems to exist between mothers and their sons within the black community recurs in all of Wright's major novels. The mother is the one that knows Richard best and the one person he would grow emotionally dependent on even in his adulthood. According to S. Philip Morgan et al. (1993:799), children at the time were "more likely to

live in mother-headed households”, although the father might have been more capable of providing a financially safe upbringing.

The children’s maturing process is accelerated, as they need to learn how to take care of themselves and it is this physical abandonment by the father that strikes Richard the most. It is a turning point in his life and one which will require of him to take over the role of family protector, as he is the older one of the two sons:

His responsibility to feed his family is a reminder that his father is gone and that he must fill the void of his father’s absence. (Green 2009:48)

Much as Ella’s role of a mother is important to her children’s emotional and social development, there are still “limitations to a mother’s sphere of influence. She can give all of herself and still come up short.” (Barras 2000:52). Although Ella Wright willingly takes over the role of both parents, she cannot substitute the father part of parenting. Nathaniel Wright is the one who should be giving his sons the advice necessary for them to survive in the hostile society and he is the one who should be teaching them the lessons of manhood. At least that is something Ella Wright cannot give them. A mother and a father play two different yet equally important roles which complement each other and which are essential for a child’s emotional and behavioral development.

#### **4. Violence within the black family**

In *The Outsider* (1953), Wright not only focused on the overall position of the black family in America, but he also introduced violence as a part of the husband-wife relationship within the black community. In this novel, Wright developed almost an extension of Bigger Thomas. Cross Damon appears to be what Bigger would have been had he not committed crimes in his youth. Cross feels both physically and emotionally outside of the American society. He is an outcast who cannot live freely or unburdened by the racialized social norms. The limitations imposed on his race lead him to develop an internal rather than an external conflict as it was the case with Bigger Thomas and his social dislocation and invisibility make him ponder on the existentialist premises regarding the meaning of life and freedom. He feels alone, unable to find comfort in the outside world and religion. Cross Damon’s life is characterized by adultery, impulse acts of violence and escapes from apparently inescapable obstacles as well as from his own family.

To Cross, as it was the case with Bigger, family comes second as the invisibility of his race becomes the focal point of his existence and this in the end prevents him from performing his roles as son, husband and father. He feels trapped and unable to comply with the norms of his surroundings and therefore escape seems the only logical solution to his problems.

Wright’s protagonists can always be seen from two perspectives – the way they are seen by others and the way they wish themselves to be seen. This

kind of double vision or ambivalence is what Du Bois called “double consciousness”. (Wright 1993:xxiv)

This duality of character reflects the reasoning behind Cross’s past and future decisions but a closer examination of this duality enables an insight into his personal relationships with his family members. A recurring pattern emerges yet again – the present mother and the absent father, this time, however, this imbalance in the family works on two levels – Cross grew up without a father and now he willingly abandons his own children.

The relationship between Cross and his mother is a close one.

As her son, he was much too close, much too warm toward her and much too cold. To keep her life from crushing his own, he had slain the sense of her in his heart and at the same time had clung frantically to his memory of that sense. (Wright 1993:21)

Although she is his harshest critic, he describes her with utmost sympathy and affection. Just as in *Black Boy* and *Native Son*, the mother represents stability, selfless love and sacrifice. No woman throughout the novel is described in such gentle and compassionate terms as the mother,

she appeared to have shrunken a bit more; and he knew that it was her chronic fretting, her always tearing at her emotions that was whitening the hairs of her head, deepening the lines in her face, and accentuating the stoop of her back. (Wright 1993:23)

Cross’s old mother lost her husband years ago when Cross was a little boy. The marriage couldn’t work because she was just one of the many women her husband was seeing during World War I, when he was a soldier. She believed their love was real, followed him from one camp to another, yet in his eyes she was just a worrisome wife who was in his way. A year into their marriage, during her pregnancy with Cross, he was found severely wounded after a drunken street fight in Harlem and died soon after in an army hospital. Cross, having fathered three children himself with his wife Gladys and another one with his underage girlfriend Dot, willingly abandons his children because he cannot cope with the responsibility of his actions. As if history were repeating itself, he echoes his father’s actions.

Cross is a modern man who thinks critically about social issues which concern his race and is able to engage into complex discussions on the political matters of his time. However, he is also a man who will not hesitate to raise his hand on a woman and even commit murder and, as the plot unfolds, it becomes evident that murder to him signifies “an act of freedom, performed in the interest of continued freedom.” (Ford 1953:91) Cross commits adultery and, once his wife finds out, he deals with it by beating her up. “He slapped her furiously and she went down like a log” (Wright 1993:81), after which he nonchalantly goes off to have drinks with his friends at a local bar. He never shows signs of remorse for

willingly abandoning her and their children. The pressure instigated by Gladys and the revelation that his underage girlfriend is pregnant cause him to contemplate escape as the only means of starting up a new life. Similarly to Nathaniel Wright who willingly abandoned his children and Bigger Thomas who disregarded his family's financial needs, Cross Damon takes the first opportunity he gets and turns his back on his familial responsibility in search of a new start. He switches his identity with that of a black man's whose body is unrecognizable after a crash and seizes the opportunity to abandon the city. Yet the memories of his old mother make him he go back, one last time, in hope of catching a glimpse of her:

at quarter to eleven she came out, dressed in black, her face hidden by a veil, and packed her way gingerly over the deep snow toward her church some two blocks away. Cross felt hot tears stinging his cheeks for the first time since his childhood. He longed to run to her, fall on his knees in the snow and clasp her to him, begging her forgiveness. His poor, sad, baffled old Mama..." (Wright 1993:123)

The only one he truly regrets not seeing one last time is his mother and occasionally, his children and Dot:

He yearned for just one more glimpse of his mother, his three sons, he hungered for just one more embrace with Dot... (Wright 1993:114)

However, Cross does not see Dot in terms of a possible future wife, just as Bigger didn't see Bessie as his potential wife either. He regards her as a woman who is capable of taking advantage of him and "would try to wring out a simple act of compassion a promise of marriage" (Wright 1993:54), because marriage denotes a commitment he cannot deliver just as his father couldn't.

## **5. Conclusion**

Although physically a member of the American society of that time, psychologically Richard Wright felt as an outsider hoping in vain, like many other African Americans of his time, to be fully accepted into his own country. His revolt against the oppressive white world is expressed best through his characters. They are all victimized individuals who through their actions convey a bitter criticism of the society which had for centuries encouraged racial injustice, as well as outsiders in the white world, but who try to prove both to themselves and to their discriminatory surroundings that African Americans deserve an opportunity to be treated as equal members of the American society. His fiction is always focused on the psychological motivations and sociological background which drive his plots." (Ward and Butler 2008:99)

In *Native Son*, *Black Boy* and *The Outsider*, which had turned Wrights into a worldwide success, he not only managed to shed the light on the apparently insurmountable interracial strife in both the southern as well the northern parts of

the United States, he also brought to attention the impact which the racist environment had on the black family of that time. In his narratives, it is observable just in what form the societal oppression manifested itself with regard to the black family of the twentieth century – broken homes, high levels of poverty and the mother’s losing the battle to fill the void of the missing father.

In these novels, the mother is the backbone of the family and the preserver of the tight bonds between family members which used to shape the black family during slavery. The absence of the father, on the other hand, cannot be easily overcome despite the mother’s attempts at filling that void and the children in Wright’s novels grow up to defy male authority and seem incapable of forming stable relationships with women, as it is the case with all of his protagonists. Such circumstances gradually lead to a shift from a stable, nuclear family structure to a relative-dependent one.

## References

- Anderson, C., W. Allen, 1984. “Correlates of Extended Household Structure” in “The Impact of Family Structure Variations among Black Families on the Underenumeration of Black Males – Part 1: A Review of Literature.” Preliminary Report for Joint Statistical Agreement 89-6. J.L. Hudgins, B.J. Holmes, M.E. Locke. Hampton University Black Family Institute. Hampton, Virginia. March 1990, pp 1-24 [Online]. Available: <http://www.census.gov/srd/papers/pdf/ex9007.pdf> [2012, February 12]
- Barras, J.R. 2000. *Whatever Happened to Daddy's Little Girl? The Impact of atherlessness on Black Women*. New York: The Random House Publishing Group.
- Brivic, S. 1974. “Conflict of Values: Richard Wright's Native Son” in *NOVEL: A forum of fiction*. Vol. 7, No. 3. Duke University Press, pp 231-245.
- Carson, B. D. 2008. “To make a bridge from man to man: Existentialism in Richard Wright’s *The Outsider*” in *IRWLE Vol. 4 No. 1*, Indian Institute of World Literature, pp 28-39.
- Cherlin, A.J. 1992. *Marriage, divorce, remarriage*. Harvard University Press.
- Davis, Thadious M. 2009. “Becoming: Richard Wright and the WPA” in *The Black Scholar*, Vol. 39, No. 1-2, Black World Foundation, pp 11-16.
- Elkholy, S. N. 2007. “Friendship Across Differences: Heidegger and Richard Wright’s Native Son” in *Janus Head*, Vol. 10, No. 1, Trivium Publications, pp 199-216.
- Ford, N.A. 1953. “The Ordeal of Richard Wright” in *College English*. Vol. 15, No. 2, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, pp 87-94.
- Green, T.T. 2009. *A Fatherless Child. Autobiographical Perspectives of African American Men*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press.
- Hogue, W. L. 2009. “Can the Subaltern Speak? A Postcolonial, Existential Reading of Richard Wright’s *Native Son*” in *Southern Quarterly*, Vol. 46, No. 2, University of Southern Mississippi, pp 9-39.
- Hudgins, J.L., B.J. Holmes, M.E. Locke. 1990. “The Impact of Family Structure Variations

- among Black Families on the Underenumeration of Black Males – Part 1: A Review of Literature.” Preliminary Report for Joint Statistical Agreement 89-6. Hampton University Black Family Institute. Hampton, Virginia, pp 1-24 [Online]. Available: <http://www.census.gov/srd/papers/pdf/ex9007.pdf> [2012, February 12].
- Morgan, S.P., A. McDaniel, A.T. Miller, S.H. Preston. 1993. “Racial Differences in Household and Family Structure at the Turn of the Century” in *The American Journal of Sociology* Vol. 98, No. 4. University of Chicago, pp. 799-828.
- Poore, C. 1995. “Review of *Native Son*” in *The Critical Response to Richard Wright*. R.J. Butler (ed). Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, pp 25-26.
- Tuhkanen, M. 2010. “Richard Wright’s Oneiropolitics” in *American Literature*, Vol. 82, No. 1, Duke University Press, pp 151-179.
- Tuttleton, J.W. 1992. “The Problematic Texts of Richard Wright” in *The Hudson Review* Vol. 45, No. 2, The Hudson Review, Inc., pp 261-271.
- Ward, J.W., Butler, R.J. 2008. *The Richard Wright Encyclopedia*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Wilson, C. E, Jr. 2005. *Race and Racism in Literature*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Wright, R. 2005 (1945). *Black Boy. An American Hunger*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Wright, R. 1972 (1940). *Native Son*. Bungay, Suffolk: Penguin Modern Classics.
- Wright, R. 1993 (1953). *The Outsider*. New York: HarperPerennial.

## NEGOTIATING DESIRE IN JOYCE CAROL OATES'S *A FAIR MAIDEN*

DANIELA ROGOBETE  
University of Craiova

*Abstract:* Joyce Carol Oates's, *A Fair Maiden*, plays with intertextual references to Nabokov's *Lolita* and Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* while going deep into the analysis of the American society affected by consumerism and mercantilism. This article focuses upon the strategies Oates uses in order to denounce and criticise the artificial construct of adolescence shaped by consumerism and caught in the enticing web of transactions and negotiations of material, sexual and abstract desires.

*Keywords:* commodification, fetishism, reification, victimization

### 1. Introduction

Considered one of the most prolific American writers of the twentieth century, recipient of the National Book Award, with three nominations for the Pulitzer Prize and four for the Nobel Prize, with more than 128 books including novels, short-stories, essays, plays and poetry, Joyce Carol Oates is also one of the most versatile authors, covering a wide range of styles and genres. Her tightly plotted novels, brimming with psychological insights and ingenious narrative devices share a common interest in problems related to family life and social criticism, to the general violence and alienation pervading the postmodern society, to the shattering of the American dream in all its aspects. This continuous research into the quintessential American issue is translated in Oates' work in her determination to always write about "real people in a real society" (Oates, qtd. in Moser and West 2010: 289).

*A Fair Maiden* suggests an interesting perspective upon the construction of adolescence faced with a consumerist society that engenders false desires and distorted self-images. Playing with narrative strategies and intertextual references, Oates imagines the protagonists of this novella and the ambiguous relationships between them so as they may offer a pertinent comment upon the dangerous encounter between objects of desire, fetishes and traumas in a patriarchal, materialistic world of consumption and consumerism.

### 2. Commodified dreams, traded desires

It has been said that the *spiritus movens* of consumer activity is no longer the measurable set of articulated needs, but *desire* – a much more volatile and ephemeral, evasive and capricious and essentially non-referential entity that 'needs', a self-begotten and self-propelled motive that needs no other justification or 'cause'. Despite its successive and always short-lived reifications, desire has

itself for its constant object, and for that reason it is bound to remain insatiable however high the pile of other (physical or psychical) objects marking its past course may rise. (Bauman 2000: 74-75)

“Innocently it began. When Katya Spivak was sixteen years old and Marcus Kidder was sixty eight” (Oates 2010: 3). Though ironical and blunt, the beginning of *A Fair Maiden* obviously alludes to Nabokov’s *Lolita*, novel which inspired Oates different reworkings on the theme of pedophilia. Innocence and guilt combine in Katya’s account of her strange experience in Bayhead Harbor. The first person narration in *Lolita* is replaced here by an omniscient narration that eliminates the touching urgency of the story and introduces an objective detachment and a deliberate lack of involvement that seems to prevent the reader from fully identifying with either of the two protagonists.

Katya’s story ironically starts in a very non-innocent way, in front of a shop window, alluding to a childhood of deprivations, of unfulfilled material desires and of an unquenched thirst for affection which are all suddenly challenged by a fairy-tale like question: “And what would you choose if you had your wish?” (3) This hypothetical question is the generator of a series of future tragic events. It simultaneously sends to the gloomy idea of a Faustian “pact” with the sweet promises it offers and at the same time the sacrifices it demands in return. This introductory episode induces a magic atmosphere that sends to the idea of a good fairy granting a wish and introduces the tone of a modern fairy tale combined with subtle social criticism. Instead of a beautiful fairy Katya is addressed by a white-haired gentleman who wins her trust with his old school politeness, courtesy and his jocular insistence.

Katya, the sixteen year old nanny hired by the Engelhardts to take care of their two little children, needs this summer job in order to pay her school tuition. Fatherless from an early age and raised by a mostly absent mother, she spent her childhood in a continuous struggle to be loved, to cope with traumatic incidents (she is raped by her cousin who will exercise a strange fascination upon her) and to avoid the lascivious insistences of her mother’s various lovers. She constantly longs for her father and accordingly builds a conflicting image of manhood and an inhibited, frustrated image of womanhood in her mind.

Since persons have been so elusive in Katya’s early life, appearing and disappearing without any reason or explanation, lying, hurting and deceiving her without fail, objects seem to acquire a central role in her story; she endows them with all the consistency and stability, with the coherence and significance that she does not find in the relationships with her family. She projects all her fears and frustrations upon the glamorous objects that seem to belong to a forbidden realm.

Now in the succession of shop windows Katya was aware of two reflections – her own, and that of a tall, white-haired Mr. Kidder. You would think, *An attractive pair!* Katya smiles in the hope that passersby might imagine them together, maybe related. She was thinking how unusual it was to see a man of Mr.

Kidder's age so tall, at least six feet two. And he carried himself with such dignity, his shoulders so straight. And his clothes – those were expensive clothes. (5)

The first encounter between Mr. Kidder and young, impressionable Katya is a symbolic moment: their contrasting reflected images projected upon the image of the sensuous lingerie displayed in the shop window establish the terms of the pact that is going to be concluded and the nature of their relationship. From now on, Katya will see herself intricately caught in the series of elusive triangles formed by desires, commodities and fetishes, by family, employers and Mr. Kidder, by a permanent craving for love, lack of self-confidence and the flattering attention she receives from Mr. Kidder. The complex and ambiguous relationship that starts to take shape between the two of them, apparently based exclusively on Katya's material interest and Kidder's pedophilic attraction is in fact much more complicated. With clinical detachment, Oates supplies psychological motivations that allude to childhood emotional traumas and to an adolescent search for identity. The intricate link between the two seems to be determined by a general process of "transplantation of the commodity-market rule to the realm of human bonds" (Bauman 2007: 21) and of projecting consumerist practices upon human emotions.

Oates' interest in teenage girls and their identity, in the psychological articulations of their acceptance and rejection of gender roles is well-known. The vivid portrayals of young girls as protagonists in novels such as *Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?* (1994), *With Shuddering Fall* (1964), *Blonde* (2000) prove the writer's preoccupation with adolescence, its entrapment in stereotypical gendered representations and its inventiveness in finding means of breaking them. "I see" – she confesses in an interview to Jessica McCort (2007) – "the adolescent consciousness as probing and skeptical and wondering and inventing, often in a way that, I think, adult consciousness no longer is. So I'm kind of drawn to that". She prefers to plunge her adolescent protagonists into a gothic atmosphere, which gives her the opportunity to deal with some of her favourite topics related to victimization and pain, to family values decay and the postmodern metamorphoses of the American Dream.

Most often, Oates' representation of the American Dream is one of a fairy tale gone bad, a magic world running short of miracles and means of self-fulfillment. In *A Fair Maiden*, Katya already inhabits a fairy-tale world that she herself creates and shapes so as to fight back her homesickness and her need for affection. The story of her childhood comes down to parental abandonment and betrayal. She interprets reality as it suits her desires and her need to find elements of stability and trust and she accordingly endows simple objects with magic and sometimes prophetic powers. Katya steps into the magic when she has to answer the tricky question about her wish. But as always in Oates' tales, miracles go the wrong way and they inevitably end up in failure and bitter disappointment.

Oates confesses she does not fully identify with the politically "conservative essence" of fairy tales, which tend to be hierarchical and center upon a "sense of nobility". "Fairy tales are a sort of projections of collective thinking like 'They lived happily after'. The fairy tale would seem to be a kind of shorthand way

of talking about the complexity of life reduced to some essence or some archetype” (McCort 2007). In this case, Cinderella’s story turns bad, since, instead of a young charming prince, Katya ends up with a dying old man. The terrible secret she learns, though somehow predictable in Oates’ narration, is the fact that Kidder has cancer and he wants her to put an end to his life so that he may experience the same kind of death as the protagonist of the tragic medieval legend of the aged King and the Fair Maiden.

The point of intersection between fairy tale and Katya’s traumatic story that includes seduction, rape, physical and emotional violence and suicide, is *desire* and its ambiguous engendering in a materialistic world – be it sexual desire, permanently alluding to Nabokov’s *Lolita*, material desires (constantly commenting upon and censoring consumerism) and its abstract correlative, the indefinite desire for a higher social status and for social visibility. Katya ambiguously combines this urge to acquire commodities that function as signifiers for social status with affective and emotional longings. Oates projects all these confusing aspects upon the problematic background of adolescence and upon the complex process of teenagers’ engagement with the material world around them. The way in which they experience materiality becomes crucial in shaping their social life which ceases to be “a pure construction of meaning but mutually constructed from ‘heterogeneous materials’ including bodies, technologies, material culture, and minds, each of which enrolls and orders the others in fluid and shifting combinations. In doing so, the boundaries between bodies and other materials become blurred and the body is extended through its association with material culture” (Sofaer Derevenski 2000: 9).

The strange encounter with Mr. Kidder, a former writer of children’s literature and exquisite artist and pianist, coincides with a crisis of identity in Katya’s life. “She was a blunt girl. She was a crude girl. She was an angry girl. For all the Spivaks were angry and she was a Spivak. Yet she was a girl easily embarrassed, shamed” (Oates 26). Her personality is a combination of conflicting features and opposite drives that makes her eager to be liked, to please, to help, to be loved, though she abhors physical love; she is attractive yet not beautiful, painfully aware of her inferior social status, she is modest but with a brazen attitude, capable and resourceful, realistic but paradoxically naïve, desirable but unaware or rather unhappy with the transformations of her body, somehow hinting at Lewis Carroll’s *Alice* and the variable physical size of her body. This discontentment – “A female is her body. A guy can be lots of things not just this body” (27) – makes her easily relate to the reliable concreteness of objects.

Through frequent flashbacks that interrupt the story of her eventful summer in Bayhead Harbor, Katya’s fascination for objects is subtly explained through a sketchy account of her early childhood spent in a house next to a landfill. Her favourite occupation was rummaging through the garbage, a debased form of treasure hunt, and the most valuable thing she had ever discovered was a baby doll which was immediately destroyed by her brothers’ rifles. The identification operated in Katya’s mind between her and the ragged doll in the garbage is visible in her low-esteem and her fear of growing up and becoming an adult woman since

the only image of womanhood she has is that of her mother - not too flattering an image.

Katya's desires and dreams are as elusive as her identity that oscillates between opposite drives. She is basically honest, hardworking and fragile but also a "skilled and accomplished and at times a seductive liar" (29). She has a particular capacity for detecting the smell of money, though she has so little of it, not the "coins sweating in the palm of a hand" but "money that was invisible, the money of true health" (13). For Katya the first step for achieving the all-promising American Dream is social visibility and fame, the first things that she finds appealing about Mr. Kidder. The fulfillment of this dream is ensured, in Bauman's opinion, by the subject's capacity to step out of the anonymity of the mass and enter the glossy realm of commodities.

Beneath the dream of fame, another dream, a dream of no longer dissolving and staying dissolved in the a grey, faceless and insipid mass of commodities, a dream of turning into a notable, noticed and coveted commodity, a talked-about commodity, a commodity standing out from the mass of commodities, a commodity impossible to overlook, to deride, to be dismissed. In a society of consumers, turning into a desirable and desired commodity, is the stuff of which dreams and fairy tales are made. (Bauman 2007: 15)

Usually invisible in her mother's house, as well as in the houses where she is hired as a nanny, Katya indulges in the attention she receives from Mr. Kidder. Her relationship with Mr. Kidder can be reduced to a series of transactions initiated by Kidder's request that Katya should pose for several sketches and portraits. Katya is seduced and manipulated by Kidder's ability to deceive her expectations, to encourage her desires and induce false needs, in this way taking advantage of her fascination for objects. The first gifts, a red lace camisole for Katya and an illustrated children's book entitled *Funny Bunny's Birthday Party* for Tricia, the Engelhardts' daughter, make a strange association of sensuality and innocence, sexual desire and protective affection which will characterize their relationship.

### **3. Fatal objects and fetishistic minds**

In discussing the postmodern transformations of the fetish as a theoretical concept and of the exacerbation of what Marx referred to as "commodity fetishism" in relation to social and cultural life, Cristopher Kocela (2010) theorizes the fetish not only as a means of "expressing social and political discontent" (4), of deconstructing ideologies and metanarratives but also as a strategy of textual interpretation, of "structuring oppositional forms of identity" (12) and commenting upon the inherent relationship between desires, consumption and consumerism.

These theoretical dimensions of the fetish can be applied upon the manner in which Oates pervades her novel with fetishised objects and fetishising views that concur in creating a gloomy, oppressive atmosphere, though replete with fairy-tale elements. The novel displays instances of thinking about fetishism and instances of

thinking through fetishism, if we were to follow E. L. McCallum's distinction between the two in what he termed as the "epistemology of fetishism" (1999: xvi) related to its impact upon the subject and upon its representation of the world. A particular space that Oates defetishises is the traditional representation of the Child – in this case, of the Adolescent – which is generally reversed by late postmodernism in various ways. The fetishist view of the child and of the cult initiated by the Romantics has been long demolished and desacralised. The child is abused and threatened, corrupted and victimized in order to denounce the anomalies of a highly consumerist society, enslaved by its own fetishes and obsessions. *A Fair Maiden* consequently dwells upon the intricate process of commodification of childhood/adolescence, upon different forms of "subjectivity fetishism", in Bauman's words (2007:14) and upon the consumerism-infected strategies of coping with emotional traumas through objects and people disposal.

Besides *Lolita*, Alice is another obvious subtext in the novel, stressing from different perspectives the threatening representation of womanhood. Kidder's fear of full-grown womanhood and his preference for adolescents remind the readers of Carroll's reluctance to let Alice grow up and join the ugly world of womanhood represented by the Queen of Hearts, the Duchess or the Cook. Mr. Kidder, whose name is suggestively chosen, has the tendency to objectify womanhood, rendering it less threatening: glam photos depicting beauties of the Golden Age of Hollywood become an illustration of his fetishistic views on beauty: "I am a dilettante and a collector and a lover of beauty. But glamour and beauty are very different things" (42) – he confesses. He chooses to depict the menacing ambiguity of women by visually representing them as glass flowers. In his opinion, they share the same characteristics, a combination of transparency and specks of dust, apparent perfection and subtle flaws and cracks, uselessness and aesthetic indispensability, fragility and danger. Katya, by no means a glamorous person, does not represent a threat for Mr. Kidder. This tendency to arrest the process of advancing into adulthood either by freezing visual representations into artificially embellished photographic images collected into a gallery of forever harmlessly smiling beauties or by metaphorically transforming them into glass flowers – turns Kidder into a false Pygmalion, who reifies people instead of bringing them to life.

Katya has the advantage of youth, offering this postmodern Pygmalion the possibility of manipulating and shaping her as he does with molten glass: "Before we are sculpted, we are pliable raw material" (22). His fear of women and attraction to children translates his insecurity, his deep fear of solitude and abandonment, of old age and death. Even his decision to give up writing and illustrating children's books speaks of his difficulty in facing women's adulthood – moreover, all his books are dedicated to young girls ("To my lost Naomi", "To Tricia, in the fervent hope that she will never change" – 32). Katya's lack of confidence and self-esteem is gradually attenuated by her progressive objectification and commodification induced during Kidder's posing sessions meant to capture her "perfect likeness". Katya's natural "gift of joy" is gradually turned into bitter awareness of her commodified value. "As long as I am paid" (95) becomes the excuse for everything, even for posing naked and accepting further gifts. Her nudity is traded

for a Kashmir shawl, her independence for money, her innocence for market value awareness, following the principle “The higher the payment, the less shame” (128).

What Baudrillard (1990: 114; 1999) called the “revenge of the crystal” acquires here literal connotations when Katya, mad against Kidder for making her pose nude, breaks a crimson glass rose in an act of defiance that initiates the downfall finally leading to Kidder’s self-staged death. Translating Baudrillard’s epiphanic moment of facing the fetish and acknowledging it, this act of revenge exposes the artificiality of desire and its dubious place at the intersection of consumption and consumerism.

#### 4. Conclusion

Joyce Carol Oates uses the concepts of *desire* and *fetish* in order to discuss and deconstruct the construction of adolescence in the context of the postmodern revaluations of the American Dream, placing it in tight relation to materiality and consumerism. This strategy, that combines narrative detachment, fairy tale elements, gothic atmosphere, social criticism, reification/fetishisation and intertextuality, offers the pretext to censor the exacerbation of false values and to deconstruct ideologies and metanarratives through a process of “disavowal”.

Even if her story has received contradictory appreciations that ranked it as “worn and unoriginal”, due to its attempted reworking on Nabokov’s *Lolita*, as “a post-feminine take on a Perrault fairy-tale” (*The Guardian* January 17, 2010) or as a combination of “soft porn and fairy-tale” (*The Independent*, January 20, 2010), Oates’ text remains a pertinent comment on teenagers’ engagement with their material world. This critical approach is translated in terms of negotiated desires engendered by the clash between real objects and their fetishistic counterparts, placed, in Lacan’s opinion (Lacan, in Sofaer Derevenski 2000:18), beyond the realms of the Symbolic, the Cultural and the Significant into a “liquid”, imponderable sphere of consumerism.

The possibility, the will of the subject to situate itself at the transcendental heart of the world and to think of itself as universal causality, under the sign of a law of which it remains master, this will does not prevent the subject from invoking the object secretly, like a fetish, like a talisman, like a figure of the reversal of causality, like the locus of a violent hemorrhage of subjectivity.

The entire destiny of the subject passes into the object. For universal causality, irony substitutes the fatal power of a singular object. (Baudrillard 1990: 114)

#### References

- Baudrillard, J. 1990. *Fatal Strategies*. Trans, Philip Beitchman and J. Niesluchowski, Jim Flaming (ed.). New York: Semiotext(e).
- Baudrillard, J. 1999. *Revenge of the Crystal: Selected Writings on the Modern Object and its Destiny, 1968-1983. Classical Edition*. London: Pluto Press
- Bauman, Z. 2000. *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge & Malden: Polity Press.

- Bauman, Z. 2007. *Consuming Life*. Cambridge & Malden: Polity Press.
- Brandmack, W. 2010. "Few teenage kicks in odd couple's tale" in *The Independent*, 20 January [Online]. Available: [www.independent.co.uk/art-entertainment/](http://www.independent.co.uk/art-entertainment/) [2012, April 28].
- Carroll, L. 2000. *Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass*. New York: Signet Classics.
- Day, E. 2010. "Review of *A Fair Maiden* by Carol Joyce Oates" in *The Guardian*, 17 January [Online]. Available: [www.guardian.co.uk/books/2010/jan/17/fair-maiden-joyce-carol-oates](http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2010/jan/17/fair-maiden-joyce-carol-oates) [2012, May 3].
- Kocela, C. 2010. *Fetishism and its Discontents in Post-1960 American Fiction. American Literature Readings in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- McCallum, E. L. 1999. *Object Lessons: How to Do Things with Fetishism*. Albany: SUNY P.
- McCort, J. 2007. "Interview with Joyce Carol Oates," *Arch Literary Journal* [Online]. Available: <http://archjournal.wustl.edu/node/32> [2012, 15 March].
- Moser Trinth, L., K. West. 2010. *Research Guide to American Literature – Contemporary Literature 1970 – Present*. New York: A Bruccoli Clark Layman Book, Facts on File, Inc.
- Nabokov, V. 1989. *Lolita*. New York: Vintage.
- Oates, J. C. 1994. *Where Are You Going? Where Have You Been. Selected Early Stories*. Ontario: Ontario Review Press.
- Oates, J. C. 2000. *With Shuddering Fall*. Northbridge: Vanguard Press
- Oates, J. C. 2001. *Blonde*. New York & London: Harper Perennial.
- Oates, J. C. 2010. *A Fair Maiden*. New York: The Ontario Review, Inc.
- Smiley, J. 2010. Book World Reviews "A Fair Maiden" by Joyce Carol Oates, Washington Post, January 4 [Online]. Available: [www.washingtonpost.com/dyn/content/article/2010/01/03/AR2010010301565.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/dyn/content/article/2010/01/03/AR2010010301565.html) [2012, May 10].
- Sofaer Derevenski, J. (ed.). 2000. *Children and Material Culture*. London & New York: Routledge.

## THE PYRRHONIST PYNCHON

ALEXANDRU BUDAC

University of Timișoara

**Abstract:** *Thomas Pynchon's psychedelic novel Inherent Vice has funny, lazy, and junky Doc Sportello as hero. This hippie turned P.I. would seem to some a mere anarchist. Yet Doc is more of a skeptic. His way of life has an uncanny resemblance to the philosophy of ancient sage Pyrrho of Elis. Despite its typical hard-boiled plot, the novel confronts the reader with epistemological issues which were initially considered by Greek analytical thinking. My approach also tackles Buddhist indeterminacy.*

**Keywords:** *detective fiction, indeterminacy, Pynchon, Pyrrho, skepticism*

### 1. Introduction: The hippie private eye

*Inherent Vice* (2009), Thomas Pynchon's latest novel, belongs to his so-called California Novels, along with *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966) and *Vineland* (1990). In its own way, each of these books is both an uncanny fantasy and a parable of the American nation (Schaub 2012:30). Although he is a hippie turned PI, Larry "Doc" Sportello, the hero of the novel, is nevertheless the literary relative of a bunch of lazy eccentrics from other Pynchon fictions, which include the bum Benny Profane in *V.*, lieutenant Tyrone Slothrop in *Gravity's Rainbow*, and another haunted hippie (but during the Reagan era), Zoyd Wheeler of *Vineland*, among others. Doc is also an atypical version of hard-boiled genre stars, such as detective Philip Marlowe, Raymond Chandler's bitter knight, or Sam Spade, Dashiell Hammett's shamus. Though, unlike them, Sportello does not wear a fedora. He is long-haired and has an afro haircut. He uses not so much his fists as his hippie hunches and sarcastic humor. When he steps into the arena to face the bad guys, Doc never utters tough threats, but song lyrics (especially surfers' hits) and funny lines from TV shows. And, yes, he is an inveterate drug addict.

The plot of *Inherent Vice* starts on a classical note. Yet, as always in Pynchon's novels, it disintegrates somewhere on the way and things veer toward paranoia, conspiracy, and chaos. In the end, the reader has some of her or his questions answered, but is still puzzled. Rather a comic sage than an embittered idealist, Doc Sportello may seem, on shallow reading, a sketchy hero of the 70s Pop Culture. He impersonates popular movie characters, enmeshes himself in surfing mythology, and makes fun of political clichés. Yet, must-see films, songs and clothing fashion of that time conceal Doc's true concerns. The crafted New Age context of the book is a complex and ironic net of hints at Buddhist teachings in the same way as Sportello's private eye job is an expression of his skepticism. I would say he is an old school skeptic, the American peer of Pyrrho, the Greek thinker who travelled to India in the fourth century BC. I do not claim that Pynchon's detective is in fact a philosopher. I only try to prove that the detective

and the philosopher see the world around them with the same acuity. Their means of investigation differ considerably, though.

## 2. The Pyrrhonist

One night Shasta Fay Hepworth, Doc's former girlfriend, comes to his place and asks him, for old times' sake, to help her find her lover Mickey Wolfmann, one of L.A.'s richest land developers. It seems that this capricious tycoon has been kidnapped or even killed after he decided to become a philanthropist and began to build a utopian complex for the homeless, named Arrepentimiento (Spanish for "sorry about that" (Pynchon 2009:248)) to ease his guilty conscience. At the same time, Hope Harlingen, the unhappy mother of a charming little girl with the name of a precious stone (Amethyst), also calls for this hippie private eye to help her find her husband, whom the authorities had declared dead without body evidence. The two disappearances will prove much more connected than Doc initially thinks. The only reason he helps these women is kindness. Not money. So he begins his investigation and, pretty soon, becomes entangled with sinister mobsters, heroin addicts, loan sharks, FBI agents, corrupted policemen, violent ex-cons, Republican paramilitary forces, the neo-Nazi Aryan Brotherhood, and many *femmes fatales*. Yet the most dangerous of all is the *Golden Fang*, a secret organization which owns a schooner with the same name and, like the mysterious alternative postal system Trystero in *The Crying of Lot 49*, has all kinds of links to the darkest events in American history. During his adventures, the detective is stalked by his nemesis, the Swedish LAPD officer Bigfoot Bjornsen, who underlines Doc's exploits like a shadow in a comic book. All the characters in this novel are similar to Roy Lichtenstein's well-known paintings. Pynchon zooms in on their ethos, exaggerates their features, emphasizes their ways of speaking. That way he offers us faces from the past.

Despite its good humor and its funny hero, *Inherent Vice* is a pessimistic book – a novel of the bad tokens. Hanjo Berressem (2012:173) rightly notices that "the main reasons for bad vibes in Pynchon are always greed and the desire for power, which define both the bad guys, and the good guys who turn bad because they are attracted by them." These are the early 70s and Los Angeles in the aftermath of the Manson case. The war in Vietnam is far from over, and president Nixon (a mere caricature in *Inherent Vice*) has just started a new war at home – the war on drugs. Denouncing counterculture on March 22, 1969, the newly elected president quoted Arthur Schlesinger quoting W.B. Yeats: "Things fall apart; the center cannot hold" (Hoberman 2003:247). The hunting of hippies may begin. This means supplementary funding for law enforcement and the unleashing of civilian troops of vigilantes. Gore Vidal remarked at that time that the expression "silent majority" was a "Homeric term for the dead" (Hoberman 2003: 261). Television is pervasive and almost everybody speaks the tube language. People stay mostly indoors in front of their TV sets. They are discovering a new outstanding invention: the remote control.

The media-induced panic, the treasons made possible by means of infiltrating snitchers among potentially dangerous youth gatherings, the looming specter of a fascist state, the paranoia of serial killings proliferation (Charles Manson and Helter Skelter Family, of course, but let's not forget the prowling of the Zodiac killer) may be well understood if we take a look at the Pop Culture aesthetics of the time and especially at the movies (Hoberman 2003:256-262; 310-312). We will find sexual freaks such as *Myra Breckinridge*, *Bloody Mama*, cannibal zombies in *Night of the Living Dead* – a must-see movie if you want to understand some of *Inherent Vice* key episodes (a 1968 obscure motion picture, *Night of the Living Dead* was resurrected as a cult film a few years later). Back then, the hippie western was in vogue too: Alejandro Jodorowsky's *El Topo*, Peter Fonda's *The Hired Hand*, or *Doc* directed by Frank Perry – it is the story of Doc Holliday, one of Wyatt Earp's buddies. I suspect that the first name of the character is not alien to Larry Sportello's nickname. And we must not forget Dirty Harry, another chief product of the 70s cinema. This unorthodox detective, "a dirty man for a dirty time," as the critics described him (Hoberman 2003:322-328), who wears shades and plays Russian roulette with "punks" using his .44 Magnum left us this immortal credo: "I don't know what the law says, but I do know what's right and wrong."

Doc is a man of the 60s. He does not feel at home at Gordita Beach anymore. He does not recognize the city and he understands that his old friends are lulled by all those insidious means of control which freak him out – the illusion of political power, television, and the brand new computer network ARPAnet. They do not even have to leave the couch to get what they want. Everybody around Doc seems to have forgotten the ideals of the previous decade. Hope Harlingen remembers sadly that all she and her husband saw back then was "the freedom – from that endless middle-class cycle of choices that are no choices at all" (Pynchon 2009:38). Only the surfers at the beach still believe in their mythology. They are expecting the day when Lemuria – a sort of Atlantis sunken long ago under California – will rise again from the Pacific and a huge wave will wash this corrupted world for ever. Yet Doc is skeptical.

Generally, when we speak about skepticism, we refer either to scientific disbelief regarding religious issues or to a reserved attitude toward a particular situation. Only few remember that the father of skepticism was the ancient sage Pyrrho of Elis. To mention Pyrrhonism nowadays is to invoke a whole tradition rather than a person, a tradition which fostered great thinkers (ancient and modern alike) such as Sextus Empiricus, Cicero, Aenesidemus, Michel de Montaigne, David Hume, Ludwig Wittgenstein. We know a lot about this tradition, but about Pyrrho himself we know very little.

He is thought to have lived in Greece from around 365-360 BC until around 275-270 BC. Like Socrates, he did not write a word. He seems to have been solitary and eccentric. All that is known about his philosophy comes from indirect sources and especially from one of his disciples named Timon (Bett 2008:1-2). Pyrrho of Elis is a special case in the history of Ancient Western thinking, because he spent eleven years in India, following the campaigns of

Alexander the Great. There he met some *gymnosophistai* – the Greek for “naked wise men”. No doubt they were Buddhists and yoga masters. The Romanian Hellenist Aram Frenkian (2007:9-63) states that Pyrrho is one of the first Greek thinkers who was inspired by the Vedāntic motif of the rope mistaken for a snake and by the Buddhist quadrilemma. Thus Pyrrho brought a particular Oriental flavor to Greek analytical thinking. According to him, “it is our nature to know nothing.” The skeptic must “assemble opposing arguments on as wide as range of topics as possible” (Bett 2008:3-4; 16-17). Pyrrho declared reality to be inherently indeterminate and considered that all we can do is try to find forms of speech that may capture indeterminacy itself and to accept that we cannot describe the way things are. Of course, in cognitive terms, we have a constant interaction with the world around us, yet this does not mean that we apprehend definite situations. Oxford scholar Richard Bett (2008: 20) emphasizes that it is this particular distinction between speaking about the nature of things and speaking about our ability or inability to grasp the nature of things that Pyrrho made explicit. The world is how our mind constructs it. This issue is a direct consequence of the fact that senses deceive us. We cannot trust them, because all they are sending to our minds are sensory appearances. That is why Pyrrho preached the suspension of judgment (*epoché*) regarding the nature of things. The suspension of judgment has a remarkably practical corollary, namely *ataraxia*, “freedom from worry”.

I do not suggest that Thomas Pynchon was influenced by this ancient philosopher. I only propose an analogy. *Inherent Vice* is a detective novel with an Oriental touch. Playful allusions to Brahminist beliefs, Buddhist practice and zen gardens abound. Doc is not concerned solely with the usual detective puzzle-solving. He also tries to cope with the speeding flux of changes around him, with cityscapes and greedy villains, but especially with people close to his heart. The opening of the novel (Pynchon 2009: 1) offers us a nostalgic pang.

She came along the alley and up the back steps the way she always used to. Doc hadn't seen her for over a year. Nobody had. Back then it was always sandals, bottom half of a flower-print bikini, faded Country Joe & the Fish T-shirt. Tonight she was all in flatland gear, hair a lot shorter than he remembered, looking just like she swore she'd never look.

This is Doc's voice. Why did Shasta swear that she would never look like this? And why does the private eye find her so changed? After all, only a year has passed. Usually past loves have this strong effect on us: we meet again as strangers. Yet we will find soon that Doc is still in love with Shasta. It seems that he notices not so much some physical changes, but the presence of certain remoteness in her personality. Lost are those intimate things which once kept them close together – “connected”, as Pynchon likes to say.

According to scholar Heinrich Zimmer (1953:12; 19), the philosophy of Ancient India describes phenomenal forms as “merely the particles of a vast universal illusion” which stimulate self-forgetfulness, misleading passions, and ignorance. The last has *Māyā*, “the illusion superimposed upon

reality”, as its main effect. Not only anchorites know that. The tyrant knows it too. Lulling your enemy to sleep by creating the illusion of safety, the illusion of friendliness, the illusion of an external threat has been the most insidious trick of mass control and the key to political success since ancient times. Zimmer (1953:109-113) offers a plethora of interesting examples, such as despotic Roman emperors, Hindu court plots, Persian cruelty, Nazi and Stalinist terror. Irrespective of culture or time, he states, the secret police has a double mission: to assure the tyrant that the inside enemies are taken care of and to assure themselves that there will always be enough victims to justify their own purpose. One character of *Inherent Vice* teaches the private eye a similar lesson.

Towards the end of the novel, Doc Sportello settles the score with the powerful residential owner Crocker Fenway, a menacing, contemptuous man, who endorses the Californian juggernaut. He calls himself “a fixer” and tells the hippie about the necessity of preserving the environment. Yet Fenway does not worry about the ecosystem (Pynchon 2009:347):

“It’s about *being in place*. We –” gesturing around the Visitor’s Bar and its withdrawal into seemingly unbounded shadow, “we’re in place. We’ve been in place forever. Look around. Real estate, water rights, oil, cheap labor – all of that’s ours, it’s always been ours. And you, at the end of the day what are you? one more unit in this swarm of transients who come and go without pause here in the sunny Southland, eager to be bought off with a car of a certain make, model, and year, a blonde in a bikini, thirty seconds on some excuse for a wave – a chili dog, for Christ’s sake.” He shrugged. “We will never run out of you people. The supply is inexhaustible.”

He articulates the purest caste mentality. Thomas Schaub (2012:39) rightly calls this discourse “Fenway’s Brahminism”. No surprise, then, that everybody around Doc confounds rope and deadly snake. Sex, television, and entertainment industry – with headquarters all over Hollywood – narcotize the former idealists. Thus they become an easy prey for those in power, as Shasta does.

Overcrowded and noisy as it is, the City of Angels seems the right place for anyone to lose track of friends and even of oneself. The megalopolis, with its swarming cars, polluted air, steel and concrete buildings, facilitates alienation. Some try to ward this off by turning to merry, psychedelic surf cults and St. Flip of Lawndale’s visions. A beach prophet waiting for the Great Wave, Flip believes that Jesus’ walking on water is “Bible talk for surfing”. Spectacular and fresh, the surfers’ fantasies prove shallow at close examination. When guru Veihi Fairfield offers Doc an “acid trip” – a surrogate to an out of body experience – this turns into a parody of a shamanistic journey, in which Nixon reveals himself as a descendant of Atlantis and Ho Chi Minh a progeny of Lemuria. With the help of Kamukea, “a Lemurio-Hawaiian demigod”, Sportello learns a zany history of the Pacific and finally finds vulnerable and frightened Shasta on the *Golden Fang* deck. No metaphysics here, just “wishful hallucination”.

The action of the book is space-dependent. Imaginary islands and planets, deserts, never-ending highways, expensive offices, LAPD tasteless buildings, villas, cozy apartments, and many bars and night clubs are crucial to suspense. Some of the buildings, like the fang-shaped *Golden Fang Enterprises*, are perfect images of the American Babylon. As Doc digs deeper, he understands that his cases are in tight connection with land owning and loan contracts – urban developments meant to swallow up the beach, the trees, and even the ocean. He visits an actual city of evil and, soon after, he catches a glimpse of the utopia.

To the Chryskyodon Institute – a brochure advertises the name as meaning “serenity” in Indian, yet Doc finds out it is Greek for the same menacing gilded tooth –, Mickey Wolfmann made a generous donation. For the first time, here, the hippie detective has a hunch, which helps him infer the link between the secret organization and the new American way of life. An artificial meditation place expounding therapeutic mincemeat, Chryskyodon is in fact a profitable brainwash business. Part a Krishna Society, part zen Buddhism mockery, the institute looks more like a luxurious concentration camp and governmental informers nursery. It may be thought of as Arrepentimiento flipside.

“The zomes” (abbreviation of “zonahedral domes”) should have been the architectural innovation meant to design the utopian complex near Las Vegas. “Not perfect hemispheres but pointed at the top” (Pynchon 2009:249), the concept designates a special meditation space and doorways to other worlds. Instead of a real estate Paradise, Doc finds Mickey Wolfmann’s dream scattered among chaparral and rocks (Pynchon 2009:250):

The zomes ahead, like backdrop art in old sci-fi movies, never seemed to come any closer. It was like feeling your way through dangerous terrain at night, though Doc was conscious of the sun overhead, the star of an alien planet, smaller and more concentrated than it should have been, zapping them relentlessly with hard radiation. Lizards came out from behind the visible world and stood timeless and breathless as rock to watch Doc and Tito.

After a while it began to look more like an abandoned construction site. Scrap lumber bleaching in the sun, spools of rusted cable, lengths of plastic pipe, snarls of Romex, a wrecked air compressor.

This is not by far the order which Doc wishes for. And it is not the momentary impulse which, at the end of the novel, determines the drivers strung out on the highway to join “like a caravan in a desert of perception, gathered awhile for safety in getting across a patch of blindness” (Pynchon 2009:368). Yet, as Thomas Schaub (2012:40-41) puts it, in *Inherent Vice* “consensus” is just fantasy. Like Oedipa Maas, Doc Sportello longs for a world in which the alternative should not be paranoia.

In his trailblazing essay on *The Great Gatsby*, Tony Tanner (2000: xxxvii-xxxviii) describes Oedipa as the post-war heiress of Nick Carraway’s personal crisis. The way Oedipa is lulled by the alternative postal system history resembles Nick’s efforts to seek shelter in fantasy. Jay Gatsby’s friend and the Californian

housewife try to grasp “the meaning of America itself.” Tanner reads this resemblance between Fitzgerald and Pynchon like a Platonic elegy: in vain do the characters seem to search for pure Forms meant to render the accidental world irrelevant, illusory. In both cases contingency proves to be bad luck. This issue is particularly difficult in Thomas Pynchon, because he revels in ambiguity. Yet I think we may speak about Platonism in *Inherent Vice* as well, if we use the term carefully.

I claim that Doc is an American Pyrrhonist. More than anything else, he refuses to be deceived by the political system and television-shaped states of things. But can we say that Doc’s adventures are a quest for Platonic Forms? According to Richard Bett (2008:137-138), Pyrrho regards the search of Forms “as a wild goose-chase”. It is damaging to a soul trying to attain *ataraxia*. Only by stripping the *Republic* of its Forms may we conjure up a proper representation regarding the wisdom of Elis’ philosophy. Yet Plato may still be an important reference to *Inherent Vice*, if we consider his imitation theory.

In the challenging study “Plato and the Mass Media”, Alexander Nehamas offers a different approach to the old quarrel between philosophers and poets, as we know it from the *Republic*. Nehamas’ premises emphasize that Plato did not understand art the way we do – an issue passed over easily by traditional Platonic exegesis – and that Socrates’ main target is not art as such, but the unprepared audience. There are inherent dangers for an uneducated mind when it does not perceive the difference between the imitation of an emotion and the way that emotion is artistically expressed. Nehamas (1999: 282) rephrases the famous argument clearly:

Plato accuses poetry of perverting its audience. Poetry is essentially suited to the representation of inferior characters and vulgar subjects: these are easy to imitate and what the crowd, which is already perverted to begin with, wants to see and enjoys. But the trouble is that all of us have an analogue to the crowd within our soul (cf. 580d2-581a1). This is the appetitive part (the counterpart to the third and largest class, the money lovers, in Plato’s analogy between city and soul), to the desires and pleasures of which we are more or less sensitive. And since [...] our reactions to poetry are transferred directly to, and in fact often determine, our reactions to life, poetry is likely to make us behave in ways of which we should be, and often are, ashamed. Poetry “introduces a bad government in the soul of each individual citizen” (605b7-8). But this is to destroy the soul and to destroy the city. [...] This is why poetry is intolerable.

This banishment may acquire a fresh meaning if we understand that Plato “simply does not distinguish aesthetics from ethics” (Nehamas 1999:280) and that his aversion to tragic and epic poetry is an outraged reaction to the Athenians’ behavior during representations. Nehamas rightly notices that although we step back to Plato’s severity, we prove nevertheless our Platonic reflexes when judging popular culture and especially the press and television. The last is a misleading medium, which disturbs reason and induces strong emotions by eradicating the

distance between reality and its representation on the screen. Nehamas (1999:291) also states, quoting a term coined by Arthur Danto, that nowadays we are exposed to a pervasive “art of disturbance” (such as extremely abstract paintings and “happenings”), which frustrates and deceives “its audience’s aesthetic, distanced, and contemplative expectations”. Thus we may say that Doc’s attitude toward television is Platonic in the same way as Rachel Owlglass’ feelings regarding The Whole Sick Crew artistic proclivities were Platonic. She tells Benny Profane in *V*. (Pynchon 2005:422):

Once I will say it, is all: that Crew does not live, it experiences. It does not create, it talks about people who do. Varèse, Ionesco, de Kooning, Wittgenstein, I could puke. It satirizes itself and doesn’t mean it. *Time* magazine takes it seriously and does mean it.

Reading Pynchon as a philosophical-challenging author always proves problematic. His imagination is so rich that inflexible approaches may foster critical dryness. After all, Thomas Pynchon revels in making irrelevant the difference between the pleasures of popular culture and the delightful effort that stimulates the sophisticated reader. His characters are prisoners of worlds driven by orderly disorder. Readers will always tend to choose either order or disorder to enjoy the literary experience.

### **3. Conclusion: an elusive vice**

In Western literature, the detective always epitomizes analytical thinking (Auguste Dupin, Sherlock Holmes, to name the most famous, but also Philip Marlowe thought a lot, in a grumpy way indeed). It was Borges in his wonderful story “The Death and the Compass” who first broke off this tradition, proving that reasoning is not enough of a tool for a detective when he is too confident.

If we judge Doc Sportello according to strong logical standards, we will easily notice that he is not very wise. Technically, Doc does not solve any of his cases. He uses his impressive emotional intelligence instead. Pynchon’s hippie detective just helps good people find each other and stay together. And he is free from worry, at least from those worries which frighten everybody else. We see him lighting a joint before and after each one of his haphazard actions, because smoking marijuana is better than watching the tube. Beyond this obvious irony lurks the danger of what Brian McHale (2001:65-73) calls “ontological instability”. Doc intensifies his senses by narcotic means, because this seems to him the only way he may cope with a city that escapes his grasp. He thinks he is hallucinating and that in front of him lies a deadly mirage. Gordita Beach *is* an imaginary land. The 70s L.A. proves to be a metamorphic city, a Metropolis with an ever changing geometry. The epigraph to *Inherent Vice* is a May 1968 graffiti (“Under the paving-stones, the beach!”), which reminds us of the metaphor of the street and the hothouse in Pynchon’s debut novel *V*.. This time though, the epigraph has a much stronger epistemological meaning. There are two cities in Doc’s mind: the foggy

one he drives through, the city of greedy land developers, and the dream city of his youth, the city of forgotten promises. The hero of *Inherent Vice* is more like a shaman stranded on a realm between worlds. He can neither reach the other side, nor can he return to his former place. So he remains on the doorsill.

The term “inherent vice” comes from marine law. It refers to those issues marine insurance policies refuse to cover. Sauncho Smilax, Doc’s friend and lawyer, explains to him (Pynchon 2009: 351): “Usually applies to cargo – like eggs break – but sometimes it’s also the vessel carrying it.” Doc cannot name the particular inherent vice of the world he lives in. He almost has a mystical feeling. This is what I would call the Pyrrhonist side of Pynchon’s prose.

## References

- Berressem, H. 2012. “How to read Pynchon” in *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Pynchon*. Dalsgaard, Herman and McHale (eds.). New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 168-177.
- Bett, R. 2008 (2000). *Pyrrho, his Antecedents, and his Legacy*. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press.
- Frenkian, A.M. 1997 (1957). *Scepticismul grec*. București: Paideia.
- Hoberman, J. 2003. *The Dream Life. Movies, Media, and the Mythology of the Sixties*. New York & London: The New Press.
- McHale, B. 2001 (1994). *Constructing Postmodernism*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Nehamas, A. 1999. “Plato and the Mass Media” in *Virtues of Authenticity*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, pp. 279-299.
- Pynchon, T. 2005 (1961). *V.* London & New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics.
- Pynchon, T. 2009. *Inherent Vice*. New York: The Penguin Press.
- Schaub, T.H. 2012. “*The Crying of Lot 49* and other California novels” in *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Pynchon*. Dalsgaard, Herman and McHale (eds.). New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 30-43.
- Tanner, T. 2000 (1990). “Introduction” in *The Great Gatsby*. Fitzgerald. London: Penguin Classics.
- Zimmer, H. 1953 (1951). *Philosophies of India*. Campbell (ed.). London: Routledge and Kegan Paul LTD.

**THE ISSUE OF IDENTITY**  
**IN MARIO ACEVEDO'S *THE NYMPHOS OF ROCKY FLATS***

**ATTILA MÓCZA**  
University of Szeged

***Abstract:** The *Nymphos of Rocky Flats* by Mario Acevedo is an immediately contemporary vampire novel from 2006. Its main character is Felix Gomez, an American soldier serving in Iraq, where he gets transformed into a vampire, after which he goes through a significant identity crisis. Therefore, this paper focuses on the significance of identity regarding the issues of the contrast between human and vampire life, isolation and othering in Acevedo's novel.*

***Keywords:** 21<sup>st</sup> century literature, Gothic novel, identity crisis, isolation, othering, vampire fiction*

## **1. Introduction**

The Popularity of vampire literature has been indisputable for several decades. In the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, an expansion of this popularity, which is still in progress today, could have been observed. Vampire literature finds its way towards potential fans regardless of their age, gender, education, etc. This popularity affected the academic world as well, the process of which mainly took place in the 1990s. If we take the history of vampire fiction into consideration, we can observe an almost 200-year-old way of literary representation. Considering the length of this period of time, it does not seem astonishing that today we can break vampire literature down into phases.

During the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the vampire was depicted as a one-sided antagonist, an ultimate evil, or to put it simply, a pure negative character. Bram Stoker's *Dracula* is perhaps one of the most significant representatives of these vampires. Nina Auerbach calls its main vampire character loveless (1995:69), Benson Saler and Charles A. Ziegler (2005: 221) in agreement with Sally J. Kline (1992:197) label him as unambiguously evil. *Dracula's* example demonstrates that the otherness of the vampire seems to be inevitable in the above mentioned period of time.

This phenomenon changed with the publication of Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* in 1976. As a result of the literary oeuvre of Rice, the character metamorphosis of the vampire set out. According to Stacey Abbott, this turning point is a move from pre-modern vampires towards modern vampires (2003:136). Anne Rice's vampires are not considered solely from the perspectives of humans as the reader gets to know their thoughts, opinions, feelings, ways of life, and so on. Milly Williamson uses the term the *new vampire* for the vampire who is not a cruel bloodsucker seeking humans to victimize but a sensitive creature who finds such things as family or friendship important (2003:101). Evaluating the significance of

the vampire metamorphosis, Fred Botting optimistically notes: “The Vampire is no longer absolutely other” (1996:178). Contrary to Botting, Catherine Belsey presents a rather pessimistic consideration in a well formed thought regarding the Ricean change: “Anne Rice's postmodern move is to make the vampire speak, to tell its own story from this uncanny place, without simply reversing the original opposition.” (1994:699).

Today, more than thirty-five years after the publication of the first novel of Anne Rice’s *The Vampire Chronicles*, the Ricean vampire delineation is quite common. However, as it can be seen in the contrast between Botting’s and Belsey’s above mentioned elucidations, for instance, scholars approach the importance of this seemingly positive phenomenon differently. This paper is to study the vampiric identity through the example of Mario Acevedo’s *The Nymphs of Rocky Flats* in which the vampire identity and issues around it, particularly the conflict between the human and the vampire existence, isolation and othering, are emphatically represented from the perspective of the main character, Felix Gomez. As a result, we can get a piece of representation and its classificatory significance in immediately contemporary literary vampire depictions. In other words, we will see whether this part of 21<sup>st</sup> century vampire literature represents the vampire in accordance with Botting’s or Belsey’s view.

## **2. The Turning Point**

At the beginning of the novel, Felix Gomez is an American soldier who serves in the U. S. army at the time of the USA's war against Iraq. In an unfortunate event, Felix’s team accidentally kills a family of Iraqi civilians and Felix is personally responsible for the death of a twelve-year-old girl. At the moment of the sudden realization of what he did, the following thought comes into Felix's mind: “Not a man's cry but the shriek of a girl, a horrible noise told me my life would never be the same again.” (2006:8). This moment is in parallel with the emergence of Felix’s remorse, a feeling he cannot get rid of almost to the end of the novel. His sense of guilt results in his disbelief in the war and the simultaneous occurrence of the burden of the murder he conducted. Felix, who considers himself a murderer rather than a war hero, feels that, as a consequence of his crime, his life has changed significantly. In accordance with this burdensome feeling, he undergoes the first step of his punishment when he encounters an Iraqi vampire, who offers him death or torture in exchange for his crime, both of which Felix rejects. Eventually, the vampire turns Felix into one of his kind, an existence he calls “[a] punishment even worse than death.” (2006:15).

## **3. Isolation**

With the transformation, Felix's punishment begins to take place. At the very beginning of his vampire life, Felix learns that being a vampire means to have an extremely marginalized position in society, as the most important governing principle of the vampire existence is, as he notes: “Above, all, don't let the humans

know we exist.” (2006:37). Hence, being a vampire in Acevedo's novel is inherently a form of othering and isolation.

### 3.1. False Identity

The vampiric existence of Acevedo's main character is a complicated one. As a young vampire among more hundred-year-old other vampires, he suffers from his still extant human properties. Thus, it does not seem astonishing that he is exceptional among the vampires who are generally fully aware of their identity.

Felix considers vampire life from human perspectives. This is what I call the *false identity* in which Felix's vampire life and his human properties conflict. It mainly manifests itself in Felix's over-evaluating vampire life and consequently his own vampire capabilities.

After Felix returns from the war, he gets hired as a private investigator to solve the case of an outbreak of nymphomania. Simultaneously, he realizes that an assassin follows him. However, he is not too afraid of the encounter, as he thinks: “My vampire sixth sense nagged at me and whispered danger. [...] I dismissed my doubts. I was dealing with humans. What could go wrong?” (2006:38) Later, it turns out that he comes out badly from the encounter, owing to the fact that he underestimated his attacker and got stunned. After he regains his consciousness, he faces the inadequacy of his previous notion:

What hurt worse than the lump or the nauseating headache was the humiliation of getting KO'd by the human goon who had ransacked my place. Being a vampire, I was heir to the legacy of the most feared ghouls in history, Dracula and Nosferatu. I was supposed to be the terrorizer, not the terrorized. (105).

A very similar aspect of Felix's false identity is connected to his relationship with women. When he questions the three women involved in the nymphomania case, he takes it for granted that with the use of vampire hypnosis he can get all the information he needs from them, but eventually, he fails in each of the three cases.

Later in the novel, he gets to know that there are not only vampires living in society but also other supernatural creatures. He falls in love with a dryad, a fairy-like woman, Wendy. Again, he gets surprised by the contrast between his very first intuition and reality:

Was I the first vampire ever to feel embarrassment? We were fearsome killers, rapacious as wolves, and yet at this moment, I, Felix, the vampire, felt as awkward as a schoolboy at a dance. (171).

When he meets Wendy for the second time, the same feeling pervades him:

Wendy looked away. This made my aura brighten in annoyance. We supernaturals used our ability to read aura to outwit humans. Now this power

betrayed me. I took a calming breath and let my aura smooth out. [...] Being the vampire, I was supposed to manipulate the woman. (227).

Thus, Felix's false identity is a result of his misconceptions regarding vampire power. He simply thinks that vampires are superior to humans as well as to women, regardless of whether they are humans or supernaturals. He supposes that his vampiric features overlap with what he thinks about them. He is certain that he can easily defend himself against the assassin and he turns out to be the less prepared for their encounter. He is sure that he can effortlessly manipulate women, but exactly the reverse happens.

So as regards his vampire identity, Felix is a stranger to the other vampires who are familiar with their abilities and limitations and do not suffer from an identity conflict, like him.

### **3.2. Drinking Human Blood**

The most important distinctive feature of Felix as compared to other vampires is his aversion to the consumption of human blood. This property of his character not only makes him even more different from other vampires, but also clearly isolates him from them. His reason for not drinking human blood is that it reminds him of the Iraqi girl he had killed in the war.

Regarding this kind of rejection of a pivotal part of vampire nature, Acevedo's main character is not an invention of the author of the novel. Anne Rice's Louis in the *Interview with the Vampire* struggles with the same feature. As Louis says to Lestat:

If I can live from the blood of animals, why should I not live from the blood of animals rather than go through the world bringing misery and death to human creatures. (176).

The vampiric behavior deriving from Anne Rice's Louis turned out to be a crucial aspect of vampire representations. Sally Miller calls it *vampiric anorexia* (2003:55). According to her, the anorexic vampire is human and not human at the same time. Considering the fact that in both of the cases of Louis and Felix, the refusal of consuming human blood is a result of the human nature embedded in their vampire characters, Miller's thought-provoking idea seems to be indisputable. Marina Levina's idea has the same basis as Miller's. However, Levina's argument is more radical than Miller's, as she states that forbidding bloodsucking means the end of vampire identity (2003:122).

Although Felix follows the line of Louis, his case is more emphatic in this respect, as he does not have to bring misery and death to human creatures in order to consume human blood. Vampires in Acevedo's novel do not have to take humans as their victims to acquire the amount of blood they need. Louis is against the unethical conduct of murder. Felix, on the contrary, is under the curse of the crime he committed as a human. Judging from the above quoted words of the Iraqi

vampire who transformed Felix, it seems that Felix's continuing his life as a vampire is itself enough to equal his crime. After his transformation, Felix is no longer a human, so he cannot have a place in the human society. Additionally, neither can he really find his place among vampires, because he is actually a *human vampire*, if we follow Miller's explanation. None of the other vampires can be considered similar to him. They do their best to separate from humans as much as they can. The reader cannot find any of them talking about their past human life, and anything related to humanity is of no interest to them. They regard themselves as having a different culture that does not have anything in common with that of the human.

Felix's character is unarguably different from that of the other vampires. He interacts with humans and does not live his life in accordance with the vampiric separatist dogma. Although this is enough for the other vampires to think that Felix's behavior is disturbing, his refusal to drink human blood makes them condemn and despise him.

Not long after Felix introduces himself to Bob, who is the leader of the vampire union, the main character tells him that he does not drink human blood, and Bob scolds him: "Your behavior is irrational and unhealthy. Preying on humans and drinking their blood is *our nature*." (2006:48, my emphasis). Understanding that Bob is not interested in his reasons, Felix feels that he is a stranger to the vampire community as well. This phenomenon appears even sharper when Felix discusses the same issue with Andre, another one of the vampires. Andre's reaction resonates with that of Bob: "Human blood replenishes our vampire powers. It makes us strong. It makes us *monsters*." (2006: 215, original emphasis). In his response, Felix expresses his opposition and reveals the burden this means for him: "'I don't want to be a monster.' [...] At this moment I hated being a vampire. I wanted to [...] be a *normal human*." (2006:215, my emphasis). The vampires do not even think that what Felix committed in the war is a crime. They consider their vampire existence a heavenly pleasure that is irreconcilable with Felix's viewpoint according to which: "God has damned us with this existence." (2006:216).

#### **4. Conclusion**

Nina Auerbach (1995:34) uses the term the *Puritan vampire*. Felix is really a puritan figure. He cannot be compared to the cruel vampires of Polidori's Lord Ruthven or Bram Stoker's Dracula who has nothing humane in them. Felix feels remorse for his accidental and unintended crime and punishes himself as a vampire.

Getting excluded from the human society, he cannot find his place even as a vampire due to the fact that he does not accept the normative and prescriptive rules of the vampire community. As a result, he gets isolated among the already socially marginalized vampires. Owing to his double isolation, Felix can live neither as a human, nor as a vampire. This results in his living in an identity crisis.

The terms *half vampire* and *mortal vampire* are also introduced by Auerbach (1995:168). The former seems to be evident regarding Felix's position in the vampire union. The latter can also describe his character, as his half-vampire nature derives from his human features which include remorse, his attitude towards human blood consumption, his relationships with humans as well as his non-separatist way of vampire life.

Another one of the pivotal arguments of Nina Auerbach is that the modern vampire is a creature who has no future (1995:174-175). For this reason modern vampires constantly turn back to the past. Although it is not true for the vampires of the novel in general, it cannot be considered false for Felix. We do not really see his future in the novel. Simultaneously, he cannot get rid of the past in the form of his remorse for his crime which constantly haunts him. He longs for the remission of the Iraqi girl and there is nothing more he clearly wants to achieve in the future.

Considering the vampires, especially Louis, depicted in Anne Rice's *The Vampire Chronicles*, Catherine Belsey claims: "Anne Rice's vampire is surely [...] solitary." (1994:701). It would be difficult to find a word which would more effectively describe Felix's character than solitariness. It seems to be obvious from his already mentioned double isolation. However, it is much more complicated, as Felix is not a modern Byronic hero. He wants to belong to a community. Although he is a stranger among the vampires to some extent, this does not change the fact that he is a vampire and that he thinks of himself as a vampire. He regularly mentions the phrases "we vampires" or "I, the vampire", etc.

After the revelation of the circumstances of an old vampire's death, Ziggy, the vampires get to know that there are vampire hunters killing the members of the vampire union. Felix has to experience the death of his minor and major friends, Andre and Bob. Afterwards, he also gets chased by the vampire hunters, because he is 'the other' from their perspective.

Belsey also argued that "Vampires [...] have no proper place." (1994:697). This is also especially true for Acevedo's main character. Near the end of the novel, after his fight with the vampire hunters, he is on the verge of death when he has a vision in which he gets forgiven by the Iraqi girl. At the end of the plot, it seems that Wendy and he can reach the fulfillment of their love, and the novel will have a happy ending, when Wendy, saying that "I've lived long enough to know that nothing's ever permanent" (2006:354), announces that she is commanded to go abroad.

In spite of the fact that Fred Botting (1996) is right when claiming that the vampire is no longer the absolute other, Mario Acevedo's *The Nymphs of Rocky Flats*, through its main character, Felix Gomez, does not reverse the original opposition in the sense of Catherine Belsey's argument in connection with Anne Rice's vampire representation. It is true that the vampire undergoes a significant liberation, if we consider the figure's delineation, but as regards his character, the following argument of Patrick McCormick (2010:41) persists even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, for which Acevedo's novel serves as a pivotal example: "[T]he constant lesson of vampire stories is that a shorter, human life filled with love and friendships is vastly superior to the long loneliness of the vampire."

## References

- Abbott, S. 2003. 'Urban Vampires in American Films of the Eighties and Nineties' in *Vampires : Myths and Metaphors of Enduring Evil*. C. T. Kungl (ed.). Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press. pp. 133 – 137.
- Acevedo, M. 2006. *The Nymphs of Rocky Flats*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Auerbach, N. 1995. *Our Vampires Ourselves*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Belsey, C. 1994. 'Postmodern Love: Questioning the Metaphysics of Desire' in *New Literary History* 25.3. pp. 683 – 705.
- Botting, F. 1996. *Gothic*. London: Routledge.
- Kline, S. J. 1992. *The Degeneration of Women*. Reinbach-Merzbach: CMZ-Verlag.
- Levina, M. 2003. 'How vampire got neutered: Boundary surveillance and technoscientific discourse on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*' in *Vampires : Myths and Metaphors of Enduring Evil*. C. T. Kungl (ed.). Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press. pp. 121 – 124.
- McCormick, P. 2010. 'It's in the Blood : The eternal popularity of Dracula & Co. is a sign of the recurring struggles of us mortals' in *U.S. Catholic*. pp. 40 – 41.
- Miller, S. 2003. 'Nursery fears made flesh and sinew': Vampires, the Body and Eating Disorders: A Psychoanalytic Approach' in *Vampires : Myths and Metaphors of Enduring Evil*. C. T. Kungl (ed.). Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press. pp. 53 – 58.
- Rice, A. 2010 (1976). *Interview with the Vampire*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Saler, B. and C. A. Ziegler. 2005. 'Dracula and Carmilla : Monsters of the Mind' in *Philosophy and Literature* 29.1. pp. 218 – 227.
- Williamson, M. 2003. 'Vampire Transformation: From Gothic Demon to Domestication?' in *Vampires : Myths and Metaphors of Enduring Evil*. C. T. Kungl (ed.). Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press. pp. 101 – 108.

# PURITAN NEW ENGLAND IN NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE'S SHORT STORIES

ANA KOCIĆ  
University of Niš

***Abstract:** This article is an attempt to (re)consider the American colonial past, as represented in some of Hawthorne's best-known short stories, from the perspective of cultural studies. After the theoretical introduction, which deals with the Puritans as the majority group in colonial New England, several short stories from the "Twice-Told Tales" collection are analyzed in order to compare the historical data with the fictionalized representations of the American past.*

***Keywords:** Colonial America, majority/minority groups, Nathaniel Hawthorne, New England, Puritans.*

## 1. Introduction

The purpose of my paper is to examine the colonial American past by using the interdisciplinary method of cultural studies, which takes into account historical and social factors, as well as the texts and discourses produced (Saukko 2003: 33). Firstly, we will deal with historical considerations of the Puritans as the most influential religious group in colonial New England and their treatment of the outsiders, i.e. those who did not share their religious beliefs. Furthermore, the importance of the Puritan heritage for the general American history will be emphasized. The rest of the paper will offer a reading of three short stories from Nathaniel Hawthorne's collection "Twice-Told Tales", based on the comparison of historical data and fictionalized history. As Hawthorne's works dealing with colonial America shaped the more contemporary perception of the Puritans to a great extent, we thought it would be interesting to compare the historical considerations of the Puritans and their legacy with their representations in some of Hawthorne's best-known short stories. We will see that Hawthorne's representations of his Puritan ancestors, although harsh and without much sympathy at first glance, are filled with ambiguities and complexities. A careful reading of his stories reveals that, although critical of Puritan sternness, rigidity and religious zeal, Hawthorne still acknowledges, or at least hints at the fact that such zeal and unwavering determination were crucial for survival in the hostile wilderness of the first colonies. What is more, Hawthorne openly praises the Puritans' firm belief in the freedom of (their) opinion and their rebellious nature, which, in scholarly literature dealing with this period of American history, are seen as the first truly American traits.

## **2. New England Puritans: a historical perspective**

It is noticeable that the treatment of Puritans by historians varies from dismissing them as “a set of somber killjoys whose greatest pleasure was preventing simple folk from enjoying themselves, and whose principal object in life was to repress beauty and inhibit human nature” (Morison, 1992, quoted in Bremer 2009: 107) to seeing them as harbingers of “democracy, more perfect than any which antiquity had dreamt of” (DeTocqueville 2006). Both of these views could be considered rather extreme, but they could also be starting points in the research of Puritanism in America, leading towards a balanced assessment of the importance of Puritans for American history.

### **2.1. Religious background**

Almost any discussion of the Puritans who settled in America highlights the issue of their faith as the central and most prominent feature of the period in which they lived. They are described as a group of religious zealots who came to the New World with the idea of forming an ideal community of the chosen people – *a City Upon a Hill*, as the first Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, John Winthrop, stated in his often-quoted sermon. The foundation of their faith was the belief that men can be saved only by faith and God’s grace, which he bestows on the elected few according to his own sovereign will. Therefore, from the beginning of time, some people are predestined for heaven, while the majority is predestined for hell (see for example, Miller 1963: 56-57, or Murphy 2001: 29). The belief in the doctrine of predestination led to constant self-examination in search for the signs of god’s grace, so introspection and turning inward with almost merciless zeal also marked the Puritan culture (Heimert and Delbanco 2001: 15).

Furthermore, Puritans (on both sides of the Atlantic) believed that they, as the elect nation, had a particular agreement with God – a covenant, which bound them to build a godly society in return for divine blessings (Conforti 2006: 54). This meant that there was a strong sense of collective responsibility for everything that happened in the colonies: prosperity was interpreted as a sign of God’s mercy, and hardships, such as droughts, Indian attacks, diseases, etc. were the proof of providential afflictions, inflicted on the colonists for failing to fulfill their part of the sacred contract. American Puritans also believed that they were a part of a social covenant, instituted among them in order to erect a new Zion on earth, which effectively meant hard work and reliance on their elected leaders and representatives.

Thinking in terms of a contract pervaded state affairs as well – it implied “the willing acceptance of God’s rule by an earthly community” (Murphy 2001: 41). State officials, therefore, had the task to ensure the fulfillment of the contract with God and to preserve the ideal community of *visible saints*, by suppressing potential dissenters both from within and from the outside.

## 2.2. Puritan treatment of dissent

As the previous section has shown, the Puritan experience in the New World was oriented towards establishing and preserving the society of the like-minded based on a set of strict laws and principles and that effectively meant that any hint of dissent would have to be immediately suppressed and silenced. Those who strayed from the holy precepts, whether they were members of the Puritan community or outsiders who came to the colony (colonies) later, were punished and excluded from the colony with equal zeal and efficiency. The sense of collective responsibility was very strong in the Puritan community; therefore, no individual transgressions were tolerated, as that would have jeopardized the prospects of the entire colony (Vaughan 1997: 199). The cases of Roger Williams and Ann Hutchinson, who were banished from New England due to their (public) disagreement with the Puritan authorities on the issues of faith and doctrine, prove that the early colonists not only regarded strangers with suspicion but also purged their own ranks of those who did not live up to the standards of the *New Zion*.

A similar thing happened to Thomas Morton, a flamboyant founder of an outpost at Mount Wollaston which grew into the colony of Merry Mount; he attempted to recreate the Old England rural spirit in the New World. He was quickly arrested by the Puritan authorities, who viewed his experiment (which included celebrating May Day, maintaining [almost too] friendly relations with the Indians and rejoicing in the beauties of the North American wilderness) as an instance of offensive paganism, and shipped back to England, while the other inhabitants were relocated (Conforti 2006: 67). After an almost 15-year-long exile, Morton returned to America, only to be arrested again. He spent a year in prison, which completely ruined his health and ultimately led to his death. The main charges against him were that he armed the Indians, thus aiding the enemies of the Puritan colonies, but it is more likely that his indulging in sensual pleasures and his lifestyle, described by Puritan magistrates as “libertine”, along with erecting the Maypole as a symbol of joy and carefree living in the heart of the Puritan colony, posed too much of a threat to the community of visible saints (Zuckerman 1977: 256).

The Morton episode was only a minor incident in the history of Puritan conflicts with dissenters. What New England Puritans fought against most bitterly was what they called *enthusiasm* (Miller and Johnson, 1963: 10). Perhaps the best summary of their attitude was given by one of the first-generation Puritan clergymen and authors:

*“All Familists, Antinomians, Anabaptists, and other Enthusiasts, shall have free Liberty to keep away from us, and such as will come to be gone as fast as they can, the sooner the better.”* (Ward 1963: 227)

Among the so-called Enthusiasts, a religious group that repeatedly refused the right to freely exercise their creed outside the boundaries of the Puritan colonies and therefore suffered the harsh consequences of such persistence, were

the Quakers. The Quakers also came to the New World in order to build their own community based on the belief in the *Inner Light*, but, unlike the Puritans, they did not insist on perfection and exclusiveness but on the equality of all men, tolerance and refusal of all ceremonies (Boorstin 1958: 33-34). Furthermore, they constantly came back to Massachusetts, despite banishments and other harsh punishments (often including whipping, ear-cropping and other cruelties), in the quest for martyrdom, disrupting the sermons and sometimes even publicly displaying their naked bodies (Bremer 1976: 139). In several extreme cases, repeated offenders who came back to the Puritan colony regardless of the previous banishment became even subjected to the death penalty. The two groups seem to have formed a peculiar symbiosis: the Quakers were relentless in their pursuit of the crown of martyrdom, while the Puritans were sometimes even too eager to oblige.

The relations between the New England Puritans and the Quakers represent only one of the dichotomies that seem to have marked the Puritan colonial experience in America. According to Henry Adams (qtd in Delbanco 1991: 14), “Resistance to something was the law of New England nature”. It seems that in many ways, Puritanism in America was defined and, according to some scholars, even invented by its opposition, by those who detested and resisted it regardless of the price they had to pay (Heimert and Delbanco 2001: 8). It is interesting that Hawthorne’s short stories that deal with these themes are also built around the opposition of two sides, one of which is always the Puritan, as we will see in the third part of the paper.

### **2.3. Puritan legacy in America**

It is noticeable that most of the scholarly literature that deals with the New England Puritans focuses on the totalitarian, autocratic, hierarchical and authoritarian aspects of their regime. However, what is often understated is the fact that the religion they brought to the new continent, although seemingly narrow and rigid, also included a peculiar philosophy and a metaphysic that provided a cultural framework inside which one’s emotional and intellectual life could be organized (Miller and Johnson 1963: 4). Owing to the complexity of the culture they brought with themselves, their errand into the wilderness was successful and the Puritans managed to establish themselves as a dominant majority group in colonial New England.

Another part of the Puritan heritage that has often been praised throughout American history was their resistance to English oppression and their struggle for preserving New England (Bremer 2009: 105). Many of the 17<sup>th</sup>-century Puritan characteristics survived long enough to influence the character of the new nation born in the 18<sup>th</sup> century: viewing Americans as the chosen people identified with ancient Israel, their activist Christianity, the covenant theology, a strong inclination towards introspection and, especially present today, the idea of America fighting the war against the Antichrist (McKenna 2007: 49).

We have seen that the Puritan legacy in the USA, although unquestionably important, can be seen in a more or less (un)favorable light in terms of historical

considerations. However, it must not be overlooked that the author who was the first to bring the Puritans into the limelight was Nathaniel Hawthorne, many of whose works explored and re-contextualized the American colonial past. The following section will focus on Hawthorne's short stories that have New England Puritans as their main protagonists.

### **3. Hawthorne's Puritans**

Many of the preconceptions about the (New England) Puritans we hold even today are based on the works of Nathaniel Hawthorne. The famous opening scene of the first chapter of "The Scarlet Letter", in which "a throng of bearded men, in sad-colored garments and grey steeple-crowned hats" (Hawthorne 1994: 40) watch and comment on the punishment of a young woman with a baby in her arms, is how most people see the Puritans even today – somber, merciless patriarchs dressed in black and opposed to anything that brings joy to life. Many of Hawthorne's short stories also deal with this chapter of American heritage and are fictionalized scenes from the American colonial past. The stories that will be presented here are all from the "Twice-Told Tales" collection. What they all have in common, besides the fact that some of their protagonists are New England Puritans, is that they are constructed around the opposition of two sides.

#### **3.1. Jollity vs. gloom: "The Maypole of Merry Mount"**

In the opening scene of "The Maypole of Merry Mount" (all subsequent quotations, unless indicated otherwise are from Hawthorne 2004: 49-63), we have the Maypole as the central symbol of a jolly and carefree colony and its inhabitants dressed in bright colors, decorated with flowers and ribbons and wearing animal masks. They are contrasted and, perhaps significantly, surrounded by a group of Puritans, described as "most dismal wretches", who are led by John Endicott, the first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, "the Puritan of Puritans". The two groups symbolically represent light and darkness and can be seen as the struggle between unrestrained sensuality and rational suppression of natural impulses (Bell 1971: 120).

Hawthorne's description of the Puritans certainly lacks sympathy, but we can also find hints of disapproval in his portrayal of the Merry Mounters. Even though, at first glance, it seems that the colony of Merry Mount and its dedication to the celebration of life, love and nature is meant to represent a happy alternative to the somber Puritan world, a careful reader will notice that the activities undertaken by the Merry Mounters are false, escapist, irresponsible, pointless and therefore, destined to failure. This view is expressed by critic Terrence Martin (1983: 88-89), who claims that the story is told in such a manner that readers cannot identify with either side – both alternatives for the New England future seem gloomy. While the stern Puritans dedicate their lives to hard work, even harder prayers and hunting for profit, the Merry Mounters organize celebrations and hunt only to use animal skins for masquerading. It is clear that such a way of

life, a “wild philosophy of pleasure”, is not compatible with the virgin soil of the New World, which demands dedication and hard work in order to survive. In the struggle in which “jollity and gloom were contending for an empire”, the winner seems to be predetermined from the start.

When Endicott triumphantly cuts down the Maypole and then suggests that a whipping post, “the Puritan Maypole” as Hawthorne ironically calls it, should be put in its place instead, the direction in which the future country is going to move seems to be irrevocably set. The Puritans swiftly disperse with all the symbols of the “gay colony”: whippings and tortures are ordered, the dancing bear is shot and the blasphemous priest is to wait for the trial, because his offence against the Puritan religion is considered the gravest one. However, a seemingly merciless Puritan leader still shows some sympathy when faced with a newly-wed couple, who, encouraged by their youth and mutual love, are the only ones among the Merry Mounters who dare to speak for themselves and show some resistance and integrity. Thus, the rigidity of the sternest representative of the Puritans is slightly mitigated in the end. The young couple also realizes that their future life will be filled with more than just merry-making and that they have to take responsibility for their actions and start behaving like adults.

The story is in line with the historical considerations of the Puritan treatment of dissent: Endicott’s swift reaction against a minor settlement, the inhabitants of which dared to live by a creed different from the Puritan one, testifies to the Puritan intolerance of any transgressions however insignificant they may have seemed. Puritan views of the transgressors, who are compared to devil’s disciples, and the harsh punishment that the Merry Mount priest is to receive confirm the centrality of the issue of faith in Puritan life. However, it must be acknowledged that Hawthorne is critical of *both* options: he sides neither with the Puritan sternness and exclusivity, nor with the frivolity of the Merry Mounters. This criticality of two very different and very extreme world views and life philosophies can also be observed in the story which we will analyze next.

### **3.2. *We are holier than thou*: “The Gentle Boy”**

“The Gentle Boy” (all subsequent quotations, unless indicated otherwise are from Hawthorne 2004: 63-99) is another of Hawthorne’s short stories that recontextualizes the American colonial past and is built around two oppositions. In this case, it is “rational piety and unbridled fanaticism contending for the empire of a young heart“. The center of the story is the fate of a young Quaker boy, whose father has been executed by the Puritans because of his religious beliefs and repeated transgressions against the Puritan laws, which strictly forbade preaching the Quaker doctrine of the *inner light* within the boundaries of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. His mother also abandons him and chooses to follow “the dictates of a wild fanaticism”, as Hawthorne describes the unrelenting zeal and enthusiasm of the Quaker sect. The boy is adopted by a Puritan family, but his inclusion in the Puritan society proves to be an unachievable end.

Even though the boy's innocence and meekness of spirit are emphasized throughout the story, he is still shunned by the Puritan community, who even extend their prejudices and rejection to the boy's adopted family. The climax of the story is the scene where the boy is tricked by one of his peers, whom he had previously treated with kindness and believed to have become his true friend, and cruelly beaten and insulted by a group of Puritan children. The scene significantly takes place behind the Puritan meeting house and the cruelty with which the boy is treated is amplified by the fact that it is performed by children, "baby-fiends", who completely repeat the patterns of behavior of their parents. The scene abounds in irony and testifies to the force of Puritan prejudices, which are imprinted onto the minds of the members of their community from early childhood. The gentle-spirited boy does not survive that outburst of unprovoked and undeserved cruelty and only his deathbed shortly manages to unite his biological mother and his adopted parents in grief and regret. The event leaves a deep mark on the boy's adopted father, who begins to lose his faith and becomes more inclined towards the Quaker doctrine, whereas the boy's biological mother becomes even more fanatical in her religious zeal. Hawthorne openly criticizes both religious views and exposes the consequences of religious fanaticism that neglects basic human values. The only character who actually manages to see beyond the religious dogma is the boy's adopted mother, who remains broken-hearted in the end. As we said in the previous section, it takes a careful reader to see beyond the simple explanation of the Quaker doctrine representing a more humanistic alternative to stern Puritanism. In this story as well, both options are severely criticized: the former because of its obstinate and self-destructive insistence on martyrdom at all costs, and the latter because of its intolerance, which sometimes turns into utmost cruelty (see, for example, Crews 1966: 65-69). Hawthorne's sympathy goes to those who are not willing to sacrifice the sanctity of a human life in the name of an abstract idea, thus exposing and criticizing "the dehumanizing effects of a religious idea" (Martin 1983: 71).

This story gives another harsh portrayal of New England Puritans, as is almost customary in Hawthorne. However, not all of his stories show his Puritan ancestors in an unfavorable light. Such is the case with the third story, discussed below.

### **3.3. Bold exploits: "Endicott and the Red Cross"**

As previously mentioned, one of the acknowledged Puritan achievements was their opposition to the tyranny of the mother country, which ultimately ushered in the American Revolution. The event that Hawthorne recontextualizes in this story also serves this purpose. The story is set in the period when Charles I ruled England and the Puritan authorities in Plymouth and Massachusetts were in danger of losing their power, due to the hostile attitude towards the Puritan movement of William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury, who was appointed by the King.

In the opening scene of "Endicott and the Red Cross" (all subsequent quotations, unless indicated otherwise are from Hawthorne 2004: 419-427), we see

the English banner with the red cross above the Puritan colony in the center of which is the meeting house. Scattered around the meetinghouse are the means of enforcing the Puritan authority: the whipping post, the pillory with a suspected Roman Catholic confined to it, the stocks which imprison a royalist and a band of Puritan soldiers led by John Endicott. Other transgressors are also publicly displayed: a member of the “enthusiast” sect, wearing the sign “A Wanton Gospeller”, a woman punished with a cleft stick on her tongue for publicly criticizing the authorities, people with cropped ears, branded cheeks and slit nostrils and a woman with the scarlet letter A on her dress – the precursor of Hester Prynne. Although the portrayed scene testifies to the intolerance and brutality of New England Puritans, Hawthorne reminds the readers that “It was the policy of our ancestors to search out even the most secret sins, and expose them to shame, without fear of favor, in the broadest light of the noonday sun.”

Another member of this mixture of fictional and historical characters is Roger Williams, minister in Salem at that period, who brings news from England for Endicott to read. Enraged by the received news, Endicott announces that the colony is to be put under the rule of a governor-general, appointed from England, and interprets this gesture as the English attempt “to establish the idolatrous forms of English Episcopacy”. He reminds his fellow Puritans that it is precisely their search for religious freedom and civil rights that brought them to the New World in the first place and that they should not accept any imposition of authority. Endicott then boldly advances towards the English banner and, with a triumphant cry and the approval of the on-looking multitude, cuts the red cross out of the banner – thus, symbolically, announcing the removal of the English rule in the Puritan colonies. Hawthorne calls this gesture “one of the boldest exploits which our history records” and weaves the trait of oppression to tyranny into the American national character. Endicott’s predominantly religious gesture thus receives political implications, announcing the American Revolution and the prominent role that the descendants of the first Puritan settlers would have in it many years later (Grant 1988: 143-163).

Despite the fact that the main purpose of this story seems to be the glorification of the rebellious Puritans, whose bravery and resolution laid the groundwork for the future independence of the U.S.A., there are still ambiguities in the portrayal of the Puritans and their leader Endicott (Wright 2007: 80). It is obvious that their struggle for civil and religious rights includes only the members of the community of *visible saints*, whereas all those with different opinions, beliefs and aspirations are to be denied those same rights. Endicott’s reply to the “Wanton Gospeller” who demands the right to exercise his religion freely is a harsh one and in line with the previously quoted Nathaniel Ward. Thus, Hawthorne’s Puritan ancestor is, on one hand, celebrated as the champion of liberty from tyranny, while on the other, portrayed as the tyrant himself, leaving the resolution of the story ambiguous.

#### 4. Conclusion

In this article, we have attempted to use the interdisciplinary method that is characteristic of cultural studies in order to analyze three of Hawthorne's short stories from the "Twice-Told Tales" collection. Comparing historical data and fictionalized history, we were able to see certain similarities between the treatment of the New England Puritans in history books and in Hawthorne's works. It seems indisputable that the Puritan New England society was a rigid, totalitarian and closed one, as is the case with Hawthorne's Puritans. Any transgression against the social and especially religious norms was immediately sanctioned and suppressed. Outsiders were treated with suspicion and even the members of the community of *visible saints* were under constant scrutiny. In certain cases, the harshest punishments were administered to the transgressors. However, what both history and Hawthorne acknowledge is the fact that the Puritan dedication, hard work and cultural framework were in many ways necessary for the survival of the colonies in the hostile wilderness. Furthermore, the spirit of rebellion against any kind of oppression that the Puritans carried with themselves (although ironically, in many ways they were the ones who oppressed) was later on fully expressed during the American Revolution and has been praised as one of the main traits of the American national character. While they helped to enforce stereotypes of the Puritans, Hawthorne's works also served another important purpose: that of exploring the American heritage and thus creating genuinely American literature.

#### References

- Bell, M. D. 1971. *Hawthorne and the Historical Romance of New England* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Boorstin, D. J. 1958. *The Americans: The Colonial Experience*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Bremer, F. J. 1976. *The Puritan Experiment*. London: St. James Press.
- Bremer, F. J. 2009. *Puritanism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Conforti, J. A. 2006. *Saints and Strangers: New England in British North America*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Crews, F. 1966. *The Sins of the Fathers: Hawthorne's Psychological Themes*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Grant, W. E., 1988 "Nathaniel Hawthorne," in Kimbel, B. E. (ed.). *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Vol. 74, pp. 143–163, Detroit: Gale Research.
- Hawthorne, N. 1994 (1850). *The Scarlet Letter*. London, UK: Penguin Books. Ltd.
- Hawthorne, N. 2004 (1837). *Twice-Told Tales* [Online]. Available: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/13707/13707-h/13707-h.htm> [2011, August 15].
- Heimert, A. and A. Delbanco (eds.). 2001 (1985). *The Puritans in America: A Narrative Anthology*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Delbanco, A. 1991 (1989). *The Puritan Ordeal*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- DeTocqueville, A. 1997. (1835). *Democracy in America* [Online]. Available: [http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/DETOC/toc\\_indx.html](http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/DETOC/toc_indx.html) [2012, April 2].

- Martin, T. 1983 (1965). *Nathaniel Hawthorne*. Boston: Twayne Publishers.
- McKenna, G. 2007. *The Puritan Origins of American Patriotism*. New Heaven & London: Yale University Press.
- Miller, P. and T. H. Johnson, (eds.). 1963. *The Puritans. A Sourcebook of Their Writings*. New York: Harper Torchbooks.
- Murphy, A. R. 2001. *Conscience and Community: revisiting toleration and religious dissent in early modern England and America*. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Saukko, P. 2003. *Doing Research in Cultural Studies: An Introduction to Classical and New Methodological Approaches*. London, UK: SAGE Publications.
- Vaughan, A. T. 1997 (1972). *The Puritan Tradition in America, 1620–1730*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England.
- Ward, N. 1963 (1647). “The Simple Cbler of Aggawam” in Miller, P. and T. H. Johnson, (eds.). 1963. *The Puritans. A Sourcebook of Their Writings*. New York: Harper Torchbooks.
- Wright, S. B. 2007. *Critical companion to Nathaniel Hawthorne: a literary reference to his life and work*. New York, NY: Facts On File, Inc.
- Zuckerman, M. 1977. “Pilgrims in the Wilderness: Community, Modernity, and the Maypole at Merry Mount” in *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 50, No. 2, pp. 255-277.

# THE INTERSECTIONS OF AMERICAN EXPERIMENTAL THEATRE AND ABSURD DRAMA

MÁRTA ÓTOTT

University of Szeged

*Abstract:* The aim of this paper is to observe the interconnections between American experimental theatre and the Theatre of the Absurd, which is generally accepted as a primarily European theatre phenomenon. What could these relations be? As the paper will hopefully prove, American absurdist and experimental theatre developed in an unambiguous parallel and had a great impact on each other.

*Keywords:* Absurdist drama and theatre, Broadway, experimental theatre, Off- and Off-Off Broadway

## 1. Introduction

During the development of the American theatre, New York's Broadway became the centre of American theatrical productions. However, many theatres and theatre companies emerged by the 1950s, seceding from Broadway, which had mostly been led by professionalist and profit-oriented producers (Gussow 2000:196). Due to their location and objectives, these theatres were collectively named Off-Broadway. Once its playhouses, actors, producers and playwrights let their need for profit take control, it became a part of the mainstream, not differentiating itself from Broadway anymore (197, 205). This is why towards the 1960s and afterwards, coffeehouses and theatre clubs invited playwrights with ideas and eagerness to create another counter-movement, called the Off-Off Broadway movement (202, 206). In the 1960s, theatrical experimentation flourished and became a pivotal concern for American dramatists, directors, producers, pedagogues and even actors.

One significant distinction from Broadway is that Off- and Off-Off Broadway theatres were extremely open to the plays of the European representatives of the Theatre of the Absurd, e.g. Samuel Beckett, Eugène Ionesco, Arthur Adamov and Harold Pinter. Also, their plays were very successful for audiences rejecting the mainstream (204). *Waiting for Godot* (1953) by Beckett was presented on Broadway in 1956, but the audiences who were used to visiting spectacular musicals were not satisfied with the play (Aronson 2000:214). This and similar dramas were then staged on Off- and Off-Off Broadway stages, only Ionesco's *Rhinoceros* (1960) had a season of a highly modified production on Broadway (Albee 1962). Off-Off Broadway railed against the commercialist attitude that eventually reached Off-Broadway; even so, this tendency strongly connects them. Although in the hierarchy of theatre types Broadway is on the top and Off-Broadway closely follows it, Off-Off Broadway was as acceptant to these dramas as its antecedent that had originally resisted commercialization.

There were American playwrights who wanted to express the questions of existence and the absurdity of mankind too. Eugene O'Neill, active in the first half of the twentieth century, was one of the playwrights in American drama literature who had an immense influence on later authors. The unbearable feeling of containment recurrent to his plays resonates with the world picture of the Esslinian absurd drama. One of O'Neill's followers, Edward Albee borrows the idea of the world being an unlivable place in the second half of the century, as well as other dramatists, whom the paper shall refer to in the following sections. This paper investigates the connections between Martin Esslin's notion of the Theatre of the Absurd and the history of the Off- and Off-Off-Broadway movements.

## **2. The Definition and the Definitional Problems of the Theatre of the Absurd in the United States of America**

Esslin (2004) offers a definition for the Theatre of the Absurd in his study of the same title. He defines absurd drama as a post-World War II phenomenon characteristic of Europe. In the first edition of his book (1961), he discusses the works of Beckett, Ionesco, Adamov and, in later editions, Pinter and others as well. He claims that these playwrights depict "the absurdity of the human condition" (Esslin 2004:25). The characters in these plays are doomed to entrapment and they are in a frustrating state of transition. There is no resolution or reconciliation for them, no development of their state. If there is any change for them, it only entails a severe sense of loss. By not providing real solutions to fictional – and humanity's – conflicts anymore, absurd drama challenges the plot structure of conventional pieces. The characters cannot find their way out, they are often in a net of relations – however, these relationships do not offer any support at all, they fail to function. This keeps alive the historical avant-garde's disenchantment that language lost its logic, and it is presented in the plays accordingly (329). However, with the help of performance, the language of the plays "ha[s] deep, often metaphysical meaning" that expresses the philosophical message behind it (329).

Esslin pinpoints literary, theatrical as well as philosophical precursors to the Theatre of the Absurd. Albert Camus, one of the major philosophers of Existentialism and Absurdism, tackles ontological questions in *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* (1942). How Camus grasps absurdity, according to Esslin (2004: 24), is through the observation that "the world ceases to make sense" and that every intention leads nowhere. The avant-garde is also acknowledged as a forerunner – especially Dada, Surrealism and in the latest edition of his book, Esslin adds Expressionism to the list (366). With its deconstruction of language and aesthetics, it is unequivocal that the avant-garde nourished the later evolving dramatic and theatrical phenomenon. Because of the in-between state of the characters, the gags and sketches, and the language games involved in these plays, it is transparent that tragicomic and grotesque elements are at work as well. The curious surrealism of Alfred Jarry, the metatheatricality of Luigi Pirandello, and retrospectively, the

madness scenes of Henrik Ibsen and the bound characters of Anton Chekhov are also recognized as influences (Brater 1990:298).

When it comes to contextualizing absurd drama and theatre in the US, Esslin seems slightly uncertain. Although he claims that the Second World War was not fought on American soil, so Americans do not share the feeling of the absurd, he mentions Albee as a potential representative of absurd writing. In his plays, Esslin writes, Albee “attacks the very foundations of American optimism” (Esslin 2004:311-312) and, in this sense, he can be referred to as an absurdist. Albee felt rather offended by this label and explains in his 1962 article published in *The New York Times* (available on the online archive) that, although he does not want to wear any labels, he acknowledges that this dramatic style exists and that it affected American theatre. To conclude that “[the Theatre of the Absurd] is out”, he adds (Albee 1962), after its blossoming in Europe, would not be less offensive than the labelling itself. The essence of this theatre will remain the same, but its methods “will undergo mutation” (Albee 1962). For the theatre of the US, he claims, it is natural to “*experiment*” and give a “response” (Albee 1962 [my emphasis]).

Albee first thought that this label was a way of marking a set of over-evaluated productions put up on Broadway stages. His opinion reflects his contempt for the marketing processes of the theatre district producers – who possess indispensable skills and have a free hand over dramatists and actors, contracts and the budget, in short, over the production itself.

What [...] could be more absurd than a theatre in which the esthetic criterion is something like this: A “good” play is one which makes money, a “bad” play (in the sense of “Naughty! Naughty!” I guess) is one which does not; a theatre in which performers have plays rewritten to correspond to the public relations image of themselves; [...] a theatre in which, in a given season, there was not a single performance of a play by Beckett, Brecht, Chekhov, Genet, Ibsen, O’Casey, Pirandello, Shaw, Strindberg – or Shakespeare? (Albee 1962)

This remark has direct connections to the aforementioned theatre movements. At that time, dramatists felt the urge to push the boundaries of Broadway, and Albee, for instance, very actively participated.

In terms of scholarly criticism, many theoreticians accept that the Theatre of the Absurd exists in the US, and they usually connect it to the 1960s in its essence:

Beckett and Ionesco, in particular, with their characters trapped in bizarre, inexplicable, and frightening worlds in which language either failed them or turned against them, seemed suddenly relevant in the American landscape of the sixties. (Aronson 2000:132)

This statement is crucial, completely relevant, absolutely acceptable, but provokes criticism. The possibility of questioning the limits of Esslin's definition cannot be seen here.

### 3. The Rise of Experimental Theatre in the US

When considering the development of Off-Broadway, the Little Theatre Movement in diverse regions in the US should be mentioned first. It was booming between the 1910s and 1920s and promoted regional theatres and theatrical innovation instead of Broadway's showcase performances (Carlson 2000:249). Marvin Carlson argues that the Off-Broadway movement in New York was "the post-war extension of the Little Theatre Movement" after 1945 (251). The Little Theatre Movement was a major step made to insert the European avant-garde techniques into the US repertoire starting from the 1910s and 1920s (Aronson 2000:88). Jacques Copeau's and Michel Saint-Denis' influence became visible in the "semi-abstract stage design" of many productions by the 1930s (89). As an example for abstract visual elements (though not particularly reminiscent of either Copeau's or Saint-Denis' techniques), Elmer Rice's *The Adding Machine* (1923) can be seen as a milestone in terms of its eerie, Expressionist stage design (Walker 2005:176-177). The fallen, almost pathetic protagonist, who cannot find a way out of his everyday misery (178), is akin to such characters as Estragon or Vladimir.

Inspired by the movement for regional theatres, the Provincetown Players, an amateur group of writers and actors, founded the Provincetown Playhouse in Manhattan by the twenties (Aronson 2000:107). Manhattan in the twenties also saw the opening of the Cherry Lane Theatre and has provided a home for it since then (107). Both engaged in staging innovative plays while searching for the American theatrical voice: the Playhouse gladly produced the plays of O'Neill, and a few decades later, those of Albee. Cherry Lane was no less acceptant of Albee as well as the slightly more anarchic and vaguely absurdist Imamu Amiri Baraka and Samuel Shepard (Gussow 2000:204). Thus far it might seem that the American theatre had insurmountable obstacles in finding its own distinct Americanness and adapting highly respected European dramatists at the same time, but this supposition is false. As I will prove by the end of the paper, this dynamism was used as an advantage for American theatrical experimentation.

According to Melvyn Gussow (2000: 202), Eugene O'Neill was also a precursor to the Off-Broadway movement. In the beginning, his plays were mostly presented by the Players. Not until then did the theatre of the US start to become coherent and united. It is crucial to refer back to the issues raised by the former paragraph: American non-mainstream theatres staged European plays based on their selection – and on what was rejected by the mainstream – and simultaneously found their American voice. In O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* (1922), Yank, the immigrant working class protagonist, wants to belong. He and his mates fuel the ocean-liner in the bottom of which they constantly shovel and burn coal. He seems the strongest of the workers and feels highly certain of his authority. However, the

conflict (to Yank, a disturbing dissonance) begins when the heiress of the ocean-liner, Mildred Douglas, descends to the level of the workers to “discover how the other half lives” (O’Neill 1980:1112), and calls Yank a hairy ape. Afterwards, Yank is tormented and cannot find relief. Wherever the slightly grotesquely depicted protagonist goes, he is excluded. He is trapped in transition (is he a civilized person? or just a hairy ape?), whatever he does, the opposite of his goal happens, and all his misery has to start all over again after each of his failures. He does not feel secure anymore, he is not accepted as a civilized person by the upper-class, and neither is he welcome in the workers’ union to take revenge on the woman. The series of disappointments ends in his tragicomic death. He eventually decides to visit a zoo to meet the apes dwelling there, and a gorilla crushes him in a friendly but lethal hug.

Considering Esslin’s definition, the play foreshadows the essence of the absurd. It presents a proto-absurdist theme, although it is regularly referred to as the follower of the Expressionist tradition. Even in his latest edition of his book, Esslin does not include O’Neill as an influence. Linda Ben-Zvi states – and I certainly agree – that:

What Esslin might well have done [...] was include O’Neill – as he did Strindberg and Ibsen – in that list of forerunners of absurdist theater acknowledging O’Neill’s kindred worldview and some of his dramatic experimentation that helped pave the way for later writers. (1990:36)

This is absolutely the point to make here. O’Neill’s other works, such as, *Long Day’s Journey into Night* (1956) create, as Ben-Zvi claims, the atmosphere of containment and entrappedness Beckett uses later in his plays (37). In this sense, the observation that the Theatre of the Absurd is primarily European, and that the American theatre adapted it in the 1960s should be approached with caution. Although O’Neill experimented with European visual techniques (Walker 2005:152), he and his contemporaries were embedded in significant social and cultural changes that modernism brought about in America (153).

Returning to theatre history, Judith Malina’s and Julian Beck’s Living Theatre, which had its origins in 1948 (Gussow 2000:203), should be mentioned as well. They promoted avant-garde works, Brecht’s political epic theatre, Antonin Artaud’s and Jean Genet’s “Theatre of Cruelty,” which chose a violent way of shaking up audiences (Roudané 2000:338), and, undoubtedly, the absurdist of Esslin’s definition were also appreciated (Gussow 2000:203). Malina and Beck worked on a considerable amount of productions of plays by such playwrights as Albee or Arthur L. Kopit (203) with slightly absurdist material. The Living attracted middle-class viewers and students (Aronson 2000:137). Malina and Beck believed that art had a calling, and that it could raise social awareness which might shake up the American theatre life (Gussow 2000:203). They were so influential that they were able to re-energize the European avant-garde (Aronson 2000:140). The Living was an especially important site of happenings and experimentation with its impressive visual elements, and the invitation launched to the audience to

have a close experience with the actors' body. American performance art is unquestionably indebted to them.

Joseph Papp founded the New York Shakespeare Festival in 1954 that became the Public Theatre in 1967 (Gussow 2000:198). He was attracted to the European avant-garde, and although tailored the productions to his own taste, he enthusiastically presented Brecht's, Pinter's, and the works of absurdists in general (200). He was a devoted though controversial and charismatic person (200).

The end of the 1950s saw a transition between the two Off-movements. Caffè Cino, with its foundation in 1958 was a remarkable coffeehouse that signed the emergence of Off-Off Broadway (206). Founder Joe Cino invited plays with experimental undertones, and homosexuals, African Americans, Hispanics and other ethnic dramatists were also able to make themselves known. One of Cino's protégés before his shocking suicide in 1967 was Albee (206), whose works recurrently tackle the issue of homosexuality.

The beginner Albee could not stage his first well-known drama, the one-acter *The Zoo Story*, in the US. In its premiere it shared the bill with Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape* in Berlin in 1959 (203). In the "Preface" to his volume, Albee states ironically that it was strange to produce an American play by an American playwright outside America, but this had its reasons to happen, it was "the nature of the theatre" (Albee 1997:7) – the nature of Broadway implied in the "Introduction." Not long after its success in Berlin, the play was first presented in the US in the Provincetown Playhouse, Off-Broadway, in early 1960, borrowing the double-ticket strategy with *Krapp* (Gussow 2000:203). The Living also staged the play in the 1959-60 season, and Cherry Lane had a long-running production too (204). The play revolves around the zoo story of protagonist Jerry near a bench in Central Park. He is a social outcast and the representative of post-war (and Cold War) disillusionment. One of the major themes of the play is the American family, the most significant social unit for the Americans in that period. The play does not support ideals such as the possibility of communication and the pursuit of happiness.

Jerry is a grotesque, ambiguous (shabby but wise, kind but arrogant) person who cannot blend in. He wants to initiate Peter, his complete opposite, who does not understand stories. Jerry tells him the story of the dog, which is an allegory about the inability to make contact. The dog wants to ward Jerry off the limits of the hell-house where he lives. However, unable to understand the dog's intentions, Jerry decides to take revenge and kill it. After the failure of his attempt, he pities the dog and wants it to love him. But nothing remains of the "contact" they made (Albee 1997:34) anymore, with the exception of a resigned nod. The conclusion of the dog story is that making contact is a series of trials and failures. The box-like *apartment* in which he lives, and where he is fully welcome after the murderous attempt, is metaphorical of the interrelatedness and the estrangement of people. Jerry impales himself on a knife held by Peter, and does it for the sake of Peter's brighter future, but the only thing left from his suicide is the sense of shock: nothing changes in the play's world.

After the Off-Broadway success of the play, Broadway staged the equally slightly absurdist *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* in 1962, but shortly after this, the playwright returned to his roots outside Broadway (Gussow 2000:203). This shows that there was a transgressible border among Broadway, Off-Broadway and Off-Off Broadway venues for the playwrights.

In the 1960s, the Civil Rights Movement endured, which was significant in the theatre movements and for playwrights as well. According to Enikő Bollobás, it was a period when the role of the text, the playwright and the audience changed (2005:746 [my translation]). The viewer became involved and the text started to be used as a tool for improvisation (746 [my translation]). Moreover, the boundaries between visual elements, dance performance and the use of music began to blur.

Ellen "La Mama" Stewart was an Earth Mother-like producer who "heard the vibes" (Gussow 2000:201) and sought talent right at the beginning of the new decade. She found ideas appealing in the first place, as she could "read" people and favoured each promising playwright (201). She founded La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club (with the nice abbreviation "etc.") in 1961 (201). Many American dramatists e.g. Sam Shepard, whose works were also influenced by Beckett, Ionesco and others, had their plays staged at her club, and naturally, Beckett's and Pinter's works were present in her repertoire too (201).

One more step towards the Off-Off is marked by Al Carmines' Judson Theatre founded at the beginning of the sixties (Gussow 2000:206). This period was already characteristic of the collaboration of directors, actors, playwrights, producers at different theatres simultaneously. Joseph Chaikin's Open Theatre, the successor of the Living opened its doors in 1963 (Carlson 2000:255). The Open Theatre was a place for actors to experiment with new acting techniques that overwhelmingly affected the Off-Off movement, and that also paved the way for the American alternative theatre (256). Ralph Cook's Theatre Genesis welcomed playwrights to improve their work from 1964 on, Richard Schechner's Performance Group started to run in 1967 and worked with highly ritualistic material (Aronson 2000:136). All of these companies functioned as actors' and playwrights' workshops and made it possible for audiences to participate in the performances.

In the decade, many playwrights followed the absurdist route previously paved by O'Neill, Albee and their contemporaries. Such playwrights were Maria Irene Fornés and Adrienne Kennedy, who represented ethnic female playwrights among many others. As more and more playwrights were welcome, marginalized themes started to appear on stage. Many playwrights used the theatre to draw attention to the core of America's social problems (Baraka, Shepard and Israel Horovitz, whose drama is the next to be analysed, are such examples). Their plays were mostly presented outside Broadway, where producers and playwrights had the opportunity to find an open audience and convey their message (Gussow 2000:196).

Some playwrights hardly ever entered Broadway and stayed only Off-Off. Horovitz was such a playwright. His *The Indian Wants the Bronx* was performed in 1968 in the Astor Place Theater, which is an Off-Broadway theatre and was

founded after Joseph Papp's acquisition of the Astor Place Library (Gussow 2000:199). The playwright came out of the early Off-Off generation of dramatists, who advocated Sartre's and Camus' Existentialist ideas (Aronson 2000:140-141). Geographically and from the point of its ownership, this theatre counts as an Off-Broadway theatre: this is an example of how the two movements had overlapping venues. Because of the tight budget of the production, the minimalist stage design of the play was not exceptional in an Off-Broadway theatre (the same is true for the above mentioned plays). The play itself depicts an American urban wasteland near a telephone booth where a foreigner meets two American boys. The play expresses the social upheaval of the time. It has realistic tones and nightmarish undertones too.

Protagonist Gupta does not speak English and would like to call his immigrant son, but does not have enough money. The two boys decide to bully him, but after a short while it seems they can help. At the very last moment, after a series of trials and failures, when the problems appear to be solved, the boys cut the telephone wire and leave, thus Gupta cannot talk to his son: the opposite of his goal happens. Hope for Gupta is immediately and irreversibly dashed. The theme and the conclusion of the drama, hence the order of the drama's world, is that people are estranged. The protagonist cannot reach one point from another, but is doomed to be trapped. People are interrelated and entrapped because of this interrelation. With the theme of the stranger, the playwright shows that language is a means of not getting closer to someone else, but to get further away from them. When Gupta holds the dead phone and says the only words he learned in English, "Thank you", (Horovitz 1972:309) to the audience (this way involving them) instead of 'Help me,' the ultimate message of the play shines through, and it is clearly shown that language with its ambiguity and potential of failure is deconstructed on the experimental stage.

During the second half of the century, a "decentralization process" took place, which means that many seminal playwrights started to produce dramas outside Broadway (Roudané 2000:331). Also, although there were overlaps among On-, Off-, and Off-Off productions, one achievement the latter two had was that playwrights sought the possibility to stage plays in local theatres, university clubs, or coffeehouses (Bollobás 2005:771 [my translation]). From the 1970s onward, Off-Off Broadway had significant innovations: they made a "step beyond the Absurd" (Gussow 2000:209), and propagated a curious fusion of moving images, movements, music and mixed-genres (210), and new performers appeared (215). The Off-Off suddenly became widely-known and to some extent, commercialized (221).

It should be stated that these "new performances" had been nurtured by the Theatre of the Absurd (Szilassy 1986:84-85) to some extent. The disillusionment with language resulted in its total deconstruction, the interrelatedness and estrangement of people resulted in a theatrical community that offered new rituals (the Living, the Open Theatre, the Performance Group), and the depiction of decay and the vulnerability of the human body became a signifier in these rituals at the same time.

#### 4. Conclusion

If we consider the proto-absurdist themes in O'Neill, it becomes obvious that absurd drama and experimentation are highly interrelated right from the very emergence of the Off- and Off-Off Broadway movements. A major mistake Esslin makes is that his definition relies heavily on historical and geographical terms. As shown before, he also leaves out the works of O'Neill. He was as influenced by the philosophical, theatrical and literary trends as European absurdist. His American way of portraying severe psychological torments produced by society may have affected European dramatists. In the 1960s, when social problems were innovatively presented by the Theatre of the Absurd, the questions of existence became appealing topics. These fuelled American theatrical experimentation. Later in the century, many styles met and merged because of the cooperation of playwrights – a very unique feature outside Broadway. How American absurd drama changed from the modernist tradition to postmodernism cannot be tackled within the frames of this paper, but it is definitely worth the consideration. It will be a future project to observe the absurd's impact on what Hans-Thies Lehmann calls "postdramatic theatre" in his book of the same title (1999; the English version was published in 2006), especially because of the shift in the role of the dramatic text and the abundant use of impressive visual elements in the theatres beginning from the 1970s. Lehmann himself hints at the connection by saying

that the Theatre of the Absurd [...] belongs to the dramatic theatre tradition. Some of its texts explode the dramatic and narrative logic. Yet the step to post-dramatic theatre is taken only when the theatrical means beyond language are positioned equally alongside the text and are systematically thinkable without it. (2006:55)

What is for future research is to find out in what way the absurdist theatre influenced the turning away from the dramatic text that finally resulted in the high grotesqueries and neo-absurdist material of Off-Off Broadway theatres (Gussow 2000:214), and their new rituals.

After this detour, let the paper finish the conclusion by looking at the most striking connection in American absurd dramas. As presented, the protagonist's frustrations become states of mind, internalized gulfs after a violent cognitive dissonance and sense of despair. This way of description can be traced back to O'Neill's *oeuvre* in the early Off-Broadway, and was a dominant element throughout the twentieth century. One reason why this kind of representation was not acceptable on Broadway for a while might have been that the American man could not be presented as a fallen creature. Also, this scathing world view was not compatible with Cold War America; however, it was creatively and persistently presented outside Broadway. The ethos of the late 1950s and the 1960s, and Off- and Off-Off Broadwayers' interest in raising social awareness could only boost this process. Lastly, it is equally apparent that absurd drama became extremely popular and common (maybe mainstream) in non-mainstream theatres.

## References

- Albee, E. 1997. "The Zoo Story." in *Two Plays by Edward Albee*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, pp. 5-50.
- Albee, E. 1962. "Which Theatre is the Absurd One?" in *The New York Times on the Web* February 25 [Online]. Available: <http://www.nytimes.com/books/99/08/15/specials/albee-absurd.html?scp=1&sq=which%20theatre%20is%20the%20absurd%20one&st=cse> [2012, August 5]
- Aronson, A. 2000. "American Theatre in Context: 1945-Present." in *The Cambridge History of American Theatre. Vol. 3*. Christopher Bigsby and Don B. Wilmeth (eds.). New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 87-162.
- Ben-Zvi, L. 1990. "O'Neill and Absurdity." in *Around the Absurd*. Enoch Brater and Ruby Cohn (eds.). Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, pp. 33-57.
- Bollobás, E. 2005. *Az amerikai irodalom története*. Budapest: Osiris.
- Brater, E. 1990. "After the Absurd: Rethinking Realism and a Few Other Isms." in *Around the Absurd*. Enoch Brater and Ruby Cohn (eds.). Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, pp. 293-303.
- Carlson, M. 2000. "Alternative Theatre." in Ch. Bigsby and D. B. Wilmeth (eds.). *The Cambridge History of American Theatre. Vol. 3*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 249-294.
- Esslin, M. 2004 (1961). *The Theatre of the Absurd*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Gussow, M. 2000. "Off- And Off-Off Broadway." in *The Cambridge History of American Theatre. Vol.3*. Christopher Bigsby and Don B. Wilmeth (eds.). New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 196-223.
- Horovitz, I. 1972. "The Indian wants the Bronx." in *Famous American Plays Of The 1960s*. Harold Clurman (ed.). New York: Laurel, pp. 275-309.
- Lehmann, H.-T. 2006 (original German edition 1999.). Karen Jürs-Munby (trans.). *Postdramatic Theatre*. New York: Routledge.
- O'Neill, E. 1980. "The Hairy Ape." in George L. McMichael (ed.). *Anthology of American Literature*. New York: Macmillan, pp. 1106-1134.
- Roudané, M. 2000. "Plays and Playwrights since 1970." in *The Cambridge History of American Theatre. Vol. 3*. Christopher Bigsby and Don B. Wilmeth (eds.). New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 331-419.
- Szilassy, Z. 1986. *American Theater of the 1960s*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Walker, J. A. 2005. *Expressionism and Modernism in the American Theatre. Bodies, Voices, Words*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

**WORDS IN CONTEXT  
AND  
CULTURAL IDENTITY**

**SLA AS IDENTITY FORMATION:  
EVIDENCE FROM STUDY ABROAD AND CLIL CONTEXTS**

**J. IGOR PRIETO-ARRANZ**  
University of the Balearic Islands (Spain)

***Abstract:** This paper aims at exploring Second Language Acquisition (SLA) as a process through which the learner may develop ‘an enriched cultural identity’ (Sudhoff 2010), placing emphasis on three main questions, namely (1) the connections between knowledge, culture and identity; (2) how individual identities may be affected by SLA, with particular reference to study abroad and CLIL contexts; and (3) how such potentially changing identities might also influence SLA itself.*

***Keywords:** CLIL, Identity, SLA, Study Abroad*

### **1. Introduction**

Back in 1997, Firth and Wagner (2007) criticised the widely-held perception that SLA studies have focused on the cognitive nature of SLA, thereby marginalising the social (and I would add ‘cultural’) dimension they recognise as inherent to every instance of SLA – a label that will be used here as an umbrella term to cover the increasingly blurred categories of ‘foreign’ and ‘second language’ (Graddol 2006:110), with clear implications for the ‘learning’ vs. ‘acquisition’ binary.

Research has since signalled learning context among the external factors that intervene in SLA (Collentine and Freed 2004). Indeed, Formal Instruction (FI) is receiving increasing competition from other learning contexts and methodologies, most especially ‘Study Abroad’ (SA), and ‘Content and Language Integrated Learning’ (CLIL).

Given the scope of this work, it is impossible to provide a full overview of what either SA or CLIL involves, although a few introductory remarks are probably necessary, if only to contextualise our discussion. Particularly favoured by US academic authorities (Kinging 2008:1), and increasingly popular in Europe through the Erasmus / Socrates programme, SA involves travelling to, and spending some time in a target-language country, during which time the student may also receive FI. This, which should in turn imply a variety of spontaneous communicative situations, appears as different enough from FI, in which teacher-led focus on form may be thought to result in substantially different learner input and, eventually, output (Collentine and Freed 2004:155). These authors, therefore, contend that, whereas FI should primarily be regarded as a learning context, SA may well combine both learning and communicative contexts (155-156), involving target-culture situations and natural interaction with native speakers of the target language.

As for the possible language gains to be derived from SA, most of the research in the field points to SA as more beneficial than FI, although a great deal of caution is required here since (1) most of the studies undertaken so far do not allow for generalisation; and (2) the only truly conclusive results that have been reached concern oral fluency (Isabelli-García 2003; Segalowitz and Freed 2004) and vocabulary (Ife et al. 2000). Other than that, the ‘progress found in many SA studies is narrowly limited’ (Dekeyser 2007:23).

CLIL, for its part, largely owes its existence to the French immersion programmes implemented in Canada since the 1960s. It involves learning the target language in a content setting ‘where attention is given both to the language and the content’ (Coyle et al. 2010:3). CLIL is particularly visible in Europe, not least through the European Union’s institutional and economic support (Education and Culture DG 2011).

Much of the spread of CLIL approaches throughout Europe can be attributed to the support it has received from constructivist theorists, for whom CLIL encourages learner autonomy, self-organisation and self-responsibility whilst, in the specific field of language learning, presenting vocabulary and grammar in ‘authentic’, ‘specific’ contexts through ‘social activities in which students interactively construct their knowledge of language use and practices’ (Wilhelmer 2008:20-21). This has led to claims that CLIL students cognitively process their L2 at a deeper, more intense level (Aliaga 2008).

Evidence has therefore begun to emerge of this methodology’s potential benefits, particularly in the field of receptive language skills (Ruiz de Zarobe 2011:223; 229-230). The literature also reports benefits in highly complex language areas, including pragmatic behaviour (Nikula 2005) and morphosyntactic and discursive competence (Vártuki 2010), whilst parents’ fears are also put at rest since findings show that CLIL methodologies do not result in defective content processing or lower L1 skills (Costa and Coleman 2010). Additional benefits reported include the fostering of students’ motivation and autonomy, and a wider range of foreign language topics well beyond those normally dealt with in conventional FI settings (Coyle 2006).

However, weaknesses should also be pointed out for CLIL (Wilhelmer 2008:45-46). Thus, there are claims that CLIL teachers may not always be linguistically up to such a demanding task (Lasagabaster and Sierra 2010:271), often enough with insufficient methodological or linguistic support. Additionally, evidence points to the possible de facto streaming of students within the CLIL classroom (Eurydice 2006). This may in turn call into question much of the research in the field (Bruton 2011), results from which are arguably even less conclusive than those briefly presented above for SA.

At all events, preliminary results from both SA- and CLIL-related research point to (1) the culture-rich context that both SA and CLIL can at least potentially provide; and (2) the need for qualitative approaches to complement what up to now has been an overwhelmingly quantitative body of research in the field. This is largely due to the fact that individual learner differences are perceived as key to

successful SLA. This article shall focus on this latter aspect (particularly those attitudinal factors that signal SLA as a cultural process).

Taking the cue from Sudhoff (2010), for whom SLA involves developing ‘an enriched cultural identity’, and drawing on Foucauldian theory, it aims at providing some reflections on the complex relations between knowledge, discourse, language and, ultimately, culture and identity.

Finally, taking into account both the learning contexts mentioned above, namely SA and CLIL, and the increasingly influential notion of English as an International Language (EIL), this paper also aims to explore (1) how individual identities may be affected by the SLA process; and (2) whether it could also be claimed that such potentially changing identities may also influence SLA itself.

## **2. Knowledge, language, culture, identity: a Foucauldian approach to (S)LA**

It is not my aim, however, to focus on either of these contexts and methodologies per se but to point out their implications as regards SLA as a social and, ultimately, cultural process. It is now quite widely held that language, rather than accurately reflect an outside reality, largely ‘constructs and constitutes’ it (Barker and Galasiński 2001:1). This has potentially powerful implications in SLA contexts. Thus, Sudhoff (2010:32) contends that, in learning an L2, learners develop ‘an enriched cultural identity’ as a result of the fusion of their own cultural background and those new cultural elements acquired through learning the new language. For her part, Moate (2010) reminds us not to dissociate (S)LA from knowledge, which she defines as ‘a historically constructed, culturally and socially contextualised entity instantiated in language’, thus relating learning to a wider community membership process (Moate 2010:39). Consequently, for her, learning depends not quite so much on the individual but on the community this individual is a member of – an idea clearly inspired by Foucault’s discourse theory.

As is well known, Foucault had a twofold aim: to point to the impossibility of (1) the individual’s absolute freedom; and (2) the existence of an objective epistemology; and all this because, in his vision, the individual is part of a world which, rather than an entirely or purely physical reality, is a discursive construction of which s/he is largely unaware. He traced the history of western (academic) knowledge, which he divided into different periods (‘epistemes’), each being characterised by a specific vision of the world shared by all branches of knowledge (Foucault 1984:250) In Foucault’s scheme, epistemes provide mental frameworks enabling the members of a certain society to ‘think’ about certain constructs (‘discursive formations’) as if they were part of their physical reality. And all this is achieved through what Foucault calls, in a deliberately ambiguous way, ‘discourse’, i.e. language in action.

Discourse theory can also be used to re-define the concept of ‘culture’ – with profound implications for (S)LA – and, by extension, ‘society’. Danesi and Perron (1999:23) regard culture as ‘a way of life based on a signifying order [...] that is passed [...] from one generation to the next’ and which draws on the

signifying order of a first community ('tribe'). This is a semiotic approach to culture that revolves around a common signifying order which, needless to say, includes language. Danesi and Perron complete the picture with a definition of 'society': 'a collectivity of individuals who, although they may not all have the same tribal origins, nevertheless participate, by and large, in the signifying order of the founding or conquering tribe (or tribes)' (1999:24). Such definitions are perfectly congruent with Foucault's discourse theory; therefore, in the light of both Foucault's and Danesi and Perron's postulates, and even at the risk of simplification but for the purposes of this paper, we could re-define society as a specific set of spatio-temporal coordinates in which a specific range of discourses are currently in force.

At this point, we are now in a position to move on, establishing connections between some of the concepts that should prove central to our discussion here. More specifically, I wish to establish the following connections: (1) culture-knowledge; (2) knowledge-identity; (3) identity-ideology; and (4) ideology-language. Note should be taken that this will be done not quite so much in terms of what might look like binary oppositions, but considering the existence of what might be referred to as a culture-knowledge-identity-ideology-language continuum.

In the light of our working definition of society, and Danesi and Perron's semiotic approach to culture, culture is not genetically-inherited, but simply – and crucially – learnt. In other words, culture is a form of knowledge (i.e. acceptance of, or submission to, a range of discourses) which is, in turn, transmitted both formally – through educational institutions like schools – and informally – within the family and, especially in contemporary societies, through the media.

An inevitable part of our cultural baggage, and the knowledge this entails, is our sense of (cultural, national) identity. This concept, undoubtedly central to cultural studies, may – in the light of what experts have written on the matter (see, e.g. Anderson 1991) – be presented as a discursive formation. In other words, exposure to the range of discourses in force in a given spatio-temporal context (referred to as 'society' above) may well foster the individual's identification with certain aspects and features attributed to certain communities (which, for lack of a better term, we may refer to as 'nations') without realising that such nations are also the product of the same discourses – hence Anderson's (1991) short definition of the nation as an 'imagined community'.

This leads us to the next step along this continuum. The knowledge all cultural identities entail is never neutral but ideology-laden. Interestingly, ideology, another key term within cultural studies, has been defined by Althusser (1999:317) as 'a "representation" of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real condition of existence', which in turn takes us back to Anderson's notion of 'imagined community' and Foucault's discourse theory.

Further down our continuum is the ideology-language relationship. There is no doubt that language is one of the most important components of the individual's identity. However, its relevance goes a long way further than this. Languages are also the main means through which (identity) discourses are

disseminated. In many ways, then, use of a language cannot be but artificially separated from the ideology-laden knowledge that is such an inseparable part of cultural and national identity. This in turn triggers interesting questions since it clearly leads to the conception of (first) language acquisition as a cultural, and consequently ideological, process. But what are the implications for SLA?

### **3. SLA as identity formation in the era of EIL. Evidence from SA and CLIL approaches**

It has been argued that sociocultural codes are learnt in combination with the first language acquisition process. This has led to culture-integrative approaches to foreign language teaching which have, however, also been contested since the notion of English as an International Language (EIL) has come to the fore as the international community comes to terms with the fact that the status of English as a language of communication on the international scene derives not quite from the size of its native speaker population but the ever-growing number of people all across the world that speak it as a second language (Ives 2010:516). As Crystal has put it, ‘the more a language becomes a [...] global language, the more it ceases to be in the ownership of its originators’ (2011:69).

This has resulted in a scholarly trend according to which EIL is (and should therefore be taught as) devoid of any cultural association with any particular English-speaking country, so that it could enable its users to freely discuss and describe their own culture. The role of culture in the foreign language classroom is, therefore, quite dramatically reshaped, now aiming at developing ‘intercultural skills’ in learners (Bretag 2006:982).

It is not my aim here to choose between ‘traditional’ or EIL-oriented approaches to the teaching of English (or any other language) as second or foreign language. What I wish to draw attention to is the fact that SLA seems to be related to the concept of culture one way or another, and this involves not only a possible target community but also, and crucially, the very learner’s own culture and identity. Thus seen, SLA becomes, at least potentially, an identity-developing and, therefore, ideological process. How can individual identities be affected by the SLA process? And can such potentially changing identities also influence SLA itself?

#### **3.1. How can individual identities be affected by the SLA process?**

As mentioned above, identity is best seen as a discursive formation. However, explaining what it means to have an identity, to feel that one is part of a larger group, is always a difficult task. It is always so much easier to state not who we are but who we are not. And this is so because, as Hall (1996:15) puts it, ‘all identities operate through exclusion, through the discursive construction of a constitutive outside and the production of abjected and marginalized subjects’, which cultural theory has come to refer to as ‘the Other’.

Equally important is the fact that identities do not remain stable. Hall (1990) points out that even if it is in the dimension of 'identity as being' that the individual finds solace and psychological comfort (thus perceiving oneself as a member of an imagined community), there is also another inescapable side to identity, namely 'identity as becoming', which points to the disruption, destabilisation and discontinuity which are also an inescapable part of the equation. In today's globalised world, individuals are increasingly exposed to different, even intersecting, contradictory and antagonistic discourses and practices (Hall 1996:4). In this light, identity is best regarded not as a final product but as a process – in which SLA may play a role.

That SLA is visibly connected to identity issues can be seen in the wealth of academic sources linking what may be presented or perceived as language imperialism and the subsequent loss of identity in postcolonial contexts (Schmitt and Marsden 2006). However, the consideration of EIL in less controversial environments, probably in combination with less monolithic conceptions of identity ('identity as becoming') has also led to another scholarly trend which approaches SLA placing emphasis on one of its ideal outcomes, namely inter- (or rather 'trans-') cultural competence.

This shift may have profound implications as to the role of culture within the foreign language classroom, since it is assumed that, for successful communication to take place in EIL, speakers must develop a range of linguistic and cultural competences that would effectively turn them into (cross-)cultural mediators, somehow equipping them with the necessary skills to predict, negotiate and adjust to cultural differences (Meyer 1991:137).

It has been argued that the development of such skills may well involve the individual's identity, since it would imply 'a constant process of negotiation between what is own and what is foreign, what is part of one's identity and what is new and challenging' (Sercu 2000:74). As I see it, this may result not quite in the individual's developing what Pavlenko (2002) calls an international identity – according to Anderson (1991:6-7), imagined communities see themselves as essentially limited – but in a reconsideration of one's identity beyond purely national terms, so as to embrace a larger imagined – yet not global – community.

There are reasons to believe, therefore, that SLA (especially if understood through the prism of EIL) may have potentially powerful effects on the learner's identity. Consequently, some scholars are currently focusing their efforts on the development of methodologies that might somehow trigger such effects, especially with a view to 'developing a better understanding of "self" and "other" and a more refined affective capacity for a desirable relationship to "otherness"' (Byram 2008:145). Let us now consider whatever evidence SA and CLIL research may have provided in this respect.

### **3.1.1. SA**

Whereas FI does not seem to substantially vary students' attitudes towards their target language speakers and culture (Byram et al. 1991), SA has been

presented as a 'potentially rich context' in which language learning can only be artificially separated from cultural learning (Dufon and Churchill 2006). As is the case in the wider context of SLA, SA research has often subsumed identity-related issues within the larger category of motivation, since it has been noted that (1) SA-related language gains are not always 'evenly distributed among students' (Kinginger 2008); and (2) ultimate language achievement pairs far more frequently with motivation than any other individual factor (Masgoret and Gardner 2003). It can be claimed that Dörnyei (1990) already linked motivation and identity issues hypothesising that the results of motivation studies in what he called 'learning environments' such as FI might not be directly applicable to 'acquisition' contexts such as SA, since many learners in the former context often lack well-formed attitudes about their target language community members.

More recently, Allen (2010) has reported that students with strong beliefs in the linguistic and cultural potential of SA are more likely to benefit from their period abroad. This takes us to the concept of 'integrativeness', which has long dominated motivation studies in SLA. As first put forward by Gardner, integrativeness 'refers to the desire to learn an L2 of a valued community', which assumes the existence of an increasing identification process with that valued community on the part of the learner (Dörnyei 2009:22-23). However, the internationalisation of English has problematised the very notion of that 'valued community', which has led Dörnyei and Csizér (2002) to reformulate 'integrativeness' in terms of their 'L2 motivational self system'. Thus, integrativeness now becomes an identification process with 'the ideal L2 Self' (Dörnyei 2009), an ideal image of oneself as a proficient L2 speaker which learners are assumed to have and which reinforces their integrative disposition. Interestingly, the Dörnyeian model places the re-defined concept of integrativeness as the gateway to the learners' intended effort to study their language of choice, as the ideal L2 Self is seen to feed on both attitudes towards members of the L2 (possibly international) community and purely instrumental aspects such as future professional success (Dörnyei 2009).

Research has also been conducted into affective factors not quite so much prior to, or during, but after SA. Thus, Yashima and Zenuk-Nishide (2008) identify another potential side-effect of SA, namely the L2 learners' development of a sense of belonging within an imagined community no longer exclusively defined in purely national terms.

Studies like these have somehow inspired some of the most recent research carried out by the University of the Balearic Islands' Research Group in Applied Linguistics (REGAL). For instance, Juan-Garau et al. (forthcoming) have recently explored the interface of two learning contexts, FI and SA, with possible motivational changes and, particularly, integrative orientations towards the target-language community. Participants (N=57) were all Translation and Interpretation undergraduates at one of Barcelona's public universities, who were asked to fill in a questionnaire tapping into their attitudes, beliefs and motivation (ABM) at three different collection times: T1 (beginning of year 1), T2 (after 80 hours of FI in English) and T3 (after a 3-month compulsory SA period).

Results show that integrativeness grows in both contexts, although not significantly during SA, which is in agreement with Yager's (1998) findings for advanced learners, but is not congruent with Allen and Herron's (2003) conclusion that no increased integrative motivation results necessarily from SA. Additionally, such results point to mixed context effects as to learner attitudes to target-language speakers, which improve during FI but worsen after SA. Interestingly, this does not seem to bear out Yashima and Zenuk-Nishide's (2008) claim that SA may give rise to a sense of belonging to an imagined community no longer defined in purely national terms.

### **3.1.2. CLIL and content-based language learning**

Theorists and practitioners have also been quick to highlight the potential of CLIL and content-based approaches with respect to the formation and development of individual identities. Relevantly, Coyle argues that CLIL 'involves the learner in using and developing language of learning, for learning and through learning'. As she sees it, CLIL encourages teacher and students alike to 'think [...] outside the box' (Coyle 2006:16). That 'box' students can think outside of, according to Coyle, can be easily seen in Foucauldian terms as that set of spatio-temporal coordinates in which a range of discourses are in force. This is something that Byram himself (1997) already claimed, suggesting that the study of a discipline such as history (one of the traditional vehicles through which identity discourses have been disseminated), especially using foreign materials, may shed light on contradictory historical discourses.

Such issues go a long way towards accounting for the exponential rise of CLIL in Europe, with the explicit support of EU authorities (Grabe and Stoller 1997:11; Pérez-Vidal 2007:40; Coyle et al. 2010:8). This may well be related to the Union's multilingual status, foreign language skills being a key to success if a sense of unity is to be established amidst the ethnically and linguistically diverse European peoples. Thus, Ruiz de Zarobe (2011:224) firmly believes that CLIL has a role to play in developing the increasingly necessary intercultural awareness. In turn, Sudhoff sees in CLIL the best vehicle to maximise the 'enriched cultural identity' that results from all instances of SLA by revisiting, adding to, and expanding on traditional school-mediated contributions to the cultural identity development process (2010:33).

In spite of the prominence of the (inter)cultural potential of CLIL, most – if not all – of the available literature does not really bear out the thesis that CLIL does help students to 'think outside the box' with either quantitative or qualitative data, which points to a crucial gap that research needs to be fill in. Among the very few works that broach the subject more or less directly, Doiz et al. (2011) discuss the implementation of English CLIL programmes at the University of the Basque Country. Their remarks are especially relevant since the Basque Country is one of several autonomous regions in which both Spanish a minority language (in this case, Basque) share co-official status. Their qualitative study inquires how the implementation of English CLIL programmes may affect the area's language

system, and their findings, even if not conclusive, are interesting, pointing to Basque loyalists perceiving the said programme as a potential threat to the normalisation of the region's minority language. Nevertheless, CLIL students are also reported to be more motivated than their non-CLIL counterparts, which the authors see as evidence of the adoption of a 'remedial' ESL identity (Martin 2010) that – and this is my own interpretation – somehow may make Basqueness compatible with a broader, overarching identity.

Such results are particularly interesting in the light of the research carried out by the REGAL group. Marian Amengual-Pizarro and J. Igor Prieto-Arranz are currently looking into the attitudes and beliefs of both CLIL and non-CLIL secondary school students of English in Majorca (N=210). Although the study is still under way, preliminary results point to similar attitudes towards English (and its speakers) being shared by CLIL and non-CLIL students at the onset of treatment, and evidence has been found pointing to such attitudes improving more visibly in the former group after treatment (two school years). Additionally, the available evidence suggests that CLIL may even out gender-related motivational factors.

CLIL's potential may also be glimpsed in a recent study by Juan-Garau and Prieto-Arranz (2011) which provides insights into some of the effects that may be derived from the implementation of content-based (although not strictly CLIL) intercultural ELT methodologies. Participants in the study, aged 14-16, are English language learners benefiting from largely parallel methodologies in two different at three secondary schools, two in Opole, Poland (N=15, N=28) and one in Majorca, Spain (N=35).

This work focuses on one of the main tools in this methodology, the 'EIL in Poland and Spain' blog, which students from all three schools had to contribute to, and enquires into whether this content-based, transcultural approach to ELT may result in a 'negotiated re-imagining of cultural identity' (Bretag 2006). The analysis suggests that the methodology of choice serves to raise awareness of the existence and consequences of national and cultural identity discourses and even helps to create an overarching sense of 'we-ness' among the participants, capable of pulling down perceived national borders. The remarkably homogeneous register employed by all participants, the systematic use of non-verbal computer-mediated communication codes, and the wealth of references to similar youth subcultures all seem to indicate that a semiotic code has been found through which youth appears as a meaningful and, crucially, transcultural experience which serves to bring Polish and Spanish participants together through EIL.

### **3.2. And can such potentially changing identities also influence SLA itself?**

In the light of the assumption that SLA may trigger changes in the learner's identity, the section above has attempted to provide a summary overview of both SA and CLIL research, paying particular attention to whether evidence can be found that such methodological approaches may be seen to foster the said changes.

This in turn leads to another question, namely whether such effects on the individual's identity may affect the SLA process itself and, if so, how.

### **3.2.1. Evidence from SA**

SA research may be said to have so far provided results which can be seen as conflicting at best in this respect. For example, Kinginger has pointed out that SA-related lexico-grammatical gains may be related to learners' 'dynamic motivations', including identity issues (2008:3; see also Allen and Herron 2003; Ellis 2008), which has prompted calls for intervention procedures to be implemented both prior to and during SA (Allen 2010).

For their part, Juan-Garau et al. (forthcoming) not only researched into possible attitudinal changes following FI and SA among university students from Barcelona but also whether any of those possible changes could be related to ultimate lexico-grammatical gains. The attitudinal changes discovered have been reported above and included an overall rise in integrativeness on the part of the students as well as a significant decrease as to their attitudes to members of the target-language community. However, no significant associations were found between such attitudinal changes and the language gains measured, although results might differ should other language gains or even a different group of students be considered.

Further research is therefore clearly needed. In order for these studies to shed some light on the subject, they will have to consider a vast array of students' personal variables. Although what follows is by no means a through account, recent research has highlighted the following: (1) the actual time spent using the target language with native speakers and the input received from the latter (García Laborda and Bejarano 2008); (2) the learner's age, which has been found to interact with 'background, initial L2 proficiency level, length of stay [...], and cognitive skills' (Llanes 2011); and, closer to our interests here, identity itself or, more exactly, the complex interplay between identity variables – not always clearly identified as such – like race, gender and nationality (Kinging 2008:3; see also LoCastro 2011; Kinginger 2004; Vera et al. 2010, and Kinginger 2011, for the different authors' still embryonic accounts of their possible effects on SLA).

One notable side-effect of the increasing visibility of these and other individual variables is a reinvigorated call for qualitative approaches to complement purely quantitative SA research – a call with which this article opened. As Kinginger puts it, SA is a learning environment in which the individual student's aspirations and value system play as important a role as their educators (2008:106). Accordingly, even if each learning experience emerges as unique, qualitative approaches to SA research may contribute to the visibilisation of productive patterns which might eventually lead to intervention processes that might help SA students maximise their experience abroad.

### **3.2.2. Evidence from CLIL**

Not surprisingly, if the issue is in urgent need of further research in the field of SA, this is even more so for CLIL. The EU has drawn up a pretty extensive list of benefits to be derived from CLIL methodologies. Among these, it is assumed that CLIL ‘builds intercultural knowledge and understanding’, ‘develops intercultural communication skills’ and ‘increases learners’ motivation’ and attitudes (Education and Culture DG 2011).

However, no sound empirical evidence has yet been provided. As Ting et al. (2007:3; 6; 10) quite graphically put it, ‘it is assumed that CLIL does “empower that FL-ID” [foreign language identity] but ‘we still don’t know why’. Nor have experts yet identified the exact nature of the link between such identity changes and subsequent SLA effects.

## **4. Conclusion and implications for further research**

In both SA and CLIL, research has been mostly carried out by linguists (Ruiz de Zarobe 2011:236). Understandably, therefore, this has focused on the possible language gains to be derived from either approach. The need, however, has been stated to broaden the scope so as to cover more variables possibly intervening in the SLA process. This article has singled out one, namely identity, making use of Foucauldian discourse theory to argue for the inseparability of ideological constructs and (S)LA.

A selection of the available literature has then been reviewed only to remark that (1) research is yet to produce conclusive results, this dearth being all the more notorious in the field of CLIL; (2) overall, identity issues are far from being directly addressed, if at all; and (3) when addressed, identity is generally subsumed under the wider category of motivation.

This seems to call for a reconceptualisation of motivation – the need for which has recently been voiced from the very field of motivation studies: as Ushioda (2010) has put it, ‘motivation is not necessarily achievement-oriented but value-based and identity-oriented’. By and large, however, motivation, as researched within SLA, remains largely disconnected from cultural studies, when identity lies at the very centre of most of the research that cultural studies has produced in the course of the last fifteen years or so. It seems to make sense, therefore, that a rapprochement between these two areas of research might well result in stronger theoretical standpoints from which to design suitable studies and, if this variable is found to affect SLA as the scarce evidence available does suggest it does, suitable intervention methodologies so as to maximise its effects.

Further research is therefore necessary. A fitting starting point might be a clearer conceptualisation (and therefore better understanding) of the interplay between the different identity variables, including nationality in the increasingly globalised world. Once this has been suitably conceptualised, research will also be needed to enquire (1) as to where the individual stands identity-wise prior to,

during and also following their SLA experience; (2) whether this initial position influences their choice of methodology / learning context; (3) whether this methodology / learning context has effects on their identity; and (4) whether such effects (if found) can somehow be related to ultimate SLA gains.

**Acknowledgement:** Thanks are due to the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation and the Catalan Autonomous Government for generous funding through research projects FFI2010-21483-C02-02 and SGR 2009 140 respectively.

## References

- Aliaga, R. 2008. 'Aprendizaje integrado de contenidos y lengua (AICLE)' in *Revista Electrónica d'Investigació i Innovació Educativa i Socioeducativa* 1.0, pp. 129-138 [Online]. Available: [http://www.in.uib.cat/pags/volumenes/vol1\\_num0/aliaga/index.html](http://www.in.uib.cat/pags/volumenes/vol1_num0/aliaga/index.html) article [2012, March 19].
- Allen, H. W. 2010. 'Language-Learning Motivation during Short-Term Study Abroad: An Activity Theory Perspective' in *Foreign Language Annals* 43.1, pp. 27 – 49.
- Allen, H. W. and C. Herron. 2003. 'A Mixed-Methodology Investigation of the Linguistic and Affective Outcomes of Summer Study Abroad' in *Foreign Language Annals* 36.3, pp. 370 – 385.
- Althusser, L. 1999. 'Ideology and ideological state apparatuses (notes towards an investigation)' in *Visual Culture: The Reader*. J. Evans and S. Hall (eds.). London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: SAGE / The Open University, pp. 317 – 323.
- Anderson, B. 1991 (1983). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (revised edition). London and New York: Verso.
- Barker, C. and D. Galasiński. 2001. *Cultural Studies and Discourse Analysis. A Dialogue on Language and Identity*. London: SAGE.
- Bretag, T. 2006. 'Developing "Third Space" Interculturality Using Computer-Mediated Communication' in *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 11, pp. 981 – 1011.
- Bruton, A. 2011. 'Are the Differences between CLIL and Non-CLIL Groups in Andalusia Due to CLIL? A Reply to Lorenzo, Casal and Moore (2010)' in *Applied Linguistics* 32.2, pp. 236 – 241.
- Byram, M. 1997. *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Byram, M. 2008. *From Foreign Language Education to Education for Intercultural Citizenship: Essays and reflections*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Byram, M., V. Esarte-Sarries and S. Taylor. 1991. *Cultural Studies and Language Learning: A Research Report*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Collentine, J. and B. Freed. 2004. 'Learning Context and its Effects on Second Language Acquisition' in *SSLA* 26, pp. 153 – 171.
- Costa, F. and J. A. Coleman. 2010. 'Integrating Content and Language in Higher Education in Italy. Ongoing Research' in *International CLIL Research Journal* 1.3, pp. 19 – 29 [Online]. Available: <http://www.icrj.eu/13-741> [2012, January 25]
- Coyle, D. 2006. 'Developing CLIL. Towards a theory of practice' in *CLIL in Catalonia. From Theory to Practice*. N. Figueras (ed.). Barcelona: APAC Monographs, pp. 5 – 29.

- Coyle, D., P. Hood, and D. Marsh. 2010. *CLIL. Content and Language Integrated Learning*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Crystal, D. 2011. 'The consequences of global English' in *Word for Word: The social, economic and political impact of Spanish and English*. I. P. Powell-Davies (ed.). Madrid: Instituto Cervantes, British Council, Santillana, pp. 67 – 72.
- Danesi, M. and P. Perron. 1999. *Analyzing Cultures. An Introduction and Handbook*. Bloomington: Indiana UP.
- DeKeyser, R. 2007. 'Study Abroad as foreign language practice' in *Practicing in a Second language: Perspectives from Applied Linguistics and Cognitive Psychology*. R. DeKeyser (ed.). Cambridge: CUP, pp. 208 – 226.
- Doiz, A., D. Lasagabaster and J. M. Sierra. 2011. 'Internationalisation, Multilingualism and English-Medium Instruction' in *World English* 30.3, pp. 345 – 359.
- Dörnyei, Z. 1990. 'Conceptualizing Motivation in Foreign-Language Learning' in *Language Learning* 40.1, pp. 45 – 78.
- Dörnyei, Z. 2009. 'The L2 motivational self system' in *Motivation, Language Identity and the L2 Self*. Z. Dörnyei and E. Ushioda (eds.). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters: 9 – 42.
- Dörnyei, Z. and K. Csizér. 2002. 'Some Dynamics of Language Attitudes and Motivation: Results of a Longitudinal Nationwide Survey' in *Applied Linguistics* 23.4, pp. 421 – 462.
- Dufon, M. A. and E. Churchill, 2006. 'Evolving threads in study abroad research' in *Second Language Acquisition. Language Learners in Study Abroad Contexts*. M. A. Dufon and E. Churchill (eds.). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters. 1 – 30.
- Education and Culture DG. 2011. 'Content and Language Integrated Learning' [Online]. Available: [http://ec.europa.eu/languages/language-teaching/content-and-language-integrated-learning\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/languages/language-teaching/content-and-language-integrated-learning_en.htm) [2012, February 5]
- Ellis, R. 2008. 'Learner Beliefs and Language Learning' in *Asian EFL Journal* 10.4, pp. 7 – 25.
- Eurydice. 2006. *Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) at School in Europe*. Brussels:
- European Commission [Online]. Available: [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/thematic\\_studies\\_archives\\_en.php](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/thematic_studies_archives_en.php) [2012, February 10]
- Firth, A. and J. Wagner. 2007 (1997). 'On Discourse, Communication, and (Some) Fundamental Concepts in SLA Research' in *The Modern Language Journal* 91 (focus issue), pp. 757 – 772.
- Foucault, M. 1984 (1969). *L'Archéologie du savoir*. Paris: Gallimard.
- García Laborda, J. and L. G. Bejarano. 2008. 'Adquisición de una segunda lengua en estancias cortas en el extranjero: un análisis actitudinal' in *Didáctica de la lengua y literatura* 20, pp. 117 – 134.
- Grabe, W. and F. L. Stoller. 1997. 'Content-based instruction: Research foundations' in *The Content-Based Classroom. Perspectives on Integrating Language and Content*. M. A. Snow and D. Brinton (eds.). New York: Longman, pp. 1 – 15.
- Graddol, D. 2006. *English Next*. London: British Council.
- Hall, S. 1990. 'Cultural identity and diaspora' in *Identity. Community, Culture, Difference*. J. Rutherford (ed.). London: Lawrence & Wishhart, pp. 223 – 237.
- Hall, S. 1996. 'Introduction: Who needs "identity"?' in *Questions of Cultural Identity*. S. Hall and P. du Gay (eds.). London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: SAGE, pp. 1 – 17.

- Ife, A., G. Vives Boix, and P. Meara. 2000. 'The Impact of Study Abroad on the Vocabulary Development of Different Proficiency Groups' in *Spanish Applied Linguistics* 4: 55 – 84.
- Isabelli-García, C. L. 2003. 'Development of Oral Communication Skills Abroad' in *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad* 9, pp. 149 – 173.
- Ives, P. 2010. 'Cosmopolitanism and Global English. Language Politics in Globalisation Debates' in *Political Studies* 58, pp. 516 – 535.
- Juan-Garau, M. and J. I. Prieto-Arranz. 2011. 'Intercultural Computer-Mediated Discourse. Evidence from the "EIL in Poland and Spain" Blog' in *Topics in Linguistics* 7, pp. 25 – 33.
- Juan-Garau, M., J. Salazar-Noguera and J.I. Prieto-Arranz. Forthcoming. 'Lexico-grammatical and motivational development at home and abroad' in *Context Matters: Formal Instruction vs Study Abroad* (provisional title). C. Pérez-Vidal (ed.). Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Kinginger, C. 2004. 'Alice doesn't live here anymore: Foreign language learning and renegotiated identity' in *Negotiation of Identities in Multilingual Context*. A. Pavlenko, and A. Blackledge (eds.). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, pp. 219 – 242.
- Kinginger, C. 2008. 'Language Learning in Study Abroad: Case Studies of Americans in France' in *The Modern Language Journal* 92, pp. 1-124.
- Kinginger, C. 2011. 'National Identity and Language Learning Abroad: American Students in the Post-9/11 Era' in *Identity Formation in Globalizing Contexts: Language Learning in the New Millennium*. C. Higgins (ed.). Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton: 147 – 166.
- Lasagabaster, D. and J. M. Sierra. 2010. 'Immersion and CLIL in English. More Differences than Similarities' in *ELT Journal* 64.4, pp. 367 – 375.
- Llanes, A. 2011. 'The Many Faces of Study Abroad: An Update on the Research on L2 Gains Emerged during a Study Abroad Experience' in *International Journal of Multilingualism* 8.3, pp. 1 – 27.
- LoCastro, V. 2001. 'Individual Differences in Second Language Acquisition: Attitudes, Learner Subjectivity, and L2 Pragmatic Norms' in *System* 29.1, pp. 69-89.
- Martin, P. 2010. "'They have Lost their Identity but Not Gained a British one". Non-Traditional Multilingual Students in Higher Education in the United Kingdom' in *Language and Education* 24, pp. 9 – 20.
- Masgoret, A.-M. and R. C. Gardner. 2003. 'Attitudes, Motivation and Second Language Learning: A Meta-Analysis of Studies Conducted by Gardner and Associates' in *Language Learning* 53.1, pp. 123 – 163.
- Meyer, M. 1991. 'Developing transcultural competence: Case studies of advanced language learners' in *Mediating Languages and Culture*. D. Buttjes and M. Byram (eds.). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, pp. 36 – 158.
- Moate, J. 2010. 'The Integrated Nature of CLIL: A Sociocultural Perspective' in *International CLIL Research Journal* 1.3, pp. 38 – 45.
- Nikula, T. 2005. 'English as an Object and Tool of Study in Classrooms : Interactional Effects and Pragmatic Implications' in *Linguistics and Education* 16, pp. 27-58.
- Pavlenko, A. 2002. 'Poststructuralist Approaches to the Study of Social Factors in Second Language Learning and Use' in *Portraits of the L2 User*. V. Cook (ed.). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, pp. 277 – 302.

- Pérez-Vidal, C. 2007. 'The Need for Focus on Form (FoF) in Content and Language Integrated Approaches: An Exploratory Study' in *RESLA* N° Extraordinario 1 *Models and Practice in CLIL*, pp. 39 – 54.
- Ruiz de Zarobe, Y. 2011. 'La lectura en el aprendizaje integrado de contenidos en lengua extranjera' in *La lectura en lengua extranjera*. Y. Ruiz de Zarobe and L. Ruiz de Zarobe (eds.). London: BM Portal Editions, pp. 220 – 244.
- Schmitt, N. and R. Marsden. 2006. *Why is English like That?: Historical Answers to Hard ELT Questions*. Ann Arbor (MI): University of Michigan Press.
- Segalowitz, N. and B. F. Freed. 2004. 'Context, Contact, and Cognition in Oral Fluency Acquisition' in *SSLA* 26, pp. 173 – 199.
- Sercu, L. 2000. *Acquiring Intercultural Communicative Competence from Textbooks. The Case of Flemish adolescents Learning German*. Leuven: Leuven University Press.
- Sudhoff, J. 2010. 'CLIL and Intercultural Communicative Competence: Foundations and Approaches towards a Fusion' in *International CLIL Research Journal* 1.3, pp. 30 – 37.
- Ting, T. with M. Bowering; S. Buttaroni; E. Ceuleers; E. Dafouz; D. Dalton; R. de Graaff; L. Elfriede; D. Foran; D. Gablasova; Y. Gao; E. Gierlinger; M. Guerrini; J. Hüttner; A. Llinares; P. Moore; T. Nikula; B. Núñez; A. Rieder; U. Smit; L. K. Sylven; Piet van de Craen; D. van de Gucht and R. Whittaker. 2007. 'A collective end-of-symposium reflection. The state of the art of CLIL and future prospects' [Online]. Available: [http://www.ichm.org/clil/pdfs/summary\\_symposium07.pdf](http://www.ichm.org/clil/pdfs/summary_symposium07.pdf) [2012, March 2]
- Ushioda, E. 2010. 'Socialising students' motivation and autonomy in the English language classroom' [Online]. Available: <http://iatefl.britishcouncil.org/2010/sessions/2010-04-10/plenary-session-ema-ushioda-audio-starts-after-0415> [2012, May 3]
- Vártuki, A. 2010. 'Linguistic Benefits of the CLIL Approach: Measuring Linguistic Competences' in *International CLIL Research Journal* 1.3, pp. 67 – 79 [Online]. Available: <http://www.icrj.eu/13-746> [2012, April 15]
- Vera, M., H. Ahumada and K. Felitti. 2010. 'The gender effect in Study Abroad: Defining theory and practice to provide a thorough cultural immersion. Should it be our goal?' Philadelphia: *CIEE Annual Conference. Prioritizing Quality as Study Abroad Evolves* (10-13 November 2010).
- Wilhelmer, N. 2008. *Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). Teaching Mathematics in English*. Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr. Miller.
- Yager, K. 1998. 'Learning Spanish in Mexico: The Effect of Informal Contact and Student Attitudes on Language Gain' in *Hispania* 81.4, pp. 898-913.
- Yashima, T. and L. Zenuk-Nishide, 2008. 'The Impact of Learning Contexts on Proficiency, Attitudes, and L2 Communication: Creating an Imagined International Community' in *System* 36, pp. 566 – 585.

# ENGLISH NAMES OF PUBS, CLUBS AND CAFÉS IN ROMANIA

ALINA BUGHEȘIU

North University Center of Baia Mare

Technical University of Cluj-Napoca

***Abstract:** My paper analyses English names of pubs, clubs and cafés found in Baia Mare and in Timișoara, Romania, from a sociolinguistic perspective. While discussing aspects ranging from linguistic patterns (grammatical constructions, lexical choices) to cultural behaviour, I will try to highlight the various ways in which English has influenced the field of commercial onomastics in Romania.*

***Keywords:** business names, onomastics, public space, sociolinguistics*

## 1. Introduction

The present paper sets to make a diagnostic research of contemporary Romanian public space by looking at names of pubs, clubs and cafés, three types of business establishments that are regarded as meeting and entertainment venues especially for and by young people. I propose a sociolinguistic approach, as, by analysing the onomastic material at its linguistic level (relative to its grammatical configuration and lexical basis), I aim to highlight the sociocultural influences that are visible in the economic field considered, namely to show how English – as a language used to convey a certain type of mindset – has determined the evolution of onomastic behaviour in the domain of trade names (as well as of pubs and clubs in particular).

## 2. From public space to commerce and commercial onomastics

Contemporary public space is getting more diverse and multidimensional each day. Its evolution is not systematic and does not follow a constant rhythm; on the contrary, it is rather hectic, since it focuses on those sub-fields in which people show more interest at a given moment or world-state (*cf.* Soames 2002:24). Therefore, the development of public space depends on factors that pertain to economy, technology, culture, history, and psychology; all these parameters contribute to a society's channeling its attention to a certain area of social life and assiduously working to upgrade it, to the point that changes in that field no longer catch one's eye, but end up by being perceived as normal. Nevertheless, such transformations leave their mark on every dimension of the public space, including (or perhaps especially) that of trade.

If commercial exchanges were, till not so long ago, an outspoken means of establishing and maintaining power relations that imposed a hierarchy on the dichotomy superior-inferior, the past century has shifted the stress from the actual activities of selling and buying to the processes that underlie the fulfilment of these two extremities of the commercial chain. In other words, what matters first and foremost is *how* one *intends* to sell, *i.e.* to persuade a potential customer of the

utmost necessity of possessing a given object, to make the object of one's trade stand out in the "crowd" of akin objects on the market and to have that object acknowledged by a community (*cf.* Trudgill 2000:2).

The position of power in commerce is a matter of communication used wisely. In this respect, the role of advertising has become crucial, since the purpose of communication today is to create impact. Whatever the object of the trade may be, it must appeal to the senses through all the dimensions of its image, even on a linguistic level. Naturally, onomastics plays a significant part, as the name of an object is – socially and culturally – more than a mere language construction meant to facilitate the identification of its bearer. In what concerns their semiotic and pragmatic status, names attribute values. Regardless of the sphere in which they are used, names can encode and trigger associative meanings relative to the object named, the context of naming, the landscape in which the name is active, its users etc. (Van Langendonck 2007:7). Names function as sociolinguistic agents whose analysis mediates, in fact, the evaluation of public space.

Onomastic orientations in the commercial domain of contemporary Romanian public space are manifold and heteroclitic, as a result of globalisation. The democratisation policies that have been continually implemented beginning with the 1990s turned the rigid pre-Revolutionary Romanian public space into what has, during the past twenty years, proven to be the willing recipient of Western influences on all levels. Needless to say, the mannerist-imperialistic rise of English as a global language and of the American mindset as a global (cor)set of attitudes and outlooks have thoroughly affected a public space that was fed up with being vocally impaired and that was open to changes and influences of the Western (*i.e.* Anglophile) sort, in the hope that some of the prestige of this Western canon might just rub off on the deeply localised context. The field of onomastics was subject to the same type of transformations, which are particularly conspicuous in the case of trade names; highly illustrative in this respect are names of pubs, clubs and cafés in Romania.

Eating and drinking houses began to develop in the 1990s; not only are they significantly more numerous today, but they are also more diversified categorially. Pubs and clubs (as socioeconomic concepts and as language elements) have occurred in the Romanian public space via the massive influx of Anglophone materials (linguistic, cultural, economic, social, political, technological etc.) that began in the post-Revolutionary period and that led to the gradual anglicisation of local public space. Although cafés originate in French and Italian sociocultural spaces (see the use of Fr. *café* or \**caffè* < It. *caffè* in Romanian to designate business establishments of this kind), they are commonly identified by means of bilingual structures, in which the categorial term French/Italian and the other items are English.

Pubs, clubs and cafés are mostly visited by young people, who are the most ardent promoters of English and the mindset it stands for. Thus, it comes as no surprise that there are very few such names in Romania that are not in English or at least not made to sound English (*e.g.*, due to their syntactic construction). Even so, those that are in Romanian add up to about 5% of this specialised onomasticon,

since the three types of business places demand, through their very nature, that they bear names which impose connotations related to prestige or exoticism, whereas a name of Romanian origin gives the feeling that there is nothing special about the place identified (a situation that tends to hold for trade names in general).

The present paper focuses on English names of pubs, clubs and cafés not just because they are the most numerous, but in order to highlight how the English (linguistic and cultural) influence, a certain Americanophile cultural behaviour, has materialised in the contemporary Romanian public space (in this sub-field in particular) into. I have looked at approximately 200 names of pubs, clubs and cafés in Baia Mare (my hometown, situated in the northwestern part of the country, in the Maramureş County, a former important mining area) and Timișoara (an important cultural center in western Romania. My aim is to show how onomastic analysis can play a key role in the diagnosis of the multidimensional development of a society.

### 3. Proper names as sources for names of pubs, clubs and cafés

Of all the names of pubs, clubs or cafés in Baia Mare or Timișoara, those that convey a vast array of cultural associations derive from other proper names. I have come across onomastic formulas based on geographical names that refer to states (*UK*), districts (*Hollywood*), cities (*Dublin – Dublin Express Pub & More; Las Vegas; London; Oxford – Pub Oxford*), parts of cities (*i.e.* boroughs, *Manhattan – Manhattan-Club*), islands (*Alcatraz*, a small island located in the San Francisco Bay, known for the very harsh military prison that existed there till the 1960s; *Jarvis – Jarvis Pub & More*, an uninhabited coral island in the Pacific Ocean, between Hawaii and the Cook Islands), highways (*Route 66*, a famous American highway).

Apart from these, there are also commercial establishments that are based on personal names:

- surnames of key American figures in politics (*Obama*, a café named after the current American president) and music (*Sinatra – Sinatra Business Club*);

- forenames: *Eve (EVE Fashion Lounge)* and *Jack (Jack's Coffee House)*.

The former has a Romanian equivalent (*Eva*); therefore, one can consider that the English variant functions here as a translation of the Romanian name, for the sake of fashion. The latter is a typical English name, a medieval diminutive form of *John* (whose Romanian equivalent is *Ion*). The name became a slang word meaning “man” (Campbell 1996); thus, its use in contexts as the one in question underlines the name's generic value. *Jack* in *Jack's Coffee House* delineates a class of individuals, a class of no-names (a comparable situation is that of the forename *Tom* in the pub name *Tom West*, in which *West* derives from the phrase *Wild West*). Besides these, one finds given names like *Gloria Jean (Gloria Jean's*, a subsidiary of an Australian owned international chain of coffee houses) and *Erick* (a variant of the English name *Eric: Erick's*, a café), used for the Western attitude they connote. However, I doubt it that the patrons of the coffee houses or pubs are aware of that

(with the exception, perhaps, of Gloria Jean's, which originally pertains to an English-speaking place)

There are also cultural names that relate to:

- literature: *Clarissa*, after the homonymous novel written by Samuel Richardson; *Gulliver*, hinting at the main character in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*;

- films: *Dallas*, a famous American soap opera, very popular among Romanians during the mid 80s-early 90s; *Piranha*, a horror film of 1978; *Porky's*, a cheeky American comedy about a group of high schoolers that experiment with life; *Scarface*, after the 1983 film directed by Oliver Stone, starring Al Pacino as Tony Montana (nicknamed *Scarface*), a Cuban immigrant-turned-drug dealer;

- cartoons: *Tom & Jerry*;

- music: *Garaj Pink Freud*, made up of a noun phrase that consists of a Romanian common noun, *garaj* "garage", which is post-modified by a fictional proper name created from the first element of *Pink Floyd* (the name of an English band, well-known worldwide for its progressive and psychedelic rock music) and the last element of *Sigmund Freud* (the name of the renowned Austrian neurologist, founder of psychoanalysis). The type of noun phrase in this pub name imitates the structure of close appositional constructions like *the poet Burns*, *the City of London* or *Fido the dog*, where the proper name provides the denotation, whereas the common noun characterises the denotatum, i.e. reveals the type of building in which the pub functions (Van Langendonck 2007:62). The derivative proper formula in the pub name points to the psychoanalytical core of the music created and performed by Pink Floyd, through the pun resulting from the phonetic similarity between the elements *Floyd* and *Freud*.

By being used as names for commercial establishments, i.e. as designations for other entities than the ones for which they functioned as *rigid designators* (Kripke 2001:48), geographical, personal and cultural names such as the above – that carry a salient significant sociocultural load – "lose their original property of unique reference" (Pârlog 2002:228), due to the ambiguity they create in various contexts of utterance. They are employed for the positive associations they trigger, which most often relate to prestige (*Garaj Pink Freud*, *London*, *Manhattan*, *Obama*, *Oxford*, *Sinatra*, *UK*), or luxury (*Dallas*, *Hollywood*, *Las Vegas*). Others imply youthfulness and adventure (*Gulliver*, *Jarvis*, *Route 66*, *Piranha*, *Porky's*, *Tom & Jerry*, *Tom West*), while some play on stereotypes/avatars of power and success (*Alcatraz*, *Clarissa*, *Scarface*).

#### 4. One word business names

Most one word names of pubs, clubs and cafés derive from simple nouns. For these, the following associations were found: prestige and class (*Admiral*, *Symphony*, *Yacht*); mystery (*Eclipse*, *Mystique*, *Space*); intimacy and relaxation (*HideOut*); active lifestyle, entertainment (*Bounce*, *Energy*, *Fever*, *Stage*, *Wave*, and even *Octopus* – a club whose name is suggestive of the variety of games that

customers can choose from to entertain themselves: bowling, billiards, snooker, kicker, rummy, chess, cards, and backgammon).

The semantic content of some names is transparent, in the sense that the lexical items these names contain reveal information related to the place where the business functions (*Corner*, on the corner of the street; *Square* – the café is situated in a square in Timișoara). Another obvious feature is that, due to the nature of these business premises (their orientation towards entertainment), most one word names that contain simple nouns pertain to the semantic field of music (*Intro*, “a brief introductory passage to a piece of popular music”, cf. *The Free Dictionary*: online; *Symphony*), and to the physics of sound (*Wave* < *sound wave*). Also in relation to music, such names may be indicative of a place where music is performed (e.g. *Stage*), or of the effect music may have on customers (e.g. *Bounce*).

I have come across two nonce formations:

- *Youtopia*, *you* + *utopia*, also a pun on the phonetic likeness established between *you* /ju:/ and the first letter sound of *utopia* /ju:'təupiə/. The name has positive associations, implying that the place designated always centers on its customers – on *you* – and on meeting their requests;

- *Discoland*, formed according to models like *Neverland*. It is the synthetical variant of the phrase “the Land of Disco”, the place of music, dancing and partying.

Although rather few, there are also one word business names that derive from simple adjectives: *Essential*, *Hypnotic*, *Next*, *Royal*. These have obvious positive connotations, either related to class and status (*Royal*), to the character and the effect of music on people (*Essential*, *Hypnotic*), or to the ongoing entertainment within the walls of that establishment (*Next*).

## 5. Compound names

Among the names recorded, there are constructions that contain lexical elements which identify the type of business establishment designated through the onymic formulas.

- café (with the final *-e* spelled with or without the acute accent): *Angel's Café*, *Atmosphere Café*, *Blue Cafe*, *Café Business*, *Café Corner*, *Café Funky*, *Casino Cool Café*, *Chill & Jazz Café*, *Friends Café*, *Green Café*, *In House Café*, *Live Café Unplugged*, *Manufactura Handmade Café*, *No Stress Café*, *Obsession Café*, *Q & Q Café*, *Secrets Café*, *Silk Café*, *Symphony Café* (different from *Symphony*, a pub); *Time Café*, *Timi's Café*, *View Café*);

- club: *Art Club*, *City Club*, *Club Boom*, *Ecstasy Club*, *Happy Club*, *Pure Club*, *Swing Club*, *The Club Francesco*, *Vanilla Club*;

- pub: *Corner Pub*, *Green Pub*, *King's Pub*, *Irish Pub*, *Life Pub*, *Little Pub*, *Music Pub*, *Old Boy's Pub*, *Photo Pub*, *Pub “RRRR...”*, *Scottish Pub* (two instances, one in Baia Mare and the other in Timișoara, not related), *The Factory Pub*.

Sometimes, the short form *café* is replaced by the English extended name of the category, *coffee house/coffeehouse*: *Jack's Coffee House*, *Java Coffee*

*House, Kafka Coffee House*, just as the long form of *pub* can also be found: *The Irish Public House*. There are also cases in which the category name follows the Italian spelling, *caffè* (accent free – *caffè*): *Butterfly Caffè, Caffè River, Moon light Caffè* (where the first element is erroneously spelled as two separate words, *\*moon light*, not solid, *moonlight*), *People Caffè, Spirit Caffè, Yo & Yo Caffè*.

There are other categories of establishments identified: *bar (Intro & Exit Bar, Office Bar by RGM, Video Games Bar)*, *house* (meaning “drinking house”: *Rock House, Shanti House, Swiss House*), *lounge (The Wellness Lounge)*, or more specific subtypes, such as *piano bar (Lemon Piano Bar)*, *business club (Sinatra Business Club)*, *outdoor club (Heaven OutdoorClub)*, *rock club (Backstage Rock Club)*, *social club (Vanity Social Club)*, *fashion lounge (EVE Fashion Lounge*, spelled this way to draw attention to the fact that this business establishment targets a female audience in particular). Moreover, I have found commercial premises that are a mixture of two types of places, due to the desire to satisfy a wider range of customers. The lexical items (which either designate the categories directly or just suggest them, for instance, *grill < grillroom* and *more*, which implies that the place has several secondary roles, besides that indicated by the noun preceding the ‘& more’ sequence) are always joined by the *and* symbol: *pub & grill (Navy’s Pub & Grill)*, *pub & more (Dublin Express Pub & More, Jarvis Pub & More)*, *café & pub (Evolution Café & Pub)*, *café & afterhours (Trend Café & Afterhours)*, *caffè & lounge (Place Caffè & Lounge)*, *coffee & lounge (700 Coffee & Lounge)*, *venue & club (Setup Venue & Club)*, *beer & steak house (Happy Beer & Steak House)*.

Through the presence of the categorical term, these names are, partially, semantically transparent, as the nature of the referent designated by the onymic formula is made clear. Soames (2002:86-87) calls these names *partially descriptive names*, because they “have semantic contents that include not just their referents but also substantial descriptive information.” In other words, such names identify and describe/characterise simultaneously – but not equally, as their interpretation implies the existence of a certain common ground between name giver and potential customers. According to Soames (2002:88), “A partially descriptive name *n* is semantically associated with both a descriptive property  $P_D$  and a referent *o*. The referent *o* is determined in part by having the property  $P_D$  and in part by the same nondescriptive mechanisms that determine the reference of ordinary nondescriptive names.” In this respect, Van Langendonck argues that this descriptive property is, in fact, only a categorial presupposition, since proper names have no asserted lexical meaning. “The only (presupposed) lexical meaning that proper names seem to have at the level of established linguistic convention” (Van Langendonck 2007:86) is this categorial meaning that reveals the basic level category to which a designated referent belongs. However, even when names do not contain the actual categorial term but an item from that family of words or from its semantic field, some degree of semantic transparency is still achieved, as it is easy for potential customers to identify either the type of business establishment designated through the name or at least one of its characteristics: *Beer & Bricks, Beers Street, \*Caffè Break, Class Bowling, Cream Coffee, Crossroads Blues, Drink’s Cabine, Friends & Coffee*.

There are names in which the categorial term appears alongside an adjective or a simple noun; these designations may have a twofold function. Contextually, they behave as proper names, or as appellative constructions: *Art Club*, *Swing Club*, *Happy Club*, *Blue Café*, *Green Café/Pub*, *City Pub*, *Irish Pub*, *Little Pub*, *Scottish Pub*, *Swiss House*. As Coates (2006:32) states, “If users, in a particular context, access the semantic properties of the lexical elements in these expressions, the expressions are not used properly (onymically) and are therefore not names; and that if users do not access those semantic properties, they are being used properly, and are therefore names.” Thus, whatever customers, as language users, believe they *understand* when using names of this kind derives from *associations* that are triggered by the lexical items contained in the names and that, in the onomastic material analysed, relate to origin (*Irish Pub*, *City Pub*, *Scottish Pub*, *Swiss House*), well-being (*Happy Club*), intimacy (perhaps even size through the qualifying value of *little* in the name *Little Pub*). Even when the head of the noun phrase is not a categorial term, the phrase behaves likewise, leading to associations related to mystery (*Black Box*, *\*Blu Gin*), nostalgia (*Gold Time*, *Old Times*), well-being (*Happy Student*, *Happy Time*), intimacy (via anonymity - *No Name*), novelty (*New Bounce*), adventure (*Wild West*).

Similar behavior is found in compound names made up of [noun] + [noun], like *\*Baricade Street* (< En. *barricade*), *Beers Street*, *\*Caffee Break* (instead of En. *coffee*), *Class Bowling*, *Crash Landing*, *Cream Coffee*, *Crossroads Blues*, *Heaven Studio*, *Park Place*, *River Deck*. Some constructions of this kind are spelled solidly (*Firestage*, from Eng. *fire* + *stage*), while others are connected by the *and* symbol (*Friends & Coffee*, *Beer & Bricks*). The synthetical genitive occurs in one such instance: *Drink's Cabine*.

Another group of names of pubs, clubs and cafés includes constructions made up of [definite article] + [noun]: *The Cube*, *The Home*, *The Note*, *The Sound*, *The Spot*, *The Tunnel*. Besides the associations triggered by the appellative, the definite article highlights the unique character of the commercial premises. There is also one instance when the definite article is part of the construction of the superlative: *The Best*. In this case, the associations are salient.

I have found only four examples of compound names of pubs, clubs or cafés that include a numeral: *3 Monkeys* (perhaps referring to the three wise monkeys in the Japanese pictorial maxim), *4 You* (in this case, *4* does not indicate a number, but it is used due to its homophony with the preposition *for*, strong form /fo:/), *Black 8* (referring to the number of the black ball used in billiards), and *Liberty XI* (the English translation of the pub's address; while the name of the square is translated into English, the word order is that used in Romanian when defining an address).

Other constructions underlying proper names of commercial establishments comprise an acronym (*NRJ West*, based on the similar pronunciation of the noun *energy* and the three letters in the acronym), a term of address (courtesy title: *Mr Billiard*, underlining the customers' putative skillfulness at this game), a prepositional phrase (*For Sport*, implying the owner's and the customers' devotion to sports), or sentences (assertive utterances – *It's Coffee*

*Time*, a pun on *It's Showtime*, implying the owner's commitment to meet the customers' expectations related to the variety and quality of products served –, and directive utterances: *Be Free*, encouraging customers to indulge in the liberating atmosphere of the establishment).

## 6. Conclusion

The names analysed in the present paper describe a contemporary public space that wishes to surpass its local boundaries. In the commercial field that includes drinking, eating and entertainment establishments, names in English are predominant, because they are believed to convey prestige to the business, thus increasing its advertising potential and making it more attractive to customers. Besides names consisting in appellative constructions, those that derive from other proper names refer to the American space and culture, with a few exceptions that relate to the United Kingdom. This is due to the fact that globalisation, although introduced and mediated by the English language, develops on American values. Thus, English is associated with the connotations of power and prestige that are conveyed by the American world, and most of the names described within my paper play on this pattern.

According to Crystal (2010:9), “A language has traditionally become an international language for one chief reason: the power of its people – especially their political and military power,” and the culture that has behaved as an international authority from the 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards – in matters of politics, economy, technology and military issues, claiming supremacy in all these fields and many more – is marked by the U.S.A. Being the language spoken by the American superpower, English is associated by most Romanians with the new political and cultural models, the new outlook on life related to the Western world, which actually means the American civilisation. In commerce, English is perceived as the language of progress (Crystal 2010:83), the key to the American dream: “‘It is in the economic and political interest of the United States to ensure that if the world is moving towards a common language, it be English; that if the world is moving toward common telecommunication, safety, and equality standards, they be American; and that if common values are being developed, they be values with which Americans are comfortable. These are not idle aspirations. English is linking the world’” (Rothkopf in Phillipson 2007:381). Names in the public space prove diagnostic in this respect.

**Acknowledgment:** The research made for the present paper was supported by *Onomastics in Contemporary Romanian Public Space: A Socio- and Psycholinguistic Research*, a project funded by CNCS in the “Human Resources” PN II programme, designed for the stimulation of young independent research teams – TE (code 3, contract number 57/2010, project manager: Dr. Oliviu Felecan).

## References

- Campbell, M. 1996. "Jack" in *Behind the Name: The etymology and history of first names* [Online]. Available: <http://www.behindthename.com/name/jack> [2012, April 10].
- Coates, R. 2006. "Some consequence and critiques of the Pragmatic Theory of Properhood" in *Onoma 41*, pp. 27-44.
- Crystal, D. 2010 (1997). *English as a Global Language*. Second edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kripke, S.A. 2001 (1980). *Naming and Necessity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Pârlog, H. 2002. "English shop names in Romania" in *PASSE Papers in Language Studies: Proceedings of the Ninth Annual Conference of the Polish Association for the Study of English. Gdańsk, 26-28 April 2000*. D. Stanulewicz (ed.). Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, pp. 227-234.
- Phillipson, R. 2007. "Linguistic imperialism: a conspiracy, or a conspiracy of silence?" in *Language Policy 6* (3-4), pp. 377-383 [Online]. Available: <http://www.springerlink.com/content/e6202728346k6927/fulltext.pdf> [2010, December 14].
- Soames, S. 2002. *Beyond Rigidity: The Unfinished Semantic Agenda of "Naming and Necessity"*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Trudgill, P. 2000 (1974). *Sociolinguistics. An Introduction to Language and Society*. Fourth edition. London: Penguin Books.
- Van Langendonck, W. 2007. *Theory and Typology of Proper Names*. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

## Online resources

- Itbox.ro*. Available: <http://www.itbox.ro/> [2012, April 5].
- Pubbing.ro*. Available: <http://www.pubbing.ro/> [2012, April 5].
- Șapte Seri*. Available: <http://www.sapteseri.ro/> [2012, April 5].
- Thankyou.ro*. Available: <http://www.thankyou.ro/> [2012, April 5].
- Timișoara în oraș*. Available: <http://timisoara.inoras.ro/> [2012, April 5].
- Timișoreni*. Available: <http://www.timisoreni.ro/> [2012, April 5].
- Urbo*. Available: <http://urbo.ro> [2012, April 5].

# CONNECTIVITY IN THE STRUCTURAL ORGANIZATION OF ARGUMENTATION

BLEDAR TOSKA

University of Vlora "Ismail Qemali"

***Abstract:** The paper focuses on connectivity issues and particularly on connectors as linking devices which enable the structural organization of argumentation. The first part discusses theoretical aspects of connectivity, connectors and the structure of argumentation. The second part describes the role and structural (meta)functions of connectors in argumentation by analyzing several short excerpts.*

***Keywords:** argumentation, connectivity, connectors, structural organization of argumentation*

## 1. Introduction

Both oral and written daily communicative exchanges take first the form of discourse (a process) and are subsequently realized in texts (a product), in which communicators express their functional aims and organize language in a way that best serves their purposes. Presumably, argumentation is the most common form of communicative exchange in many fields - political, legal, commercial, mediation, interpersonal etc. Therefore, the ultimate aim of most of our everyday communicative activities is to argue in favour of or against certain standpoints, opinions, or even particular situations. The present paper attempts to discuss and analyse the linguistic process of argumentation.

This process is affected by a number of linguistic and extralinguistic factors which interact simultaneously and enable both its construction and interpretation by interlocutors. Moreover, successful argumentation appears to rely particularly on its internal structure (the interdependency and interconnection between elements such as premises, subpremises, conclusions and subconclusions) and the organization of these elements at its local and global levels.

These elements, however, need to be arranged logically and relevantly in order to enable a satisfactory argumentative discussion. In this respect, connectivity is one of those discourse or textual features which ties arguments both cohesively and coherently in the process of argumentation. One very common way of realizing connectivity is by using connective devices such as connectors (words like *and*, *but*, *however*, *probably* etc.). I will attempt to discuss in this paper the role and function of connectivity in general and of connectors in particular in the overall organization and structure of argumentation, an issue which has been recently, but briefly considered in my dissertation (Toska 2012: 72-81).

## 2. Connectivity and Connectors

De Beaugrande (1980) proposes a number of standards of textuality as the basis for the actualization of texts. The main ones, which are closely related to textual connectivity, are cohesion, which includes sequential connectivity (the progressive occurrences of surface elements in texts) and coherence, which includes conceptual connectivity (the activation of elements of knowledge in texts).

Both sequential and conceptual connectivity can be regarded as standards of the discourse process as well, since they include important elements which enable its construction and interpretation. Thus, the former includes devices such as recurrence, pro-forms and articles, co-reference, ellipsis, and junction (which I include in the class of connectors), and the latter “(1) logical relations such as causality and class inclusion; (2) knowledge of how events, actions, objects, and situations are organized; and (3) the striving for continuity in human experience” (de Beaugrande 1980).

Although text or discourse is structurally organized and is composed of a “heterogenic and hierarchic structure” (Dibra and Varfi 2005: 30-31) and has as its basic unit the sequence, it still requires semantic interpretation of some kind. In this regard, it should be highlighted that the sequential connectivity concept is part of the conceptual connectivity concept, since all the ties between surface elements in texts can be produced and understood as part of our linguistic and world knowledge, both of which are part of coherence. For instance, in the passage below, *and*, taken as a device which realizes sequential connectivity between the prior sequence, *insufficient bandwidth*, and the following one, *this misinterpretation*, will be insufficient to semantically interpret the passage. Rather, one has “to activate” linguistic concepts, namely, follow all the concepts expressed in the co-text in order to interpret it and as a contrastive device rather than an additional one. Thus the two sequences mentioned above are not expanding each other, but rather contrasting in conceptual relations.

- (1) Long delays from bufferbloat are frequently misattributed to insufficient bandwidth *and* this misinterpretation of the problem leads to the wrong solutions being proposed. (COCA, accessed March 3, 2012)

The realization of connectivity often depends on linking or connective devices, which I summarily call connectors. It is an open class of mainly lexical items which includes (coordinate and subordinate) conjunctions, adverbials, particles, interjections, performative verbs and other lexical constructions. As I have argued elsewhere (Toska 2011, 2012), they are basically (syntactically) detachable from the sentence and do not contribute to its propositional content. For instance, in examples (2) and (3) below, both connectors, *honestly* and *since*, are not part of the propositions by which they are preceded, neither of those which they follow. Also, they both could be easily removed from the sentences without any significant syntactic change.

- (2) Since it's impossible to guess, bring it up and see what he has to say. *Honestly*, this behavior is so far from what a typical dude does that you have every right to ask. (COCA, accessed March 3, 2012)
- (3) *Since* obesity is a risk factor for a number of complications in pregnancy, obese women should be encouraged to achieve a healthy weight before pregnancy. (COCA, accessed March 3, 2012)

Furthermore, connectors operate both in the local and the global planes of discourse and texts by enabling cohesion and coherence in them. This is even more evident in argumentation, where interlocutors have to structure their own speech in a way that makes it well-organized (cohesive) and well-understood (coherent). In the analysis section of this paper, concrete examples will further clarify the claim made here.

### **3. Argumentation and its Structural Organization**

It is generally acknowledged that the study of argumentation dates back to the Aristotelian time, in which it was mainly approached from the logical and rhetorical perspective. Argumentation has always been a field of study which has attracted the attention of many scholars worldwide, and various paradigms of argumentation theory have emerged, but the model adopted in this study is the Pragma-Dialectical Theory developed by the Amsterdam School of Argumentation, associated with the prominent scholars, Frans H. van Eemeren and Rob Grootendorst. Van Eemeren et al. (1997: 217) states that

The pragma-dialectical theory begins with the assumption that the purpose of argumentation is to resolve a difference of opinion, so that the opposition of argumentative roles is a characteristic feature of argumentative discourse. Argument is seen as a kind of interaction ... when something said, implied, or otherwise conveyed makes plain that there is a difference of opinion between two parties. This description is necessarily abstract, since argumentation can take any form from a single, written text by an author addressing an unknown audience to a heated back-and-forth debate between two people talking face to face. But the important, defining feature of argument is that it occurs as a means of addressing - and attempting to resolve - a difference of opinion by means of exploring the relative justification for competing standpoints.

Thus argumentation, from this perspective, is seen more as an interactional activity between interlocutors, in which dialectification, functionalization, and contextualization of argumentation are considered important in the realm of the discourse procedure. In this regard, the structure and the organization of argumentation depend not only on the form or content of argumentation (its sequential connectivity), but also on the opposing roles of the interlocutors in it, on background knowledge, etc. (its conceptual connectivity).

Van Eemeren, Grootendorst and Henkemans (2002: 63) identify two types of structures in argumentation: single and complex (multiple, coordinative or subordinative). Single argumentation usually consists of two supporting premises, one of which is explicitly stated and the other is implied or deduced and usually not included in it, and a conclusion, standpoint, stance etc. The scholars provide the following schematic overview for it.

- (4) 1. We did not include bottled water consumption in the analysis (conclusion)
  - 1.1 because it typically contains very low levels of THMs. (expressed premise)
  - (1.1) What contains very low levels of THMs is not to be included in the analysis. (unexpressed premise) (COCA, accessed March 8, 2012)

Thus the conclusion 1. is supported by two premises, the expressed 1.1 and the unexpressed (1.1).

In multiple argumentations, the conclusion is supported by two or more premises, each of which do it independently and provide further arguments for the conclusion. For instance, in example (5) below, the standpoint 1., expressed by the protagonist is supported by two premises, 1.1 and 1.2., which separately provide defence for the standpoint 1.

- (5) 1. Large segments of the economy over the past 20 years would have been almost inoperable without it. (standpoint)
  - 1.1 The NHS is a prime example, (premise one)
  - 1.2 as is the university sector. (premise two) (*Immigration*, accessed March 9, 2012)

In coordinative argumentations, two or more premises are taken together or complement each other so as to defend the conclusion. All the premises presented in this type of argumentation are considered as one, in the sense that if any of them is excluded, then the other is weakened or destroyed. This can be illustrated in example (6).

- (6) 1. This particular green ship offers energy efficiency, lowers the impact on the environment, and addresses economies of scale. (conclusion)
  - 1.1a Able to carry up to 16 percent more than current container ships, this ship will reduce the number of ships required to transport goods (premise one)
  - 1.1b while also being energy efficient. (premise two) (COCA, accessed March 11, 2012)

The standpoint 1. states that the green ship is efficient in energy consumption as well as environmental. This is supported by premises 1.1a and 1.1b, which should be presented together in argumentation in order to provide the relevant support for what is claimed in 1.

The last type of argumentation that Van Eemeren et al. (2002: 70-71) propose is subordinative argumentation, in which the conclusion is supported by a

chain of “vertically connected” premises. In subordinative argumentation, the conclusion is supported by a premise, which is supported in turn by another subpremise and so on. It is important to know that the stated premises (apart from the first one) in this argumentation do not support directly the conclusion but each other. For example, in (7), the standpoint 1. is supported by the premise 1.1, which in turn is supported by the subpremise 1.1.1. In a word, each of the arguments presented here is subordinate to the main one above it (conclusion-premise-subpremise).

- (7) 1. I follow the noble Baroness in finding it perverse that the debate is driven partly by how many people leave the UK. (standpoint)  
    1.1 We talk about net immigration figures, with a base which seems to be artificially low (premise one)  
        1.1.1 because it was taken at the worst point of the recession. (subpremise) (*Immigration*, accessed March 11, 2012)

In this section I have briefly discussed aspects regarding the structural organization of argumentation, following the model introduced by Van Eemeren, Grootendorst and Henkemans (2002), who assert that “in order to arrive at a reasonable evaluation of argumentation, its structure must be carefully identified: is it single, multiple, coordinative, or subordinative, or even more complex?” (2002:73). Connectivity issues also need to consider the way argumentations are structured and the role and function of connectors in organizing and affecting structural organization.

#### 4. Analyses

This last part of the paper deals with the function of connectors as well as their role in enabling connectivity in the structural organization of argumentation. Each of the types of argumentation touched upon in the previous section will be analysed separately and, at the end, we will see how these types could be combined in more complex structures.

The function of connectors in single argumentation is to connect propositions within the sentence or among them in discourse. Also, they assist interlocutors to (re)construct and interpret argumentation by bringing in discourse one or more premises, which are not explicitly stated. For instance, in example (8) the minor premise 1.1 supports conclusion 1. only because the connector *so* in 1. demands the presence of a major premise, in our case (1.1). Thus, *so* enables sequential connectivity between 1.1 and 1., but it also realizes conceptual connectivity between them and (1.1).

- (8) 1.1 The second theory of costs is the revenue theory. According to this theory, put forth by Howard Bowen (1980), colleges spend all of the revenue you give them. (expressed premise)  
    1. *So*, holding down costs means holding down revenue. (conclusion)

(1.1) The revenue which one spends depends on the expenses that one makes. (unexpressed premise) (COCA, accessed March 19, 2012)

Similarly, in the following example *because* not only relates 1 and 1.1 structurally and enables sequential connectivity between the two clauses, but it also makes the whole sentence coherent in itself. Clearly, this is not because of propositions 1. and 1.1, or because they do not fully justify the protagonist's claim, but owing to the logical relation (conceptual connectivity) which the connector *because* realizes between 1 and 1.1 as well as (1.1).

(9) 1. The two nations are at odds (conclusion)

1.1 *because* the West and its allies fear Iran could use its uranium enrichment program to eventually develop material for nuclear warheads. (expressed premise)

(1.1) The West and its allies disagree and are in conflict with nations that could use its uranium enrichment program to eventually develop material for nuclear warheads. (unexpressed premise) (COCA, accessed March 21, 2012)

Since the last premise is unexpressed in this discourse, it should be deduced based on the interlocutors' world or background knowledge (that the West and its allies disagree with those who develop material for nuclear warheads).

In the last two examples, we notice that connectors *so* and *because*, sequentially connected, express premises and conclusions and they also conceptually enable connectivity between them and the unexpressed premises. In this way, they structurally organize the argumentations and facilitate their (re)construction and interpretation. In some other argumentative discourses, especially scientific ones, as in example (10) below, connectors may not be present at all. There is no connector which sequentially links conclusion 1 with premise 1.1 in the following argumentative excerpt.

(10) 1.1 The investigation, aimed at restoring normoglycemia in diabetic patients, showed that the cells could maintain both a glucose-stimulated and basal insulin secretion. (expressed premise)

1. This and other studies indicate that nanofluidic systems can be developed for permanent restoration of body functions that have been compromised by underlying medical conditions. (conclusion)

(1.1) Nanofluidic systems can be developed for permanent restoration of body functions, cells could maintain both a glucose-stimulated and basal insulin secretion. (unexpressed premise) (COCA, accessed March 19, 2012)

However, a connector which ties them is still deduced by the interlocutors, and in our example, it could be *so* or *thus* or *as a result* etc. Whichever connector is deduced, it has the function to enable sequential connectivity between the expressed premise and the conclusion but also the metafunction to demand the deduction of a major premise, which in our example is (1.1). The last process, as

already mentioned, establishes coherent links between the sequences of discourse and makes argumentation valid.

In multiple argumentation, connectors textually tie a number of premises to the conclusion and assist in realizing coherent relations between them. For instance, in example (11), *firstly* in premise 1.1 connects sequentially the proposition of the conclusion 1. with the proposition of premise 1.1. *Secondly* functions in the same way and relates 1 with 1.2. Furthermore, both connectors coherently structure the whole argumentation by restricting the conceptual interpretation of the respective propositions which they precede, namely, *firstly* indicates that the study was not adequately controlled as one of several problems and *secondly* brings a further argument for the problems with the study.

- (11) 1. There are several problems with this study. (conclusion)
  - 1.1 *Firstly*, it was not adequately controlled (e.g., there was no numerical group), making between-study comparison dubious. (premise one)
  - 1.2 *Secondly*, results may be an artefact of the limited range of the scale. (premise two) (COCA, accessed March 26, 2012)

The conceptual connectivity that both connectors establish in the whole argumentation also indicates that the premises they bring together are to be taken as independent from each other and that they support the conclusion separately.

There is no real restriction about how many supportive premises can be brought to defend conclusions in multiple argumentations and about how connectors are used to bring them. In example (12), the protagonist's standpoint is defended by three independent premises, each of which is brought to the process of argumentation by a connector. But, unlike example (11) above, only the first premise is directly linked to the proposition of the standpoint (that this computer reduces cost and time). 1.2 and 1.3 do provide premises for the standpoint, but they bring additional facts which are not included in it. Premise 1.2 includes scoring subjectivity and premise 1.3 group diagnostic information.

- (12) 1. This computer scoring reduces the cost and time in marking an examination. (standpoint)
  - 1.1 *For example*, the scoring on a provincial basis of the written response questions from the Chemistry 30 January 1987 Diploma Examination involved approximately eighteen chemistry teachers marking for three days, with a cost of approximately \$11,000; there is no similar cost for the scoring of the soft-linked items. (premise one)
  - 1.2 *Besides*, replacing subjective human scoring with more objective computer scoring increases the reliability of the test score. (premise two)
  - 1.3 *Furthermore*, individual and group diagnostic information can be obtained from soft-linked items. (premise three) (COCA, accessed March 23, 2012)

In this case, the conceptual interpretation of the argumentation is expanded or extended, namely, additional arguments are brought to defend this computer

scoring efficiency. As in the case of single argumentation, connectors here establish cohesive relations between sequences of discourse but also coherent relations in its global plane, although rather differently than in single argumentation.

The role of connectors in coordinative argumentations is much the same as in multiple ones. However, they do not link sequentially the propositions they precede directly to the conclusion of argumentation, rather they establish cohesive relations between it and the other complementary premise. For instance, in example (13) *also* connects premise 1.1b to premise 1.1a, which are both taken as one to support the conclusion. This argument also supports the conceptual connectivity it establishes between the flow of thought in 1.1a and 1.1b

(13) 1. Both elements are anaphoric, that is, dependent on a previous discourse referent (Kamp & Reyle, 1993). (conclusion)

1.1a This implies that children need to learn that both definite determiners and definite pronouns require discourse antecedents. (premise one)

1.1b They *also* need to learn the relevant lexical factor in optionality, *as* previously discussed (i.e., mass/count distinction for determiners, transitive class for objects). (premise two) (COCA, accessed March 25, 2012)

The double connectors *and* *as* in premises 1.1b and 1.1c in example (14) sequentially interrelate them with premise 1.1. Conceptually, the exclusion of one of the connectors would have made the proposition it precedes invalid, and as a result the whole major premise (1.1a, 1.1b and 1.1c taken together) would have been weaker in that case and without a reliable support for the conclusion.

(14) 1.1a The congressman has quite correctly pointed out the fact that they do have some great resources in the canal, in the oil pipeline, in the very strong middle class. (premise one)

1.1b *And as* it relates to our own national security, its stability, (premise two)

1.1c *and as* it relates to the rest of Central America, (premise three)

1. it is strategic. (conclusion) (COCA, accessed March 25, 2012)

The structure of subordinative argumentation depends a lot on the role of connectors, since they are usually used to connect subpremises to premises and also to bring the conclusion. Thus, in example (15), *because* links subpremise 1.1.1 to premise 1.1 and *therefore* connects the conclusion to the premise 1.1. Moreover, these connectors assist the (re)construction and interpretation of the argumentation by organizing its arguments hierarchically. Similarly, *since* and *so* in example (16) enable sequential connectivity between the arguments in discourse and also realize conceptual connectivity in the realm of dialogic discursive communicative activity.

(15) 1.1 More recent research, as from Lee (2005), recommends preservice teachers engage in reflective activities to learn new ideas about their teaching, *and* Davis (2006) adds simply that providing opportunities to reflect is insufficient (premise one)

1.1.1 *because* the reflection promoted may not be productive. (premise two)

1. *Therefore*, teacher educators must “determine the extent to which tasks promote productive reflection.” (Davis, 2006, p. 281). (conclusion) (COCA, accessed March 29, 2012)

(16) 1.1 You know, I have my own state dinners (premise one)

1.1.1 *since* I'm not often invited. (premise two)

1. *So*, what I'll do is I'll get all my stuffed animals and I'll just surround them around the TV tray and I feed them colored cotton balls. (stance) (COCA, accessed May 4, 2012)

The different cases that I have analysed in this part were excerpts extracted from larger argumentative discourses. They were all discussed in isolation, according to the structures that some types of argumentation have and the connectivity that connectors enable in each of them. In everyday communication, however, argumentative discourse is much more complex and very frequently includes a combination of all the structures discussed in this section. Obviously, both sequential and conceptual connectivity is present in different parts of discourse and connectors operate in its local and global planes.

Example (17) is a complex argumentative discourse, a mixture of multiple and subordinate argumentation, in which two independent premises (1.1 and 1.2) are supported by two respective subpremises (1.1.1 and (1.2.1) and which in turn defend the conclusion 1. Here, the function of the connector *also* is to provide an additional premise to 1.1, the two *because* to connect subpremises to their respective premises and lastly *thus* to conclude the argumentation process by bringing it to conclusion. Like in the above-mentioned cases, connectors used in this discourse contribute to its overall structure by enabling connectivity networks.

(17) 1.1 According to Kenneth Waltz, however, anarchy encourages states to behave defensively *and* to maintain rather than upset the balance of power in most cases (premise one)

1.1.1 *because* states' first concern is to maintain their position in the system. (subpremise one)

1.2 Glaser *also* argues that states can determine whether it is easier or cheaper to defend *or* attack and that defensive capabilities usually are cheaper *and* can preserve security (premise two)

1.2.1 *because* states can limit themselves to defensive capabilities. (subpremise two)

1. *Thus*, under most circumstances, states would be willing to settle for the status quo *and* are driven by fear more than the desire to conquer. (conclusion) (COCA, accessed May 4, 2012)

## 5. Conclusion

In this short paper, I have attempted to show that connectors, as linking devices which enable connectivity in the local and global planes of discourse, determine, to some extent, the structural organization of argumentation. Their role and (meta)functions as well as their distribution in discourse realize both sequential and conceptual connectivity, which appear to be significant in the (re)construction and interpretation of argumentation between interlocutors.

Hopefully, further studies will examine in more detail other (meta)functional and discursive features of connectors in argumentative discourse, and the preliminary assumptions made in this article may contribute in some way.

## References

- Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) [Online]. Available: <http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/>. [2012, May 04].
- de Beaugrande, R. 1980. *Text, Discourse, and Process* [Online]. Available: <http://www.beaugrande.com/TDPOpening.htm>. [2012, March 11].
- Dibra, K. and N. Varfi. 2005. *Gjuhësi Teksti*. Tiranë: SHBLU.
- Immigration [Online]. Available: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/101021-0001.htm#10102148000677>.
- Toska, B. 2011. "The Effects of Pragmatic Markers on Political Argumentation." in *The Said and the Unsaid: Papers on Language, Literature and Cultural Studies*, A.Panajoti (ed.). University of Vlora "Ismail Qemali", pp. 248-255.
- Toska, B. 2012. "Contrastive Study of Connectors in Argumentative Texts in English and Albanian", Dissertation in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Degree of Doctor. Faculty of Foreign Languages, University of Tirana.
- Van Eemeren, H. F., R. Grootendorst, and A. F. S. Henkemans. 2002. *Argumentation: Analysis, Evaluation, Presentation*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Van Eemeren, H. F., R. Grootendorst, and A. F. S. Henkemans. 2007. *Argumentative Indicators in Discourse: a Pragma-Dialectical Study*. AA Dordrecht: Springer.
- Van Eemeren, H. F. R., Grootendorst, and A. F. S. Henkemans. 1997. "Argumentation" in *Discourse as Structure and Process*, Teun Van Dijk (ed). London: Sage Publications, pp. 217-231.

# TYPES OF ABSOLUTE CONSTRUCTIONS IN MODERN ENGLISH

NADEZHDA P. TODOROVA

St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia

***Abstract:** The paper offers a general characterization of the English absolute construction (AC) and a detailed classification of the various types of ACs in present-day English. Some observations on the use of this construction in different types of discourse are also made. The results are finally systematized and presented in a table illustrating the frequency profile of ACs in Modern English.*

***Keywords:** absolute construction, AC, Modern English, types*

## 1. Introduction

The absolute construction (AC) is a detached secondary part of the sentence linked semantically and intonationally to it, but lacking any overt expression of a syntactic linkage. According to Ganshina and Vasilevskaya (1964: 386), “the detached secondary parts of the sentence are those parts which acquire certain independence in the sentence and are consequently more loosely connected with the parts of the sentence on which they depend.” Quirk et al. (1985: 1120) say that such constructions are *absolute* (from the Latin *absolutus*, literally meaning *made loose*) in the sense that they are “not explicitly bound to the matrix clause syntactically.”

(1) Old Ivar, *his white head bare*, stood holding the horses. (WC: 85)

## 2. Characteristic features of the AC

One of the most important characteristic features of the AC is the presence of its own subject, different from the subject of the matrix clause.

(2) Anthony jumped out of bed and, *the night being cold*, put on his dressing-gown and slippers. (Barkhudarov 1966: 129)

The AC has a binary structure – it consists of two members, the first being an NP and the other either a verbal non-finite form or a non-verbal part of speech. Despite its two-member structure resembling a sentence, however, the AC cannot be considered one, since it lacks the typical subject-verb structure – the verbal form is not finite and the two members do not agree in person and number. Hence, such constructions cannot be used on their own, but only as part of a sentence.

(3) Cf. The night was cold. *The night being cold...* (Barkhudarov 1966: 128)

Since the AC is either non-finite or non-verbal, it is unmarked for tense and mood. However, it can be marked for aspect and voice, when its predicative element is expressed by a verbal form.

(4) He said that, *the point having been raised*, the same mistake would not occur again. (Reishaan)

Intonationally, the AC is separated from the matrix clause by pauses, which is usually but not necessarily marked by commas in writing.

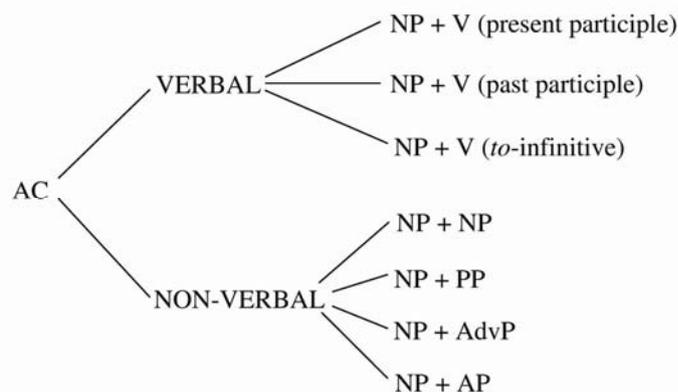
(5) They stood on the sloping turf beside the stone urn, [*the papers and books collected*], ready to take indoors. (EJ: 109)

(6) Alexandra closed her door, and Emil sank down on the old slat lounge and sat [*with his head in his hands*]. (WC: 130)

### 3. Types of ACs

#### 3.1. Structural classification

As it has previously been said, the structure of the AC is binary, the first member always being an NP, the second – either a verbal non-finite form or a non-verbal part of speech. Therefore, two main types of ACs can be distinguished “with respect to the nature of the head of their predicative element” (Kortmann 1991:10) – *verbal* and *non-verbal* (or *verbless*). *Verbal* are those ACs in the structure of which there can be observed a non-finite form of the verb – the present or the past participle or the infinitive, while *non-verbal* have a nominal (NP), prepositional (PP), adjectival (AP), or adverbial head (AdvP). Thus, the following structural subtypes (patterns) of ACs in English can be systematized and presented visually:



**Figure 1.** Structural Types of ACs

The following examples illustrate these structural patterns of ACs:

- *NP + V (present participle)*  
(7) A minute later, *nerves still tangling*, Jem and I were on the sidewalk headed for home. (HL: 107)
- *NP + V (past participle)*  
(8) Mayella looked at her father, who was sitting *with his chair tipped against the railing*. (HL: 183)
- *NP + V (to-infinitive)*  
(9) *With the moonlight to guide you*, feel the joy of being alive. (MOR)
- *NP + NP*  
(10) Merrill stood up suddenly, her fists clenched against her sides, *her eyes a glacial blue-grey*. (KK)
- *NP + PP*  
(11) There he would stand, *his arm around the fat pole*, staring and wondering. (HL: 8)
- *NP + AP*  
(12) (...) when he stood or walked, the back of his hand was at right angles to his body, *his thumb parallel to his thigh*. (HL: 3)
- *NP + AdvP*  
(13) She lay on her back, *with the quilts up to her chin*. (HL: 107)

### 3.2. Semantic classification

The absence of standard subordinators (*when, where, etc.*) overtly specifying adverbial relations enhances the *semantic indeterminacy* of the AC. Thus, the adverbial semantics of a given AC in the sentence needs to be determined for each individual instance (see Kortmann 1991: 1).

According to Blokh (1983: 349), there are three types of ACs with respect to the adverbial meaning they may express in the sentence: *temporal, causal* and *attendant-circumstantial*. Kortmann goes further on in classifying and analyzing the semantic interpretation of ACs. From his table (1991: 135) illustrating the distribution of semantic relations of absolutes and free adjuncts, it becomes clear that, apart from the previously mentioned semantic representations of ACs, the latter may also express other adverbial meanings such as *manner, reason, condition, concession, contrast, result*, etc. However, the number of such examples is very small, and, as Kortmann (1991: 157) points out, there is a wide gap between “what absolutes, in theory, *can* express and what they actually *do* express when seen against the background of a considerable amount of data.”

Each adverbial meaning is exemplified below:

- (14) *The pudding plates being removed*, the rest of the company were invited to take cheese. (EJ: 100) (time)
- (15) She paused, but *Cecil remaining silent*, she went on with a slight heaving and swallowing: “I think she is very self-absorbed...” (EJ: 233) (cause or reason)
- (16) *Politics being the natural field for such talents*, he neglects his farm to attend conventions and to run for county offices. (WC: 74) (cause or reason)
- (17) Nobody’s gonna shoot me *with the grandmother watching*. (MOL: 50th min.) (attendant circumstances)
- (20) Varvara looked at him in silence but went calmly into the bedroom she shared with Ludmilla, who was lying *with eyes staring over the sheet*. (EJ: 122) (manner)
- (18) *Weather permitting*, we will have a picnic. (Reishaan) (condition)
- (19) Today, *with the national polls consistently unfavourable for the Alliance*, the faith of the Liberals in what [...] was called the constituency of Chippenham remains untarnished. (Kortmann 1991: 163) (concession)

### 3.3. Position in the sentence

ACs may be observed at the beginning, at the end, or within the sentence. Hence, the three positions available for an AC in the complex sentence are *initial*, *final* and *medial*, the latter two representing the most frequent and the least frequent position respectively. The three positions are illustrated below:

- (21) *With this thought in mind*, I made perhaps one step per minute. (HL: 52) (initial)
- (22) He turned slowly and faced the front door, stooping slightly, *his face heated and tired*, with an absent smile. (EJ: 145) (medial)
- (23) The Samsung Wave 723 is a promising and stylish full touch handset, *with its main disadvantage being the poor screen*. (SAM: 21) (final)

### 3.4. Presence/absence of augmentation

The AC can be introduced into its matrix clause either with the help of certain linking words (in most cases the prepositions *with* and *without*) or without them. When linked to the clause without the help of such words, the AC is said to be *unaugmented*. The presence of certain linking words employed to introduce the ACs is known as *augmentation* and, according to Blokh (1983: 349), it is used for the purpose of semantic emphasis. The ACs introduced in this way are termed *augmented*. For Kortmann (1991: 201), augmentation is “an important means of syntactically integrating two clauses which exhibit an unusually high degree of semantic (referential) detachment.” He also points out that the possible augmentors of ACs are *with* and *without*, as well as, marginally, in colloquial English, *what with* and *and*. “In earlier stages of English, practically no limitations existed on the inventory of lexical items that could serve as augmentors of absolutes. This has drastically changed in present-day English, where, even under a generous count, this inventory has been reduced to no more than four members, namely *with/without*, *what with*, and *and*” (Kortmann 1991: 199).

Here are some examples:

- (24) Alexandra looked from one to the other, *her eyes full of indignation*. (WC: 126) (unaugmented)  
(25) He turned painfully in his bed and looked at his white hands, *with all the work gone out of them*. (WC: 19) (augmented)  
(26) It got satellite lock in just over two minutes *without the A-GPS on*, which isn't too bad at all. (HTC: 22) (augmented)  
(27) We worry about Miss Masha a bit, *what with her daddy being away and all*. (Kortmann 1991: 203) (augmented)  
(28) Like an old horse's hoofs they are – *and this fellow wearing gloves and rings!* (WC: 108) (augmented)

### 3.5. Nature of case-marking onto a pronominal subject

Another criterion for the classification of ACs is the case of the subject as seen when it is expressed by a pronoun. Thus, Kortmann (1991: 12) distinguishes between *nominative ACs* (when the subject is in the nominative case) and *object-case ACs* (when the subject is in the dative case).

- (29) Off they went, *she remaining behind*. (Kortmann 1991: 12) (nominative AC)  
(30) But you see, *him being here in the room* – I had to be careful. (Kortmann 1991: 12) (object-case AC)

It should be pointed out, however, that some authors use the term *nominative absolute* to refer to the general notion of AC as defined and described in this paper. Although this has its grounds, the nominative AC being the most frequent and normally accepted form in Modern Standard English, the presence of object-case ACs in present-day informal language gives enough reason for the terms employed to be specified. Thus, here *absolute construction (AC)* is the general term, and *nominative AC* and *object-case AC* are terms denoting two of its subtypes. This specification is also necessary because many linguists use the term *absolute* in a very broad sense. According to Pence (1958:120), for example, “an absolute construction is any expression (word, phrase or clause) used independently”, while a nominative absolute is a construction consisting of “a substantive without any grammatical function in the statement in which it appears, modified by a participle.” As Reishaan (2003) quite rightly notices, grammarians always relate the nominative absolute to a type of participle, although participles represent only one kind of non-finite clauses which may be part of its structure. In addition, there also exist verbless ACs, as defined by Quirk and Greenbaum (1985: 996). What all authors are unanimous about, however, is that the nominative absolute is called so because its subject is in the Nominative case.

If we trace back the origin of ACs, we can see that they occur with other grammatical cases in Indo-European languages. Thus, we may observe *accusative* and *ablative ACs* in Latin, *genitive ACs* in Greek, *dative ACs* in Gothic and Old Church Slavonic, and *locative ACs* in Vedic Sanskrit. Since the present study is not

a diachronic but a synchronic one, these types of ACs are only mentioned for information purposes. In Modern Standard English, if there is a pronoun in subject position, it is normally in the *Nominative* case, whereas Old English standardly employed the *Dative* in ACs. However, object-case ACs can still be observed in Present-day Non-Standard varieties of English and informal language.

### 3.6. Type of matrix clause the AC is embedded in

There are two types of syntactic relationships between clauses – *paratactic* and *hypotactic*. *Parataxis* is the relationship between units of equal status, and *hypotaxis* – between units of unequal status. In hypotactically related clauses, one clause is syntactically and semantically subordinated to another or to a series of clauses. As Downing and Locke (1992: 281) state, however, it should be kept in mind that syntactically the nature of this relationship is not always marked explicitly.

No matter what type of clause the AC is embedded in, the relationship between them is always a hypotactic one. Thus, the matrix clause of ACs may be either a *main* or a *subordinate* clause to which, semantically, the absolute always adds further information.

(31) Miss Grosvenor sailed back *with the tray held out in front of her like a ritual offering*. (AC: 2) (main clause matrix)

(32) Imogen was glad of her large, shady hat; as she came out of the shop, *the suitcase in her hand*, the road was blinding white. (EJ: 154) (subordinate clause matrix)

## 4. The use of ACs in various types of discourse

“ACs, in all periods, seem to be basically a characteristic of written rather than spoken language. Yet, some absolutes can be used during dialogues and in conversations. Many grammarians such as Wooley (1920: 67.8), Pence and Emery (1965: 63n) and Onions (1971:76) state that the nominative absolute is a perfectly proper construction as far as grammar is concerned. Moreover, it is an effective device, in the hand of the skilled writers, for the unobtrusive insertion of descriptive and narrative details. However, it can easily call attention to itself and thus becomes ungraceful only in the hand of an inexperienced writer” (Reishaan 2003).

Logically, *fiction* happens to be the richest source of examples containing ACs of any type. The main reason which makes this construction highly preferred by authors is its concise form and stylistic markedness. As a result, greater expressiveness of the narration is achieved in comparison with texts where a subordinate clause is used instead of an AC.

(33) Through all the turnings of his thoughts one image dogged him – Colberg’s face, so sharply carved, *his eyes a wee bit slanting at the corners, his nostrils cut*

*on a long shallow curve, his forehead not rounded but angled above the glossy black hairs at the outside ends of his eyebrows.* (DC)

(34) *With Evelyn beside her, she drove off, head forward, lips pursed, with an air of almost sacerdotal dignity.* (EJ: 150)

(35) My father looked at me mildly, *amusement in his eyes.* (HL: 75)

(36) He stood looking at the carpet, *his bushy head bowed, his hands clasped in front of him.* (WC: 68)

The compactness and the high degree of expressiveness of the various types of ACs make them a powerful syntactic device of the functional sentence perspective (FSP) with a pretty high frequency of occurrence in Modern English. In his book *Syntactic Devices of the FSP Localizing the Communicative and Informational Focus of the Sentence in Modern Standard English, 15-20 c.*, Grancharov (2010: 341-344) points out the increase in AC use in Late Modern English as compared to the earlier stages of the language development. From a table (2010: 361) illustrating the frequency of occurrence of some main FSP syntactic devices during that period, it becomes evident that, of the twenty-two FSP devices listed there, the AC, with its 9.79 percent, takes the fourth place.

In *technical texts* ACs, scarce as they are, skilfully moderate and lend variety to the narrow technical information. The compact form of the AC makes it extremely appropriate to this type of discourse. The AC fits well in such texts, on the one hand lending them colour and, on the other, contributing to their overall perception as specialized materials by the audience.

(37) *With USB on-the-go enabled on the Nokia C7, you can also use the file manager to access USB flash drives and even other phones connected over the optional USB cable.* (NOK: 12)

The texts under observation here are mobile phones reviews. Such materials, though intended for a wide audience, are expected to abound with technical terms and narrow specialized information. However, the analysis has shown that, when expertly written, they may be well diversified with stylistic devices, typical of fiction, such as metaphors, comparisons, puns, personifications, etc.

(38) Flash video support is also pretty dodgy *with the Wildfire failing to play the Vimeo and Netcafe videos that we tried.* (HTC: 19)

The AC is far less frequently used in *speech* than in writing. It can be observed in films, videos, TV or radio interviews, although its presence there is not so frequent. The analysis of the spoken examples containing ACs showed that in speech there prevail the ones augmented by *with*, although some cases of unaugmented ACs can also be observed, the latter most often being stereotyped phrases as in (42) below.

(39) I was standing right in this very spot, *with my back to him*, looking at the window. (STA: 65th min.)

(40) If someone... if I was there and someone says something to him, I wouldn't sit... I couldn't sit *with my mouth shut*. (BGT: 1st min.)

SPATIU

Another source of spoken examples are the comments left under publications of various kinds in websites, personal blogs, social networks, etc. Although formally they represent a written text, they can be considered part of the spoken rather than the written language, because of the way they are originated. In their nature, comments are nothing more or less than a spontaneous, immediate expression of one's thoughts or emotions on a certain topic. Another argument in support of the spoken nature of online comments is the dialogical form achieved between the participants in the discussion, which is very often carried out in real time.

(41) Good evening, guys! Hope you are having a swell evening at home *with your favourite drink in hand!* (FB status)

(42) They look yummy! *That said, given the choice,* I'd still pick the chocolate brownie every time! (Comment under a food photo)

In speech, the AC is most often used for description and its semantics is typically attendant-circumstantial. Still, other semantic relations can be observed, such as the ones in (42) – the meaning of the two consecutive ACs here is temporal and causal, respectively.

## 5. Frequency profile

The table below illustrates the frequency profile of the English AC. It presents the summarized information about the various types of ACs in English and their frequency of occurrence in language as observed in my corpus of examples. The statistic data are presented in percents.

FREQUENCY		MOST FREQUENT (more than 50 %)	LESS FREQUENT (10-40 %)	LEAST FREQUENT (less than 10 %)
CRITERION				
STRUCTURE	<i>Verbal</i>	- present participle	- past participle	- <i>to</i> -infinitive
	<i>Non-verbal</i>	- PP	- AdvP - AP	- NP
MEANING		- manner - attendant circumstances	- time - cause/reason	- condition - concession
POSITION		- final	- initial	- medial
AUGMENTATION		- unaugmented - with	- without	- what with - and
CASE-MARKING		- nominative	-----	- object-case
TYPE OF MATRIX CLAUSE		- main	- subordinate	-----
TYPE OF DISCOURSE		- fiction	- technical texts	- speech

**Table 1.** Frequency Profile of the English AC  
SPATIU

## 6. Conclusion

The analysis of my corpus has revealed that the *infinitive* is not among the most preferred forms as predicative element in ACs. The most frequent patterns of verbal ACs are those containing *present* or *past participles*, and of the non-verbal ones – *PPs* and *NPs*, followed by *AdvPs* and *APs*.

As far as the semantic interpretation of the AC is concerned, the *attendant-circumstantial* meaning predominates over the less frequently expressed *temporal* and *causal* relations. The examples containing ACs denoting *condition* or *concession* have the lowest degree of occurrence in language.

The most preferred position in the sentence of an AC has proved to be the *final* one, followed by the *initial* and the *medial* positions, in descending order.

The number of *unaugmented* and *with-augmented* ACs is almost the same and they have the highest degree of occurrence in language. I have found rather few examples of ACs introduced by the preposition *without* and very few, if any, with *what with* and *and*.

The *nominative* AC is the most frequent and normally accepted form in Modern Standard English, yet there are *object-case* AC instances in present-day informal language as well, but their number is very small.

As previously pointed out, the matrix clause of the AC may be either a main or a subordinate clause. After analyzing the material excerpted so far, it became clear that the number of ACs embedded in a *main* clause is greater than that of those embedded in a *subordinate* clause.

As for the distribution of ACs among the various types of discourse, my analysis has revealed that the more formal a text is, the lower the ACs frequency of occurrence is. Thus, *narrative texts* abound with ACs, while in *technical texts* their presence is pretty scarce.

Basically, the AC is characteristic of written rather than of spoken language. In *speech* it is rarely used, mainly for descriptive purposes. This is to a great extent due to its nature, on the one hand, and the diversity of its types and ways of interpretation, on the other: the AC is considered tricky to use and therefore is instinctively avoided in speaking. *Written texts*, however, are studded with ACs of all types, because of the high degree of expressiveness of the text achieved through their use.

With all of the above in mind, the final conclusion that can be drawn is that, in Present-day English, ACs are more and more frequently and widely used in various types of discourse.

## References

- Barkhudarov, L. 1966. *Struktura prostogo predlozheniya sovremennogo angliyskogo yazyka..* Moscow: Vyshaya shkola.

- Blokh, M. 1983. *A Course in Theoretical English Grammar*. Moscow: Vyshaya shkola.
- Downing A., P. Locke. 1992. *A University Course in English Grammar*. Hertfordshire: Prentice Hall.
- Ganshina M., N. Vasilevskaya. 1964. *English Grammar*. Moscow: Vyshaya shkola.
- Grancharov, M. 2010. *Sintaktichni sredstva na funktsionalnata izrechenka perspektiva, lokalizirashti komunikativno-informatsionniya fokus na izrechenieto v moderniya angliyski knizhovno-literaturen ezik, 15-20 vek*. Plovdiv: Plovdiv University Press.
- Kortmann, B. 1991. *Free Adjuncts and Absolutes in English. Problems of Control and Interpretation*. London: Routledge.
- Onions, C. 1971. *Modern English Syntax*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Pence, R. 1958. *A Grammar of Present-day English*. New York: The Macmillan Company.
- Quirk, R., S. Greenbaum., G. Leech, and J. Svartvik. 1985. *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*. London and New York: Longman.
- Reishaan, A. 2003. *Absolute Constructions in English: A Syntactic Study*. [Online] Available: <http://www.arts.kufauiv.com/teaching/e/reishaan/Paper1.html>
- Woolley, E. 1920. *A Handbook of Composition: A Compendium of Rules*. Boston: Heath.

#### **Sources of the excerpted material**

- AC: Christie, A. 2000. *A Pocket Full of Rye*. New York: Signet.
- BGT: Britain's Got Talent. 2012. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kt3Utn4mjeg>
- DC: Craig, D. 1991. *King Cameron*. Manchester: Carcanet Press.
- EJ: Jenkins, E. 2008. *The Tortoise and the Hare*. London: Virago Press.
- HL: Lee, H. 1982. *To Kill a Mockingbird*. New York: Warner Books.
- HTC: GSMarena team. *HTC Wildfire Review: Desire Mini*. [Online]. Available: [http://www.gsmarena.com/htc\\_wildfire-review-495.php](http://www.gsmarena.com/htc_wildfire-review-495.php) [2010, July 20]
- KK: Kingston, K. 1993. *A warning of magic*. Richmond, Surrey: Mills & Boon.
- MOL: Man on a Ledge. 2012. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1568338/>
- MOR: Morcheeba. 2008. *Enjoy the Ride*. [Online]. Available: [http://www.lyricsmania.com/enjoy\\_the\\_ride\\_lyrics\\_morcheeba.html](http://www.lyricsmania.com/enjoy_the_ride_lyrics_morcheeba.html)
- NOK: GSMarena team. *Nokia C7 Review: Rise and Shine*. [Online]. Available: [http://www.gsmarena.com/nokia\\_c7-review-530.php](http://www.gsmarena.com/nokia_c7-review-530.php) [2010, November 3]
- SAM: GSMarena team. *Samsung S7230E Wave 723 Review: Waving Hello!* [Online]. Available: [http://www.gsmarena.com/samsung\\_s7230e\\_wave\\_723-review-532.php](http://www.gsmarena.com/samsung_s7230e_wave_723-review-532.php) [2010, November 8]
- STA: Something to Talk about. 1995. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0114496/>
- WC: Cather, W. 1989. *O Pioneers!* New York: Signet.

# THEMATIC AND RHEMATIC SEMANTIC REFERENCE IN WRITTEN ADVERTISEMENTS

SIMONA ŞIMON

“Politehnica” University of Timișoara

*Abstract:* The present paper focuses on the interweaving of themes and rhemes at a semantic level. After classifying the 84 written advertisements of the corpus on basis of their interpersonal function, the concept of thematic and rhematic semantic reference is defined, the kinds of thematic and rhematic semantic reference encountered in these advertisements are identified and, finally, some conclusions are drawn with respect to the kinds of thematic and rhematic semantic reference most frequently used in each advertisement class and in advertisements in general.

*Keywords:* interpersonal function, rhematic/ thematic semantic reference, written advertisements.

## 1. Introduction

An advertisement is the result of the action of advertising, and advertising is, according to The American Marketing Association, any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods or services by an identified sponsor (Baker 1994:369).

Taking into account the interpersonal function of written advertisements, I classified them into informative, appellative, commissive and contact advertisements (Şimon 2008:53-54).

*Informative advertisements* give information about the advertised product/ service. They may be descriptive, argumentative and informative. The *informative-descriptive advertisements* (type 1.1) name the products/ services, provide a list of their characteristics, etc; the *informative-argumentative* ones (type 1.2) make a claim or an appeal supported by the provided information (Gieszinger 2001:213); the *informative-narrative* ones (type 1.3) resort to an endorser to support the advertiser and the claim (Tellis 1998:185).

*Appellative advertisements* try to influence the addressee's actions in a certain way; they may be questioning and directive. The *appellative-questioning* advertisements (type 2.1) usually contain a question in the headline and the central topic of the question is the addressee. The *appellative-directive advertisements* (type 2.2) contain a *direction*, especially in titles and slogans, which may refer to the consumption of the advertised product/ service or might prepare the consumption of the advertised product/ service (by offering further information, catalogues, guides, coupons, by mentioning the website address, etc.) (Gieszinger 2001:228, Kotler 1994:602).

*Commissive advertisements* commit the addressers to carrying out a specific action. These advertisements make *offers* (type 3.1) (e.g. characteristics and advantages of the product/ service, preparation of consumption, etc.) and

*promises* (type 3.2) (e.g. reference to the procedure, the high quality of the advertised goods, consumer's satisfaction, specific features of product/ service, etc.) which have to be kept, otherwise legal actions may be taken (Gieszinger 2001:235, White 1988:171).

Finally, *contact advertisements* express the addresser's wish to come into contact with the recipients and to set up or establish a social relationship with them by addressing the recipients directly (type 4.1) (e.g. contacts made in the headline/ quasi-headline, which refer only to a particular segment of population: women, men, children, house-owners, etc.) (Gieszinger 2001:244), by illustrating the social relationship between the communication partners (e.g. reference to the recipients' desires/ wishes/ needs, which can be known only by close friends (type 4.2), by using jokes or informal speech (type 4.3) (Gieszinger 2001:249).

The above classification has been applied to the eighty-four written advertisements making my corpus. Thus, each sub-class contains nine advertisements with the exception of the sub-classes belonging to contact advertisements, which are represented by seven advertisements each. The sole reason for this is the fact that, in the sources used for this analysis, no other contact advertisements could be found, which might suggest that they are less frequently used than the other types.

In the next sections of the present analysis, I shall first define the widely debated concepts of theme and rheme, I shall identify their possible semantic content, I shall analyse the thematic and rhematic semantic content of eighty-four advertisements and I shall draw some conclusions with respect to the most encountered thematic and rhematic semantic content of each advertisement class and of written advertisements in general.

## **2. Thematic and rhematic semantic reference in written advertisements**

The Czech linguist, Daneš (1974:106), asserts that, in a statement, the known information is placed at the beginning of a sentence and is conveyed by the *theme*, while the unknown information, the *rheme*, follows the theme and develops the ideas introduced by the theme. The concept of theme and rheme has been studied at a clause, sentence and discoursal level. Thus, Halliday (1994: 54) emphasises that everything preceding the topical theme of the clause (the participant expressed by the grammatical subject, the circumstance of place, time and manner, and the verbal processes expressed by the imperative) is part of the theme (Th), and the rest of the clause is the rheme (Rh). At a sentence level, the hypotactically and paratactically related clauses are interpreted as clause complexes (Downing & Locke 1992: 235), thus the first clause becomes the theme and the second one the rheme. Finally, at a discoursal level, Martin (1992:437) introduces the concept of *hypertheme*, i.e. the titles or/ and subtitles that establish the semantic framework within which the information will be presented.

The present analysis approaches themes and rhemes from the viewpoint of their semantic content and not from that of their lexico-grammatical features, as it

usually happens. For this purpose, the main semantic information conveyed by ads has been identified and listed below:

- *reference to addresser* (producer/ retailer/ any other kind of company);
- *reference to 'features' of the addresser* (any descriptive information concerning the addresser)
- *reference to addressee;*
- *reference to 'features' of the addressee* (any descriptive information concerning the addressee);
- *reference to endorser;*
- *reference to 'features' of the endorser* (any descriptive information concerning the endorser);
- *reference to product/ service/ issue;*
- *reference to features of the product/ service/ issue* (any descriptive information concerning the product/ service/ issue);
- *reference to gained benefits;*
- *reference to price of the product/ service/ issue;*
- *reference to incentives;*
- *reference to credentials;*
- *reference to pressure tactics;*
- *reference to feedback.*

For the purpose of the present analysis, there still is one aspect that needs clarification, namely the elliptical clauses that are frequently used in written advertisements. In these particular cases, the information will be recovered, placed between round brackets and taken into account, because, in the case of written advertisements, the semantic information is easily identifiable, even if it is not explicitly expressed.

### **3. Patterns of thematic and rhematic semantic reference in written advertisements**

First line 1.25 Taking into consideration the information presented above, I shall now exemplify the way in which the analysis has been done and present its results. The advertisement below is a contact advertisement because it identifies the target audience from the very beginning. Moreover, it has an informative-descriptive function because it offers details about the product, an appellative one because it resorts to imperative sentences and a commissive one because it makes a promise suggested by the future tense simple used in rheme four. The advertisement reads:

**Introduce (Th1) your family to the 5 minute dinner. (Rh2)**

Spend (Th2) more time enjoying dinner rather than making it. (Rh2)

Ready in as little as five minutes, (Th3) all our carved beef and pork roasts are tender and juicy. (Rh3) You (Th4)'ll find them in your grocer's refrigerated meat section. (Rh4)

They're just (Th5) what you need to bring your family together. (Rh6)

*Thomas E. Wilson: (advises) (Th6) MAKE MORE OUT OF DINNER (Rh6)*  
 (“People”, 13 May 2002)

The themes in this advertisement refer to the addressee (Th1, Th2, Th4), to the addresser (Th6), to the gained benefits (Th3) and to the product (Th5). The rhematic reference is made to the addressee (Rh5), to the “features” of the addressee (Rh1, Rh5), to the “features” of the addresser (Rh3), to the gained benefits (Rh1, Rh2, Rh6), to the features of the product (Rh3) and to the feedback (Rh4).

The remaining eighty-three advertisements of my corpus have been analysed in the same manner, the results being rendered in the tables below:

**Table 1 Thematic semantic reference in written advertisements**

Ad type	Informative			Appellative		Commissive		Contact		
	Type 1.1	Type 1.2	Type 1.3	Type 2.1	Type 2.2	Type 3.1	Type 3.2	Type 4.1	Type 4.2	Type 4.3
Thematic semantic reference										
to addresser	2 ads	3 ads	3 ads	6 ads	4 ads	3 ads	1 ad	5 ads	5 ads	2 ads
to ‘features’ of the addresser	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	1 ad	0 ads	0 ads	1 ad	1 ad	1 ad	0 ads
to addressee	5 ads	6 ads	3 ads	9 ads	9 ads	7 ads	5 ads	5 ads	5 ads	7 ads
to ‘features’ of the addressee	1 ad	1 ad	0 ads	4 ads	2 ads	3 ads	3 ads	4 ads	2 ads	4 ads
to endorser	0 ads	0 ads	9 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads
to ‘features’ of the endorser	0 ads	0 ads	2 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads
to product/ service/ issue	6 ads	6 ads	7 ads	4 ads	9 ads	7 ads	8 ads	6 ads	4 ads	5 ads
to features of the product/ service/ issue	7 ads	8 ads	4 ads	6 ads	5 ads	9 ads	6 ads	5 ads	4 ads	4 ads
to gained benefits	6 ads	7 ads	7 ads	7 ads	2 ads	2 ads	2 ads	2 ads	3 ads	3 ads
to price of the product/ service	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	4 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads
to	0 ads	3 ads	1 ad	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	1 ad	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads

incentives										
to credentials	1 ads	4 ads	6 ads	4 ads	4 ads	2 ads	0 ads	3 ads	0 ads	0 ads
to pressure tactics	0 ads	1 ad	0 ads	1 ad						
to feedback	7 ads	8 ads	6 ads	4 ads	7 ads	8 ads	7 ads	4 ads	3 ads	7 ads

**Table 2. Rhematic semantic reference in written advertisements**

Ad type	Informative			Appellative		Commissive		Contact		
	Type 1.1	Type 1.2	Type 1.3	Type 2.1	Type 2.2	Type 3.1	Type 3.2	Type 4.1	Type 4.2	Type 4.3
Thematic semantic reference										
to addresser	2 ads	3 ads	3 ads	6 ads	4 ads	3 ads	1 ad	5 ads	5 ads	2 ads
to 'features' of the addresser	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	1 ad	0 ads	0 ads	1 ad	1 ad	1 ad	0 ads
to addressee	5 ads	6 ads	3 ads	9 ads	9 ads	7 ads	5 ads	5 ads	5 ads	7 ads
to 'features' of the addressee	1 ad	1 ad	0 ads	4 ads	2 ads	3 ads	3 ads	4 ads	2 ads	4 ads
to endorser	0 ads	0 ads	9 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads
to 'features' of the endorser	0 ads	0 ads	2 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads
to product/service/issue	6 ads	6 ads	7 ads	4 ads	9 ads	7 ads	8 ads	6 ads	4 ads	5 ads
to features of the product/service/issue	7 ads	8 ads	4 ads	6 ads	5 ads	9 ads	6 ads	5 ads	4 ads	4 ads
to gained benefits	6 ads	7 ads	7 ads	7 ads	2 ads	2 ads	2 ads	2 ads	3 ads	3 ads
to price of the product/service	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	4 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads
to incentives	0 ads	3 ads	1 ad	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	1 ad	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads
to credentials	1 ads	4 ads	6 ads	4 ads	4 ads	2 ads	0 ads	3 ads	0 ads	0 ads
to pressure tactics	0 ads	1 ad	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	0 ads	1 ad
to feedback	7 ads	8 ads	6 ads	4 ads	7 ads	8 ads	7 ads	4 ads	3 ads	7 ads

In the tables above one can easily notice that *reference to addresser* is usually thematised in questioning-appellative advertisements and in contact advertisements directly identifying the target group and those referring to recipients' desires/ wishes/ needs, but it is hardly used in rhematic position, irrespective of the advertisement class. *Reference to addressee* is made in the rhemes of most advertisements and in the themes of all appellative advertisements and most of the other types of advertisements with the exception of the informative-narrative advertisements, which favour the thematic *reference made to the endorser*. *Reference to 'features' of the addressee* is usually made in the rhemes of appellative and contact advertisements. *References to the advertised product/ service/ issue and its features* are made both thematically and rhematically in all advertisements. Thematic *reference to gained benefits* is usually encountered in informative advertisements and in questioning-appellative advertisements. Rhematic reference to gained benefits is found in almost all advertisements, with the exception of commissive advertisements and contact advertisements directly identifying the target group and those referring to the recipients' desires/ wishes/ needs. (Commissive advertisements emphasise the features of the product both in the rheme and in the theme, and reference to the product is usually thematised. Contact advertisements directly identifying the target group and those referring to the recipients' desires/ wishes/ needs tend to use thematic and rhematic reference to features of the product and not to gained benefits.) *Reference to price* is sometimes thematised or rhematised in commissive advertisements making a firm offer. *Reference to credentials* is sometimes used in rhematic position; reference to credentials is thematised in almost all informative-narrative advertisements. Almost all the advertisements in my corpus refer both thematically and rhematically to *feedback*.

#### 4. Conclusion

In the present paper, the concepts of theme and rheme have been defined at a clause, sentence and discoursal level. As the present analysis approaches themes and rhemes from the semantic viewpoint, fourteen types of semantic reference have been identified in written advertisements: *reference to addresser*, *reference to 'features' of the addresser*, *reference to addressee*, *reference to 'features' of the addressee*, *reference to endorser*, *reference to 'features' of the endorser*, *reference to product/ service/ issue*, *reference to features of the product/ service/ issue*, *reference to gained benefits*, *reference to price of the product/ service/ issue*, *reference to incentives*, *reference to credentials*, *reference to pressure tactics*, *reference to feedback*.

The analysis has been carried out on a corpus of eighty-four written advertisements classified on basis of their interpersonal function into informative advertisements (informative-descriptive, informative-argumentative, informative-narrative), appellative advertisements (interrogative-appellative, interrogative-directive), commissive advertisements (making a firm offer or promise) and contact advertisements (directly identifying the target group, referring to the

recipient's desires/ wishes/ needs, using jokes/ informal speech). Some conclusions have been drawn with respect to the type of thematic and rhematic semantic reference most frequently used in each advertisement class.

Leaving apart the taxonomy of written advertisements from the perspective of their interpersonal function, one can easily notice that the themes of written advertisements usually refer to the addresser, addressee, endorser, product/ service/ issue and its features, to feedback and sometimes to credentials and/ or to price. The rhemes usually refer to addressee and his/ her 'features', to product / service/ issue and its features, to gained benefits, to credentials, to feedback and sometimes to price. In other words, the thematic and rhematic semantic information seems to overlap with little exception. They both refer to addressee and his/ her 'features', to product / service/ issue and its features, to gained benefits, to feedback and sometimes to credentials and/ or to price. The previously mentioned exceptions are thematic reference to addresser and to endorser. All the other types of semantic references are scarcely, if ever, used: rhematic reference to the addresser, thematic and rhematic reference to 'features' of the addresser, rhematic reference to endorser, thematic and rhematic reference to 'features' of the endorser, thematic and rhematic reference to incentives and pressure tactics.

## References

- Baker, M.J. 1994 (1971). *Marketing: An Introductory Text*. Malaysia: Macmillan.
- Daneš, F. 1974. *Papers on Functional Sentence Perspective*. Prague: Academia.
- Downing, A. & P. Locke. 1992. *A University Course in English Grammar*. New York: Prentice Hall.
- Gieszinger, S. 2001. *The History of Advertising Language: The Advertisements in The Times from 1788 to 1996*. Frankfurt-am-Main: Peter Lang.
- Halliday, M. A. K. 1994 (1985). *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Kotler, P. 1994. *Marketing Management. Analysis, Planning, Implementation, and Control*. Eaglewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.
- Martin, J.R. 1992. *English Text: System and Structure*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company
- Şimon, S. 2008. 'The Pragmatic Structure of Written Advertisements' in *Proceedings of the 5th International Conference on Professional Communication and Translation Studies: Politehnica University of Timișoara*. vol. 1. R. Superceanu and D. Dejica (eds.). Timișoara: Politehnica Publishing House.
- Tellis, G.J. 1998. *Advertising and Sales Promotion Strategy*. Reading/Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley.
- White, R. 1988. *Advertising. What Is It and How to Do It*. London: McGraw-Hill.

# MAPPING ACROSS NLP META PROGRAM CLUSTERS FOR MAINTAINING BUSINESS RAPPORT

CRISTINA-MIHAELA ZAMFIR

University of Constanța

***Abstract:** Meta program patterns come from the attempt to better understand the functioning of cognitive strategies. Mapping involves the encoding of key elements which make up a person's 'internal landscape'. Business people tend to interact differently, being 'programmed' to express themselves by using specific thinking styles that can be described as more general/specific-referenced, more options/procedures-oriented, or more self/other-focused. Mastering the language of meta programs and matching our interlocutor's linguistic preference can improve our ability to establish rapport and frame our communication.*

***Keywords:** map, meta program, NLP, rapport, thinking styles.*

## 1. Introduction

Meta programs are filters that determine our perception of the outside world. They have a major influence on how we communicate with others and the behaviours we manifest. They define typical patterns in the strategies or thinking styles of an individual, company or culture. Etymologically, *meta* comes from the Greek preposition *μετά* which is used in English with the meaning *after, beyond, over, above, or on a different level*. These interpretations suggest we are operating at an unconscious level, since the prefix *meta* is used to indicate a concept which is an abstraction from another concept, used to complete or add to the latter. Meta programs are deeply rooted mental programs that automatically filter our experiences and guide and direct our thought processes, resulting in significant differences in behaviour from person to person.

The way we use language and our cultural beliefs and experiences *to filter* the outside world makes up our *map of reality* (O'Connor and Seymour 2002:5). The language itself is a filter and we act according to some *perceptual filters*, called *meta programs* (Knight 2002, Molden and Hutchinson 2006). Thus, most NLP researchers agree that one can identify other people's meta programs through their *linguistic cues* and behaviour. In a particular context, people are likely to prefer certain meta program patterns to others. Nevertheless, the interactants' communicative preferences can be easily changed to suit any new situation and can be displayed along several dimensions. From a linguistic point of view, each of the NLP patterns is characterized by specific verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs and phrases.

In Business English, it is very interesting to study their *application in the context of workplace*, strongly focusing on *company culture* and everyday *business relationships*. Such meta programs have been categorized into *motivation traits* – dealing with patterns that determine people to take action, and *working traits* –

approaching the common thinking patterns and mental processing that people use in a given situation.

The paper explores the way in which business people who share the same language profile can display similar behaviour patterns; the specific words and phrases that have the greatest impact on a person's behaviour are analyzed. Bailey (qtd. in Charvet 1997: 31-35) refers to this as the *language and behaviour profile*, or *LAB profile*.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. The General – Specific Pattern

Rodger Bailey's research on meta programs at the workplace identifies a pattern which determines the level of specificity or generality in people's thinking styles. The pattern defines what *scope of information* people work with, and how they perform at their best based on the right amount of information. In other words, do people prefer to *work with details* or *with the big picture*?

According to NLP, "Situations may be analyzed in terms of varying degrees of *detail* (micro chunks of information) and *generalities* (macro chunks of information). Too much focus on details leads people to lose sight of the 'big picture'. Similarly, an overemphasis on generalities can compromise and weaken the ability to 'follow through', because you can't see the discrete steps" (Dilts and DeLozier 2000:757).

The *General – Specific Meta Program*, also known as Big Chunk – Small Chunk in NLP, makes use of questions to elicit a certain level of information. Thus, the question *What is that an example of?* overviews the situation and corresponds to *chunking up*. A question like *What would be an example of this?* breaks the information into smaller components and refers to *chunking down*. One can identify a person's general / specific pattern by asking him/her about ways of improving customer communications, for instance. The person using *specific* patterns in the example below prefers small chunks of information and follows a sequence step-by-step. As Bavister and Vickers (2004:58) explain in their book *Teach Yourself NLP*, "If you interrupt someone with a specific pattern when they're telling you something they usually need to start from the beginning again. This is because they follow a sequence, which unlike the procedures pattern they don't deviate from" (2004: 58). From a linguistic point of view, the person uses lots of *adjectives* and *adverbs*. Here is an example:

(1) *We are a team who has been assigned the task of putting forward the best proposals for improving customer communication. Well, actually, I*

---

<sup>2</sup>**Note:** In 1986, Rodger Bailey started using the name "LAB Profile", short for Language and Behavior Profile. He then actively promoted and adapted it for use in business settings. Although he has not published any work on the LAB profile, its development was taken over by Shelle Rose Charvet, who was solely authorized by Rodger Bailey to do so. Charvet wrote *Words that Change Minds* (1997), which is based on Bailey's original work, and is considered to be the "official" LAB Profile book.

think it is **pretty evident** that we expect **precise feedback** from all the team members. The team is working to a very **tight deadline**. If the **proper process** is followed, then the team leader will present all the **solutions** which appear to be **potentially good**, and **apparently practical ideas** could be put into practice. One solution has already been offered by **David**, our PR manager, and would be a **quick and easy** one. A little **more complicated solution** has been suggested by **Roger**, the brand manager, who recommended that we update our **webpage** at least once a week. **Interesting and exciting brochures** are **essential** and we feel **sure** that an extension of **telephone coverage** in **China and India** would help to answer **more enquires**. I am **pleased** with this **step-by-step progress** as we have **extremely good resources** at our disposal and a **well-rounded experience**.

The speech patterns used above include adverbs, adjectives, proper names, places and things:

- adjectives before nouns: *precise, tight, proper, practical, quick, easy, step-by-step, good*, the superlative *best* and the comparative *more complicated*;
- adjectives after stative verbs such as *be, appear, feel*: *good, essential, sure, pleased* (adjective ended in *-ed* which describes how the person feels);
- adjectives formed by affixation (*-ing*): *interesting* and *exciting*, which describe what things are like and the effect they have on people;
- adverbs before an adjective, used as intensifiers (*amplifiers*): *potentially (good), apparently (practical), extremely (good), pretty (evident)* intensify the adjectives *good, practical* and *evident*;
- adverbs before an adjective (*downtoners*): *little (interest)* which scales down the meaning of the adjective;
- adverbs and a past participle in a compound adjective: *well-rounded (experience)* to show that something is complete and varied;
- proper names followed by apposition: *David, the PR manager, Roger, the brand manager*;
- places: *China, India*;
- nouns designating concrete things: *webpage, brochures, telephone coverage, enquires*;
- abstractions: *proposals, communication, feedback, deadline, process, solutions, ideas, progress, resources, experience*.

The analysis of a person's language containing *specific* patterns is likely to reveal the presence of a lot of detail in a clearly defined sequence, and words such as:

- nouns: *details, schedule, sequence(s), plan*;
- preposition + noun: *in detail, on plan, ahead of/behind/ on schedule, in/out of sequence*;
- adjective + noun: *fine / full detail(s), busy / tight schedule, correct / logical sequence*;
- adverbs: *exactly, particularly, precisely, specifically, in particular*;
- connecting adverbs: *first...second...third*;
- be + past participle + prep.: *be scheduled for*;

- verb + noun (pl) + preposition: *have / make plans for*;
- collocations: *give details, keep/ stick to a plan, work out / draw up / devise a plan*;
- phrasal verbs: *plan on + -ing* ('to intend to do sth. '), *plan ahead* ('to think carefully about sth. you want to do, and decide how and when you will do it'), *plan out* ('to plan sth. carefully, considering all the possible problems');
- phrases: *have an eye for detail, go according to plan, plan of action, go as planned.*

By way of illustration, the following examples can be considered:

- (2) *We are running several months **behind schedule**.*
- (3) *Your task is to visit the company's customers and give information about our products **in detail**.*
- (4) *The whole transaction went **exactly as planned**.*
- (5) *They started to **draw up a plan** to improve sales and market orientation whose **first** stage will be completed by November and whose **second** stage will be set in January.*

Although a person with a specific pattern copes well with the fine print, s/he can nevertheless be characterized as being too meticulous in his/her working practices. As Molden and Hutchinson (2006:12) put it, the disadvantage for 'detailed' persons is that they "may be perceived as pedantic or fastidious".

From my point of view, by analyzing both the specific and the procedure thinking style, one can make a clear distinction between them. Although people using both specific and procedure patterns take things step by step, the difference lies in *how they follow the sequence of events*. While the *procedure* pattern allows the person to "take another route" in order to finish what s/he has started, the person using a *specific* pattern does not feel comfortable if interrupted from his/her speech. If this somehow happens, s/he automatically starts from the beginning again.

On the contrary, people using *general* patterns think globally and work with large chunks of information. They describe the big picture, delete and look for generalizations. A person's *general patterns* include simple sentences, few modifiers, abstract concepts and contrasted forms of the verbs:

- (6) *We're **briefed** to recommend ways of improving customer communications. The team cooperates and we've **found** solutions. It seems like a **professional** team where **everybody's** experienced.*

The general (global) approach emerges in descriptions such as the one above, which is a summary or an overview of its more detailed version from the specific pattern. In order to effectively influence someone that employs a general pattern, one should adapt one's linguistic preference to match the interlocutor's

type of language. For people using general patterns, the following words and expressions have the strongest impact:

- nouns: *concept, idea, framework, overview, summary*;
- the + adjective + noun: *the main concept, the important thing, the big picture*;
- adverbs: *basically, broadly, essentially, generally*;
- adjectival phrase: *in brief, in general*;
- prepositional phrases: *in broad terms, in summary*.

### 3. Options and the Procedures Pattern

A powerful meta program pattern emphasizing choice motivation, on the one hand, and finding too many choices difficult, on the other, is called the *options* and *procedures* pattern. In agreement with Bailey's categorization of metaprograms, Ellerton (2006:56-57) considers *options* in relation to the freedom of choice (self-motivation) and *procedures* in relation to imposing standard procedures on oneself. He analyses them taking into account a person's *motivation traits*, whereas Dilts and DeLozier (2000:757-758) include both of them under *achievement of a task*, and classify them with respect to *working traits*:

Task (Achievement)

- 1) Choices – Goals
- 2) Procedures – Operations

People using *option patterns* crave for choice, alternatives and new ideas, and use *I can* and *I could* as their preference in language. At work they would make an excellent career as project initiators, freelancers, process re-engineering managers and (re)design operators. Someone with an options pattern can be influenced and motivated by words and phrases which refer to a person's freedom of choice:

- nouns: *alternative, chance, choice, flexibility, opportunity, options, possibilities, variety*;
- adjectives: *better (than previously), different, challenging, new, unlimited*;
- verb collocations: *break / bend / stretch the rules, expand one's choices, keep options open*;
- idiomatic phrases: *play it by ear, put out feelers, smooth ruffled feathers, tempt providence*:

(7) *Are you interested in buying a **new, innovative** HD motorcycle? I strongly believe that Harley Davidson needs to launch a product aimed at a younger market, offering significant **new** benefits. **I feel**, however, that we first need to focus on product development. **I can** design a **new** HD motorcycle with increased speed, **flexibility** and style. **New** lighter and faster HD models **could** be an **opportunity** to increase sales significantly. "New and improved" will be the watchword for marketing our product. Thus, we **can** give our younger cyclists a*

*chance to buy an exciting product. Don't you think that expanding overseas could also be an option?*

People using *procedures patterns* like to follow rules and processes. Their work is usually associated with a procedural approach, that is why they are likely to start their sentences by saying *I must*, or *I should*. Accounting, banking, commercial airline piloting would be suitable positions for people with a strong procedures pattern. They are motivated by the following specific language patterns:

- adjectives: *correct, reliable*;
- adjective + noun: *correct way, right way*;
- adverbial connectors: *first, second, next, lastly...*;
- verb collocations: *play by the rules; take clear steps, follow / obey / observe the rules, comply with the rules*
- idiomatic phrases: *tried and true, tried and tested, cut and dried*;

For example:

(8) *The chairman made up his mind and the decision is cut and dried.*

(9) *First, I should make known among the employees the tried and tested safety procedures. Second, I must explain the benefits of each procedure to them. Next, I should make them aware of the necessity of complying with these procedures. Lastly everybody will get an evaluation form with questions checking on their understanding and application on a regular basis.*

In the procedural description above, the stress is laid on making sure that everyone has been acquainted with the strict set of procedures. Everything seems to be going according to plan, and moving down on a “fixed path”. The speaker’s task is to take clear steps to avoid any lapse in procedure. The boundary of time is rendered by listing (enumerative) conjuncts/adverbials (Greenbaum and Quirk 1990:185) *first, second, next, lastly* to denote temporal sequence, and the use of specific procedural patterns include 1<sup>st</sup> personal pronoun + modal verbs, like *I must* and *I should* used twice, nouns such as *procedures, necessity*, the “fixed” collocation *tried and tested*, the collocation *complying with procedures*, the reduced relative clause expressed by the present participle *checking on*, and the adverbial phrase *on a regular basis*.

#### 4. The Self – Other Pattern

In identifying proactive (internal or “self” referenced) and reactive (external or “other” referenced) patterns, Cooper (2008:118) gives a synthesized account of sentence structures, i.e. the structure of internal / external language, as well as body language characteristics, as presented in the Table below. She acknowledges that such persons are “part of the cluster of people whom researchers identify as being very proactive or highly reactive (15 to 20 per cent of the working population for each category, according to Rodger Bailey’s research, with the remainder being a mix of proactive and reactive)”.

PROACTIVE AND REACTIVE CHARACTERISTICS		
	<i>Sentence structure</i>	<i>Body Language</i>
Pro active/self-referenced	Short sentences	Fast speaking as if controlling the situation
	Crisp sentences	Lots of movement
	Direct	Fidgeting
	Active verbs	
Reactive/other-referenced	Incomplete sentences	Stillness
	Passive verbs	Ability to sit for long periods
	Long, complex, convoluted sentences	
	Nominalizations, Conditional words, including <i>would, could, should, might</i>	

(Cooper 2008:118)

People with a *self* pattern speak in terms of ‘I’ and ‘What’s in it for me?’. They can appear self-absorbed and only seem to be interested in things that affect themselves. The ‘self’ and ‘other’ patterns reflect how much we instinctively notice and respond to other people. When it comes to recruiting people for a job this is valuable information to have, especially if the role involves dealing with customers. People with a *self* pattern respond to others on the basis of what they have to say and do not appear to be aware of non-verbal communication.

To influence people based on their proactive, *self*-reference pattern, we use expressions that have meaning to them, given their pattern. For example:

- imperative verbs: *go to it, do it, go for it, don’t wait,*
- collocations: *take control, take charge, take / size the initiative;*
- verb phrases: *get the job done, make things happen, involve oneself ( in sth).*

To identify these people, we have to notice whether they use short sentences with an active verb, speak as if they were in control or have difficulty sitting still for long periods of time. These people do well in situations where

something needs to be done now – outside sales, project management. A proactive/self-referenced person will tend to use complete sentences with a personal subject (noun or pronoun), an active verb and a tangible object, for example ***I am going to meet the managing director.***

To influence people based on their reactive, *other*-reference pattern, again we use expressions that have meaning to them, given their pattern. For example:

- *let + verb: let's analyze this, let's examine this, let's investigate*

*this*

*further;*

- modal verbs: *would, could, might, should, have to, ought to;*

- phrasal verbs: *think of/about, think over;*

- nominalizations (verbs transformed into nouns): *communication* (rather than 'communicate'), *meeting* (rather than 'meet'), *arrangement* (rather than 'arrange'), *negotiation* (rather than 'negotiate').

This group can be identified through their use of long, complex sentences or incomplete sentences, use of passive verbs and nominalizations, use of conditionals. A reactive/*other*-referenced person is likely to use qualifying phrases and nominalizations, for example, *Is there any chance that it might be possible to arrange a meeting with the managing director?* People with a reactive pattern wait for the others to take action, they spend their time considering and analyzing before acting. Positions suited to these people would be those of analysts or customer service representatives.

## 5. Conclusion

Meta program patterns are not fixed and unchangeable features of identity. They can be changed if we are not happy with the outcomes they are producing. Understanding variations in meta programs can help us to better understand diversity and deal more effectively with difference.

Meta programs filter the world to help us enlarge and share maps of the world, expand and enrich our own perceptual filters and the perceptual space of others. Good communicators shape their language to fit the other person's model of the world. No value judgement is implied in these meta program patterns, none are 'better' or 'right' in themselves (O'Connor and Seymour 2002:150), each has advantages and disadvantages. But knowing some key meta programs that others may have gives us a great advantage at the workplace and we can quickly gain rapport.

In selecting meta program patterns to include in this paper, I have used my own experience of working in a business environment and explored how meta programs appear in all kinds of business communications, depending on the context and the outcome we want.

## References

Bavister, S. and A. Vickers 2004. *Teach Yourself NLP*. London: Hodder Education.

- Charvet, S.R. 1997. *Words that Change Minds: Mastering the Language of Influence*. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall Hunt Publishing.
- Cooper, L. 2008. *Business NLP for Dummies*. England: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Dilts, R. and J. DeLozier 2000. *Encyclopedia of Neuro-Linguistic Programming and NLP New Coding*. Santa Cruz: NLP University Press.
- Ellerton, R. 2006. *Live Your Dreams. Let Reality Catch Up: NLP and common sense for coaches, managers and you*. Canada: Trafford Publishing.
- Greenbaum, S. and R. Quirk 1990. *A Student's Grammar of the English Language*. Harlow, Essex: Longman.
- Knight, S. 2002. *NLP at Work*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing.
- Molden, D. and P. Hutchinson 2006. *Brilliant NLP*. Glasgow: Pearson Education Ltd.
- O'Connor, J. and J. Seymour 2002. *Introducing NLP: Psychological Skills for Understanding and Influencing People*. Hammersmith, London: Element, Harper Collin.

# ON COLLOCATIONS IN ENGLISH

ÉVA KOVÁCS

Eszterházy Károly College

**Abstract:** *It is widely acknowledged that collocations – a natural combination of words – are among the distinguishing marks of a native-like command of English and pose special problems for both foreign learners of English and linguists. My paper discusses the importance of collocations, their various types and their structural and semantic properties.*

**Keywords:** *collocations, ELT, lexicography, lexicology, semantics, partitives*

## 1. Introduction

It is widely acknowledged that collocations – a natural combination of words – (e.g. *strongly recommend, drop a hint, a thirst for adventure, fully aware, heated discussion*, etc.) are among the distinguishing marks of a native-like command of English and pose special problems for both foreign learners and teachers of English and linguists.

Nevertheless, collocations – regardless of their frequency – were a vastly neglected phenomenon in both ELT and linguistics until the 1990's, when a new approach to language learning and teaching, namely the *Lexical Approach* appeared, whose the key element is collocation. Several influential books were published in this field, among others Michael Lewis' *Implementing the Lexical Approach* (1997) and *Teaching Collocations: Further Developments in the Lexical Approach* (2000), which gave a central role to vocabulary acquisition and more specifically to collocation. As assumed by Lewis (1997, 2000), the language learner comprehends and produces language on the basis of lexical phrases (chunks), one of which are collocations. In other words, collocational patterns form the core of word knowledge and increasing the learners' collocational competence is the way to improve their language as a whole. Thus, learning collocations not only increases the mental lexicon but develops fluency as well.

Similarly, in linguistics, despite the increasing recognition that is being given to collocations, there are very few systematic accounts of them, one of which was developed in the lexicographic context. Lexicographically oriented researchers such as Benson, Benson and Ilson (1986, 1997) and Sinclair (1987) noted that collocations are lexical items standing in a specific syntagmatic and semantic relations with one another and that they are classifiable and listable accordingly. The first dedicated lexicographical account of collocation led to the publication of the *BBI Dictionary (The BBI Dictionary of English Word Combinations Revised Edition.*, by Benson et al. 1997, formerly known as *The BBI Combinatory Dictionary of English: A Guide to Word Combinations*, Benson et al.1986). Almost at the same time, Hill and Lewis (1997) also brought out their *Dictionary of Selected Collocations*.

By publishing his book *Corpus, Concordance, Collocation* (1991), Sinclair also became an early leader in the fields of collocation studies and computational linguistics. He was the founder of the ground-breaking COBUILD project in lexical computing, which revolutionized lexicography in the 1980s and resulted in a new generation of corpus-driven dictionaries, the first of which was *Collins Cobuild English Dictionary* (1987). Since then, numerous excellent dictionaries have been published, the great advantage of which is their unique computer database, containing several hundred million words, that is continuously expanding. For example, the fifth edition of *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (2009), like all *Longman* dictionaries, was compiled using the *Longman Corpus Network*, which offers a huge database of 330 million words, taken from a wide range of real life sources.

Remarkably, the newer editions of such general-purpose dictionaries pay more and more attention to collocations as exemplified by *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (2009), which was transformed into an integrated collocations dictionary containing over 65,000 common collocations. What is more, if a word has several collocations, they are listed in a box at the end of the entry, as illustrated by the following example (Mayor 2009:506):

*Doubt:*

Verbs: *have doubts, have your doubts, have no/little doubt, leave no/little doubt about sth, leave no/little doubt (that), cast/throw doubt on sth, raise doubt about sth, call/throw sth into doubt, express/voice doubts*

Adjectives: *serious/grave doubts, considerable doubts*

Phrases: *there is no/little doubt, without a shadow of a doubt, an element of doubt, slightest doubt*

No doubt specialised dictionaries of collocations represent an even better resource for developing this important skill and using collocation with confidence. Besides *The BBI Dictionary of English Word Combinations* (1997) mentioned above, the recently published *Macmillan Collocations Dictionary for Learners of English* (2010) provides a complete record of the most typical ways in which common English words combine with one another. Deriving its information from a 2-billion-word corpus, this excellent dictionary contains collocations with over 4500 carefully-selected key words, grouped in semantic sets.

In the light of what has been pointed out above, it should come as no surprise that collocations still serve as a topic of interest not only for lexicologists and lexicographers, but for learners and teachers of English as well. The present paper will discuss the structural and semantic properties of English partitive constructions, touching upon the importance and classifications of collocations in general.

## **2. The importance and classifications of collocations**

In general terms, collocations are defined as “the habitual co-occurrence of individual lexical items“(Crystal 2003:82), “the readily observable phenomenon

whereby certain words co-occur in natural text with greater than random frequency” (Lewis 1997:8), “frequently recurrent, relatively fixed syntagmatic combinations of two or more words” (Bartsch 2004:11) or “the property of language whereby two or more words seem to appear frequently in each other’s company” (Rundell 2010:vii)

The first and most obvious reason why collocations are important is that the way words combine in collocations is fundamental to all language use. In Lewis’s view (2000:53), it is possible that up to 70% of everything we say, hear, read or write is to be found in some form of fixed expression.

It is a well-known fact that in order to speak and write English in a natural and accurate way, learners need to be familiar with collocations. As was observed by O’Dell and McCarthy (2008:4), people will probably understand what one means when one talks about *\*making a crime* or say that *\*there was very hard rain this morning*, but one’s language will sound unnatural and might perhaps be confusing. Collocations may also provide speakers with alternative ways of saying something, which may be more colourful/expressive or more precise: instead of repeating *It was very cold and very dark*, one can say *It was bitterly cold and pitch dark*. A good way of demonstrating one’s wide vocabulary is to employ natural collocations, and being able to produce them is an indication of fluency. Especially in advanced level exams, a good grasp and an appropriate handling of collocation is a real advantage. McCarther (2010: ix), ELT author and teacher, notes that a student who is about to sit for the IELTS (the International English Language Testing System) and who has a reasonably large vocabulary of around 7,500 words, but no awareness of how words work naturally together, will be at a disadvantage compared to someone who may have a smaller vocabulary (5000 words), but is able to use those words effectively and combine them in natural sounding ways.

According to Lewis (2000:53-55), collocations don’t only allow us to think more quickly and be more fluent, but they also enable us to communicate more efficiently. One of the main reasons why learners of English find listening, reading or speaking difficult is that they cannot recognise and produce these natural word combinations, which may often express complex ideas. Memory plays an important role in mastering collocations and exposure to them can develop learners’ confidence as well.

Bartsch (2004:17) points out that collocations play an important role in the resolution of lexical ambiguity caused by polysemy and the subtle distinctions between seemingly synonymous words which can often only be drawn by considering the immediate linguistic context in which a lexical item occurs.

There have been several attempts made to categorise collocations, for example Benson et al. (1986 ix-xxiii), Hill (2000:51), McCarthy and O’Dell (2005:12) and O’Dell and McCarthy (2008: 10). In general, collocations are categorised by taking into account the elements they contain:

1. Verb + noun (*draw up a contract, pass up a chance*)
2. Noun + verb (*an opportunity arises, standards slip*)

3. Adjective + noun (*idle threat, vain hope*)
4. Adverb + adjective (*intensely personal, stunningly attractive*)
5. Verb + adverb (*drive recklessly, fail miserably*)
6. Noun + noun (*a barrage of questions, a snippet of information*)
7. Verb + prepositional phrase (*be filled with horror, foam at the mouth*)
8. More complex collocations (*take it easy for a while, put the past behind you*)

Furthermore, Hill (2000:63-64) and O'Dell and McCarthy (2008:8) propose a different categorization of collocations, depending on how closely their constituents are associated with each other:

1. Unique collocations (*to foot the bill, to shrug your shoulders*): the verb is not used with any other nouns. Such collocations are called idioms;
2. Strong collocations (*rancid butter*): the words are very closely associated with each other, e.g. *rancid* is most commonly used with *butter* or *bacon*;
3. Weak collocations (*long hair*): are made up of words that collocate with a wide range of other words, these combinations are completely free and predictable;
4. Medium strength collocations (*to make a mistake, to hold a meeting*): These are neither free nor completely fixed.

Both Hill's (2000) and O'Dell and McCarthy's (2008) classification of lexical collocations show that collocation is a matter of degree, ranging from weak collocation, with only the slightest degree of predictability of co-occurrence, through strong collocation, that is almost entirely predictable, to fixed/unique combinations, which are completely fixed. Nevertheless, collocations have specific structural and semantic properties. To explore these, I shall examine the Noun + Noun collocation type, which represents English partitive constructions (e.g. *a pinch of salt, a herd of cattle* and *a stroke of luck*, etc.).

### **3. Partitive constructions and their collocations**

Partitives (unit nouns) are commonly used to denote a part of whole or the quantity of an undifferentiated mass. Having specific syntactic, semantic properties, partitives represent a difficult and challenging aspect of English vocabulary for both students and teachers. Besides, collocations also exhibit some semantic constraints on the nouns they co-occur with. In fact, some are closely connected with certain nouns, and conversely certain nouns are characteristically selected by certain partitives. Some of them are very general in meaning, occurring with many quantifiable lexical items (*piece, group*), others are restricted to a single item or a very small set (e.g. *a blade of grass, a knob of butter, a tuft of hair/grass, a clump of trees/bushes* and *a flock of birds/sheep*, etc.). Next let us examine what kind of syntactic, semantic properties English partitives have, focussing on their collocational constraints. The examples are primarily taken from *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (2009).

### 3.1 Syntactic properties

Certain partitive expressions collocate strongly with particular kinds of nouns - singular, plural, non-count or countable, concrete or abstract nouns:

- Singular, Non-count, Concrete Nouns: *a speck of dust, a grain of rice, a dash of vinegar and a drop of oil, etc.*
- Singular, Non-count, Abstract Nouns: *a stroke of luck, a spell of dry weather and a flicker of interest, etc.*
- Plural, Count, Concrete Nouns: *a herd of elephants, a swarm of bees, a bunch of keys and a pile of blankets, etc.*
- Plural, Count, Abstract Nouns: *a gamut of emotions, a torrent of questions, a stream of insults, a barrage of complaints and a series of lectures, etc.*

### 3.2 Semantic properties

As far as their meaning is concerned, partitive constructions commonly refer to the part, the amount, the shape, the arrangement, collection of entities, the container which holds the item referred to and the period of a time of an action/state/feeling, etc. The major semantic types of partitives are illustrated below:

1. Partitives referring to conventionalized measures:

*a kilo of apples, an ounce of tobacco, an ounce of gold, a spoonful of medicine, a foot of wire, a yard of cloth, a litre of milk, a gallon of petrol, a pint of beer/milk, etc.*

2. Partitives referring to parts of the whole, meaning *a piece of* (very small, small or large):

*a grain of sand/salt, a speck of dust, a slice of meat, a knob of butter, a clove of garlic, a splinter of wood/glass, a lump of clay, a hunk of bread, etc.*

3. Partitives denoting containers, semantically related to volume:

*a barrel of beer, a basket of fruit, a bottle of milk, a carton of orange juice, a packet of cigarettes, a glass of water, a jug of water, a mug of cocoa, a tin of soup, a tube of paste, a vase of flowers, a pool of standing water/blood, etc.*

4. Partitives expressing quantity, a small/big amount of mass nouns:

*a pinch of salt, a sprinkling of cinnamon, a dollop of cream, a morsel of chocolate/bread, a dash of vinegar, a drop of oil, a swig of lemonade, a shock of hair, etc.*

5. Partitives expressing a small amount of abstract notions:

*a touch of sadness/class/irony/humour, a shred of evidence/truth/self-esteem, a grain of truth/courage/sympathy, a spot of bother/trouble/work/sailing/yachting, a crumb of information/hope/comfort, a ray of hope/comfort, a snippet of news/information/conversation, etc.*

6. Partitives related to the shape of things:

*a bar of chocolate/soap, a sheet of paper/steel/ice, a strip of cloth/land, a stick of celery, a column of smoke, a ball of string, a head of lettuce, an ear of corn, a blade of grass, etc.*

7. Partitives indicating collections of entities meaning (a) *a group of animals*, (b) *people*, and (c) *things*:

a) *a herd of cattle/deer/elephants, a flock of birds/chickens/sheep/goats, a pack of dogs, wolves/hounds, a shoal of fish/sardines, a school of dolphins/whales, a tribe of monkeys/baboons, a bask/float of crocodiles, a swarm of bees/locusts, a colony of sea birds/insects/ants, an army of caterpillars/ants, a litter of puppies/kittens, a hide/ambush of tigers, etc.*

b) *a gang of hooligans/thieves/smugglers/kids/youth, a rabble of noisy angry youth, a mob of demonstrators, a swarm of children/tourists, a troop of soldiers, a troupe of actors/singers/dancers, a party of tourists, a team of doctors, a bunch of people, a cluster of people, a horde of tourists, a mass of people, a crowd of people, etc.*

c) *clump of trees/bushes/plants, a bunch of flowers/keys/grapes/bananas, a bundle of papers/clothes/sticks, a cluster of star/shops/motels, a fleet of ships, a tuft of hair/grass, etc.*

8. Partitives denoting a whole range of activities/emotions or a large amount/number of abstract notions:

*a flurry of phone calls, a gamut of emotions/new experiences, a torrent of abuse/criticism/Greek/Italian/questions, a stream of traffic/abuse/visitors/jokes/insults/questions, a barrage of questions/complaints/criticism, a spate of attacks/thefts/burglaries, etc.*

9. Partitives referring to arrangement of entities:

*a pile of bricks/wood/blankets/bills/boxes/clothes, a stack of papers, a heap of dead leaves/bones/ashes/clothes, a line/a row/a queue of people, a column of soldiers/military vehicles/marching men/ants, a cluster of stars/shops/motels, etc.*

10. Partitives referring to a period of time of an action/state/feeling:

*a fit of laughter/cough /anger/panic, a round of applause, a flurry of activity/speculation/snow, a bout of flu/nausea/depression, a spell of dry /cold weather, a flicker of hope/interest/regret/amusement/uncertainty/excitement, a glimmer of hope/interest, a stroke of genius/inspiration, a stroke of luck/fortune, etc.*

Examining the above semantic classes of partitives, one can notice that some partitives expressed by nouns that, when used in isolation, have concrete objects as referents, have a literal meaning, e.g. *a stick of celery, a blade of grass, a ball of string, a cube of ice and a slice of bread, etc.*, just like those denoting containers, e.g. *a barrel of beer, a basket of fruit, a bottle of milk, a packet of cigarettes, a glass of water or a jug of water, etc.*

Similarly, the partitives of arrangement have an element of shape in their meaning: *a line of, a row of, a pile of, a heap, a stack of and a bundle of entities*. *A line/a row of* refer to things or people next to each other, while *a cluster* refers to a group of entities of the same kind that are close together. In the case of *a pile of* and *a heap*, there is a difference in meaning depending on how the things are arranged. The former refers to things arranged with one on top of the other and the

latter to their being arranged in an untidy way. Similarly, *a bundle* refers to several papers, clothes or sticks held or tied together in an untidy way.

When they collocate with nouns that belong to the same semantic family, partitives denoting an amount of something have a similar literal meaning, but there is a difference in the amount or size of the quantified entity: *A hunk of bread/cheese or meat* refers to a thick or large slice, *a knob of butter* refers to a small lump of butter, *a dollop of cream* is a large spoonful of cream, thus bigger than *a dash of cream*, which is a small amount. *A swig of Cola* refers to a large mouthful from a bottle, while *a drop of brandy in your tea* refers to a smaller amount. Similarly, in the case of partitives denoting a piece/whole relationship, *a blade of grass* is a single thin leaf and *a tuft of grass* means a bunch of grass. *A clove of garlic* means one small separate section of *a head of garlic* or *a slice of bread* is a slice cut from *a loaf of bread*.

Sometimes the partitives, especially those referring to a group of entities, reveal some property of the entities. The use of partitives that collocate with animals depends on the animals referred to. So, we talk about *a pack of dogs, hounds and wolves*, but *a herd of cattle and elephants* (and other large herbivorous mammals). We say *a swarm of bees/locusts* (and other flying insects), but *a flock of birds* and also *a flock of sheep*. Other rather unusual examples include *a pride of lions*, *a bask/float of crocodiles*, *a hide/ambush of tigers*, *a shoal of fish or sardines* (and other specific small fish), *a school or pod of dolphins or whales*, *a tribe of monkeys or baboons*. Thus, the meaning of the partitives may be determined by the characteristic features and behaviour of the animals.

The partitives used to denote a group of people may also reflect the behaviour of those people. *A gang* may refer to (especially young) people who go around together and often deliberately cause trouble and fight with other groups or criminals. *A rabble* refers to a noisy group of people who behave badly, *a horde* is a large crowd moving in an uncontrolled way and *a mob* refers to a large, noisy and perhaps violent crowd. *A team of people* are a group of people who work together and *a party of tourists* are a group of people who are travelling together.

Remarkably, some partitives derived from verbs are related to the result of actions, such as *a pinch of salt*, *a dash of vinegar*, *a sip of water*, *a slice of bread*, *a sprinkle of sugar*, *a sniff of fresh air*, *a drop of brandy*, *a sprinkling of herbs/spices*, *a glimmer of light*, *a flicker of hope*, *a wink of sleep* and *a spurt of flame/energy/anger*, etc.

The partitives may have metaphorical and associative meanings that depend on the nouns they quantify. *Bunch* in *a bunch of keys/flowers/bananas/grapes* (fastened, held or growing together) and *cluster* in *a cluster of star/shops/motels* (close together in the same place) are semantically related to *bunch* and *cluster* in *a bunch of people*, used in informal style, and *a cluster of people*, a group of people, all in the same place, respectively. Similarly, the meaning of *a swarm of tourists/children* is understood by analogy with *a swarm of bees/insects*. *Herd* and *flock*, which refer to a group of animals (*a herd of cattle/elephants* or *a flock of sheep/birds*) can also be used for a group of people: *a herd of people* denotes a group of people acting together without planned direction,

while *a flock of people* suggests a large number of people going together somewhere because something interesting is happening there. *A torrent of abuse/criticism* or *a stream of abuse/visitors/questions* are associated with *a torrent/ a stream of water*, respectively. We can state therefore that the extended meanings of these partitives are derived from their prototypical meanings.

One can witness a metaphorical extension of the literal meaning of partitives in other cases as well. A small amount/piece of something can metaphorically be interpreted as a small amount of quality. *A dash* can refer to a small amount of substance that is added to something else (e.g. Add salt, pepper and *a dash of vinegar*) or a small amount of a quality that is added to something else (e.g. Add *a dash of romance* to your life with a trip to Paris). *A pinch of salt* refers to a small amount of salt, however to *take something with a pinch of salt* means that you do not believe that something is completely accurate or true. Similarly, *a grain* can denote a very small quantity of substance such as *sand* or *salt*, but it can refer to a very small amount of quality in the case of *truth/courage/sympathy*. *A crumb* refers to a very small piece of dry food, especially bread and cake, but it can refer to a small amount of abstract notion, e.g. *a crumb of hope/comfort/affection*.

Some partitives are restricted to a small set or to a single item, e.g. *a shoal of fish* or *sardines*, *a clump of trees or bushes*, *a dollop of cream*, *a clove of garlic* and *a pride of lions*, etc. Furthermore, most English partitives exhibit some semantic constraints on the nouns which they co-occur with. Collective partitives usually occur together with nouns denoting animals, people and objects, whereas those denoting amounts or parts of the whole typically collocate with nouns denoting food, drinks or some other materials. As pointed out, most partitives and the nouns they combine with form literal combinations; however, the literal meanings of some partitives can be metaphorically extended to the abstract domain as well. Finally, there is often a specific relation between the partitive and some property of the quantified noun.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Although it is widely acknowledged that collocations – a common and natural phenomenon in language – tend to be both indispensable and problematic for language learners and that they should play an important part in second language teaching, especially at an advanced level, the relevant aspects of collocations have not been investigated in as much detail in either linguistics or ELT as those of idioms and other multi-word expressions. Nevertheless, with the advent of corpus linguistics, collocations received due consideration in lexicology, and it became possible for lexicographers to reveal invaluable information about the collocational behaviour of words (cf. Sinclair 1987), resulting in the publication of such excellent dictionaries as *Macmillan Collocations Dictionary* (2010). The interest in collocations was also stirred by the appearance of the Lexical Approach in ELT, represented by Lewis (1997, 2000).

As was argued above, in addition to the fact that by employing natural collocations speakers demonstrate a wide range of vocabulary and fluency, their use also enables learners to express complex ideas, make their oral and written performance more colourful and accurate. In other words, collocations help them to develop the ability of sounding more natural when using English. The constituents of collocations are not just in direct syntactic relation with each other, but they can also be lexically constrained.

By paying special attention to English partitive constructions, this paper has attempted to reveal what special syntactic and semantic properties collocations may have and to highlight their importance for teaching and learning English as a foreign language.

## References

- Bartsch, S. 2004. *Structural and Functional Properties of Collocations in English. A corpus study of lexical and pragmatic constraints on lexical co-occurrence*. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag.
- Benson, M., E. Benson, and R. Ilson. 1986. *The BBI Combinatory Dictionary of English. A Guide to Word Combinations*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamin Publishing Company.
- Benson, M., E. Benson, and R. Ilson. 1997. *The BBI Dictionary of English Word Combinations*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamin Publishing Company.
- Crystal, D. 2003. *A Dictionary of Linguistics & Phonetics*. Fifth Edition. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Hill, J. 2000. "Revising priorities: From Grammatical failure to collocational success" in *Teaching Collocation: Further Developments in the Lexical Approach*. Michael Lewis. (ed.). Hove: Language Teaching Publications, pp. 47-69.
- Hill, J. and M. Lewis. 1997. *Dictionary of Selected Collocations*. Hove: Language Teaching Publications.
- Lewis, M. 1997. *Implementing the Lexical Approach: Putting Theory into Practice*. Hove: Language Teaching Publications.
- Lewis, M. 2000. "Learning in the lexical approach" in *Teaching Collocation: Further Developments in the Lexical Approach*. Michael Lewis (ed.). Hove: Language Teaching Publications, pp. 155-158.
- Mayor, M. (ed.). 2009. *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*. Harlow: Pearson Educated Limited.
- McCarthy, S. 2010. "Using the Dictionary in IELTS" in *Macmillan Collocations Dictionary for Learners of English*. Oxford: Macmillan Publishers Limited, p. ix.
- McCarthy, M. and F. O'Dell. 2005. *English Collocations in Use. Intermediate*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- O'Dell, F. and M. McCarthy. 2008. *English Collocations in Use. Advanced*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rundell, M. 2010. *Macmillan Collocations Dictionary for Learners of English*. Oxford: Macmillan Publishers Limited.
- Sinclair, J.M. 1991. *Corpus, Concordance, Collocation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sinclair, J.M. (ed.). 1987. *Collins COBUILD English Dictionary*. London: Harper Collins Publishers.

# ENGLISH VERBS OF MOTION AND PROTOTYPE THEORY\*

DUŠAN STAMENKOVIĆ and MILOŠ TASIĆ

University of Niš

***Abstract:** The main goal of this paper is to check whether Prototype Theory can be applied to the analysis of the English verbs of motion. More precisely, the paper attempts to apply various elements of S.G. Pulman's (1983) model of prototype effect testing to a semantic analysis of the English motion verbs (as defined and selected in Miller 1972 and Levin 1993). The methods of analysis include prototypicality rating tests previously used by psychologists (Rosch 1975a,b, Rosch and Lloyd 1978, inter alia), frequency tests and corpus data analysis. The results show that a semantic analysis of verbs based on Prototype Theory is possible, though it has certain constraints. On the whole, there is a steady semantic pattern related to the obtained category structure of motion verbs: the more generic verbs seem to be closer to the centre and, as we move towards the periphery, the verbs tend to be more specific.*

***Keywords:** verbs of motion, prototypicality, semantic analysis, English, word frequency.*

## 1. Introduction

The main aim of the paper is to analyse the English verbs of motion from the perspective of Prototype Theory, using the findings of S. G. Pulman (1983), which will be presented in the next section. To this point, Prototype Theory has been mostly concerned with nouns, sometimes with adjectives and prepositions, but there have been very few attempts to apply Prototype Theory to verb analyses. After a short historical overview of the development of Prototype Theory and a presentation of two major attempts to approach verbs using Prototype Theory, the English verbs of motion, as defined and selected in Miller 1972 and Levin 1993, are sorted in accordance with two prototypicality experiments involving respondents and one frequency experiment based on the *Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)*. The paper will also try to find out whether there are any semantic “patterns” in the order of verbs obtained from the three experiments.

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1. The Basics of Prototype Theory

In discussing Prototype theory, one usually starts with the problem of categorization. According to Smith and Medin 1981 and Medin and Rips 2005, we

---

\* **Acknowledgement:** This article is part of the project No. 179013, conducted at the University of Niš – Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, and supported by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia.

may distinguish between at least three groups of approaches to categories: *atomistic*, *probabilistic*, and *exemplar*. The atomistic approach largely corresponds to what we call *the objectivist view*, in which things belong to the same category in case they have certain (usually objective) properties in common – categories are consequently verifiable and they correspond to the real world. The probabilistic approach is based on binary features, which can be either present or absent within a concept, and configurations of these features determine whether a concept can be classified within a particular category or not. Properties within these two approaches are called *necessary and sufficient conditions* for defining a category. Categories based on necessary and sufficient conditions and/or binary features are usually clearly bounded and their members have equal status (Taylor 1989:23–24). In the exemplar approach, the best representatives of a category serve as ‘role models’ in the process of categorization and this view seems to be very close to what we call Prototype Theory, which is the dominant approach to categorization *in the experiential view*.

Even though we may track the beginnings of the prototypical approach to categories back to Kant’s claims that concepts cannot be empirically delineated and that the synthesis of our knowledge is not arbitrary, but related to our experience (Kant 1791, *Einleitung*, III, IV, in Antović 2009: 90) and Husserl’s notion of *categorical intuition* (Husserl 1900/2001), contemporary semanticists usually regard Wittgenstein as the forefather of Prototype Theory. While trying to define the term *game*, Wittgenstein (1953:31–33) claims that the boundaries of the category are fuzzy and that this does not make it less valid than some of the categories which are not as fuzzy – the category of games is not based on shared necessary and sufficient features or conditions, as there are no attributes common to all the games in the world, but on a “criss-crossing network of similarities” (Taylor 1989:38). Wittgenstein uses the famous metaphor of ‘family resemblances’ to illustrate this network of similarities – the notion that entities thought to be connected by one essential common feature may actually be connected by a series of overlapping similarities, with no feature common to all of them. Wittgenstein’s views on categories certainly influenced Zadeh’s (1965) fuzzy set theory and Lakoff’s (1972) early claims that category membership is not binary in any way, but rather a matter of degree (Stamenković 2012:176–177).

The early experiments which confirmed these assumptions on categories were performed by William Labov (1973), Willett Kempton (1981), Eleanor Rosch (1973, 1975a,b), Brent Berlin (1978), Paul Kay, and Chad McDaniel (1978) among others. Labov’s experiments (1973) included line drawings of various household receptacles, such as mugs, cups, and bowls. The subjects in this experiment were to classify the presented drawing as one of these and, among other conclusions, the experiment proved that there was no clear dividing line between cups and bowls and no attribute crucial to distinguishing one category from another. Eleanor Rosch’s frequently quoted experiments (1973, 1975a, 1975b) on categorization represented a real challenge for the classical view of categories, as she tackled very many apparently delineated categories and proved that they are far from being discrete in relation to reality. Her respondents were to grade memberships of

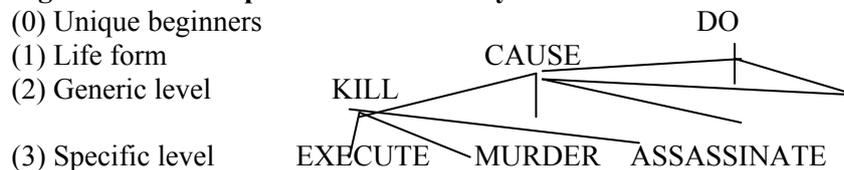
concepts within certain categories, including birds, furniture, tools, sports, fruits, vegetables, toys, etc., using a 7-point membership scale or response time measurement. These experiments proved that neither natural categories (such as birds, fruits, and vegetables) nor nominal kind terms (furniture, sports, or toys) have clear boundaries. Moreover, the experiments showed that we can also talk about a degree of membership, including the notions of centre and periphery of a category. This method introduced the notion of prototypicality in the sense in which it is used nowadays – prototypes or exemplars are those concepts which take central places within a category. However, Vidanović (forthcoming: 13) notices that the very term of prototypicality can be found in Wittgenstein’s *Brown Book II*.

Using experimental data, as well as various previous attempts to weaken the position of the classical view of categories, George Lakoff, in *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things* (1987), framed a comprehensive overview of the new position on categories and provided the philosophical background and possible implications of the experientialist view. When we come to prototypicality, we encounter a number of topics, including family resemblances, centrality, polysemy as categorization, membership and centrality gradience, conceptual and functional embodiment, basic-level categorization and primacy, reference-point, or “metonymic,” reasoning, and other phenomena (Stamenković 2012:177–178). Lakoff (1987:68–76) uses the notion of prototypicality as one of the bases for the formation of *idealized cognitive models* (ICMs or in Fillmore’s (1982/2006) terms *frames*), which represent stable and complex gestalt structures that are essential in the process of conceptualisation.

## 2.2. Verbs and Prototype Theory

In his book *Word Meaning and Belief*, Pulman (1983:107–136) performed a wide-ranging analysis so as to prove that there are aspects of verb meaning that can be studied by means of Prototype Theory. He found graded membership and prototypicality effects in the categories denoted by the verbs *kill*, *speak*, *look*, *walk*, *deceive*, *rub*, *hold*, and *burn*. Pulman embarked upon his exploration of verb prototypicality by proposing a taxonomy that starts with a unique beginner and ends with a specific verb:

**Figure 1. An example of verb taxonomy based on Pulman 1983: 108**



However, he realized that there are very many problematic issues related to the unique beginners, as well as to the life form level. For instance, it is quite difficult to decide whether the verb DO or the verb BE can be considered to be the

hypernym of ‘close’ in “*John closed the door*” and “*The door was closed.*” Therefore, he focused his study on the generic and the specific level, investigating only those verbs which seemed to be organized in “hyponymy sets reminiscent of the distinction between basic and subordinate level categories” that are found in nouns (Pulman 1983:109). Firstly, Pulman wanted to check whether prototypicality effects can be obtained for verbs; in order to do so, he tried to replicate one of Rosch’s original experiments – Pulman’s subjects were asked to decide which members of a given category were more representative of the category in question, using a 7-point scale (the lower the figure, the more prototypical the verb, just like in Rosch’s tasks). He selected eight hyponymy sets: *kill*, *speak*, *look*, *walk*, *deceive*, *rub*, *hold*, and *burn* and, for each of them, he selected a range of six hyponyms to cover the largest part of the generic verbs’ meanings. The results that emerged from this experiment were the following:

**Table 1. The results of Pulman’s (1983:113) prototypicality test.**

	1	2	3	4	5	6
<b>look</b>	<i>survey</i>	<i>stare</i>	<i>glance</i>	<i>scan</i>	<i>peer</i>	<i>squint</i>
	2.05	2.80	2.87	3.25	3.91	6.05
<b>kill</b>	<i>murder</i>	<i>assassinate</i>	<i>execute</i>	<i>massacre</i>	<i>sacrifice</i>	<i>commit suicide</i>
	1.10	2.05	2.82	3.28	5.22	5.33
<b>speak</b>	<i>recite</i>	<i>mumble</i>	<i>shout</i>	<i>whisper</i>	<i>drone</i>	<i>stutter</i>
	2.57	3.46	3.51	3.64	3.98	5.35
<b>walk</b>	<i>stride</i>	<i>pace</i>	<i>saunter</i>	<i>march</i>	<i>stumble</i>	<i>limp</i>
	1.86	2.05	2.41	3.01	5.31	5.37
<b>deceive</b>	<i>lie</i>	<i>cheat</i>	<i>mislead</i>	<i>defraud</i>	<i>hoax</i>	<i>decoy</i>
	1.87	2.20	2.34	3.84	4.10	5.01
<b>hold</b>	<i>grasp</i>	<i>grip</i>	<i>clutch</i>	<i>hug</i>	<i>squeeze</i>	<i>pinch</i>
	2.03	2.03	2.45	3.40	4.36	5.30
<b>burn</b>	<i>scorch</i>	<i>singe</i>	<i>kindle</i>	<i>toast</i>	<i>brand</i>	<i>cauterise</i>
	2.10	2.61	3.90	4.54	4.80	4.83
<b>rub</b>	<i>polish</i>	<i>scour</i>	<i>scrape</i>	<i>file</i>	<i>grate</i>	<i>fray</i>
	1.81	3.80	4.21	4.70	4.76	5.69

Secondly, Pulman wanted to acquire more data related to the prototype effect by performing a test which would give him some sort of a ‘family resemblance’ measure. He wanted to rate the hyponyms of the selected sets in accordance with the number of features they shared (or did not share) with other hyponyms, in this case other category members. The results he received were very difficult to assess, because the responses could be classified into roughly five quite diverse categories: when asked to provide features of certain verbs, people tended to list (1) their synonyms (or near synonyms), to give (2) definitions or (3) the category name itself, sometimes they would list (4) connotations and they offered (5) a number of attributes which were parallel to what Rosch used in her studies. Thirdly, Pulman edited some of the data in order to reach better consistency in the

analysis, i.e. he deleted a number of attributes which seemed to be unrelated to certain verbs and amended others, to make them more uniform. The results were analysed in both their edited and unedited form and summarised in the following way:

**Table 2. Pulman’s (1983:119) result survey for ‘kill’.**

<i>Kill</i>	murder	assassinate	execute	massacre	sacrifice	commit suicide
Ranked by:						
1 Prototypicality	1	2	3	4	5	6
2 All attributes	1	4	6	2	5	3
3 Shared attributes	2	3	5	4	6	1
4 Edited attributes	2	1	5	4	6	3

Pulman concluded that family resemblances do not positively correlate with prototypicality, which might lead one toward thinking that family resemblance is not a causal factor in the formation of prototypes when it comes to verbs. Nevertheless, Pulman did not reach a firm conclusion in regard to this on several grounds: he admitted that the number of selected category members in his study was too low and quite arbitrary, which led the statistical methods he used to unreliable results. Moreover, the number of subjects was much lower than in Rosch’s experiments (20 as compared to 400) and, lastly, verbs proved to be quite delicate when it came to listing attributes and required a more comprehensive experimental design. On the whole, Pulman arrived at the conclusion that verbs, just like nouns, can be regarded as more or less prominent, prototypical or representative members of their semantic categories and that prototypicality probably derives from semantic closeness between a member and a category. Pulman’s experiments, though mainly aimed at being pilot studies in this domain, reveal that there are aspects of verb meaning that can be approached by means of Prototype Theory. Besides this, we may assume that an improved experimental design may provide more relevant data in the future (Stamenković 2012:180).

Taylor (1989:105–109) studied prototypicality as related to the polysemy of the verb *climb*, in order to explain the contrast between *the family resemblance approach* and *the core meaning approach*. The main problem of the core meaning approach stems from the fact that it is close to the classical approach to categories, as it implicitly demands that there is a set of necessary and sufficient conditions which govern the existence or stability of a category. Various senses of *climb* prove that there is no possibility to subsume them all under a general core sense. Taylor follows Fillmore’s (1982/2006) characterization of the process in terms of the attributes ‘ascend’ (as in ‘The plane climbed to 30,000 feet’) and ‘clamber’ (as in ‘The boy climbed down the tree and over the wall’). The clambering sense of this verb cannot be applied to entities without limbs. Therefore, although some of the uses of the clambering sense may seem to be close to ‘the core meaning’, there are

some others connected to the ascending sense (to some of which the former sense cannot be applied), which depart from this kind of centre. Taylor notes that these “different senses cannot be unified on the basis of a common semantic denominator [...] the different meanings are related through ‘meaning chains’” (Taylor, 1989: 108). In this way any “node in a meaning chain can be the source of any number of meaning extensions” (Taylor, 1989: 109).

### **2.3. Verbs of Motion in English**

*Motion* as such is probably one of the most frequent concepts we encounter in our everyday life – this is why there are very many verbs which could be labelled as ‘*verbs of motion*’ and this applies to almost all languages. Practically all verbs which describe any state change could be called verbs of motion. Yet, this study will have a limited scope when dealing with this class of verbs: it will treat those verbs which denote natural human movement (i.e. change of position) along a vertical path and it will exclude all the verbs which refer to movement that requires a vehicle or any other device. This limitation is in accordance with the limitations which we can find in other studies of verbs of motion, such as Fillmore 1971 and Vujović 2009. The selection will include most of what Levin (1993:263–270) calls *Verbs of Inherently Directed Motion*, *Leave Verbs*, and *Manner of Motion Verbs*.

## **3. Research corpus and procedures**

### **3.1. Corpus**

The corpus of verbs used in this study was designed to meet the requirement of encompassing all the verbs which denote natural human motion along a path; it was compiled with the help of a number of previous studies involving the English verbs of motion: Miller 1972, Žic-Fuchs 1991, and Levin 1993. The list of verbs of motion which entered the experiments was the following: *abandon, advance, amble, arrive, ascend, bound, canter, cavort, charge, clamber, climb, clump, coast, come, crawl, creep, cross, dart, dash, depart, descend, desert, dodder, drift, escape, exit, flee, float, gallop, gambol, go, goosestep, hasten, hike, hobble, hop, hurry, inch, jog, journey, jump, leap, leave, limp, lollop, lope, lumber, lurch, march, meander, mosey, move, pad, parade, perambulate, plod, plunge, prance, promenade, prowl, race, ramble, return, rise, roam, rove, run, rush, sashay, saunter, scamper, scoot, scam, scud, scurry/scutter/scuttle, shamble, shuffle, sidle, skedaddle, skip, skitter, sleepwalk, slink, slither, slog, slouch, sneak, somersault, speed, spin, stagger, stray, streak, stride, stroll, strut, swagger, swim, tiptoe, toddle, totter, traipse, tramp, travel, trek, troop, trot, trudge, trundle, vault, waddle, wade, walk, wander, whiz, zigzag, zoom.*

### 3.2. Procedures

Drawing on Pulman's findings, our study attempted to 'measure' the verb of motion prototypicality by combining three different experiments:

- (1) Direct Grading,
- (2) Free Association Test,
- (3) Corpus Frequency Test.

Our respondents in the first two experiments were 45 native speakers of English. In the first test (direct grading using the inverted 1-7 scale aimed at relevance/salience), they were given a list of verbs (as seen in the corpus) to grade from 1 to 7, according to their relevance to their everyday experience. Circling grade 1 meant that the verb was absolutely irrelevant, whereas grade 7 meant that the verb was exceptionally relevant. In the second, free association test, the respondents were given 3 minutes to list as many verbs of motion as they could remember. The word frequency test was performed on the data obtained from the *Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)* (Davies 2012). In a previous study (Stamenković 2012), it turned out that a prototypicality analysis based only on frequency data had a number of disadvantages: in such a study, it may be very difficult to isolate idioms, homonyms and homographs, and prevent them from interfering with word frequency results. As the study showed that verb frequency was an insufficient factor in establishing verb prototypicality, we decided to include respondents and carry out a combined analysis. The combined analysis meant that the results obtained from the second and the third test had to be converted into a 1–7 scale and added to the results of the first experiment.

### 4. Results and discussion

The following table presents the order of the top 35 verbs in accordance with the result of the three experiments:

**Table 3. The combined results of the three experiments.**

<i>No.</i>	<i>Verb</i>	<i>Relevance</i>	<i>Associations</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Total</i>
<b>1.</b>	<b>run</b>	6.11	5.00	5.96	<b>17.07</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>walk</b>	6.82	5.00	5.19	<b>17.01</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>move</b>	6.56	5.00	5.41	<b>16.97</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>go</b>	6.62	1.36	6.96	<b>14.95</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>come</b>	6.58	1.40	6.51	<b>14.49</b>
<b>6.</b>	<b>leave</b>	6.53	1.40	6.02	<b>13.95</b>
<b>7.</b>	<b>jump</b>	5.71	3.92	3.49	<b>13.12</b>
<b>8.</b>	<b>climb</b>	5.73	2.72	3.26	<b>11.72</b>
<b>9.</b>	<b>travel</b>	6.40	1.24	3.88	<b>11.52</b>
<b>10.</b>	<b>return</b>	5.64	1.00	4.76	<b>11.40</b>

11.	arrive	6.29	1.00	4.07	<b>11.36</b>
12.	skip	5.38	3.44	1.60	<b>10.42</b>
13.	rise	4.89	1.16	4.00	<b>10.05</b>
14.	cross	5.27	1.20	3.44	<b>9.90</b>
15.	crawl	4.40	3.28	1.79	<b>9.47</b>
16.	hurry	6.29	1.20	1.91	<b>9.40</b>
17.	swim	5.76	2.44	1.18	<b>9.38</b>
18.	leap	4.87	2.56	1.87	<b>9.30</b>
19.	jog	4.98	3.00	1.22	<b>9.19</b>
20.	race	6.02	1.36	1.63	<b>9.01</b>
21.	depart	6.09	1.00	1.53	<b>8.62</b>
22.	rush	5.60	1.00	1.94	<b>8.54</b>
23.	hop	4.36	2.68	1.30	<b>8.34</b>
24.	speed	5.24	1.20	1.83	<b>8.27</b>
25.	stroll	4.91	1.84	1.40	<b>8.15</b>
26.	dash	5.33	1.48	1.28	<b>8.09</b>
27.	exit	5.22	1.20	1.52	<b>7.94</b>
28.	tiptoe	5.31	1.52	1.09	<b>7.92</b>
29.	escape	4.91	1.16	1.79	<b>7.86</b>
30.	sneak	4.91	1.12	1.52	<b>7.56</b>
31.	advance	5.20	1.20	1.14	<b>7.54</b>
32.	strut	4.84	1.56	1.12	<b>7.52</b>
33.	stagger	4.89	1.32	1.25	<b>7.46</b>
34.	wander	5.18	1.16	1.02	<b>7.36</b>
35.	wade	4.62	1.36	1.21	<b>7.19</b>

The first two experiments had statistically significant correlations with the third experiment 0.726 (*Pearson Correlation*, significant at 0.01), whereas the second experiment had no correlations with the other two. The reliability of scales in the experiments involving respondents was 0.962 and 0.617 (*Cronbach's Alpha*) for the first and the second experiment, respectively. In the first and the third experiment, generic verbs such as *go*, *walk*, and *run* and verbs reflecting direction, such as *come*, *go*, *leave*, *arrive*, took the lead, whereas in the second experiment, there was more space for those verbs depicting the manner of motion, such as *crawl*, *jog*, *sprint*, *stride*. These tests seemed to be measuring different prototype effects, which is why they were combined in order to give the final list. Although extracting meaning components or semantic features may seem to be atomistic and non-prototypical in method, it is nevertheless interesting to see how features change from the centre to the periphery of a verb class or category. One may say

that the number of semantic features added to ‘the core meaning’ increases on the way from the centre to the periphery. Generic verbs seem to be closer to the centre (and to the top of the list – verbs such as *go*, *move*, and *run* have very few distinguishing features linked to them), whereas specific verbs tend to move towards the periphery – they get more specific in the sense that they denote different manners of movement (such as *crawl*, *sneak*, or *strut*), directions (*climb*, *exit*, *depart*, or *arrive*), impediments to the motion (*stagger* or *wade*) or speed (*dash*, *hurry*, or *rush*). As we go from the top towards the bottom, it seems that verbs get more “difficult” in terms of defining or describing. Verbs limited in terms of use in specific contexts have greater chances to find themselves on the periphery. Besides this, obsolete or derogatory or insulting verbs are always on the periphery and this is probably due to the fact that their ‘specificity’ actually limits them to certain contexts, but we may also claim that it makes them less prototypical. To get a more detailed account of specific features which change as we go from the top toward the bottom of the list, we need to perform an individual verb analysis, which will be our next task.

## 5. Conclusion

Even after the three experiments, we cannot claim that we have achieved the order of verbs in accordance with the verbs’ prototypicality, as the prototypicality effects of the verb seem to be more difficult to analyse, especially when compared to nouns or adjectives. We can, nonetheless, hope that including a large list of verbs, an average number of native respondents, and involving three methods of measurement brought us a step closer to such a goal. Unlike nouns, verbs are rarely thought of as belonging to categories and this makes their classification and exploration more difficult. As we could see in Pulman’s experiments, it seems impossible to measure and describe verb components, which is why we have not included another experiment that would break these verbs into constituents. An individual verb analysis which will follow is likely to give us more details on the relation between verb features and prototypicality. However, the order we acquired had at least one significant tendency: the (most) generic verbs are at the top of the list of potential prototypicality, becoming more and more specific as we move toward the bottom, which means that the number of semantic features increases as we go down the list. This tendency should be tested in other languages in order to provide additional information on the connection between the semantic features of verbs and their prototypicality across languages. An ongoing study will apply the same procedure to the analysis of the Serbian verbs of motion.

## References

- Antović, M. 2009. *Lingvistika, muzikalnost, kognicija*. Niš: Niški kulturni centar.  
Berlin, B. 1978. “Ethnobiological classification” in Rosch, E. and B. Lloyd (eds.). *Cognition and Categorization*. Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum, pp. 11–27.

- Davies, M. 2012. "Word frequency data from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)" [Online]. Available at: <http://www.wordfrequency.info> [2012, May 10].
- Fillmore, C. 1971. "How to know whether you are coming or going" in Hyldgard-Jensen, K. (ed.). *Linguistik*. Frankfurt am Mein: Athenäum, pp. 369–379.
- Fillmore, C. 2006 (1982). "Frame semantics" in Geeraerts D. (ed.). *Cognitive Linguistics: Basic Readings*. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter, pp. 373–400.
- Husserl, E. 2001 (1900). *Logical Investigations*. Volume 1. (transl. J. N. Finlay). London: Routledge.
- Kant, I. 1781. *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*. Riga: Johann Friedrich Hartknoch.
- Kay, P. and C. McDaniel. 1978. "The Linguistic Significance of Meanings of Basic Color Terms" in *Language* 54 (3), pp. 610–646.
- Kempton, W. 1981. *The Folk Classification of Ceramics: A Study of Cognitive Prototypes*. New York: Academic Press.
- Labov, W. 1973. "The boundaries of words and their meanings" in Bailey, C. and R. Shuy (eds.). *New Ways of Analysing Variation in English*. Washington: Georgetown University Press, pp. 340–373.
- Lakoff, G. 1972. "Linguistics and Natural Logic" in Davidson, D. and G. Harman (eds.). *Semantics of Natural Language*. Dordrecht: Reidel Publishing Co., pp. 545–665.
- Lakoff, G. 1987. *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Levin, B. 1993. *English Verb Classes and Alternations: A Preliminary Investigation*. University of Chicago Press.
- Medin, D. and Rips, L. 2005. "Concepts and Categories: Memory, Meaning, and Metaphysics" in Holyoak, K. J. (ed.). *The Cambridge Handbook of Thinking and Reasoning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 37–72.
- Miller, G. A. 1972. "English Verbs of Motion: A Case Study in Semantics and Lexical Memory" in Melton, A. W. and E. Martin (eds.). *Coding Processes in Human Memory*. New York: V. H. Winston and Sons/Halsted Press, pp. 335–372.
- Pulman, S. G. 1983. *Word Meaning and Belief*. London: Croom Helm.
- Rosch, E. 1973. "On the internal structure of perceptual and semantic categories" in Moore, T. E. (ed.). *Cognitive Development and the Acquisition of Language*. New York: Academic Press, pp. 111–144.
- Rosch, E. 1975a. "Cognitive representations of semantic categories" in *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* 104, pp. 192–233.
- Rosch, E. 1975b. "Natural Categories" in *Cognitive Psychology* 4, pp. 328–350.
- Rosch, E. and B.Lloyd (eds.). 1978. *Cognition and Categorization*. Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Smith, E. and D. Medin. 1981. *Categories and Concepts*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Stamenković, D. 2012. "Verbs and Prototype Theory: State of the Art and Possibilities" in Đurić Paunović, Ivana and Maja Marković (eds.). *English Studies Today: Views and Voices – Selected Papers from the First International Conference on English Studies – English Language and Anglophone Literatures Today (ELALT)*. Novi Sad: Filozofski fakultet, pp. 175–186.
- Taylor J. R. 1989. *Linguistic Categorization: Prototypes in Linguistic Theory*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

- The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)*. Provo: Brigham Young University [Online]. Available at: <http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/> and <http://www.americancorpus.org> [2012, May 10].
- Vidanović, Đ. forthcoming. "Wittgenstein and the Beginning of Cognitive Semantics" [Online]. Available at SSRN: [http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=1716431](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1716431) [2012, May 15].
- Vujović, D. 2009. "Semantička i derivaciona analiza glagola kretanja u srpskom jeziku". PhD Dissertation. Novi Sad: Filozofski fakultet.
- Wittgenstein, L. 1953. *Philosophical Investigations*. New York: Macmillan.
- Zadeh, L. 1965. "Fuzzy sets" in *Information and Control* 8, pp. 338–53.
- Žic-Fuchs, M. 1991. *Znanje o jeziku i znanje o svijetu: semantička analiza glagola kretanja u engleskom jeziku*. Zagreb: Filozofski fakultet/Biblioteka SOL.

# ERGATIVE AND MIDDLE CONSTRUCTIONS IN ENGLISH AND CROATIAN

NATAŠA STOJAN  
University of Split

**Abstract:** *The paper describes ergative and middle constructions in English, focusing on their semantic and morphosyntactic properties. It analyses their Croatian counterparts with the aim of determining the similarities and differences between the two languages. Furthermore, the relationship between active transitive, passive, middle and ergative constructions is explored within the framework of Cognitive Grammar.*

**Keywords:** *Cognitive Grammar, Croatian, English, ergatives, middles*

## 1. Introduction

In traditional typological linguistics, languages are divided into nominative-accusative and ergative-absolutive (Comrie 1978: 330). In nominative-accusative languages intransitive and transitive subjects have the same form. Therefore, no terminological distinction is made between them in traditional linguistics. For the purpose of the comparative analysis of nominative-accusative and ergative-absolutive languages, the following abbreviations were introduced (Comrie 1978: 330): S is the subject of an intransitive verb; A is the subject of a transitive verb; P is the direct object of a transitive verb. In nominative-accusative languages, A is expressed in the same way as S. They are generally zero-marked by the nominative case. On the other hand, direct objects are usually marked in the accusative case. In ergative-absolutive languages, subjects of transitive verbs are marked differently from subjects of intransitive verbs and objects of transitive verbs. P is expressed in the same way as S, they are marked with absolutive case and A is marked as ergative case.

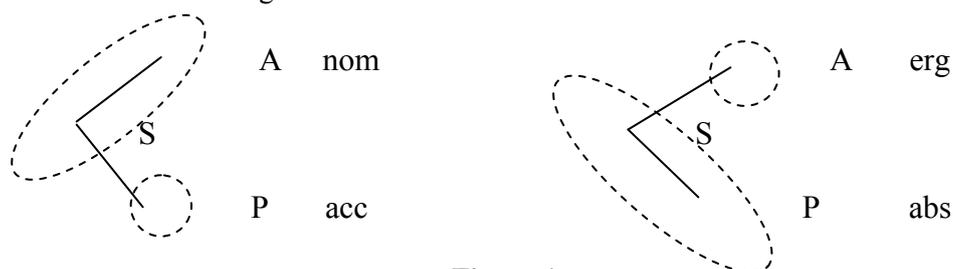


Figure 1

Many Asian and Australian languages are ergative. English and Croatian are both classified as nominative-accusative languages. Although the terms nominative, accusative, ergative and absolutive are mostly used as names for cases, they often refer to different grammatical phenomena, such as the marking of syntactic functions by word order, by particles or adpositions, and by pronominal

cross-referencing markers on a main or auxiliary verb (Dixon 1994:1). We speak of ergativity in languages such as English, when the intransitive subject is equivalent to the transitive object of the same verb.

Transitivity is a complex grammatical category, which primarily refers to a relationship between the verb and the direct object. Although different syntactic theories offer various definitions of this category, they all agree that the presence of a nominal expression in the accusative case in Croatian, for example, or unmarked noun phrase in English, which function as direct objects, is not the only relevant criterion for the specification of transitivity. Therefore, it is best described as syntactic-semantic property of a clause, with reference to actions or processes and the associated participants. A systemic transitivity model was developed by Halliday (1967: 199) who describes it as

the set of options relating to cognitive content, the linguistic representation of extralinguistic experience, whether of the phenomena of the external world or of feelings, thoughts and perceptions.

This model was further developed by Hopper and Thompson (1980: 252), who described transitivity explicitly by setting up universally applicable transitivity parameters, which involve the volitionality of the subject, the affectedness of the object, the individuation of the object etc. On the basis of these parameters Hopper and Thompson (1980: 253) classified sentences as 'more or less transitive'. A prototypical transitive sentence describes situations with two participants, most commonly agent and patient, expressed by noun phrases that function as subject and direct object. A sentence which describes a situation with just one participant, which is coded as the subject, can also convey a transitive meaning. Hence, we can talk about degrees of transitivity.

## **2. Transitive/ intransitive use of verbs**

In many languages, including Croatian and English, verbs are classified as transitive or intransitive depending on whether or not they require a direct object. However, Jespersen (MEG III: 319) thought that the difference between transitive and intransitive verbs in English is not very relevant so he stated the following:

It is customary to divide verbs into *transitive* and *intransitive*. But in English at any rate, it is impossible to make a sharp distinction between two classes, and we should rather speak of a transitive and an intransitive use of verbs...

According to Quirk et al. (1985:1169) there are three types of intransitive verbs. Each is characterized by a different subject-verb relationship:

1) 'pure' intransitive verbs, which do not require an object (except in rare occasions). Examples are *arrive, appear, die, fall, come, go, lie, wait* etc.

2) verbs which can also be transitive and retain the same meaning such as *read, drive, win, eat, drink, write*. The subject-verb relationship with such verbs is not changed:

(1) *I'm reading (a book).*

3) verbs which can be transitive, but the meaning relationship between subject and verb is changed. Examples are *stop, close, increase, turn, walk, change, drop, move*. When such a verb is used intransitively (examples 2 and 4), the subject has the semantic role of an affected participant. If the verb is used transitively (examples 3 and 5), the affected participant functions as the direct object and the subject has the role of an agent:

(2) *The car stopped.*

(3) *He stopped the car.*

(4) *The door opened slowly.*

(5) *I slowly opened the door.*

Dixon and Aikhenvald (2000:4) classify verbs that can occur in either a transitive or an intransitive clause pattern as *ambitransitive* or *labile*. There are two varieties of ambitransitives, according to whether the subject or object of a transitive clause functions as the subject in an intransitive clause:

1) Verbs whose transitive subject corresponds to an intransitive subject are termed *agentive ambitransitives* by Mithun (2000: 87). The subject has an agentive semantic role.

Below are some examples of English verbs that can be used both transitively and intransitively. When the verb is used intransitively, the object is omitted. The meaning of the verb is not changed; furthermore it is more prominent in an intransitive sentence pattern (Quirk et al. 1985: 722-723):

(6) *They're eating lunch/ Chinese food/ oysters.*

(7) *They're eating.*

In some cases, the meaning of the verb is somewhat changed, depending on the sentence pattern in which it is used:

(8) *He writes because writing is fun.*

(9) *He wrote a will/ a letter/ a prelude.*

(10) *She cooks excellently/ in a famous restaurant.*

(11) *She cooks healthy food/ delicious meat dishes.*

When the verbs are used intransitively (examples 8 and 10), their meaning is related to a person's ability to perform an action or to his/her professional occupation. On the other hand, when the same verbs are used transitively (examples 9 and 11), their meaning is not necessarily related to a person's professional occupation or an ability to perform an action, but it is rendered more

specific due to the presence of direct objects. The intransitive subject in these examples corresponds to the transitive subject.

In Croatian there is a general rule concerning obligatoriness of the direct object, which says that

The more general or abstract the meaning of the verb is, the more obligatory the presence of the object is, and vice versa, the more specific the meaning of the verb is, the less obligatory the presence of the object is. (Silić, Pranjković 2005:301).

Hence the array of possible objects required by verbs of general meaning such as *kupovati* ('buy'), *gledati* ('watch'), *popravljati* ('fix'), etc. is quite large, and the direct object makes the meaning of the verb more specific. On the other hand, verbs with specific meanings such as *jesti* ('eat'), *piti* ('drink'), *kositi* ('mow'), *pisati* ('write'), *čitati* ('read'), *pjevati* ('sing'), *kopati* ('dig'), etc. can only have a limited number of objects. Moreover the direct object is omitted in many cases, e.g.:

- (12) *Isključite televizor dok djeca jedu.* ('Turn off the television while the children are eating'.)  
(13) *Ona čita svaki dan.* ('She reads every day'.)

Not only is the choice of possible objects limited, but their omission from the clause places the focus on the meaning of the verbal action rather than on the object (Katičić 2002: 96).

In Croatian, like in English, there are verbs whose meaning is slightly changed depending on the sentence pattern in which it is used- transitive or intransitive, e.g.:

- (14) *On piše brže, ona piše bolje.* ('He writes faster, she writes better'.)  
(15) *On je napisao molbu/ ljubavno pismo/ oporuku.* ('He wrote a request/ a love letter/ a will'.)  
(16) *On kuha svaki dan.* ('He cooks every day'.)  
(17) *Skuhao je obilan obrok/ povrće/ ribu.* ('He cooked a lavish meal/ vegetables/ fish'.)

Intransitive verbs (examples 14 and 16) convey the agent's ability to perform the action expressed by the verb or possibly his/her professional occupation. Transitive verbs (examples 15 and 17), on the other hand, convey more specific meaning, due to the presence of the object, which completes the meaning of the verb.

2) Verbs whose intransitive subject corresponds to the transitive object are termed *patientive ambitransitives* by Mithun (2000: 88):

Transitive

Intransitive

- (18) *He moved the rock.* (19) *The rock moved.*  
 (20) *He hasn't washed this blouse very well* (21) *This blouse hasn't washed very well.*

In both sentence patterns, transitive and intransitive, the verb has the same form. In transitive sentences, an agent, which instigates or carries out the process, functioning as the subject, is overtly expressed. An affected participant, which functions as the direct object is also expressed. On the other hand, in intransitive sentences an agent is not expressed, although some kind of agency necessary for carrying out the process expressed by the verb is felt to be present. The affected participant is encoded as the subject.

Constructions in which transitive verbs are used intransitively are also termed *pseudo-intransitive* constructions (Lyons 1968: 363, Carter, McCarthy 2006: 506). Jespersen (MEG III: 351) calls such verbal forms *passivo-active* because the meaning conveyed by such constructions is passive and the verb has the same form as in transitive active sentences. O'Grady (1980:58) calls such intransitive verbs *alternating intransitives* and states the following:

Verbs in this class of 'alternating intransitives' typically denote events involving processes and changes of states which can be seen as 'self-originating' in the sense that their occurrence is not necessarily dependent on the intervention of an agent.

Furthermore, O'Grady (1980:60) thinks that transitive verb is basic, while its intransitive counterpart is derived; he states that

'derived intransitives constitute one of the least studied verbal constructions in English and they are considered to be somewhat idiosyncratic and marginal because of the curious syntactic properties.'

Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 306) on the other hand use the term *non-agentive dynamic intransitive verb*, because the subject does not have an agentive role and the construction expresses a non-dynamic situation.

In the analysis of these specific types of intransitive verbs in English a sharp distinction is made between two types of constructions by linguists who have dealt with them: ergative and middle (see O'Grady 1980, Keyser and Roeper 1984, Dixon 1991, 1994, Kučanda 1998) - a terminology that has been adopted in this paper. These constructions are considered to be an indispensable part in the description of transitivity of English verbs. This paper shows their morphosyntactic properties and also distinguishes between the uses and meanings of each of the two constructions. It also analyzes their Croatian counterparts with the aim of revealing the syntactic and semantic differences and possibly similarities between the two languages in this respect. Furthermore, this paper explores the relationship between active transitive, passive, middle and ergative constructions within the framework of Cognitive Grammar.

### 3. The Cognitive Grammar Approach

Cognitive Grammar offers a challenging alternative to the formalist theories, since it utilizes tenets of conceptualist semantics, which is based on human experience, schematized patterns of conceptual structuring and symbolization (Tabakowska 2005:12, Langacker 2008:27). Furthermore, the cognitive model is based on processes of imagination and mental construction, on our capacity to construe the same situation in different ways, thus representing a fundamental way in which we view the world. The focusing of attention is a mental process which is fundamental in grammatical description. Two processes are based on it: construal and prominence. Construal refers to our ability to apprehend and present the same situation clearly, in alternate ways. For that ability to be fully exercised, a conceptual phenomenon referred to as prominence is necessary. Two particular kinds of prominence are distinguished: profiling and trajector/ landmark alignment. A profiled process is the process that is the specific focus of our attention. Since a process usually involves more than just one participant, they are usually endowed with varying degrees of prominence. The most prominent participant or the primary focus within the profiled relationship is referred to as the trajector. In traditional terms, trajector is the subject of a clause. The object, on the other hand, stands out as a secondary focus, which is referred to as the landmark. Different choices of trajector and landmark, caused by our wish to focus our attention on different participants, can change the meaning of expressions that have the same content and profile the same process (Langacker 2008: 66, 70, 72).

A basic type of clause in English and Croatian is the transitive clause with two participants. It describes the canonical event model, which usually involves an agent that performs an action on a patient thus causing a change of state –figure 2 (a) (Langacker 2008: 357).

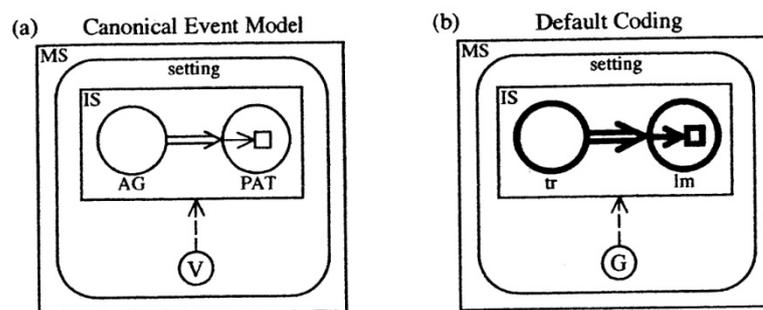


Figure 2

Our attention is usually directed at agent and patient considered to be intrinsically salient. Figure 2 (b) (Langacker 2008: 357), where the agent is focused as trajector and the patient as landmark, represents the most typical instance of the alignment and a very basic coding strategy. A two-participant transitive clause is

just one basic type and each language provides a range of different clause structures such as passive, middle, ergative, existential etc.

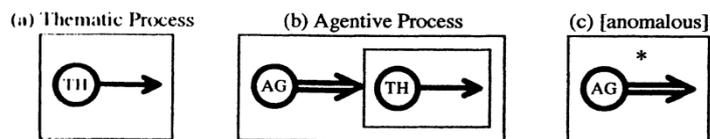
Each language has its commonest way of connecting conceptual structures with linguistic structures, which represents its default coding strategy. A crucial factor in canonical alignment is the choice of trajector, which is aligned with either the agent or the theme. The term theme is a comprehensive term that includes four 'passive' semantic roles: patient, mover, experiencer and zero. Each role can be the single participant in a thematic process, which is defined

as a minimal, single participant process in which the theme's role is passive (i.e. not construed as a source of energy) (Langacker 2008: 370), e.g.:

(22) *The ice (patient) melted.*

(23) *The boat (mover) sank.*

Each clause is conceptually coherent, with the profiled occurrence being perfectly comprehensible, although neither an agent nor an agentive causation is evoked in the sentence. The conceptually coherent construal of such a process is referred to as absolute (figure 3 (a)) (Langacker 2008: 372), with agent, energy source or agentive causation not being expressed in the sentence. Nevertheless, they are felt to be present, because they pertain to our basic human experience.



**Figure 3**

On the other hand, an agentive process incorporates a thematic process, without which it is conceptually incoherent. There is no absolute construal of an agentive process (figure 3(c)), where the agent acts as a causer, without conception of the process itself (Langacker 2008: 371):

(24) *\*He caused.*

A thematic process, which can also be expressed independently (examples 22 and 23), forms an indispensable part of an agentive process (figure 3(b)), thus composing more complex autonomous conception, e.g.

(25) *They sank the boat.*

The configuration most typical of an active transitive, ergative and passive constructions is shown in figure 4 (Langacker 2008: 385).

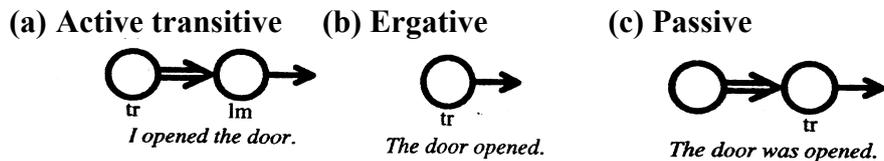


Figure 4

Active transitive:

(26) *I opened the door.*

(27) *Mary broke the vase.*

(28) *A U-boat sank three British ships.*

Ergative:

(29) *The door opened.*

(30) *The vase broke.*

(31) *Three British ships sank.*

In an active transitive clause (figure 4(a)), both an agent's use of force and the thematic process it causes are profiled. In an ergative construction (figure 4(b)), the patient is made prominent as trajector or primary focus within the profiled relationship. A single participant process which is conceptualized autonomously is expressed without reference to an agent or agentive causation. In an ergative construction, the verb form is the same as in a transitive construction and the subject, which does not have the agent role, corresponds to the transitive direct object. Ergatives do not imply the presence of an agent nor do they allow the expression of an agent:

(32) \**The door opened by me.*

(33) \**The vase broke by Mary.*

(34) \**Three British ships sank by a U-boat.*

Passive:

(35) *The door was opened (by me).*

(36) *The vase was broken (by Mary).*

(37) *Three British ships were sunk (by a U-boat).*

In a passive construction (figure 4(c)), the patient is focused as trajector, and the agent, if expressed, is made prominent as secondary focus, or landmark. A thematic process is evoked and profiled in such constructions, with or without reference to an agent. The passive construction uses a different verb form. It contains the same two participant roles that its active counterpart does: the agent and the patient. The agent can be omitted, but there is always the feeling that the action has been carried out by somebody, even if the instigator is not overtly expressed.

In Croatian there are no ergative constructions, in the sense that a non-agent is aligned with the subject without changing the form of the verb. Instead, two processes are conducted, which are considered equivalent to the process of ergativization in English (Kučanda 1998: 211).

In the first process, the verb is detransitivized by means of an invariable particle *se*:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>Active Transitive:</p> <p>(38) <i>Ja sam otvorila vrata.</i></p> <p>(40) <i>Marija je razbila vazu.</i></p> <p>(42) <i>U-brod je potopio tri britanska broda.</i></p> | <p><i>se</i> construction:</p> <p>(39) <i>Vrata su se otvorila.</i></p> <p>(41) <i>Vaza se razbila.</i></p> <p>(43) <i>Tri britanska broda su se potopila.</i></p> |
|--|--|

They are formally identical to passive *se* constructions. Two types of *se* have to be distinguished in Croatian: the reflexive pronoun *sebe/se*, which has separate forms for the dative and locative (*sebi/si*), and the instrumental (*sobom*) and particle *se* (Težak, Babić 1992: 274, Silić, Pranjeković 2005: 57). *Se* used in these constructions is an invariable particle, and not the accusative clitic form of the reflexive pronoun *sebe*.

The second process involves the use of two different verbs, one of which is a transitive verb (examples 44, 48) that can also be used intransitively (examples 45, 49), and the other one is a pure intransitive verb (examples 46, 50) (Kučanda 1998: 212), e.g.:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>(44) <i>Marija je razbila vazu.</i></p> <p>(46) <i>Vaza je pukla.</i></p> <p>(48) <i>Mornarica je potopila brod.</i></p> <p>(50) <i>Brod je potonuo.</i></p> | <p>(45) <i>Vaza se razbila.</i></p> <p>(47)*<i>Marija je pukla vazuu.</i></p> <p>(49) <i>Brod se potopio.</i></p> <p>(51)*<i>Mornarica je potonula brod.</i></p> |
|---|--|

The configuration most typical for a middle construction is shown in figure 5(b) (Langacker 2008: 385).

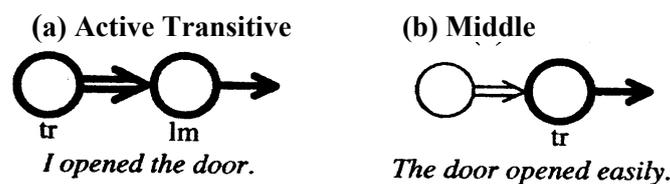


Figure 5

A typical middle construction invokes causation, but it does not profile it. In such constructions only the theme is expressed, it is focused as trajector, and only the thematic process is profiled (Langacker 2008: 385).

Middle constructions require some kind of modification. Three types of contexts can be distinguished (Dixon 1991:325-326):

a) adverbs such as *slowly, fast, quickly, badly, properly, oddly, easily*; a prepositional phrase with *like*:

(52) *The bucket filled rapidly.*

(53) *The shirt irons well.*

(54) *The meat cuts surprisingly easily.*

(55) *Chomsky's new book reads like a thriller.*

(56) *Our dog food cuts and chews like meat.*

b) negation is used when some activity is not conducted on account of the qualities of a non-agent subject:

(57) *She doesn't frighten easily.*

(58) *The handle doesn't turn.*

(59) *That book didn't sell.*

c) emphatic *do* can have similar meaning to that of an adverb like *well*, e.g.:

(60) *These red sports models do sell, don't they?*

A marker is almost always obligatory in middle constructions. Characteristics of middles in English are alignment of non-agent (prototypically a patient) with the subject, present tense verb form (but the past tense is also possible) and consequently generic meaning. On account of these morphosyntactic and semantic properties, middles present a non-agent subject as the one responsible for the carrying out of an action expressed by the verb. It is therefore not surprising, according to Hatcher (1943:12) that middles are abundant in the language of advertisements. E.g. *couches convert easily into beds; bed-lamps attach and adjust easily; machinery installs, operates, repairs easily; cream whips quickly; paint applies evenly* etc.

Croatian middles are formed by means of particle *se* and an active verbal form. They are almost formally identical to passive *se* constructions. The function of the particle *se* is precisely that of presenting the sentence as less transitive and closer to a prototypical event with single participant (Kučanda 2002: 106):

Active transitive:

(61) *Otac reže meso iznenađujuće lako.* ('Father cuts meat surprisingly easily.')

(62) *Majka dobro glača košulju.* ('Mother irons the shirt well.')

(63) *Knjižare prodaju Chomskyjeve knjige kao vruće kolače.* ('Bookstores sell Chomsky's books like hot cakes.')

*se* construction:

(64) *Meso se reže iznenađujuće lako.*

(65) *Košulja se dobro glača.*

(66) *Chomskyjeve knjige se prodaju kao vrući kolači.*

It should be noted that the omission of adverbial modification does not result in an ungrammatical sentence in Croatian. Their meaning is changed in the sense that the activity expressed by the verb is not performed easily due to the subject's inherent properties. They merely express facts.

(67) *Meso se reže.* ('The meat is cut.')

(68) *Košulja se glača* ('The shirt is ironed.')

(69) *Chomskyjeve knjige se prodaju.* ('Chomsky's books sell.')

These sentences are typical passive *se* constructions. The basic difference between the passive and the middle construction is the obligatory usage of present simple tense in middles and their generic meaning. On the other hand, there are no restrictions regarding the use of tense in passive *se* constructions. E.g.:

(70) *Počinitelj toga djela kaznit će se novčanom kaznom do 5000 kuna.*

('The perpetrator of that offense shall be punished by a fine of up to 5,000 kunas'.)

The use of the future tense does not result in an ungrammatical sentence in Croatian. The result of changing the tense is the loss of genericness with the sentence now referring to a particular event. Another feature that distinguishes middle and passive constructions is the use of adverbial modifiers. The omission of an adverbial modifier together with the use of different tenses does not cause the sentence to be ungrammatical (Kučanda 2002: 108). The sentence acquires the passive meaning without referring to the qualities of a non-agent subject, which facilitate or even impede the carrying out of an activity expressed by the verb.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Clauses are our basic means for expressing our ideas and describing the outside world. The choice of a particular clause type is influenced by which participants we want to bring into perspective, for example, an agent, whose willingness, promptness and ability to perform an action is emphasized, or an affected participant, which undergoes a process or an action. English and Croatian differ a lot in their transitivity realizations, yet some parallels can be drawn. A prototypical transitive sentence describes situations with two participants, most commonly agent and patient, which are encoded as subject and direct object. In both languages there are verbs which can be used both transitively and

intransitively, such as *eat, write, cook, read, sing*. When the direct object is omitted, they are formally intransitive, but still express semantic transitivity. Hence, we can talk about different degrees of transitivity. Lower transitivity is overtly signalled when such verbs are used without an object. What the two languages have in common is that the intransitive subject of verbs which can be used both transitively and intransitively corresponds to the transitive subject.

In order to contribute to better understanding of basic grammatical categories, this paper outlines explicit characterization of the conceptual structures within the framework of Cognitive Grammar, which offers schematic definitions of grammatical constructs on the basis of a basic cognitive ability- focusing of attention. Therefore, Cognitive Grammar defines subject as the most prominent participant in a situation that we want to describe or the primary focus of our attention, and object as a secondary focus within the situation designated by the verb. The active transitive construction is used in English and Croatian to express an agent's use of force and the 'transfer' of an action to the affected participant. In an ergative construction in English a non-agent participant is made prominent as primary focus within the described situation without reference to an agentive causation, with the same verb form used as in a transitive construction. The subject does not have the agent role and it corresponds to the transitive direct object. Croatian does not have ergative constructions in the sense that a non-agent participant is aligned with the subject without changing the form of the verb. It uses pure intransitives or derived intransitives, formed by means of the particle *se*, as their correspondents. The similarity between English ergatives and their Croatian correspondents lies in the fact that they are used when the focus of our attention is on a situation with a single participant, which undergoes the consequences of that situation and is coded as the primary focus or the subject of a sentence. Characteristics of English middles are alignment of a non-agent (prototypically a patient) with the subject, present tense verb form and consequently generic meaning. These constructions invoke the causal force of an agent, which can only be exerted due to the properties of a non-agent, usually a patient, focused as trajector. Croatian equivalents of English middles are formed by means of the particle *se* and an active verbal form. These constructions share some important properties with English middles. They have generic meaning, require adverbial modification and express events which are performed with ease, or even obstructed, on account of the properties inherent in the non-agent subject.

## References

- Carter, R., M. McCarthy 2006. *Cambridge Grammar of English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Comrie, B. 1978. 'Ergativity' in *Syntactic typology*. Winfrid Lehmann (ed.). Austin: University of Texas, pp. 329-94.
- Dixon, R.M.W. 1991. *A New Approach to English Grammar, on Semantic Principles*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dixon, R.M.W. 1994. *Ergativity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Dixon, R.M.W., A.Y. Aikhenvald. 2000. 'Introduction' in *Changing Valency: Case Studies in Transitivity*. R.M.W. Dixon and A.Y. Aikhenvald (eds.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-29.
- Halliday, M.A.K. 1967. 'Notes on transitivity and theme in English: Part 2' in *Journal of linguistics*, 3, pp.199-244.
- Hatcher, A.G. 1943. 'Mr. Howard amuses easy' in *Modern Language Notes* 58, pp. 8-17.
- Hopper, P.J., S.A. Thompson 1980. 'Transitivity in grammar and discourse' in *Language*, 56, 2, pp. 251-299.
- Huddleston, R., G. Pullum 2002. *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jespersen, O. 1909-1949. *A Modern English Grammar. Part III (MEG III)*. Copenhagen: Einar Munksgaard.
- Katičić, R. 2002. *Sintaksa hrvatskoga književnog jezika*. Zagreb: Publishing company Globus.
- Keyser, S.J., T. Roeper 1984. 'On the Middle and Ergative Constructions in English' in *Linguistic Inquiry*, 15, pp. 381-416.
- Kučanda, D. 1998. *Rečenični subjekt u engleskom i hrvatskom jeziku*. PhD Thesis. Zagreb: Faculty of Philosophy.
- Kučanda, D. 2002. 'Middle constructions in English and Croatian' in *The First Twenty-Five Years of English Studies in Osijek. An Anthology*. E. Petrović (ed.). Osijek: Faculty of Pedagogy, pp. 91-113.
- Langacker, R.W. 2008. *Cognitive Grammar: A basic Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lyons, J. 1968. *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mithun, M. 2000. 'Valency-changing derivation in Central Alaskan Yup'ik' in R.M.W. Dixon and A.Y. Aikhenvald (eds). pp. 375-403.
- O'Grady, W.D. 1980. 'The derived intransitive construction in English' in *Lingua*, 52, 1- 2, pp. 57-72.
- Quirk, R., S. Greenbaum, G. Leech, J. Svartvik 1985. *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*. London: Longman.
- Silić, J., I. Pranjković 2005. *Gramatika hrvatskoga jezika*, Zagreb: Školska knjiga.
- Tabakowska, E. 2005. *Gramatika i predočavanje, uvod u kognitivnu lingvistiku*. Zagreb: Faculty of Philosophy.
- Težak, S., S. Babić 1992. *Gramatika hrvatskoga jezika*. Zagreb: Školska knjiga.

# QUANTITATIVE AND STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF ENGLISH PROVERBS WITH THE COMPONENTS «GOOD» AND «BAD»

ROMAN ALEXEYEVICH VORONIN  
Northern (Arctic) Federal University

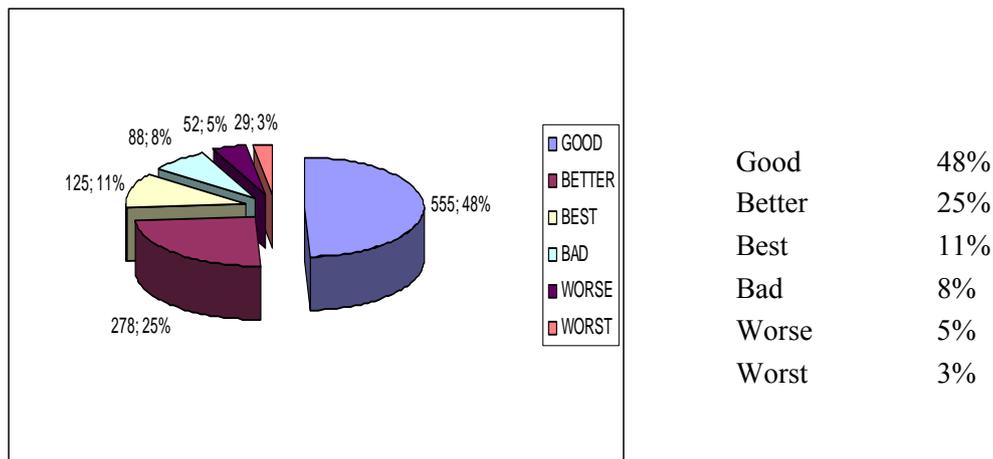
**Abstract:** The paper is a detailed analysis of the quantitative and structural organization of the communicative phraseological units (CPUs), or proverbs with the components «good» and «bad» in the English language; 5 structural types and 11 subtypes of CPUs can be distinguished in Modern English. The present investigation is of great importance, as a reliable statistical and formal basis for further research into one of the most essential oppositions, «good – bad», as reflected in the English proverbial worldview.

**Keywords:** component, phraseological unit, proverb, sentence

## 1. Introduction

The object of the present research is the analysis of 947 proverbs (considered to be *communicative phraseological units*) (Fedulenkova 2003:13), with the components *good*, *bad* and their degrees of comparison *better*, *best*, *worse*, *worst*, as found in “The Wordsworth Dictionary of Proverbs” by G.L. Apperson (2006).

These proverbs contain 1127 components mentioned above, the correlation of which is shown in the following pie chart:



The greatest number of uses (555, which represents 48 percent of the whole stock). Then go the proverbs containing its comparative degrees, *better* and *best*, (278 and 125 units, respectively). A similar relation is observed between the

proverbs with the component *bad* and the proverbs with its degrees of comparison, the difference consisting just in the absolute quantity of the elements (88 for *bad*, 52 for *worse* and 29 for *worst*).

The use of these words in the analyzed proverbs with a positive connotation is much more frequent: the proverbs display 958 positive uses vs. 169 negative ones.

The exact number of uses is presented in the following table:

Component	Number of proverbs with the component
Good	498
Better	276
Best	118
Bad	84
Worse	52
Worst	29

The presentation of the data in the form of a pie chart seems to be inexpedient as far as the componential frequency is concerned, as there are proverbs including several different components simultaneously, e.g. *A bad custom is like a good cake: better broken than kept*. The number of proverbs comprising these components is given in the table above in a descending order. Such a gradation coincides with their degree-of-comparison distribution from *good* to *best* and then from *bad* to *worst*.

Of special interest are the proverbs in which one and the same component is reiterated (e.g. *Though good be good, yet better is better*) and the proverbs including more than one component (e.g. *It is bad to do evil, but worse to boast of it*).

## 2. The number of components in a proverb

### 2.1. Reiteration of one component.

The table below gives information about the number of repetitions of each item within a proverb:

Component	Reiteration		
	None	Once	Twice
Good	443	53	2
Better	274	2	–
Best	111	7	–
Bad	80	4	–
Worse	52	–	–
Worst	29	–	–

Evidently, in the majority of the proverbs no reiteration of one and the same component occurs. For instance, 443 of 498 proverbs including *good* do not contain reiteration. Repetition of the components makes the proverbs more

emphatic, and most often a component is reiterated only once. Thus, there are 54 proverbs where *good* is reiterated. For example:

Better a good keeper than a good winner.  
He's born in a good hour who gets a good name.  
None so good that's good to all.

Double reiteration of other components can be found by far more rarely; my corpus contains only 2 proverbs where *better* is repeated:

If better were within, better would come out.  
Though good be good, yet better is better.

7 proverbs – with *best*:

The best bred have the best portion.  
The best is best cheap.  
The best is best to speak to.  
The best of men are but men at the best.  
Clowns are best in their own company, but gentlemen are best everywhere.  
The suit is best that best suits me.  
Women want the best first, and the best always.

and 4 – with *bad*:

There's but bad choice where the whole stock is bad.  
Bad is a bad servant, but worse being without him.  
A bad Jack may have as bad a Jill.  
Bad words find bad acceptance.

The components *worse* and *worst* are not found in one and the same proverb more than once. Triple repetition is to be found in just one proverb with *good*:

All women are good, viz. either good for something, or good for nothing.

## 2.2. Availability of more than one component within a proverb.

The data obtained are presented in the following table:

Number of components	Number of proverbs
1 component	846
2 components	93
3 components	7

As can be seen, most proverbs (846) include only one component:

A bad broom leaves a dirty room.  
A bad thing never dies.

In 93 proverbs, there are 2 components present; for example:

It is bad to do evil, but worse to boast of it.  
Good luck in cards, bad luck in marriage.

Seven proverbs contain 3 components, e.g.:

A bad custom is like a good cake, better broken than kept and some others.

Finally, there is one proverb that contains 4 components simultaneously:

Praise makes good men better and bad men worse.

As for the number of lexemes making up the proverbs in question, it may vary from 3 (e.g., *Good finds good; Good wits jump; Quietness is best*) to 29 (e.g., *He that lets his horse drink at every lake and his wife go to every wake, shall never have a good horse, nor a good wife which is worse*). But most often one can find proverbs the number of words in which doesn't exceed 10 (e.g., *A good sailor may mistake in a dark night; Man's best candle is his understanding; It is good to marry late or never*).

### 3. The structure of the proverbs

Now, let's consider the *structural* aspect of the proverbs with the components «good» and «bad». Without knowing the structure of a phraseological unit, it is impossible to study its semantics as A. Kunin (1996:105) puts it. It should also be noted that the importance of research concerning the structural peculiarities has been repeatedly emphasized in linguists' works. For example, Kunin (1996:105) believes that without knowing the structure of a phraseological unit it is impossible to study its semantics

From the point of view of syntax, a proverb is always a sentence. This is where its communicative essence lies, that is, its ability to be an element of communication, of contact, presupposing a mutual exchange of utterances. Unlike PUs of other classes, proverbs often have the form of composite sentences. A proverb may be an independent sentence or part of a composite one.

Proverbs can take the form of *declarative, imperative and interrogative sentences*. There are no exclamatory sentences among them.

The material that we have analyzed allows the singling out of the following types of syntactic structures of proverbs as communicative PUs.

### 3.1. Declarative sentences.

(a) *Simple affirmative sentences.* Such proverbs include only one subject-predicate unit and assert something about events, objects, people, their characteristics and interconnections. They represent the majority of the phraseological units under analysis.

In most cases the CPU subject is a noun, with or without an attribute:

Good words and ill deeds deceive wise men and fools.  
Bad luck often brings good luck.  
Truth hath a good face but bad clothes.  
The best remedy against an ill man, is much ground between.  
Men are best love furthest off.  
Sometimes the best gain is to lose.  
Anger and haste hinder good counsel.

In some cases the subject is expressed by a pronoun or a numeral:

Everything is good in its season.  
One good deed atones for a thousand bad ones.

(b) *Simple negative sentences.* The proverbs that are simple negative sentences are structurally similar to the simple affirmative sentences, but they have the opposite meaning. It should be remembered that not all the negation types are exploited in the English proverbs. For instance, there are no negative questions, the particle *not* is not used in its contracted form (e.g., *doesn't*, *shan't*, etc.). In these proverbs, negation is predominantly lexical rather than grammatical, that is, the particle *not* is often replaced by a lexical unit that implies negation. One of the most frequently used items of this kind is the adverb *never*.

The subject of the proverbs that are simple negative sentences can be expressed by a pronoun or by a noun, with or without an attribute:

One never loses by doing a good turn.  
A bad shearer never had a good sickle.  
The bad worker never yet had a good tool.  
Busy-bodies never want a bad day.

(c) *Complex sentences.* Such sentences contain two or more subject-predicate units. The relation between the elements of a complex sentence is characterized by asymmetry, that is, by the inequality of the main and the subordinate clauses from a grammatical point of view. These proverbs are the most widespread ones in English. Their typical trait is that the main clause is conditioned by the subordinate clause:

He's a good man whom fortune makes better.  
He is a good orator that convinces himself.  
He's born in a good hour who gets a good name.  
There is not always good cheer where the chimney smokes.  
It is a bad bargain where both are losers.

(d) *Compound sentences*. Such sentences, unlike the complex ones, are characterized by grammatical equality between the constituting clauses. Some of these proverbs structured as compound sentences display different types of connections between their parts:

There is one good wife in the country, and every man thinks he has her;  
Corn in good years is hay, in ill years straw is corn.

Once can also include here asyndetic sentences characterized by maximum laconism: e.g. *Cold of complexion, good of condition*.

### **3.2. Imperative sentences.**

Such proverbs express advice. Structurally they can be:

- (a) simple sentences: e.g. *Be not too bold with your betters*;
- (b) complex sentences without negation: e.g., *Do good: thou doest it for yourself*;
- (c) complex sentences with negation: e.g., *If you can't be good, be careful*.

### **3.3. Interrogative sentences.**

There are very few English proverbs that are interrogative sentences and their meaning is in fact a declarative, that is, they are rhetorical questions and need no answer:

Why should the devil have all the best tunes?  
All are good maids, but whence come the bad wives?  
Who knows who's a good maid?  
What's worse than ill luck?

The selection of proverbs under analysis allows of distinguishing two more structural types:

### **3.4. Comparative sentences.**

In the analyzed corpus one may find comparative sentences in which the comparative degree of equality is used. Such proverbs are not numerous; the construction presupposes that the compared items possess some quality to an equal degree. For example:

A change is as good as a rest.  
A change of work is as good as touch-pipe.

Many more proverbs contain the comparative degree:

Like a collier's sack, bad without but worse within.  
Better a barn fitted than a bed.  
Better unborn than untaught.  
Better be a cock for a day than a hen for a year.

### **3.5. Sentences of proportional agreement.**

Such proverbs are formed with the help of the comparative degree of adjectives or adverbs and express a proportional increase or decrease. Here are some examples:

The sooner, the better.  
The better workman, the worse husband.  
The properer man, the worse luck.  
The more knave, the better luck.

## **4. Conclusion**

The analysis of the structural organization of the communicative PUs with the components *good* and *bad* has revealed the existence of five structural types and eleven subtypes in Modern English. They are: declarative sentences (simple affirmative, simple negative, complex, compound); imperative sentences (simple, complex, complex with negation); interrogative sentences; comparative sentences (with the adjective in the positive degree and in the comparative degree); sentences of proportional agreement.

## **References**

- Apperson G.L. 2006. *The Wordsworth Dictionary of Proverbs*. Harlow: Wordsworth Reference
- Fedulenkova, T. 2003. "A new approach to the clipping of communicative phraseological units" in *Ranam: European Society for the Study of English: ESSE 6 – Strasbourg 2002*. P.Frath and M.Rissanen (eds.). Strasbourg: Université Marc Bloch, vol. 36, pp. 11-22.
- Kunin, A.V. 1996. *Kurs fraseologii anglijskogo yazyka*. Moskva: Visshaya shkola.

# SPECIFIC INSTITUTIONAL CONCEPTS OF THE BULGARIAN NATIONAL REVIVAL IN AN ENGLISH CONTEXT

ZHIVKO HRISTOV

Varna Free University 'Chernorizets Hrabar'

***Abstract.** The paper analyses the approach to translating two unique Bulgarian institutional concepts with a view to their communicative effect for speakers of English. The absence of EL concepts with a relevant denotation will result in the use of descriptive phrases in the translation or even of new lexemes. The approaches discussed here take into account the cultural background of various target readers.*

***Keywords:** connotation, cultural heritage text, denotation, National Revival, semantics.*

## 1. Introduction

When they get into one of the many Bulgarian museum exhibitions related to the National Revival, many of our countrymen need a detailed explanation of some of the special vocabulary, for which the guides, of course, are prepared. Today it is difficult for a young person to get an idea as to what 'chardak' veranda or 'chekrak' wooden spinning wheels are, without an ostensive definition, i.e. indication of their material denotation.

But generally speaking, the Bulgarian museum visitors know the cultural context of the national Revival. This background allows them to grasp the concepts and terms for which there are almost no semantic denotations in today's reality.

From the perspective of their communicative capacity, the texts presenting the cultural heritage of Bulgarian Revival (henceforth referred to as TBCH, for the sake of brevity) are the source of even more serious difficulties when the presentation is done in a foreign language; the more so when the speakers of that language lack the cultural competence on the paradigm of the Bulgarian Revival. My personal experience of translation and editing TBCH in English leads me to the conclusion that it is only the translator's intercultural competence with regard to both civilization models that will render the text communicatively functional. Actually, in this case, the translator encounters the same difficulties as in the translation of fiction, in at least two areas:

1. at the syntactic level of the language, as statements may carry connotations like in *belles-lettres*, i.e. they cannot be attributed to the purely 'academic discourse' of N. Fairclough (2006: 6);

2. in the vocabulary, where, as in other spheres of the Bulgarian cultural heritage, the choice of a word can make the text communicative or contrariwise.

The Bulgarian National Revival (18<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> century) is perhaps the most discussed issue of the national cultural heritage in TBCH. This fact is determined by multiple factors, such as the accessible, well-preserved and restored material heritage sites across the entire territory of the country – involving architecture,

crafts, ethnography, and iconography. The need for their presentation to the foreign audience naturally presupposes the existence of multiple foreign language texts in this area. Since in this field of research, a relative consensus exists on values, periodization, stylistic classification, schools, etc. (unlike, for example, in prehistoric archeology and the heritage of Antiquity), it is not so much the subject of the academic discourse (Fairclough 2006), as of more popular genres, mostly in tourism

One of the terminologically problematic areas of English language texts in the sphere of the Bulgarian Revival is the denomination of certain institutions in that period. Our study has been facilitated by the fact that one of the unique institutions of the Bulgarian Revival, the 'chitalishte' community centre (the relevance of the English phrase will be discussed below), has proved its vitality to the present day. Further justification for the relevance of our study is the increasingly active involvement of speakers of English from Great Britain in the public life of many settlements in Bulgaria, where they permanently reside. For most of them, living in a community is one of the most positive aspects of life here: "In the UK you do not know your neighbours and your community is fragmented and broken. There is a community in Bulgaria." (on-line version of *Vagabond* magazine, <<http://www.retirement-homes-bulgaria.com>>). Therefore, it is the concept of 'community' that should be the key when introducing the term designating 'chitalishte' in English, TBCH, as in reality it has no signified in English.

## **2. 'Chitalishte': a concept without a denotation in English**

According to Bulgarian monolingual dictionaries, 'chitalishte' has two meanings - the institution and the building which houses it (cf <<http://www.talkoven.onlinerechnik.com>>). Seemingly it would be easier to render the second, material meaning into English. In fact, due to the impossibility for affixal word formation of adjectives for many words in English and to the preferred attributive use of nouns in collocations, whose equivalents in Bulgarian are prepositional (e.g. 'the building of the chitalishte'), the problem that arises is that of the attributive part being too long if we need to convey the denotation of 'chitalishte'. This denotation must include at least three attributes: *community*, *culture*, *education*. Translated into Bulgarian, the provisional English phrase, 'community centre building', would feature an adjectival first part, in which the adjective is affixally formed.

However, this was the approach chosen by the translator of 'Treasures of Bulgaria' by P. Konstantinov (2001: 131). His version is 'reading-room building' (the root morpheme of 'chitalishte' is 'read'). But those familiar with the context of the Bulgarian Revival and modern culture know that the content of 'reading room' is not equivalent to that of 'chitalishte'. Judging from the overall high intercultural competence of the translation, the above choice was imposed precisely because of the long descriptive definition, which is indispensable to the relevant representation of both the denotation and the connotative meanings of 'chitalishte'. If, however,

the semantic center of the text is not the community center itself, but an exhibition organized in it, the text does not fail in its communicative function even if one has a foreign cultural background.

Let us look at a fairly accurate, though incomplete description of the many connotations that the term may have in a Bulgarian cultural context. It is understandable that the following account cannot precede the word 'building' in the above definition. In the English-language Internet page of the Bulgarian community centres (<http://www.chitalishte.bg>), the description cited below appears only in English. And indeed, for a reader with a Bulgarian cultural background, the following is not really a prerequisite for understanding the content of the site; for people with an Anglo-Saxon cultural background, however, it introduces a new concept, untranslatable into English by a single term:

The Chitalishte is a unique institution with a special place in the history of the Bulgarian society. The first Chitalishta appeared in the 1850s as 'reading houses' but their role gradually evolved and they assumed additional responsibilities, with education and charity being the most important ones. The Chitalishta developed as independent entities bearing all the characteristic features of volunteer civil associations, promoting the establishment of a new form of social contract without precedent in earlier Bulgarian history. The Chitalishta were the first secular community centres that offered equal participation and universal access to services on a democratic basis and without discrimination. They have become one of the most respected and enduring institutions, as they played a critical role in the processes of national consolidation and modernisation.

### **2.1. 'Chitalishte' and 'chitalishta': the connotation of the plural form in English**

It is interesting to note that, in this case, a foreign institutional concept is introduced in the English language, while the latter has imposed its own institutional concepts (e.g. the 'Parliament') in various countries across the British Empire. The only way to convey its connotation by a single word in English is to transliterate it as 'chitalishte', as it appears in the aforementioned text; thus a new lexeme is added to the English language. The plural form retains its Bulgarian suffix: 'chitalishta' (cf. <http://www.encyclopedia.thefreedictionary.com>).

We will attempt to make a brief review of the reasons why some foreign lexemes in English retain their plural form in the source language. Examples include the scientific names of species in biology ('cactus' - plural 'cacti' from Latin), other terms of Greek and Latin origin, such as a 'crisis', 'basis', 'stimulus', the denominations of the Israeli and Bulgarian currency ('lev' – 'leva', 'sheqel' – 'sheqelim' – cf. [www.treasurerealm.com](http://www.treasurerealm.com) and [www.wordhippo.com](http://www.wordhippo.com)), or and others.

The reason why the source language plural is sometimes preferred may be phonetical – the avoidance of consonant clusters. However, this does not always apply: for example, in a Bulgarian-English dictionary (Atanassova 1975), the plural form given for the Bulgarian noun 'lev' is 'levs'; in all contemporary sources it is

already 'leva', although 'levs' is not phonetically problematic for speakers of English.

In the case of 'chitalishte', the use of the Bulgarian plural form 'chitalishta' will be acceptable from a phonetic standpoint, as the language has many borrowed words ending in a (e.g., *ameba*, *amnesia*, *anaesthesia*, *anemia*, *candelabra*, etc.). If the English plural inflection were used after the final, vocalized 'e' of the Bulgarian word, the native speakers of English might find that rather unusual. The use of the transliterated term 'chitalishte' in precisely this way, as a new lexeme in English, obviously has solid grounds; it fulfils its communicative function, albeit only for those who are, to some degree, familiar with its cultural context.

## **2.2. Selection of attributes that would render the concept of 'chitalishte' in English**

The difficult issue is how to concentrate the above descriptive definition into a phrase (not a single word) that should be sufficiently meaningful for people that have an Anglo-Saxon background, but are strangers to the Bulgarian culture. As already noted, the main narrative of the Bulgarian Revival heritage is aimed at the general reader, so if we simply transliterate the term 'chitalishte', a 'footnote' would be inappropriate for them.

### **2.2.1. The 'community' attribute**

As already noted, the most significant connotative feature of 'chitalishte' is its relation to a particular community - in the Revival period, this institution even created communities in the settlements where Bulgarians lived. From the viewpoint of historical development, the communities that have created and are still maintaining their centres are no longer just small towns - they still exist and operate in our big cities as well. But during the Revival period, there were no large cities in Bulgaria, so those were 'communities' of people in villages and small towns.

In the contemporary context of globalization, however, the borderline between the various types of settlements, the lifestyles and cultural attitudes of their inhabitants are being wiped out in a natural way, by communicating in the 'global information village' (McLuhan 1964: 6). At the same time, the English term 'community' has a connotation that is too close to the universalism of modern communities: it is not limited to a village, town or suburban residential area (indeed, many Bulgarian villages with a significant number of English speaking settlers have recently become such areas). In the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, the main denotation of 'community' is 'people who live in the same area, town etc', i.e. it is not bound by 'village' or 'town'. These reasons make me believe that this concept is an indispensable attribute in the descriptive rendering of 'chitalishte' in English – the more so as the same dictionary indicates a second denotation: 'a group of people who have the same interests, religion, race

etc.’ I therefore consider ‘*community centre hall*’ to be a relevant communicative phrase in the aforementioned text by P. Konstantinov (2001: 131).

We will briefly comment on the English affixally formed adjective ‘communal’ with its denotation ‘shared by a group of people or animals’ (see Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English). To me, its relevance in the collocation under discussion is problematic. Besides ‘shared by the group’, the scope of its connotation involves meanings similar to those of the Bulgarian concept ‘komunalen’, relating to public utilities. It is only the third signified in Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (‘relating or belonging to all the people living in a particular community’) that corresponds to the content sought by us. As discussed in other cases, the choice (not) to use this adjective in the discourse of the Bulgarian Revival institutions depends primarily on the competence of the translator of TBCH – not only linguistic but also intercultural.

### **2.2.2. The ‘culture’ attribute: syntactic priorities**

It should be noted that in the Anglo-Saxon tradition (in the U.S. and Britain) the institution similar (but not identical) to *chitalishte* is referred to as ‘community centre’. In the Scandinavian countries, a corresponding institution, the ‘folk high school’, was created by the Danish political reformer Grundtvig. Longman Dictionary defines the community center as ‘a place where people from the same area can go for social events, classes etc’. This, of course, does not exhaust all the connotations of ‘community center’ in the Bulgarian cultural context, and suggests the need for at least one more attribute: it is a place where people create material and spiritual values. Therefore, in order to coin a truly communicative phrase, relevant to both the Bulgarian and the British social and cultural environment, it is necessary to use the attribute ‘cultural.’

The polysemy of the concept ‘culture’, used in the English collocation ‘community cultural centre’, should not be a matter of concern. Its conventional meaning (and not the Latin participle of the verb *colo*, ‘to process’ – cf Asoyan 2001: 21), such as ‘cultivation through education’ and ‘the intellectual side of civilization’, are widely accepted in the postmodern world. Both meanings date respectively from the 16th and the 17th centuries, according to the etymological dictionary of Douglas Harper (Harper 2001). Parts of this connotation of ‘culture’ are education and, of course, reading. This is the root morpheme of the Bulgarian lexeme ‘chitalishte’; etymologically its origin can be traced to the Old Indic (Sanskrit) *cētati* (<http://www.bg.wiktionary.org>), whose semantics is associated with knowledge.

Unfortunately, these attributes will not be present in the translation into English of ‘chitalishte’ in all contexts. They will fit only contexts that focus on the educational and library activities of a ‘chitalishte’. In such situations it may be appropriate to add ‘educational’ and/or ‘library’ to the basic definition – ‘of the community’. In its full form, the English phrase may be ‘community educational and library centre’ or ‘educational and library centre of the community’, depending on whether the main emphasis is on the community or the activity. For a concept

like ‘chitalishte’, with so broad a connotation field and no precise denotation in English, the appropriate choice will depend on the context and the target audience – ultimately, on the intercultural competence of the translator.

Usually, when the English-speaking reader of the text belongs to the ‘general public’, in my opinion it will be appropriate to use only the two basic attributes forming the connotation field of ‘chitalishte’: ‘community’ and ‘cultural.’ This is the choice made by Zlateva (2009: 4), but because she wanted to ensure the responsiveness of the target audience and to make clear the purpose of the center - cultural activities – the author has preferred the sequence ‘cultural community centre’. This word order is ambiguous, however, and ‘cultural’ may be interpreted as referring directly to ‘community’, i.e. the first two features may be seen as forming a noun phrase with the meaning ‘community of cultural activists’ or, to paraphrase the entire collocation in a prepositional form, it might be understood as ‘centre of the cultural community’. The last phrase certainly does not bear the same denotation as ‘chitalishte’.

I think that ‘cultural’, the affixal form of an adjective, should be positioned as a pre-modifier of ‘centre’ (‘cultural centre’, not ‘cultural community’), forming thus a semantic entity. The other feature, ‘community’, retaining its noun form, should either precede this semantic entity as a pre-modifier (‘community cultural centre’) or post-modify it as a prepositional noun phrase (‘cultural centre of the community’). Since the latter phrase corresponds literally to a possible Bulgarian one, a translator who is a native speaker of Bulgarian might be tempted to use it. We must note that this is normally the case in translating TBCH. However, the first option is preferred, on the one hand because of its brevity, and on the other - because of the marked semantic focus on the concept of ‘community’. This example of possible attributive sequences demonstrates the complexity of choices at the syntactic level in the English-language presentation of TBCH.

### **3. ‘Board of trustees’ and ‘nastoyatelstvo’: a different connotation field in English and Bulgarian**

Assuming that the English phrase ‘board of trustees’ is a working translation for the term ‘nastoyatelstvo’, we will find that it is almost impossible to coin an English communicative phrase for one of its most common uses – *chitalishte nastoyatelstvo* (‘chitalishte board of trustees’) – if we use the above descriptive definitions of ‘chitalishte’. The shortest phrase that can render more or less completely and precisely the meaning of the concept will read like this: ‘board of trustees of the community cultural centre’.

That is why, in the translated text on the Bulgarian (Revival) institution ‘community cultural centre’, it is necessary to combine ‘board of trustees’ with the borrowing in the English language of the transliterated (or even transcribed, because it retains its phonetics) concept ‘chitalishte’. Of course, the phrase ‘chitalishte board of trustees’ will be intelligible only to those English-language speakers that have some knowledge of the Bulgarian cultural environment. But with the increased global exchange of information and the interdependencies

between national cultures in the information village, this target audience might prove sufficient: the most likely readers of texts concerning the community center trustees will be speakers of English who participate in the social life of the Bulgarian communities and know the cultural context as well as the denotation and connotation of 'chitalishte'. This is precisely the target audience to which the texts on the pages dedicated to particular community centres in the English version of the chitalishte website is intended for (eg. [http://www.chitalishte.bg/pageview.php?pageid=1834&set\\_language=2](http://www.chitalishte.bg/pageview.php?pageid=1834&set_language=2)).

The communicative capacity of the English translation of another concept inherited from the national Revival, but still topical today - *the church board of trustees*, is not problematic in terms of attribution and word order. We shall only note that the sphere of its use in TBCH in English is largely restricted to the historical context. An overview of the topics in the English-language magazine of the British expatriates in Bulgaria 'Vagabond' (<http://www.vagabond.bg>) shows no reference to church boards of trustees, but the term appears, for example, in relation to the managements of schools. As a matter of fact, in the context of the Anglican Protestant and Irish Catholic tradition, this institution is quite important – the World Wide Web can find detailed information about the commitments of its members, its legal aspects, etc. ([http://www.ehow.com/about\\_5297613\\_church-trustee-job-description.html](http://www.ehow.com/about_5297613_church-trustee-job-description.html)) Why, then, should there be no mention whatsoever of this aspect of community life in Bulgaria in relevant English texts, if their members consider it to be so substantial to community integration?

In my experience, the English-speaking expatriates cannot develop in the traditional Orthodox Church in Bulgaria a close communication with the clergy and the kind of social awareness of the religious institution typical of their homeland. This circumstance does not prevent the concept 'church board of trustees' from being fully comprehensible to them - but in the Bulgarian cultural and historical context.

We should note that, despite the clarity of the concept expressed by the above phrase, it has quite a different connotation in English, determined by the availability of two lexemes. The word 'board' (which has already become a loan-word in the Bulgarian language) is associated primarily with economics and finance in both English and Bulgarian. On the other hand, 'trustee' ('custodian', 'guardian') also has similar priority semantics. The main association of the Bulgarian term for 'trustee' and 'board of trustees' ('nastoyatelstvo') is different, as is its very root, and as an economic term it is hardly of prime importance. Moreover, its unambiguous denotation in the Bulgarian language is evident from the mere fact that a single word has been coined to signify this institution.

But unlike the case of 'chitalishte', we do not need to transliterate 'nastoyatelstvo' in English texts, and introduce a new concept in the English language. The English collocation 'board of trustees', albeit with very wide semantics, is fully functional in the context of TBCH. We should not rule out as a relevant translation the plural form 'trustees' either, whose association (in a narrow sense) with 'community center' would be particularly adequate. The absence of a prepositional structure in the phrase 'community centre trustees' makes it

meaningful in TBCH aimed at both a general and a culturally competent audience. But the context should also introduce at least one more important attribute of the term ‘chitalishte’ – that of *cultural* (center).

#### 4. Conclusion

The ‘*chitalishte*’ *community centre* and the ‘*nastoyatelstvo*’ *board of trustees* are just two among the many Bulgarian national Revival-related concepts, whose translation into English requires a delicate balance between equivalence and the sought-after communicativeness. The translation approach should take into consideration the morphological (plural formation, adjectival affixation), lexical and syntactic (alternative word order) levels. In certain instances, as with ‘chitalishte’, translation is conveniently reduced to a transliterated borrowing; but not in all contexts. The connotations attached to different cultural contexts also influence the appropriate choice, as does the text itself.

#### References

- Asoyan, Y. et al. 2000. Асоян Ю., Малафеев А. 2000. *Открытие идеи культуры. Опыт русской культурологии середины XIX - начала XX веков*. Москва: ОГИ.
- Atanassova T., M. Rankova, R. Rusev, D. Spasov, Vl. Filipov, G. Chakalov. 1975. *Bulgarian-English dictionary*. Sofia: Naouka i izkoustvo.
- Fairclough, N. 2003. *Analysing Discourse*. London: Routledge.
- Harper, D. 2001. ‘Online Etymology Dictionary’ [Online]. Available: <http://www.etymonline.com> [2012, April 10]
- Konstantinov, P. 2001. *Treasures of Bulgaria*. Sofia: St Kliment Ohridski University Press.
- Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English. 2006. Essex: Pearson Education Ltd.
- McLuhan, M. 1964. *Understanding Media*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Zlateva M., A. Zlateva. 2009. *Bulgarian Cultural Heritage: Interpretation and Presentation. Problems and Prospects*. [Online]. Available: [http://www.arcchip.cz/w05/w05\\_zlateva.pdf](http://www.arcchip.cz/w05/w05_zlateva.pdf) [2012, February 10]
- <http://www.bg.wiktionary.org> [2012, February 12]
- <http://www.chitalishte.bg> [2012, February 12]
- [http://www.ehow.com/about\\_5297613\\_church-trustee-job-description.html](http://www.ehow.com/about_5297613_church-trustee-job-description.html) [2012, February 20]
- <http://www.encyclopedia.thefreedictionary.com/chitalishte> [2012, February 11]
- <http://www.retirement-homes-bulgaria.com/seniors-feedback/articles/the-portrait-of-britons-in-bulgaria/> [2012, April 05].
- <http://www.talkoven.onlinerechnik.com> [2012, March 05]
- <http://www.treasurerealm.com/coinpapers/dictionary> [2012, February 09]
- <http://www.vagabond.bg> [2012, February 12]
- <http://www.wordhippo.com>

# ASSESSMENT IN TRANSLATOR TRAINING: FROM LINGUISTIC TO PROFESSIONAL CRITERIA

MIHAELA COZMA  
University of Timișoara

***Abstract:** Starting from the assumption that the process of translation evaluation should be performed in a manner that helps the future translators rationalize their decision-making processes in an objective way, this paper discusses the process of evaluation in the field of professional translator training from the perspective of the translation error, on the one hand, and of the translation competence, on the other. The main purpose of the paper is to suggest an assessment scheme that is closely related to the competences that the various translator training programmes are meant to develop or to create.*

***Keywords:** professional translator training, translation competence, translation error, translation evaluation*

## 1. Introduction

The use of translation as a language learning activity represents a common practice during English classes, and the work generated in this context is normally evaluated according to a set of pre-established criteria of linguistic and stylistic nature. However, with the development of a wide range of translator training programmes in institutions all over the world, students are supposed to produce more elaborate forms of translation and, consequently, teachers must use criteria of assessment which differ from those specific to foreign language teaching. Even if most translator trainers agree on the existence of this necessity, several aspects regarding the process of evaluating the trainees' work remain unclear: What evaluation criteria must teachers use in professional translator training? How should the process of evaluation be performed so that it would teach future translators something relevant about the standards that their work must meet in the real world?

A clearly defined set of objective criteria according to which the quality of translations should be evaluated would not simply have the role of making the teacher's job as an evaluator easier and, at the same time, more reliable. The existence of such criteria of assessment would also be beneficial to the trainee translators, because, if they know exactly the criteria according to which their translations are assessed and their mistakes are corrected, then they learn how to rationalize their decision-making processes in an objective way, and, in close relation to that, they acquire the ability to discuss translations in an objective manner. Moreover, knowledge and awareness of the level of expectations to which their work must rise on the real translation market would certainly get future translators closer to the status of professionals in that field.

Trying to meet the needs that both translation students and translator trainers have in this respect, this paper will approach the process of evaluation in

the field of professional translator training from two main perspectives. The first perspective is that of the translation error, which, in the translation courses, is no longer perceived as a deviation from a system of norms or rules that, in most cases, must be penalized, but is defined in terms of the purpose of the translation process or product. The second perspective offered by this paper is that of the focus of evaluation in professional translator training, which is actually represented by the trainees' translation competence. The most important conclusions revealed by the discussion of the concepts of translation error and translation competence are meant to point to criteria that the teacher could use in the process of assessment as part of the translator training courses.

## **2. Translation error: from foreign language pedagogy to functionalist perspectives**

Even if translator trainers function in a professional translator training programme, in the vast majority of cases they are basically foreign language teachers. Consequently, it may be said that their traditional attitude towards the process of error evaluation is primarily influenced by the way in which this is approached by the foreign language teaching pedagogy. In order to reveal some differences between the traditional manner of evaluating translation and that required by the professional context, I will refer, first of all, to the terms in which errors and evaluation are discussed by foreign language methodologists.

Both foreign language teachers and researchers in the field of education seem to be deeply concerned with the problem of errors, because, in their view, the mistakes a person makes in the process of constructing a new system of language represent a possible key to understanding foreign language acquisition. A good illustration in this respect is provided by Corder (1967: 167), who was one of the first supporters of this view:

A learner's errors...are significant in that they provide to the researcher evidence of how language is learned or acquired, what strategies or procedures the learner is employing in the discovery of the language.

In the light of such assumptions, foreign language teaching pedagogy has traditionally considered that the analysis of errors with a view to identifying their sources represents a matter of major interest. Selinker (1972), Corder (1981) and Ellis (1994) are some of the language methodologists who resorted to error analysis in order to understand the language learning process and, implicitly, to improve the students' achievement. Corder (1967), for example, suggested a model of error analysis that includes three stages: data collection (recognition of idiosyncrasy), description (accounting for idiosyncratic dialect), and explanation (the ultimate object of error analysis). Ellis (1994) elaborated on Corder's model, offering practical suggestions with regard to the manner in which the learners' errors should be approached. In his view, the initial step requires the selection of a corpus of language, followed by the identification of errors. Next, the errors are classified,

and, after each error is given a grammatical analysis, an explanation for the different types of errors is offered.

The more recent foreign language methodology also acknowledges the role played by error analysis, but with certain reservations. Jordan (1997: 275), for instance, claims that a systematic noting of errors in the students' work can help to identify the areas of greatest need for an improvement in accuracy, but this does not necessarily correlate with breakdowns in communication. Similarly, Harmer (2007: 137) is aware that teachers are very much concerned about their students' errors, but expresses the opinion that other instances of incorrect language production, such as the students' "attempts" (i.e. cases when learners try to say something, but do not know the correct way of saying it) are very likely to indicate a lot about their current knowledge, and, consequently, to "provide chances for opportunistic teaching".

Discussing the role that foreign language error analysis might play in the context of professional translator training, translation theorists (e.g. Kussmaul 1995) consider that this type of analysis can be used, but it does not lead to relevant results. This happens because it accounts only for the linguistic mistakes, which are more likely to appear at an initial stage of the training process and predominantly when students translate into the foreign language. Foreign language error analysis, he says, has little to offer as far as other types of translation errors are concerned, such as stylistic errors or errors where the situation of the target readers has not been sufficiently considered.

It can be concluded that the view which is offered by the foreign language teaching methodology – a view which is sometimes applied in the case of translator training, too – is generally focused on the word or phrase as an isolated unit and mainly takes into account the student's competence as a foreign language learner. The problem is that this type of evaluation heavily penalizes the cases in which the grammatical rules are ignored or the basic vocabulary is not known, but does not take very much into account the communicative function that words and phrases are meant to fulfill in the particular passage, text, situation and culture in which they are used.

Being aware of these shortcomings, the representatives of the functionalist approaches to translation propose a professional translator's perspective on errors and evaluation, a perspective centred on the communicative function that a particular phrase and utterance is supposed to achieve in a given situation. Thus, if in the foreign language teaching pedagogy the translation error is perceived as a deviation from a system of norms or rules, in functionalism it is defined in terms of the purpose of the translation process or product. In this context, inadequacy is no longer regarded as a feature inherent in a particular expression, but as a feature ascribed to that expression from an evaluator's point of view. Consequently, it is suggested that the deviation from a grammatical rule or the distortion of meaning must be seen within the text as a whole and in close relation to other elements, such as the translation assignment and the translation recipients.

The functional perspective on errors was introduced into translation studies by Sigrid Kupsch-Losereit, who defined the translation error as an offence against

the function of the translation, the coherence of the text, the text type, the linguistic conventions, the culture- and situation-specific conventions, and the language system (cf. Nord 1997: 73). This idea was further developed by other translation theorists, such as Christiane Nord and Paul Kussmaul, whose contributions will be shortly presented in what follows.

In Nord's (1997: 74) approach, translation error is defined in the following terms:

If the purpose of a translation is to achieve a particular function for the target addressee, anything that obstructs the achievement of this purpose is a translation error.

It is obvious that errors are not defined on intrinsic criteria such as correctness: instead, the quality of erroneousness is ascribed by the recipient to features of the translation that do not meet a given standard. In other words, a translation error occurs when the recipient's expectations are frustrated because the translator has failed to follow the task instructions in some way. In Nord's view, such a definition of errors is useful for the translator trainer in that s/he can formulate the translation brief in such a way that even the students with a more modest linguistic competence can fulfill the task. As she aptly illustrates, the translation brief may state that the target text will be revised stylistically by a native speaker, in which case certain grammatical and lexical mistakes can be tolerated as long as they do not block comprehension. At the same time, if the students do not know exactly the situation for which they are translating, they will completely focus on the surface structures of the source text, thus being more likely to make various translation mistakes (Nord 1997:74).

It seems, therefore, that a clear formulation of the translation brief is of central importance for the achievement of high-quality work in professional translator training. First of all, the students are supposed to compare the translation brief with the results of the source-text analysis. In this way, they will identify the various translation problems raised by the text in question, and, then, will try to find appropriate solutions. It can be concluded that, for the representatives of the functionalist approaches, the basis for the evaluation of a translation is represented by the adequacy or inadequacy of the solutions offered by the trainee translators. The process of translation evaluation is very likely to reveal a series of translation errors, which, in Nord's (1997: 75-76) view, can be categorized, in close relation to the translation problems, as: *pragmatic translation errors*, caused by inadequate solutions to pragmatic translation problems such as the lack of receiver orientation; *cultural translation errors*, due to an inadequate decision with regard to the reproduction or adaptation of culture specific conventions; *linguistic translation errors*, caused by an inadequate translation when the focus is on language structures; and *text-specific translation errors*, which are related to a text-specific problem and can usually be evaluated from a functional or pragmatic perspective.

Another representative of the functionalist approaches to translation, Kussmaul (1995), supports the same idea: in professional translator training, the

evaluator should take into account the communicative function of a particular word, phrase or sentence. In this context, the distortion of meaning or the ignorance of grammatical rules must be considered within the text as a whole and with regard to the translation assignment and the receptors of the translation. Like Nord, Kussmaul refers to the interrelation between detecting errors and noticing problems, and considers that the analysis of the problematic text passages should form the basis for the teachers' evaluation of their students' translations. He discusses the following categories for evaluation: the *cultural adequacy* of the translated text, its *situational adequacy*, the various *speech acts* that it contains, the *meaning of its words*, and its *grammatical accuracy* (Kussmaul 1995: 130-145).

Kussmaul goes deeper into problems specific to the professionally-oriented translation teaching methodology and offers some practical suggestions on how translator trainers should evaluate their students' translations and grade their errors. Thus, a first step would be the classification of the problematic text passage and the resulting errors, according to the categories mentioned above. Having classified the problematic passage, the teacher can further analyze its function within the particular context and with regard to the overall purpose of the translation as specified in the translation assignment. In the theorist's opinion, the principles which should guide the teacher at this stage are those of cohesion within the text and coherence of the text with its function for the recipients in a given situation and a culture (cf. Kussmaul 1995: 153). As far as grading the students' various errors is concerned, things are not always very simple. This happens because, as Kussmaul suggests, evaluation is both a qualitative and a quantitative matter. In developing this idea, the theorist is influenced by the distinction made by Pym (1992) between *binary* and *non-binary errors*, a distinction explained as follows:

Binary errors are those choices which are clearly wrong. Binarism is the typical approach of foreign language teaching and is concerned with solutions that are either right or wrong... Non-binarism, according to Pym, should be the approach of professional translation teaching. It is concerned with selection from potential target text variants. (Kussmaul 1995: 129)

The translator trainer who embraces the non-binary concept of error is no longer interested in finding out what went on in the student's mind when making a certain mistake (as it happens in the case of foreign language teaching), but is only interested in the effect that the error has on the target reader. But, as suggested above, this is not a very easy task for the teachers who want to objectively evaluate their students' translation mistakes, because, in each individual case, they must ask themselves: What are the effects produced by that particular error? Does it affect the meaning of a sentence, of a passage, or of the whole text? Does it distort communication in any way, or does it weaken the psychological effect? In other words, teachers must be aware that, in certain situations, "what looks as a simple orthographic error does in fact change the meaning of a whole sentence, and what looks as a simple error in word meaning distorts the meaning of the entire text"

(Kussmaul 1995: 130), and that they are supposed to grade these errors accordingly.

It is obvious that the functionalists' perspective on errors and evaluation is in line with an idea which was very much emphasized by the functionalist approaches to translation, namely that the professional translator training should produce a new understanding of the translator's task. In order to produce this new type of understanding, the translator trainer has the duty of creating a psychological environment in which the training process should not be perceived as the context in which the students are faced with an ideal situation and are offered the linguistic tools meant to help them in any kind of circumstances. Instead, the translator training process must be thought of as a reproduction of various real life situations whose role is to turn the students into professionals. As I have already mentioned, the evaluation stage of the training process plays an essential part in this respect. If the students are made aware of the criteria that their translations must meet in order to be considered functionally appropriate by the evaluator, they will gradually learn to take responsibility for their own work. Moreover, if the translator trainer always explains why a particular error has been assessed in a certain way, his/her students will know what kind of arguments to use when discussing the quality and appropriateness of the translated texts with their clients or employers, and, in this way, they will learn to behave as experts in their domain of activity.

### **3. Translation competence as the focus of assessment in professional translator training**

One of the most important conclusions revealed by the previous section, which was focused on the concept of translation error, is that, in professional translator training, the process of evaluation should not be restricted to rules of grammar or to various semantic and stylistic features of the texts to be translated. But, if it is not the students' language skills that represent the focus of assessment, then what is it that translator trainers are supposed to evaluate? Even if, in the vast majority of cases, the assessment is based on one or several texts translated from a source language into a target language, researchers (e.g. Martinez Melis and Hurtado Albir 2001) agree that, in broad terms, the focus of evaluation in the context of professional translator training is represented by the translation competence. In very general terms, translation competence can be defined as a complex of knowledge and skills that a person needs in order to be able to translate. Starting from the models offered by Bell (1991), Neubert (2000), and Martinez Melis and Hurtado Albir (2001), I will describe the concept of translation competence in terms of the following parameters:

- Language competence

It is obvious that a good linguistic competence represents an essential condition for the achievement of good quality translation. This competence is supported by an almost perfect knowledge of the subtleties of the grammatical and

the lexical systems of the two languages involved in the translation process. In addition to that, the linguistic competence is closely related to the translator's awareness of the fact that any language undergoes a continual change, and the effects of this change are only partially reflected in dictionaries and other types of reference books.

- Discourse competence

Even if words and structures exist and can be described as systemic elements, they do not function by themselves, but follow significant patterns when they feature in texts or, rather, in text types or genres. Therefore, translators should have the ability to combine form and meaning in such a way as to produce functionally appropriate spoken or written texts, illustrative of various genres.

- Thematic competence

Familiarity with what constitutes the body of knowledge of the domain to which a translation belongs represents another important element of the translator's competence. Even if translators cannot be expected to have solid knowledge of any potential field with which they might have contact in their career, they should have the capacity to access the encyclopaedic and the highly specialized information whenever they need it.

- Cultural competence

This parameter involves a variety of strategies for identifying and solving problems specific to a cultural context which is different, to a certain extent, from that of the translator and his/her target audience. This competence, which is not at all restricted to the literary type of translation, is based on the role of the translator as mediator between the culture of the source text producer and that of the target audience.

- Professional competence

Professional competence covers knowledge and skills specific to the professional translation practice: professional conduct, responsibility for their own work, research skills, information of documentation sources, new technologies, etc.

- Transfer competence

Transfer competence refers to the mental equipment that constitutes the translator's unique ability of matching language, textual, subject and cultural sub-competences. Even if the translators have very good language skills, great specialist expertise or deep understanding of the two cultures, there is still the danger that they may fail if all these qualities are not matched by the transfer competence, which determines the production of an adequate variant of the source text. Transfer competence covers various elements that determine the final variant of the target text, from the comprehension of the text to be translated, to the choice

of the most appropriate translation method and the decision to use a particular translation solution.

This overview of the knowledge and skills needed by a good translator clearly indicates that translation competence is a very complex phenomenon. It should come as no surprise, then, that the process of translation evaluation, which, as mentioned earlier, tries to capture the multi-faceted nature of this competence, can by no means be a simplistic one either. But how should the process of evaluation be performed so that it may ensure objectivity on the part of the trainer and meaningful learning on the part of the translation students? In the following section, I will try to suggest a possible answer to this question.

#### 4. Suggested criteria for translation assessment

Discussing the concepts of translation error and translation competence, I have described two elements that are essential for the process of assessment in professional translator training. On the one hand, I have identified the features of the translated text, of the translation process, and of the translator's behaviour that must be taken into consideration for evaluation, and, on the other, I have presented the situations in which the solutions offered by the translator are considered as inappropriate. My suggestion is that the translation assessment criteria to be used should be established in close correlation with the categories of errors considered relevant for the professional translator training, and with the skills specific to each of the sub-competencies that a particular training programme is meant to build in the future translators.

Starting from the categories of errors and from the sub-competencies underlying the general translation competence, I have designed a checklist of assessment criteria that can be used during professional translator training. The checklist is the result of research in progress (see also Cozma 2009) and is still open to improvement. It is based on the idea that the separate assessment of the various features displayed by the translation work and the translator's behaviour does not only increase the objectivity of the evaluation process, but also represents a good means of raising the students' awareness of what exactly is required from a good translator.

CATEGORIES FOR EVALUATION	CRITERIA
LINGUISTIC ACCURACY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ grammar (e.g. verb form, subject-verb agreement, choice of word class, uncountable nouns, sentence and phrase structure, word formation, etc.)</li> <li>➤ general vocabulary (appropriate use of words and phrases)</li> <li>➤ mechanics (spelling, punctuation, capital letters, abbreviations)</li> </ul>
DISCOURSAL ADEQUACY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ cohesion and coherence (e.g. correct use of connectives, pronouns, lexical reiteration, lexical chains,</li> </ul>

	etc.) ➤ style and register (e.g. formal vs. informal, neutral vs. emotional, etc.) ➤ structure awareness (at the level of text, paragraph, sentence)
THEMATIC APPROPRIATENESS	➤ correct decoding of the source text due to field awareness ➤ use of officially accepted target language terminology ➤ consistent terminology within the target text
CULTURAL ADEQUACY	➤ awareness and appropriate treatment of culturally-embedded words and phrases (e.g. units of weight and measurement, various titles, proper names, euphemisms, etc.): according to the purpose of the translation and the prospective readership, the translator preserves, explains or adapts the culture-related issues ➤ awareness of the target language conventions for the genre to which the translation belongs
PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE	➤ observing the instructions given in the translation task ➤ ability to justify the translation decisions ➤ use of various documentation sources ➤ use of new technologies
TRANSFER COMPETENCE	➤ the translation is either too free or too literal ➤ omissions ➤ additions ➤ distorted message ➤ indecision (e.g. several synonyms) ➤ miscopied figures or names

In line with the functionalists' view on translation assessment, I consider that the importance of each of the criteria suggested in the scheme above does not have an absolute nature. Thus, it may depend, first of all, on the particular skill or area of expertise that the translation teacher intends to highlight at a particular stage of the training process. In this context, it is possible that the criteria of linguistic accuracy may weigh more at the beginning of the instructional process, while, towards its end, the criteria regarding professional expertise should become predominant. Additionally, as Kussmaul (1995) and Nord (1997) suggest, the trainer must evaluate every inappropriate translation solution in terms of the effect that it is likely to produce on the target audience.

## 5. Conclusion

The most important idea put forward by this paper is that, in professional translator training, the assessment of the students' work has a role which represents much more than just measuring linguistic competence or providing a basis for grading. Evaluation is one of the stages at which translator trainers have good

opportunities of teaching their students how to behave like experts. But, in order to achieve this important aim, the trainers themselves are expected to behave like experts, and not only like experts in the field of translation, but also in the field of translation teaching. In this respect, the evaluation criteria that they use and, moreover, that they try to impose as standards for their students' work play an essential part.

But the mere existence of objective criteria of assessment does not automatically ensure a good quality of the evaluation process. A positive attitude on the part of the teacher as evaluator is also necessary, because it is very likely to exert a great influence on the students' self-awareness, self-confidence and motivation – that is on attitudes which are considered to represent basic qualities for an expert. A solution in this respect might be the positive type of assessment suggested by Hewson (1995), in whose view translator trainers should not focus only on the students' mistakes, but should also appreciate the manner in which they solved, even if only partially, some of the translation problems with which they were confronted. In this way, there are great chances that the students will be willing to get actively involved in the training process and will learn to take full responsibility for the work they have done.

## References

- Bell, R. T. 1991. *Translation and Translating: Theory and Practice*, London and New York: Longman.
- Corder, S. P. 1967. "The Significance of Learners' Errors" in *IRAL*, 5, pp. 161-170.
- Corder, S. P. 1981. *Error Analysis and Interlanguage*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cozma, M. 2009. "Assessment in Translation Teaching: A Research Perspective" in *English in Translation Studies: Methodological Perspectives*. V. Gaballo (ed.). Macerata: Eum Edizioni Università di Macerata (ITALY), pp. 119-125.
- Ellis, R. 1994. *The Study of Second Language Acquisition*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Harmer, J. 2007. *The Practice of English Language Teaching* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.), Essex: Pearson Longman.
- Hewson, L. 1995. "Detecting Cultural Shifts: Some Notes on Translation Assessment" in *Cross-Words. Issues and Debates in Literary and Non-Literary Translating*. I. Mason and C. Pagnouille (eds.). Liège: University of Liège, pp. 101-108.
- Jordan, R. R. 1997. *English for Academic Purposes. A guide and resource book for teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kusssmaul, P. 1995. *Training the Translator*. Amsterdam/ Philadelphia: Benjamins.
- Martinez Melis, N. and A. Hurtado Albir. 2001. "Assessment in Translation Studies: Research Needs" in *Meta*, 46(2), pp. 272-287.
- Neubert, A. 2000. "Competence in Language, in Languages and in Translation" in *Developing Translation Competence*. C. Schaffner and A. Beverly (eds.). Amsterdam/ Philadelphia: Benjamins, pp. 3-18.
- Nord, C. 1997. *Translating as a Purposeful Activity: Functionalist Approaches Explained*, Manchester: St. Jerome.
- Pym, A. 1992. "Translation error analysis and the interface with language teaching" in *Teaching Translation and Interpreting. Training, Talent and Experience*. C.

Dollerup and A. Loddegaard (eds.). Amsterdam/Philadelphia: Benjamins, pp. 279-290.

Selinker, L. 1972. "Interlanguage" in *IRAL*, 10(3), pp. 201-231.