B.A.S.
British and American Studies

CONTENTS

ANXIETIES OF OTHERNESS:

RELIGION, SEXUALITY, HUMOR

HUMAN, POSTHUMAN

ANXIETIES OF OTHERNESS:

RELIGION, SEXUALITY, HUMOUR

RENAISSANCE TRAVEL: FROM UTOPIA TO THE NEW WORLD IN SHAKESPEARE'S *THE TEMPEST*

ARMELA PANAJOTI

"Ismail Qemali" University of Vlora

Abstract: *The writing of travel narratives during Renaissance, most of which are products of imagination, probably demonstrates the writers' eagerness to portray life on the new found land. Many of these narratives, most notably More's* Utopia*, projected the model of an ideal society governed on the principles of equality and uniformity underlying a commonwealth settled far removed from the world.*
In this article, I discuss Shakespeare's The Tempest *as a play modelled after travel narratives, in which ideas about remote places, how they are projected and how they are in reality are contrasted in what I see as a paradigmatic shift from utopia to new land.*
Keywords: *commonwealth, Shakespeare, travel writing, utopia*

1. Introduction: travel narratives and the rise of utopia

For an island country like Britain, whose life was organized around seafaring and voyages, travel has been very important and has indeed inspired writers very early. *John Mandeville's Travels* (Carter and McRae 2001: 25), published in 1356-67 in Anglo-Norman French, despite its being a fantasy, is one of the earliest books that provided readers with insights about the Orient. When Columbus discovered America in 1492, he could not have imagined that his discovery would mark not only the beginning of expansionism, but it would, most importantly, kindle man's ambition and fantasy about the other world out there. From the political perspective, the period following Columbus's discovery witnessed the growth of Britain as a sea power. During the Elizabethan period, many expeditions were organized to search for new lands, to meet the people who inhabited them and to exploit their riches. The sea became an important milieu for commercial, military, exploratory and technological successes and advances. The British navy would become the pride of the nation, especially after the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588, which was due not only to the military strength of the British navy, but also to the fact that the British ships were technologically more advanced. This resulted in the leading role of Britain worldwide and accounted for its growing power.

Nevertheless, not all stories were reports of glories. Where there was success, there was also loss, defeat and shipwreck. These would become the subject matter for literature too, reaffirming in this way the fact that Britain was a maritime nation, but also shaping new genres of literature, travel writing among the most relevant ones. Travel books, either written in the form of fantasy writing or of real reports of travels to faraway places, abounded during this period, in a desire to explain in real or fictional terms how the new world was constructed:

> As the New World did not provide its own cultural script for Europe to read, no encyclopaedias, histories, plays or books, this space was filled by scripts written by Europe: empirical accounts and fictions. (Brennan 2006: 263)

As a result, travel accounts grew very popular, not only because they informed readers about places and cultures unknown to them, cherished the desire for wealth and power, but also provided a space for understanding, questioning, assessing and reassessing these cultures and their own culture too. It is with regard to one's own culture that travel and travel accounts in particular acquired greater importance, because most often these accounts mirrored the desire for change and for reforming England's political, religious and social systems.

From a wider political perspective, travel writing came to be "increasingly identified with power, specifically with European interests to influence or even control the non-European world" (Mitsi 2005: 2). From a literary perspective:

> Travel writing in the sixteenth century is an amalgam of many literary genres, such as autobiography, fiction, journal, memoir, as well as disciplines (cosmography, geography, ethnography, archaeology), unified by the writers' relation to their material. In the Renaissance, it was travel that gave rise to the development of most of those disciplines, as travelers not only presented readers with geographical descriptions and maps but also attempted to understand, and therefore define and control newly discovered, or different, lands and peoples. (Mitsi 2005: 9)

Utopian writing spread around this time as a result of the surge of these accounts. Although the rise of utopian writing is primarily connected with the geographical discoveries and explorations by Columbus and others who later followed him, it should not be seen as their by-product only. The projection and construction of utopias was based on the idea of building ideal cities and societies, rooted in the humanistic impulse of the ancient classics, whose revival inspired and shaped many Renaissance ideas.

In considering utopianism and utopian writing, I take as a departure point Thomas More's book *Utopia*, which has not only given the name to the genre and defined the features of most utopian writing in the sixteenth century, but has also provided the model for the construction of these ideal societies. More's *Utopia* is

quite often conceived as a parody of most travel narratives that were written during this period, which tried to imagine a projection of the new world.

In this article, I discuss Shakespeare's *The Tempest* as a play modelled after travel narratives, in which ideas about remote places and how they are projected and how they are in reality are contrasted in what I see as a paradigmatic shift, which I read as a shift from the idea of commonwealth, as propagated by the kind-hearted Gonzalo, to the idea of wealth, as defended by Prospero, whose name means just that (Italian for "prosperous", "affluent"), or to demonstrate that "'nowhere' is a place", as Mitsi (2005: 4) puts it.

In the following part of the article, I will discuss utopianism in the play, that is, I will try to identify all those elements that often classify the play as falling under utopian writing, although I have already argued elsewhere (Panajoti 2016) that the play mixes together a variety of genres, and continue arguing how the play rather projects the idea of the new world.

2. Utopia in *The Tempest*

As I emphasized earlier, for the discussion of utopianism in the play, I will draw on More's *Utopia*. To summarize briefly, More fashioned *Utopia* in a dialogic form after Plato's *Republic*, but his work became somewhat more important than Plato's, because it not only gave us the word "utopia", but also the new concept of utopia from the play on the Greek words *ou-topos* ("no place") and *eu-topos* ("a good place"), a place that is to be found nowhere, but that is good. Because they are rooted in the idea of travel to a place that is out of the way, utopias are unattainable idealistic representations in spatial and social terms. The architectural structure and social order of these places are intended to stand for harmony, equality and peace. As political projects, utopias are founded on the idea of the commonwealth, which presupposes an ideal state, whose governing pattern is modelled on commonality of values, moral norms and respect for what is considered lawful and decent.

As discourse or text, utopias, at least sixteenth and seventeenth-century utopias, are characterized by dialogue. The dialogue allows the author/character and the returned traveller, as it happens in More's *Utopia*, to introduce, contrast and question ideas. Houston (2014) discusses utopias as dialogues extensively in her book:

> This abiding relationship between utopia and dialogue is clearly founded in the fact that the most influential utopia of the period, More's, was written as a dialogue in the open mode: questioning, discursive and self-critical. (Houston 2014: 4)

I will not focus on this issue, but would like to suggest that, given that dialogue is at the core of drama, the idea of utopia as dialogue could have proven useful to Shakespeare for discussing and defining utopia in his plays, more particularly in *The Tempest*. More precisely, I want to suggest that what is contrasted in the play is the old world with the new world and Shakespeare wants to make the reader question

the status of the new world, whether it is a utopia or it resembles the old world. To discuss this, I will focus on three of the characters of the play, Gonzalo, Prospero and Miranda. In this trio, I see Gonzalo as a defender of the utopian project, Prospero as a representative of the old world and Miranda as detached from either of the two and capable of providing a final judgement in the play.

The tempest, brought about by Prospero through Ariel the spirit occurring only at the beginning of the play, casts everybody on board a ship on Prospero's enchanted island; thus any social barriers and statuses become erased and everybody is given the possibility to dream about reinventing themselves in a new capacity – that of king of the island. One can note this in the boatswain's exclamation: "What cares these roarers for the name of king? To cabin: silence! trouble us not." at the beginning of the play (I.1, 16-17). I will not discuss how each of these characters behaves when facing the possibility of losing their lives, but will focus, as already stated, only on Gonzalo, Prospero and Miranda.

Finding himself marooned on Prospero's enchanted island, after the latter caused a shipwreck as part of his plan for revenge on the people who had wronged him twelve years before, Gonzalo appears marveled by the things he sees and soon starts to build a utopian vision in his mind. He thinks it lucky to have survived and to find himself on the island:

> GONZALO
> Here is everything advantageous to life. (II.1.47)
> …
> How lush and lusty the grass looks! how green! (II.1. 51)

Here, Gonzalo's utopian dream is contrasted with Sebastian's and Antonio's cynicism and also Prospero's desire for revenge. Finding themselves on this "out of the world" island, Sebastian and Antonio plot over the opportunity of killing the king of Naples and thus paving the way for Antonio to become king and then blame the kind-hearted Gonzalo for that. Prospero seeks his chance for avenging his brother's treachery and usurpation of his former position as Duke of Milan, whereas Gonzalo, in all of this, seeks the opportunity to build a utopia, an idea which Sebastian and Antonio mock:

> SEBASTIAN
> I think he will carry this island home in his pocket
> and give it his son for an apple. (II.1. 85-86)

Although almost everybody in the play cherishes ideas of authority and power, Gonzalo's wish to reign on the island is meant to inspire a new political project:

> …
> GONZALO
> Had I plantation of this isle, my lord, —

…
And were the king on't, what would I do?
…
I' the commonwealth I would by contraries
Execute all things; for no kind of traffic
Would I admit; no name of magistrate;
Letters should not be known; riches, poverty,
And use of service, none; contract, succession,
Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard, none;
No use of metal, corn, or wine, or oil;
No occupation; all men idle, all;
And women too, but innocent and pure;
No sovereignty; — (II.1. 143-152)

For him, the island opens up all opportunities for a commonwealth project,
which excludes all the negative things belonging to the old world. Gonzalo hopes
that in a world of "contraries," he will be able to let enthusiasm overtake him:

GONZALO
All things in common nature should produce
Without sweat or endeavour: treason, felony,
Sword, pike, knife, gun, or need of any engine,
Would I not have; but nature should bring forth,
Of its own kind, all foison, all abundance,
To feed my innocent people.
…
I would with such perfection govern, sir,
To excel the golden age. (II.1. 155-162)

Antonio's and Sebastian's mockery of Gonzalo's words throughout Act II,
especially when he proposes the idea of a commonwealth suggests their pessimism
about the realization of his project. If Gonzalo cherishes ideas of an Edenic place to
live in, they plot power games and plan his murder too:

It proposes an idealised society partly based on a New World model, but appears to
call into question its credibility by undermining confidence in its proponent. However,
the main sources of this undermining are two corrupt members of European society,
ripe for reform, and to whom the 'very words that import lying, falshood, treason,
dissimulations, covetousnes, envie, detraction' are eminently applicable. (Montainne
qtd. in Brennan 2006: 327)

3. The new world vs. the old world in *The Tempest*

When the tempest stops, the class order is restored on the island. Gonzalo
remarks:

> That our garments, being, as they were, drenched in
> the sea, hold notwithstanding their freshness and glosses,
> being rather new-dyed than stained with salt water. (II. 2. 59-61)

The restoration of clothes is a reassertion of class, of rank. Clothes come to be associated with power. Shakespeare often makes remarks about Prospero's clothes:

> In contrast to Antonio's robes of office, Prospero wears a robe which confers magical, not earthly, power. Clothing, then, carries particular signification in the play, as it did in wider society: dress indicated rank. That the system of power relations and governance is to be, in the end, unchanged for these maroons is perhaps indicated to them, and to the audience, by the magical freshness and dryness of their clothes. (Brennan 2006: 329)

Before being inhabited by those shipwrecked from the world Prospero had left behind, the island featured three inhabitants, Prospero, Caliban and Miranda. Prospero uses his knowledge (his books), which had once caused him to lose his former position as Duke of Milan, as his mind was all the time taken up by reading, to rule the island through magical tricks and the exercise of power. The very name "Prospero" means "wealth." Prospero is cast in the role of the ruler and usurper of the island. He overthrows Sycorax, Caliban's mother, imprisons Caliban after his attempted rape of Miranda and denies freedom to Ariel, the spirit, once Sycorax's servant. That is, the island already displays a social order that is no different from the old one, before the shipwrecked arrive. That this is the case is demonstrated by the fact that Prospero has taught Caliban his language at which Stephano and Trinculo marvel. They themselves try to teach him to drink. From a postcolonial perspective, this clearly features a binary relation of the kind colonizer – the colonized. Prospero's appropriation of the island and authority over its inhabitants allude to this.

Prospero's obsession with Miranda's virginity is not only a symbol of preservation of naturalness, but also of preservation of class. He enslaves Caliban as a punishment for his attempted rape, but when Miranda falls in love with Ferdinand, son of Alonso, the king of Naples, Prospero appears secretly satisfied and happy. Their union is an indication of the restoration of class order.

Miranda's perspective of the world is the most innocent. She marvels at seeing other human beings inhabiting the island and identifying them with herself. To her, they seem beautiful creatures. When all the characters are brought together at last, she exclaims:

> MIRANDA
> O, wonder!
> How many goodly creatures are there here!
> How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world,
> That has such people in't!
> PROSPERO
> 'Tis new to thee. (V.1. 182-186)

Miranda's innocent exclamation pins down the new world, makes it locatable - "nowhere is a place" - and identifiable as "brave," which, although it might be taken to connote several things, seems to stand particularly for the appearance of clothes as "showy'" or "dazzling." The new world "that has such people in't" does not seem any different from the old one. The use of "goodly" and "beauteous" to refer to the new inhabitants of the island reinforces the idea. Moreover, *A Dictionary of English Etymology* connects the word "brave" with "brag", associating it primarily with ostentatious and dazzling clothing, and explains the sense of courage as a derivation of bragging (cf. "brave" in Wedgwood 1872: 92).

There seems to be an overlapping of visualizations in this context though. For Prospero, the old world is the world he has left behind when he acted as Duke of Milan, whereas for Miranda it is the island inhabited by herself, her father, Caliban and Ariel. In her view, the population of the island, with the new creatures she can identify herself with, does indeed sound astonishing and flaunting. By juxtaposing "brave" with "new," with the former making reference to appearance and the latter to the island, Miranda actually restores the order of things to its default position and unknowingly equates the old world with the new one. Prospero's reply to Miranda's innocent remark not only recognizes the similarity the old world bears to the new world, but also reaffirms the restoration of the order of things. Gonzalo himself recognizes this in his exclamation:

> In one voyage
> Did Claribel her husband find at Tunis,
> And Ferdinand, her brother, found a wife
> Where he himself was lost, Prospero his dukedom
> In a poor isle and all of us ourselves
> When no man was his own. (V.1. 208-213)

Here Gonzalo speaks of losing people and identifies the island as the milieu where the redeeming act of finding takes place. The characters are rewarded not only with finding a wife or a husband, but above all, with finding themselves. Although Prospero is the orchestrator of this journey designed to end up in a shipwreck, it affects him too. In the end, he gets to self-recognition. He realizes that the books which he successfully used on the island to dominate its inhabitants and to trick his enemies of the old world, had once actually distanced him from his duties.

However, such a view sounds too idealistic. Is it that all characters found themselves in the end? What can we make of the evil designs of Antonio and Sebastian?

4. Conclusion

I have tried to demonstrate how, in *The Tempest*, the journey is used as an event or device, if you wish, to feature the new world, herein standing for a newly discovered remote place. Although there are many utopic elements, identifiable particularly in Gonzalo's discourse, which seem to project a new utopia, the island is

rather a projection of the new world, which is after all not that different from the old world. Leaving his old world behind, Prospero makes use of his books and casts himself in the role of a usurper, becoming the ruler of the island. On the island, he recognizes other forms of evil, which are less refined and sophisticated than those he could identify in the old world, as is for instance Caliban's attempted rape of Miranda.

Overall, it appears that Shakespeare highlights the importance of losing as a relieving act that leads to the redeeming act of finding. Without losing, there could be no finding. If Prospero had not lost his dukedom because he was so much taken with his books, he would have never reached the island, which would eventually make him and his enemies embark on a journey in search of things lost. In this search, Shakespeare raises the expectations of the characters and the readers alike.

Many elements in the play, primarily, but not exclusively, connected with travel, such as the island's remoteness and unculturedness, Gonzalo's wish to build a commonwealth on it, the play's concern with learning and books, allude to the prospect of finding a utopia. However, in the end, the island is affirmed as a representation of a new world rather than a utopia. Despite the fact that Gonzalo cherishes an idealistic view of the new world, whereas Prospero a rather sceptical one, Miranda's innocent exclamation affirms the similarity the two worlds bear to each other.

If so, what point does the play make? In the end, Prospero realizes that his absorption in books had distanced him from human interaction and behaviour. By the idea of finding our selves on the island, Gonzalo actually refers not only to the restoration of the former class order, but, above all, to the restoration of the self. What are the chances that the restoration will project a better world? Miranda's marvel at the new world "[t]has such people in't" (V.1.138) somehow reaffirms the fact that the world is beautiful because it hosts such a variety of creatures, from the noble, innocent and kind-hearted to the dishonest, mischievous and treacherous. What the play emphasizes is forgiveness and living in peace with oneself and the others. Prospero's act of forgiving his enemies has not probably made them any better, but it did help Prospero look ahead and build his future freed from the ghosts of the past.

References

Brennan, Rosamund Elaine. 2006. *European Representations of the New World in Travel Narratives and Literature, Late-Fifteenth to Mid-Seventeenth Centuries*. PhD thesis. Cardiff University.

Carter, Ronald and John McRae. 2001. *The Routledge History of Literature in English*. 2nd edition. New York: Routledge.

Houston, Chloë. 2014. *The Renaissance Utopia: Dialogue, Travel and the Ideal Society*. Surrey: Ashgate.

Mitsi, Evi. 2005. "'Nowhere is a Place': Travel Writing in Sixteenth-Century England" in *Literature Compass*, 2, pp. 1-13.

More, Thomas. 2012. *Utopia*. Ed. and trans. Dominic Baker-Smith. London: Penguin Classics.

Panajoti, Armela. 2016. "Shipwreck in Shakespeare's Plays" in Penda, Petar (ed.). *The Whirlwind of Passion: New Critical Perspectives on William Shakespeare*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. 217-229.

Shakespeare, William. 2006. *The Tempest*. Fully annotated with an introduction by Burton Raffel and with an essay by Harold Bloom. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Wedgwood, Hensleigh. 1872. *A Dictionary of English Etymology*. 2nd edition. London: Trübner & Co.

"YET IS SHE A PLAIN AND RATIONAL WRITER": MARGARET CAVENDISH'S SELF-FASHIONING IN *THE BLAZING WORLD*, POLITICS, SCIENCE AND LITERATURE

JUAN DE DIOS TORRALBO CABALLERO
University of Córdoba

Abstract: This study focuses on The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World *by Margaret Cavendish. It explores the political undertones and the support of the monarchy that permeates this text published in 1666, alongside* Observations upon Experimental Philosophy. *It also discusses its scientific and philosophical content, examining the dialogue used, which is based on the theories of contemporary scientists. The article will also study the author's self-depiction in* The Blazing World*, tangentially citing several strategies of self-fashioning contained within* Poems and Fancies *(1653) and* Natures Pictures Drawn by Fancies Pencil *(1656).*
Keywords: Blazing World, Cavendish, natural science, restoration literature, self-fashioning

> If your Majesty were resolved to make a Cabbala, I would advise you, rather to make a Poetical or Romancical Cabbala, wherein you can use Metaphors, Allegories, Similitudes, etc. and interpret them as you please. (Cavendish 2016a: 121)

1. Introduction: "I may live in a glorious Fame"

Margaret Lucas (1623?–1673) was born in Colchester (Essex) to a family belonging to the gentry (her parents were Thomas Lucas and Elizabeth Leighton). where she enjoyed a happy and idyllic childhood (Todd 1989: 497). The family, however, suffered for its political ideals on several occasions; for example, when an anti-monarchical group ransacked their house and attacked Margaret's mother. Margaret settled in Oxford for one year with her sister and became a maid of honour

to Queen Henrietta Maria. She followed the court to St Germain (France) in 1645, three years after the English Civil War broke out in 1642, culminating in the beheading of Charles I and the proclamation of the Republic, or Commonwealth, under Oliver Cromwell, in 1649.

In France she met and married William Cavendish in 1645 (an army officer and a minor Cavalier poet), who was the Earl, Marquis and, ultimately, First Duke of Newcastle upon Tyne in 1665, as a reward for his fidelity and defence of the royalist cause. After marriage, they also lived in Holland and Antwerp, and Margaret would rub shoulders with the intellectual elite of her era, as she met scholars like her brother-in-law, the mathematician Charles Cavendish, the philosophers René Descartes and Pierre Gassendi, and exiled intellectuals, such as Thomas Hobbes (at that time he was working on his *Leviathan*, published in 1651) and Edmund Waller. They remained in exile on the Continent until the Restoration of the Monarchy in 1660, returning to Welbeck Abbey, where Margaret (who had no children) set about writing.

Thus, Margaret Cavendish eventually dedicated herself fully to intellectual debate and writing. Her first books were *Poems and Fancies* and *Philosophical Fancies*, which she sent to the press in 1653, during a brief visit to England (Hobby 1988: 81). She also published essays, like her collection *The World's Olio* (1655) as well as a series of stories, under the general title of *Natures Pictures Drawn by Fancies Pencil to the Life*, the next year.

The work examined here is prose fiction, describing a fantastic voyage to a Utopian world, featuring an amalgam of literary genres, such as romance and satire. *The Description of a New Blazing World* (also known as *The Blazing World*) is "the first science-fiction novel to have been written and published by a woman" (Mendelson 2016: 21) and "female scientific utopia, introduced like many contemporary utopias and dystopias as a travelogue to an imagined locale" (ibid.). The fictional story reveals the writer's philosophical side, scientific theories, and the politics of her time.

The Description of a New Blazing World is composed of two parts. The first (Cavendish 2016a: 59-142) begins with the kidnapping of a maiden by her suitor, followed by an account of their trip, which ends in another world (called The Blazing World), where she is turned into the Empress of a diverse society, before ultimately returning to Earth. The second part (Cavendish 2016a: 143-164) describes the return of the Empress to her home world to help her country's king.

The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World was published in 1666 and 1668, alongside *Observations upon Natural Philosophy*, whose full title is *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy: To which is Added the Description of a New Blazing World.* Margaret Cavendish possibly intended to add a third work, "A Piece of Play" (Thell 2016: 128), which was eventually published in *Plays, Never before Printed* (1668). Throughout the narrative, Cavendish interweaves various passages of self-representation; for example, as Anne M. Thell has observed, the character of Lady Phoenix from "A Piece of Play" symbolises the aesthetic model

of "palingenesis" – regeneration, the epitome of the author's self-projection and desire for immortality. Regarding the theme of self-representation, Kate De Rycker (2017: 76-93) has also investigated its relation to *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World*.

Margaret Cavendish explains "her theories of authorship, publication and poetics" (Ross and Scott-Baumann 2018:199) in her prefaces. In *Poems and Fancies* (1653, revised and re-edited in 1664 and 1668), the writer (1972: 1) firmly declares, "For all I desire, is Fame". The second edition of the collection of poems includes several highly complimentary lines written by her husband, William Cavendish: "Your New-born, Sublime Fancies, and such store, / May make our Poets blush, and write no more". *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World* (1666) includes an episode in which the Duchess expresses to the spirits her wish to triumph over oblivion by attaining lasting fame: "I may live in a glorious Fame, and by the other I am buried in oblivion" (Cavendish 2016a: 123). In the closing scenes of *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World,* the Duchess beseeches "your Majesty [...] the Elixir that grows in the midst of the Golden Sands, for to preserve Life and Health" (Cavendish 2016a: 157).

Cavendish's literary legacy offers numerous examples of self-representation and various references to the subject of fame. One of the protagonists of *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World* is explicitly mentioned as "the Duchess of Newcastle" (Cavendish 2016a: 148) on various occasions. The objective of the present paper is, firstly, to explore the author's strategies of self-representation in *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World,* by examining both the paratextual elements as well as the text itself. A further aim is to illustrate the uniqueness of this narrative in its depiction of contemporary scientific dialogue, combined with the opinions of the author herself, whose other publications include the non-fiction work *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy.*

2. Paratextual elements: "chose rather the figure of Honest Margaret Newcastle"

The frontispieces of the published text contain a wealth of information meriting further study. These include "an image of the author facing the title page to amplify its contents" (Ezell 2017: 51). The 1656 edition of *Natures Pictures Drawn by Fancies Pencil* contains a sketch by Peter Clout of the author and her husband in a social context, "with a crowd around a table in front of a cheerful fire, servants busy in the background" (ibid.). This has the effect of generating "a domestic scene" containing imaginary elements that evoke an atmosphere of literature and story-telling: "This in this Semy-Circle, wher they Sitt,/ Telling of Tales of Pleasure & of Witt". The image of the author was taken from a portrait by Abraham van Diepenbeeck, a famous painter from the school of Rubens.

A similar image appears in *Poems, and fancies written by the Right Honourable, the Lady Margaret Newcastle*, published in 1653. In this edition, the author is depicted standing on a pedestal, flanked on either side by Athena and

Apollo. These are "classical motifs of fame during the 1650s" (Ezell 2016, 52) which were also recreated in *Hesperides* (Robert Herrick 1648) and *Fragmenta Poetica* (Nicholas Murford 1650). The format of the poems, consisting of 300-page folio volumes including all the paratexts, follows the schematic developed by other writers. Cavendish "wishes her poetry to be seen as being unorthodox, original, and experimental" (Ezell 2017: 197). The author's portrait differs considerably from the image included in *Poems by the most deservedly admired Mrs Katherine Philips*, published in 1667 (with subsequent editions in 1660 and 1678), consisting in a bust by William Fairthorne, "in contrast to Margaret Cavendish's full-length portrait of herself atop a pedestal" (Ezell 2017: 197). The self-fashioning displayed by Cavendish contrasts significantly with the self-effacement of Philips, who cultivated "an alternative female poetic lineage based on those women poets who had reputations for virtue" (Prescott 2003: 60).

The full title of the work analysed here is *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World. Written by the Thrice Noble, Illustrious, and Excellent Princesse*, *The Duchess of Newcastle* (Cavendish 2016a: 55). The text is notable for its innovative approach to topography, as illustrated by the adjective "blazing" included in the title. Equally remarkable is the author's appetite for explaining and clarifying elements within the text, an aspect that is also emphasised in the title through the noun phrase "The Description" and in the apposition that sheds further light on the conception of this "New World". The adjective "blazing" emphasises the importance of the story's localisation through its meaning of "burning very brightly"; it also carries the significance of being "of outstanding power, speed, heat, or intensity", according to the definitions contained in *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary*. The title page continues to elevate the author's image: the three successive adjectives referring to the noun "Princesse" are premodified by the adverb "Thrice", which further emphasises their laudatory significance. It is also worth noting that the author is referred to initially by her peerage title, while her actual name is only given afterwards: ("[…] Princesse, The Duchess of Newcastle").

Following this, the reader is presented with a eulogy by William Newcastle (Cavendish, 2016a: 57) entitled "To the Duchesse of Newcastle, on her New Blazing World". Similarly, noteworthy is the fact that Newcastle signs the poem using his full ducal title, which he received on returning to England following the Restoration of the Monarchy. The content of the poem draws a comparison between the creation of a new world by Cavendish and the territorial discoveries of Columbus. The poet ultimately deems Cavendish's achievements superior to those of the world-famous explorer, given that he "Found a new World, *America* 'tis nam'd / Now this new World was found, it was not made" (lines 4-5). He goes on to contrast the writer's creative abilities with Columbus' feats through a biblical reference (Genesis 1: 2-3), by means of which he stresses that she created her world out of nothing: "Then what are *You*, having no *Chaos* found" (Cavendish 2016a: 7). He continues his argument by maintaining that, while Columbus discovered and named his new territory, Margaret actually created and named her new world by virtue of her ingenuity and

imagination ("But your creating Fancy, thought it fit") (Cavendish 2016a: 10-11), the additional merit being "To make your World of Nothing, but pure Wit" (Cavendish 2016a: 11).

The third element worthy of investigation is the preface to the reader, in which the author emphasises the originality of her creation, while at the same time attempting to defend herself from any potential criticism: "I have made a World of my own; for which nobody, I hope, will blame me, since it is in every ones power to do the like". In relation to this, she references the legendary achievements of great conquerors such as Alexander III of Macedonia and Julius Caesar (Cavendish 2016a: 60). Cavendish also remarks on the coherence between the fictional and the philosophical texts that she published simultaneously: "If you wonder, that I join a work of Fancy to my serious Philosophical Contemplation; think not that it is out of a disparagement to Philosophy; or out of an opinion, as if this noble study were but a Fiction of the Mind." (Cavendish 2016a: 59). The preface to the second edition (which is an abbreviation of the first) also begins with an allusion to the correlation between the two works. In the opening pages, the writer conceptualises the literary genre, declaring "Fictions are an issue of man's Fancy, framed in his own Mind, according as he pleases" and that "the end of Fancy, is Fiction" (ibid.).

Throughout the text, multiple references are evident that indicate a consideration of the reader's perspective, implying that Cavendish was eager to please her reading audience. For example, while describing the lenses of microscopes, the narrator mentions "their optick observations through the several sorts of their Glasses" before admitting that attempting a full explanation "would be a tedious work, and tire even the most patient Reader, wherefore I'le pass them by" (Cavendish 2016a: 83).

Lastly, "The Epilogue to the Reader" gives further evidence of the author's methods of self-proclamation, while also interweaving certain narrative threads. Cavendish builds herself up as an author: "By this Poetical Description, you may perceive, that my ambition is not onely to be Emperess, but Authoress of a whole World" (Cavendish 2016a: 163). She also suggests certain specific qualities of the world she has created: "But I esteeming Peace before War, Wit before Policy, Honesty before Beauty; instead of the figures of Alexander, Caesar, Achiles, Nestor, Ulysses, Helen, etc. chose rather the figure of Honest Margaret Newcastle" (ibid.). The author stresses the originality of her work, warning any "unjust Usurpers" of copying her unique idea:

> …and if any should like the World I have made, and be willing to be my Subjects, they may imagine themselves such, and they are such; […] they may create Worlds of their own, and Govern themselves as they please. But yet let them have a care, not to prove unjust Usurpers, and to rob me of mine; (Cavendish 2016a: 163)

In this way, Cavendish applies the existing mechanisms of print culture in order to justify, authorise and defend both her fictional narrative and her

philosophical treatise. Not only *a priori* ("To the Reader"), but also *a posteriori* ("The Epilogue to the Reader"), the author emphasises the innovative nature of her work, while at the same time clarifying its content and elevating its ontology.

3. Realism: "Why they preferred the Monarchical form of Government before any other?"

Eugene Marshall (2016: xxv) suggests that, while in *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy* Cavendish "sets out her views in relatively systematic ways and in philosophical treatises", the fictional work contains "her thoughts on social or political issues". For example, the text begins with a noteworthy defence of women, when the narrator enters into a debate with the Priests and declares, "I never perceived any Women in your Congregations", asking them "But what is the reason, you bar them from your religious Assemblies?" (Cavendish 2016a: 72).

The author's connections with the royal family dates back to her childhood. She had been a lady in waiting at the court of Henrietta Maria (Ross and Scott-Baumann 2018: 11, 99), whom she accompanied to Paris with her husband during Cromwell's Puritan theocracy. During this period, she composed *Natures Pictures Drawn by Fancies Pencil to the Life*, the first edition of which appeared in 1657, with a second edition following in 1671. In this way, the author's own life experiences reflect her political beliefs.

Within the framework of this narrative, the Empress is an absolute ruler capable of moulding the will of her subjects to match her own wishes. In religious matters, she "did not only convert the Blazing-world to her own Religion, but kept them in a constant belief, without inforcement or blood-shed", achieving this through peaceful means: "that belief was a thing not to be forced or pressed upon the people, but to be instilled into their minds by gentle perswasions". Thus the protagonist confirms, "both Church and State was now in a well-ordered and settled condition" (Cavendish 2016a: 202), demonstrating the social harmony that corresponded to the smooth functioning of governmental and religious establishments. In the second part of the work, the Duchess makes the same assertions (Cavendish 2016a: 145).

Cavendish's belief in the necessity of an established set of rules or laws becomes clear in the dialogue between The Empress and The Duchess regarding the Duchess' imaginary world. In the construction of this world, she "framed all kinds of Creatures proper and useful for it; strengthened it with good Laws, and beautified it with Arts and Sciences" (Cavendish 2016a: 126). The narrator goes on to clarify the factors necessary for achieving lasting social harmony:

> …for it was governed without secret and deceiving Policy; neither was there any ambition, factions, malicious detractions, civil dissensions, or home-bred quarrels, divisions in Religion, foreign Wars, etc. but all the people lived in a peaceful society, united Tranquility, and Religious Conformity; (Cavendish 2016a: 126)

At the beginning of the narrative, the protagonist asks the States-men: "Why they preferred the Monarchical form of Government before any other?" (Cavendish 2016a: 72). Their response reveals the author's views on the body politic; firstly, regarding the need for the political establishment to be governed by one voice; secondly, in the pejorative conceptualisation of a system of multiple governors as a monster with numerous heads. The author also stresses the importance of monarchy by drawing a parallel between it and God, stating that both inspire devotion and loyalty in their followers. She ultimately concludes, by way of a syllogism, that a monarch is essentially a god to be worshipped and obeyed. In this way, the fictional text reveals the writer's personal belief in the need for total obedience to the monarchical system in order to safeguard social stability and harmony:

> That as it was natural for one body to have but one head, so it was also natural for a Politick body to have but one Governor; and that a Common-wealth, which had many Governors was like a Monster of many heads: besides, said they, a Monarchy is a divine form of government, and agrees most with our Religion; for as there is but one God, whom we all unanimously worship and adore with one Faith, so we are resolved to have but one Emperor, to whom we all submit with one obedience. (Cavendish 2016a: 72)

Towards the end of the first part, when the Empress wishes to unify the "factions of the Bear- Fish- Fly- Ape- and Worm-men, the Satyrs, Spider-men and the like, and other of their perpetual disputes and quarrels" (Cavendish 2016a: 140) and seeks the Duchess' "advice and assistance", the Duchess counsels her "to introduce the same form of Government again, which had been before, that is, to have but one Soveraign, one Religion, one Law, and one Language" (Cavendish 2016a: 139).

The fictional community portrayed by Cavendish displays a hierarchy of power similar to the monarchical model of Western civilisation, particularly of England. Through a description of the virtues of the population, the author conveys a highly positive image of a community of people that have lived for hundreds of years in a state of seemingly perpetual youth. The protagonist wonders "how it came that the Imperial Race appeared so young" (Cavendish 2016a: 93).

When the Empress visits the Duchess' country, she arrives at Court and notes how the "affability mixt so exactly together, that none did overshadow or eclipse the other; and as for the Queen, she said, that Vertue sat Triumphant in the face, and Piety was dwelling in her heart and that all the Royal Family seem'd to be endured with a divine splendor" (Cavendish 2016a: 129-130). The specific country that the Empress visits – and the chronology of the story itself – are revealed implicitly, supporting the interpretation of the Duchess as the *alter ego* of Margeret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle.

Margaret Cavendish's husband is also referenced in the narrative, and in a wholly positive light. The Duchess mentions that Charles II was educated by William Cavendish, a historical detail that actually occurred between 1638 and 1640: "when she had heard the King discourse, she believ'd that Mercury and Apollo had been

his Celestial instructors; and my dear Lord and Husband, added the Duchess, has been his Earthly Governour" (Cavendish 2016a: 130). The Duke is characterised as "being wise, honest, witty, complaisant and noble" (Cavendish 206a: 133) and, before entering into a debate with Fortune, he himself alludes to his two friends, "Prudence and Honesty" (Cavendish 2016a: 134), an allegorical device which recalls the work of John Bunyan and the medieval mystery plays. When the Empress expresses her desire to visit the Duke, "there two souls went towards those parts of the Kingdom where the Duke of Newcastle was". Further detail is given, that "the Emperess and Duchess's Soul were travelling into Nottingham-shire, for that was the place where the Duke did reside" (Cavendish 2016a: 130). Travelling through Sherwood Forest, they reach the Duke's residence at Welbeck, a country house modelled on Welbeck Abbey. Further references mention the family palace "called Bolesover" and their love of equestrianism, or the "Art of Mannage" (Cavendish 2016a: 132), which will later be emulated by the Emperor at the end of the narrative: "for he had built Stables and Riding-Houses, and desired to have Horses of Manage, such as, according to the Emperess's Relation, the Duke of Newcastle had" (Cavendish 2016a: 158).

Another explicit reference to the King appears in the second part, when the Empress travels to "her Native Country" (Cavendish 2016a: 143), which is currently at war – a clear reference to the Second Anglo-Dutch War. In a particularly evangelical and messianic scene, the Empress gives a patriotic speech on board a ship in which she confirms, "I intend to make you the most powerful Nation of this world". Subsequently the narrator mentions "the King of E S F I" (Cavendish 20161: 153), an acronym for the King of England, Scotland, France and Ireland, confirming that the Empress "made it the absolute Monarchy of all the World". The Empress receives her compatriots and, returning to her ship maintains a lengthy conversation with the King himself: "wherein the Prince and Monarch of her Native Country was, the King of E S F I with whom she had several Conferences" (Cavendish 2016a: 155). Before returning to her Blazing World, she gives a final discourse, the opening lines of which are particularly eloquent. The speech takes its inspiration from an address given by Elizabeth I (Martí Escayol 2016: 177), further confirming the representation of the English monarchy in the text. It also gives direct references to the geography of England and the Channels that separate it from neighbouring countries: "Great Heroick, and Famous Monarchs: I came hither to assist the King of ESFI against his Enemies, he being unjustly assaulted by many several Nations, which would fain take away his Hereditary Rights and Prerogatives of the Narrow Seas" (Cavendish 2016a: 155).

4. Scientist: "have the truth of the Phaenomena's of Celestial bodies"

The contributions of early modern women to science have been studied by Sarasohn (2010), Mendelson (2016: 10) and Martí Escayol (2016: 12), among others. The connection between science and literary discourse has been investigated in

English Literature and the Disciplines of Knowledge, Early Modern to Eighteenth Century. A Trade for Light, edited by Jorge Bastos da Silva and Miguel Ramalhete Gomes (2017).

Margaret Cavendish visited the Royal Society on Thursday, 30th May 1667, causing a considerable amount of controversy among its members. The visit made her one of several "high-ranking ladies to attend meetings in which experiments were performed as entertainment […] The Duchess's visit in 1667 was one such occasion" (Mendelson 2016: 13). The source of this information is none other than Samuel Pepys (1978: 144), who wrote in his *Diary* that "the Duchesse of Newcastle […] had desired to be invited to the Society; and was, after much debate, pro and con, it seems many being against it; and we do believe the town will be full of ballads of it". The renowned Restoration-era diarist also remarked "Anon comes the Duchesse with her women attending her" (ibid.). In terms of the innovative experiments that the writer witnessed at the Royal Society, Pepys tells us "Several fine experiments were shown her of colours, loadstones, microscopes, and of liquors among others, of one that did, while she was there, turn a piece of roasted mutton into pure blood, which was very rare" (ibid.).

The Empress acts as a voice for the author when she asks the hybrid animal-men questions of a scientific nature, remarking that the "new founded societies of the Vertuoso's had made a good progress" (Cavendish 2016a: 73). The Bird-men and the Bear-men, who enter into conversation with the Empress, are an ironic depiction of the Baconian principles of the Royal Society (Bacon's utopic vision, *New Atlantis* (1627), forms part of the background of Cavendish's *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World*; Mendelson 2016: 31-39), while the "vertuosos" also represent the members of the Royal Society themselves.

The protagonist asks the Bird-men questions regarding the sun and the moon, solar heat, the shapes and positions of celestial bodies, "the motes of the sun" (Cavendish 2016a: 75), air, wind, snow, thunder and lightning. The dialogues reflect the thinking of the foremost scientific minds of the age, including Kepler in the definition of the sun as a solid rock, a theory presented in his *Grounds of Natural Philosophy* (1668). Galileo's theory of sunspots is also cited, as is the work of Hobbes with regard to the formation of snow (*De Corpore*, IV, 28) and Boyle ("An Examen of Mr. Hobs's Doctrine, touching Cold", 1665).

In this way, Cavendish incorporates genuine scientific theories by recognised thinkers into her writing. She also includes her own opinions, such as with regard to the formation of snow, where she refutes one of the existing theories: "This observation amazed the Emperess very much, for she had hitherto believed, That Snow was made by cold motions, and not by such agitation or beating of a fiery extract upon water" (Cavendish 2016a: 77). Similar topics, such as heat (Cavendish 2016b: 23-27), were also explored in the author's philosophical work.

In the encounter with the Bear-men, the author uses references to telescopes and microscopes as a means to incorporate the debate over the geocentric and heliocentric models of the universe, hinting at the divisive nature of the argument:

"but these Telescopes caused more differences and divisions amongst them, then ever they had before" (Cavendish 2016a: 78). Cavendish echoes the theories of Ptolemy and Copernicus and also summarises Kepler's theory of the movement of the planets around the sun: "for some said, they perceived that the Sun stood still, and the Earth did move about it; others were of opinion, that they both did move; and others said again, that the Earth stood still, and the Sun did move […]" (Cavendish 2016a: 78). Following a discussion of scientific matters with the Fish-men and Worm-men, the narrator states, "This Relation confirmed the Empress in the opinion concerning the motion of the Earth, and the fixedness of the Sun" (Cavendish 2016a: 87). The author's implied criticism of the microscope by extension also amounts to a critique of Robert Hooke, who discussed the new invention in *Micrographia.* In *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy*, the author offers a similar viewpoint (Cavendish 2016b: 8).

The influence of Galileo is also apparent in the depiction of the Bear-men, who discover new stars and discuss their size. Lastly, the Empress questions the validity of telescopes and suggests that the Bird-men should trust their innate perception rather than relying too heavily on scientific instruments: "let the Bird-men trust onely to their natural eyes, and examine Celestial objects by the motions of their own sense and reason" (Cavendish 2016a: 79). The episode is an implicit reference to the concept of empirical knowledge, as defended by the writer herself in *Philosophical Letters* (1664). Cavendish's philosophical treatise dealt extensively with the idea of perception (Cavendish 2016b: 32-63); in it the author explores the subject through twelve questions and their respective answers. The first of these questions (Cavendish 2016b: 49) is "What difference is there between self-knowledge and perception?"

The author reveals her skepticism regarding certain experiments performed at the Royal Society (Ezell 2017: 178), contesting the work of Robert Boyle (*Experiments and Considerations Touching Colours*, 1664) and Robert Hooke (*Micrographia*, 1665) in particular. Her challenge of the experimental philosophers is also evident in *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy*, particularly in the third chapter:

> …as boys that play with watery bubbles, or fling dust into each others' eyes, or make a hobby-horse of snow, are worthy of reproof rather than praise, for wasting their time with useful sports, so those that addict themselves to unprofitable arts spend more time than they reap benefit thereby" (Cavendish 2016b: 8).

In her meeting with the Ape-men, the protagonist explores the concept of the ἀρχή, which she describes as "the Primitive Ingredients of Natural Bodies" (Cavendish 2016a: 91) or "the true principles of natural bodies" (Cavendish 2016a: 92). This allows the writer (through her literary character) to refute the pre-Socratic theory of the four elements (earth, air, fire and water) and the *tria prima* (salt, sulphur and mercury). Both hypotheses are dismissed in the protagonist's question:

> Why should you be so simple as to believe that fire can shew you the principles of Nature? and that either the four Elements, or Water onely, or Salt, Sulphur and Mercury, all which are no more but particular effects and Creatures or Nature, should be the Primitive ingredients of Principles of all natural bodies? (Cavendish 2016a: 92)

The Empress personally explains her theory, which is essentially a transposition of the writer's own views (2016a: 92): "it is in vain to look for primary ingredients, or constitutive principles of natural bodies, since there is no more but one Universal principle of Nature, to wit, self-moving Matter, whish is the onely cause of all natural effects". The second part of *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy* presents this conceptualization (Cavendish 2016b, 70-2) in its sixth and seventh chapters.

As demonstrated above, certain female writers turned their attention to contemporary epistemology (as also evidenced by Aphra Behn's translation of Fontanelle's *Les Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes* (Torralbo 2017: 226) entitled *A Discovery of New Worlds*, a dialogue between a Marchioness and a philosopher). Coupled with this interest in the epistemology of the age, there exists a notable enthusiasm for contemporary philosophical thought. Anne M. Thell (2017: 41) defines *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World* as "a wildly imaginative travel text that explodes the epistemological assumptions on which empiricism is based".

5. Philosopher: "I will not dissolve your society"

The passage in which the protagonist encounters the orators (Parrot-men) is a philosophical episode with deeply parodic undertones. Firstly, one of the Parrot-men attempts to formulate an eloquent discourse in discussion with the protagonist, but is unable to complete their own line of thinking, "his arguments and divisions being so many, that they caused a great confusion in his brain, he could not go forward, but was forced to retire backwards" (Cavendish 2016a: 98). Next, one of his colleagues tries to complete the argument for him and is equally unsuccessful. In response, the Empress declares that "they followed too much the Rules of Art, and cofounded themselves with too nice formalities and distinctions" advising them "to consider more the subject you speak, and leave the rest to your natural Eloquence" (Cavendish 2016a: 98).

Her Imperial Majesty hoped to confirm the skills of the logicians "in the Art of disputing" and encouraged them to discuss various subjects. As will be seen, the Jackdaw-men represent Aristotelian logic, applying the reasoning of syllogistic progression, albeit with contradictory premises and conclusions. First, they discuss politicians in four syllogisms; the first of the four, and the response it elicited, are as follows:

> Every Politician is wise:
> Every Knave is a Politician,
> Therefore every Knave is wise.
>
> No Politician is wise:
> Every Knave is a Politician,
> Therefore no Knave is wise" (Cavendish 2016a: 98).

They then turned their attention to the subject of philosophers. One of the Jackdaw-men offers a syllogism, which is immediately rejected by one of his colleagues, who offers his own attempt:

> Every Philosopher is wise:
> Every Beast is wise,
> Therefore every Beast is a Philosopher.
>
> Every Philosopher is wise:
> Some Beasts are not wise,
> Therefore some Beasts are not Philosophers. (Cavendish 2016a: 99)

The Empress interrupts the discussion, declaring, "your formal argumentations are able to spoil all natural wit" and "that Art does not make Reason, but Reason makes Art". She continues by saying "especially your Art of Logick, which consists onely in contradicting each other, in making sophisms, and obscuring Truth, instead of clearing it" (Cavendish 2016a: 99). Margaret Cavendish imbues her narrative with various logical and philosophical operations that were frequently employed in the intellectual dialogue of the time. At the same time, the writer ridicules the overly formulaic structure and rigid reasoning of the syllogistic progression (Mendelson 2016: 98).

The protagonist concludes with an emphatic rejection of this form of intellectualism, warning of the potential threat that it poses to the establishments of politics and religion. The declaration is a clear example of self-representation in direct speech:

> In short, said she, I do not ways approve of your profession; and though I will not dissolve your society, yet I shall never take delight in hearing you any more; wherefore confine your disputations to your Schools, lest besides the Commonwealth to Learning, they disturb also Divinity and Policy, Religion and Laws, and by that means draw an utter ruine and destruction both upon Church and State. (Cavendish 2016a: 100)

Cavendish depicts certain figures in the form of a caricature; the portrayal of the orators as parrots and the logicians as jackdaws is a perfect example of this

technique. Both groups take on the attributes of their respective birds, while the caricature also heightens the sense of parody evident in the scene.

The text also integrates the Platonic conception of the mortal body and the immortal soul. This viewpoint would have been accessible to Cavendish through contemporary philosophical texts such as Thomas Stanley's *History of Philosophy*, 1656 (Mendelson 2016: 30), among other sources. The theory, and particularly its interpretation by writers of the seventeenth century regarding "the Souls of Loves" that "live in the bodies of their Beloved" (Cavendish 2016a: 118), appears within the narrative when the spirits ask the protagonist if she wishes to have a scribe to "write the Cabbala" to which she replies that she desires a spiritual scribe. She then expresses her preference for the spirits of the classics "Aristotle, Pythagoras, Plato, Epicurus, or the like", but the spirit replies that "those famous men were very learned, subtile and ingenious Writers, but they were so wedded to their own opinions, that they would neer have the patience to be Scribes" (Cavendish 2016a: 118). The protagonist then states her wish to "have the Soul of one of the most famous modern Writers, as either Galileo, Cassandus, Des Cartes, Helmont, Hobbes, H. More, etc." to which the spirit responds that their vanity would not allow them to be the spirit of a woman (Cavendish 2016a: 119). It is interesting to note that the protagonist first gives priority to the classical writers, and then to the contemporary philosophers.

Given the impossibility of finding a scribe among the groups mentioned by the Empress, the spirit makes the third suggestion of an ingenious female writer, the Duchess of Newcastle. This *momentum* is a crucial instance of self-fashioning whereby the author proposes herself as a writer within her own narrative. This is done with modesty but also with determination, the writer essentially proposing herself as a fitting alternative to the aforementioned classical philosophers and contemporary thinkers:

> But, said he [the Spirit], there's a Lady, the Duchess of Newcastle, which although she is not one of the most learned, eloquent, witty and ingenious, yet is she a plain and rational Writer, for the principle of her Writings, is Sense and Reason, and she will without question, be ready to do you all the service she can. (Cavendish 2016a: 119)

6. Writer: "I intended them for Playes; but the Wits […] condemned them as uncapable of being represented"

The narrative developed by Cavendish in *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World* contains various literary allusions. In her meeting with the Immaterial Spirits, the protagonist mentions *The Alchemist* by Ben Jonson, which was first performed in 1610 and printed in 1612. The author would certainly have been familiar with this work, given that her husband was Jonson's patron. Discussing the Jewish Cabbala, the protagonist condemns the English alchemists John Dee and

Edward Kelly as charlatans, citing Jonson in defence of her position: "but they [Dee and Kelly] proved at last but meer Cheats, and weer described by one of their own Country-men, a famous Poet, named *Ben, Johnson*, in a Play call'd *The Alchymist* […]" (Cavendish 2016a: 104).

In a final dialogue between the two protagonists, in which the eccentricity of the Duchess is remarked upon as well as her honesty and virtue, there appears an indirect allusion to her *Orations of Divers Sorts, Accomodated to Divers Places* (1662) (Martì Escayol 2016: 180). The Empress points out that a certain literary work of Cavendish's portrays characters notably lacking in these aforementioned qualities, to which the Duchess' response emphasises her skill as a writer in being able to depict such unappealing characters: "how comes is that you plead for Dishonest and Wicked persons in your Writings? The Duchess answered, it was onley to show her Wit, not her Nature" (Cavendish 2016a: 158)

Before the end of the narrative, the Emperor asks the Duchess how best to establish a theatre, confirming that she had written plays in the past. Cavendish did in fact write *Playes Written by the Thrice Noble, Illustrious and Excellent Princess, the Lady Marchioness of Newcastle* in 1662. The protagonist explains that she was unable to stage her plays, because they did not follow contemporary theatrical customs, although she also remarks upon the quality of the writing:

> I intended them for Playes; but the Wits of these present times condemned them as uncapable of being represented or acted, because they were not made up according to the Rules of Art; though I dare say, that the Descriptions are as good as any they have writ" (Cavendish 2016a: 159).

The theatrical customs referred to are those established by Aristotle in his *Poetics*: the unity of action, time and place. These guidelines were taken up by John Dryden in *An Essay on Dramatic Poesie (1668)* and advocated by Samuel Johnson (Richetti 2017: 278). The Duchess remarks further "it is the Art and Method of our Wits to despise all Descriptions of Wit, Humour, Actions and Fortunes that are without such Artificial Rules". The Emperor's subsequent question and the Duchess' response give further clarity to the issue:

> Are those good Playes that are made so Methodically and Artificially? […]. They were Good according to the Judgment of the Age, or Mode of the Nation, but not according to her Judgment […] their Playes will prove a Nursery of Whining Lovers, and not an Academy or School for Wise, Witty, Noble, and well-behaved men. (Cavendish 2016a: 160).

The Emperor's response is unequivocal: "I […] desire such a Theatre […] will have such Descriptions as are Natural, not Artificial". This support for naturalness over artificiality allows the Duchess to conclude that her literary works would be fit

for the stage in "The Blazing World", but not in the "Blinking World of Wit" (Cavendish 2016a: 160).

During their visit to the Duchess' country, at one point the protagonists come to a building where there are "many Galants". It is revealed to be "one of the Theatres where Comedies and Tragedies were acted". The Emperess enquires "whether they were real?" to which the Duchess responds "No […] They are feigned". After seeing a play, the Empress states her preference for "a natural face before a sign-post, or a natural humour before an artificial dance, or musick before a true and profitable Relation" (Cavendish 2016a: 129). For an empirical account we have the observations of Samuel Pepys, who attended the staging of Cavendish's play (*The Humourous Lovers*) Saturday, 30th March 1667, leaving no room for doubt as to his utter disapproval of the work:

> At noon home to dinner, and thence with my wife's knowledge and leave did by coach go see the silly play of my Lady Newcastle's, called "The Humourous Lovers;" the most silly thing that ever come upon a stage. I was sick to see it, but yet would not but have seen it, that I might the better understand her. (Pepys 1893: 471)

The following month, on the 11th April, Pepys (1978:141) once again commented upon Cavendish's comedy in his *Diary*, stressing once more that it was "the most ridiculous thing that ever was wrote". Pepys makes no mention of Cavendish's fictional work in his writings, although he does include these references to her dramaturgy as well as her unprecedented visit to the Royal Society, a fact that certainly fits with the content of *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World*.

7. Conclusion: "my ambition is not onely to be Emperess, but Authoress of a whole World"

The narrative work of Margaret Cavendish was a milestone for its time, not only for having been written by a woman, but also for the very fact that it was printed and published in a society and a culture that was so eminently patriarchal. An example of proto-science fiction, it is also remarkable for its inclusion of the latest and most innovative perspectives on politics, science, philosophy and literature, all of which are articulated by two female characters, "two female souls" with "intimate friendship between them" (Cavendish 2016a: 127, 121). Just as Lady Phoenix in "A Piece of a Play", the Duchess of *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World* embodies the thoughts and concerns of Cavendish herself.

Cavendish integrates various contemporary academic devices into her narrative, through which she succeeds in setting out her own theories as well as her own vision of reality. *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World* is a self-assertive text that brings to life the authorial self-representation in terms of social, literary and personal matters.

References

Bastos da Silva, Jorge and Miguel Ramalhete Gomes (eds.). *English Literature and the Disciplines of Knowledge, Early Modern to Eighteenth Century. A Trade for Light.* Leiden: Brill. Rodopi.

Boyle, Robert. 1664. *Experiments and Considerations Touching Colours […].* London: Printed for Henry Herringman.

Boyle, Robert. 1665. "An Examen of Mr. Hobs's Doctrine, touching Cold" in *New Experiments and Observations Touching Cold, or An Experimental History of Cold […].* London: Printed for John Crook, pp. 805-845.

Cavendish, Margaret. 1653. *Philosophical Fancies*. London: Printed by Thomas Roycroft for J. Martin and J. Allestrye.

Cavendish, Margaret. 1655. *The World's Olio*. London: Printed for J. Martin and J. Allestrye.

Cavendish, Margaret. 1656. *Natures Pictures Drawn by Fancies Pencil to Life.* London: Printed for J. Martin and J. Allestrye.

Cavendish, Margaret. 1662. *Playes Written by the Thrice Noble, Illustrious and Excellent Princess, the Lady Marchioness of Newcastle*. London: Printed by A. Warren.

Cavendish, Margaret. 1664. *Philosophical letters […].* London: [s.n.].

Cavendish. Margaret. 1668. *Plays, Never before Printed […].* London: Printed by A. Maxwell.

Cavendish, Margaret. 1668. *Grounds of Natural Philosophy […]*. London: Printed by A. Maxwell.

Cavendish, Margaret. 1677 (first performed 1667). *The Humorous Lovers. A comedy […].* London: Printed by J. M. for H. Herringman.

Cavendish, Margaret. 1972 (1653). *Poems, and Fancies Written by the Right Honourable, the Lady Margaret Newcastle.* Menston: Scholar Press.

Cavendish, Margaret. 2016a (1666). *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World.* Mendelson, Sara H. (ed.). Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press.

Cavendish, Margaret. 2016b. *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy. Abridged, with Related Texts*. Marshall, Eugene (ed.). Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company.

De Ricker, Kate. 2017. "A World of One's Own: Margaret Cavendish and the Science of Self-Fashioning" in da Silva, Jorge Bastos and Miguel Ramalhete Gomes (eds.). *English Literature and the Disciplines of Knowledge, Early Modern to Eigteenth Century. A Trade for Light*. Leiden: Brill. Rodopi, pp. 76-93.

Ezell, Margaret. J. M. 2017. *The Oxford English Literary History. Volume 5: 1645-1714. The Later Seventeenth Century.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Herrick, Robert. 1973 (1648). *Hesperides.* Scolar Press. Menston: Scholar Press.

Hobbes, Thomas. 1655. *Elementorum Philosophiae. Sectio Prima De Corpore*. Londini: Excusum sumptibus Andreae Crook sub signo Draconis viridis in Coemeterio B. Pauli.

Hobby, Elaine. 1988. *Virtue of Necessity. English Women's Writing 1649-88*. London: Virago Press.

Hooke, Robert. 1665. *Micrographia […].* London: Printed by J. Martyn and J. Allestry.

Marshall, Eugene. 2016. "Editor's Introduction" in Cavendish, Margaret. *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy. Abridged, with Related Text*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, pp. vii-xxviii.

Martí Escayol, Maria Antònia. 2016. "El Mundo Resplandeciente, una Mirada tras las bambalinas del siglo XVII" in Cavendish, Margaret. *El Mundo Resplandeciente*. Madrid: Siruela, pp. 9-48.

Mendelson, Sara H. 2016. "Introduction" in Cavendish, Margaret. *A Description of the Blazing World*. Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, pp. 9-49.

Murford, Nicholas. 1914 (1950). *Fragmenta poetica [...]*. London: King's Lynn.

Pepys, Samuel. 1978. *The Illustrated Pepys*. Selected & edited by Robert Lathan. London: Book Club Associates.

Pepys, Samuel. 1893. *The Diary of Samuel Pepys. Transcribed by Mynors Bright from the Shorthand Manuscript in the Pepysian Library*. Edited with additions by Henry B. Wheatley. New York: Random House.

Prescott, Sarah. 2003. *Women, Authorship and Literature Culture, 1690-1740*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Richetti, John. 2017. *A History of Eighteenth-Century British Literature*. Oxford: Willey Blackwell.

Ross, Sarah and Elizabeth Scott-Baumann. 2018. *Women Poets of the English Civil War*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Sarasohn, Lisa. T. 2010. *The Natural Philosophy of Margaret Cavendish: Reason and Fancy during the Scientific Revolution*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Thell, Anne M. 2016. "Lady Phoenix: Margaret Cavendish and the Poetics of Palingenesis" in *Early Modern Women: An interdisciplinary Journal*, 11, pp. 128-136.

Thell, Anne M. 2017. "Lady Phoenix: Motion, Imagination, and Cavendish's Blazing World" in Thell, Anne. *Minds in Motion. Imagining Empiricism in Eighteenth-Century British Travel Literature*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, pp. 41-72.

Todd, Janet. 1989. "Newcastle, Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of" in *British Women Writers. A Critical Reference Guide*. New York: Continuum, pp. 497-499.

Torralbo Caballero, Juan de Dios. 2017. "The Translatress in her own Person Speaks: Estudio de las traducciones de Aphra Behn a partir de la tipología de Dryden" in *Alpha*, 45, pp. 217-233.

POPULAR CULTURE IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND: SOME METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

DRAGOŞ IVANA

University of Bucharest

Abstract: Vying with each other in terms of conceptual frameworks and methodologies, recent studies on popular culture in early modern England have sought to shed light on people's values, customs, beliefs and behaviour by recourse to what the Annales School has termed "anecdotal history". Viewed from this angle, popular culture no longer appears to be the cultural pariah that was either ostracised or ridiculed as barbarian and primitive by the elite. The present article elaborates on the interaction between the two opposite categories and presents a few methodological approaches that have had the merit of digging up valuable information about ordinary people and their lived experience in early modern England.
Keywords: early modern England, elite culture, history, methodology, popular culture

1. Introduction

Talking about popular culture in early modern England may be a puzzling undertaking at first sight. Terminological confusions, on the one hand, and the lack of a common denominator between the multifarious conceptual frameworks employed by scholars in the field, on the other, are the major setbacks. Currently considered a fully-fledged discipline founded as a spin-off of cultural studies, popular culture is thought to have emerged during the Industrial Revolution or to have been the consequence of industrialization and a capitalist market economy, two essential socio-economic processes which enabled the Frankfurt School to interpret culture as a mass-production object or, more specifically, as "industry" (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002: 94-136). From this perspective, popular culture has been theorised as a synonym for commodified culture due to revolutionary technologies that have upheld cultural consumption. Notwithstanding these views, popular culture is a concept meant to cause terminological ambiguity, especially when the historical component is at stake. For instance, Tony Bennett (1980: 18) argues that "the concept of popular culture is virtually useless, a melting pot of confused and contradictory meanings capable of misdirecting inquiry up any number of theoretical blind alleys". Bennett's cogent argument can be coupled with Holt N. Parker's

(2011: 169) idea that "nearly all common definitions are inapplicable to any but recent times" (Parker, since the misunderstanding of "popular culture" stems from the wide circulation of post-modern theories that aim to undermine high-brow culture and to turn history into an almost non-existent ingredient. Furthermore, Parker (2011: 152) labels popular culture as a marginal category, a "residual area" utterly opposed to elite culture as long as "'popular' and 'high' represent two nonintersecting sets".

This article examines high culture/the elite in tandem with popular culture/the *vulgus* in early modern England by capitalising on the historical component often ignored by cultural studies. In what follows, I will endeavour to show that history – more precisely what the Annales School has called "anecdotal history", translated as the study of ordinary people and their social experience – connects the "popular" to various meanings of "culture", understood not only as artefacts, but also as customs, beliefs, attitudes and types of behaviour accepted or dismissed by the polite. Acutely aware of regional variations, localised social practices and protocols performed by both men and women, a historical approach to popular culture in the context of early modern England has the potential to reconstruct a culturally diverse past evidenced by historical/archival accounts that stand as living proof of the interaction between two social categories that became separated in the mid-nineteenth century.

2. "High" vs. /and "low"?

A swathe of definitions of popular culture creates a divide between "high" and "low". However, recent scholars and, most notably, historians have pleaded for an interaction between the culture of the elite and that of the unlearned by focusing on a wide array of social, cultural, religious, political and economic factors typical of specific group in space and time. They have revised Peter Burke's binary model examined in his thought-opening study, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, published in 1978, viewing popular culture as a dynamic process that is subject to negotiation and refashioning when discussed in relation to the culture of the toffs. Taken as "the starting point for historical analysis" (Reay 1998: 198), Burke's model has been refuted because "high" and "low" are treated as socio-cultural polarities. Distinguishing between the "great" and the "little" traditions, Burke contends that

> This asymmetry came about because the two traditions were transmitted in different ways. The great tradition was transmitted formally at grammar schools and at universities. It was a closed tradition in the sense that people who had not attended these institutions, which were not open to all, were excluded. In a quite literal sense, they did not speak the language. The little tradition, on the other hand, was transmitted informally. It was open to all, like the church, the tavern and the market-place, where so many of the performances occurred. (Burke 2009: 55)

In spite of this "asymmetry", Burke (2009: 55) draws attention to the fact that low culture was shared by the aristocracy, who also "participated in the little tradition as a second culture". The historian expounds on the causes that have led to the separation of the two cultural categories by the early nineteenth century, among which the most relevant are the moral and religious reform of the uncouth, the rise of literacy, early modern capitalism and politeness and the aftermath of the Scientific Revolution. Though Burke fails to perceive "high" and "low" as fully interdependent, his excellent analysis promotes popular culture as a wide-ranging, rather than residual, field: "Speaking of the 'little tradition' in the singular suggests that it was relatively homogeneous, which was far from being the case in early modern Europe" (Burke 2009: 56).

This line of argument has turned out to be a fertile ground for further research that looks at popular culture as context-bound, i.e. deeply anchored in the socio-economic and cultural realities of the early modern period. By following in the footsteps of the Annales School representative Roger Chartier, whose cultural historical analysis encompasses regional, rural v. urban, religious, gender or age-based divisions, current critics and historians of popular culture have urged for an analytical model that reveals different uses of beliefs, objects and attitudes the uncivilised borrowed from the elite. For a historian like Barry Reay (1998: 201), this manner of assimilating high-brow culture elements goes hand in hand "with a recognition of culture as *process*" (emphasis in the original). Martin Ingram (1995: 95) has rightfully observed that Burke's theory does not shed light on "the infinite gradations of the social hierarchy", nor can it be appropriately employed to capture regional variety or gender roles. Bob Bushaway (2002: 344) has questioned the notion of class, arguing that seventeenth-century British society differs from the eighteenth-century one in which "general labels such as 'the labouring poor' or 'the lowest orders' are usually employed". Bushaway (2002: 345) explores eighteenth-century popular culture via E.M. Thompson's coinage of "the patrician-plebeian dichotomy" that "accords with the views of eighteenth-century contemporaries such as Fielding and Goldsmith". In an attempt to reconcile the "mob", a term initially recorded in English around 1600 and used in the first decades of the eighteenth century, with the polite, the study of popular culture has concentrated on the way in which the *vulgus* was responsive to the elite's social conventions, regulations, education, laws, etc., as well as on the manner in which the latter "participated in the little tradition", as Burke (2009: 55) suggests.

Observations on the Popular Antiquities of Great Britain is John Brand's well-known antiquarian work that unravels collective social practices, of which some were enjoyed by patricians themselves. "Connived at by the state" (Brand 1849: xi), the preservation of plebeian ceremonies, rituals, oral lore, superstitions, prophecies, popular religion and popular literature are the hallmark of "customary consciousness" (Bushaway 2002: 350). Cases of shared cultures did exist before the late eighteenth century. Reay explains how astrology and medicine were used by both high and low culture, yet for different purposes. The former included the systematic astrology of

natural philosophers, which "reinforced providential ways of viewing the universe" (Reay 1998: 214) and popular (pseudoscientific) astrology, which dealt with the way in which the stars influenced people's life. The latter was practiced by physicians who "were amazingly eclectic in their approaches, drawing on the panoply of folk as well as classical remedies […] The poor did visit surgeons and physicians".

Works on popular culture in early modern England have lately brought into discussion the question of gender deemed as a standard of virtue. Susan Dwyer Amussen provides useful information on the instability of gender as a socially constructed category. Inextricably linked to marriage, sexuality and household management, gender was concerned with the traditional status of women, whose task was to defend their chastity, to obey their husbands and to have sex only within marriage. Amussen's original approach deconstructs such a stereotypical approach by detailing on women's inferiority to men as a consequence of their limited access to education, property, law and professional instruction. Concurrently, her study has the merit of revising Burke's thesis, according to which "there is too little to say about women, for lack of evidence" (Burke 2009: 81). After elaborating on women's use of violence, particularly women beating their husbands who suffered public shaming, such as charivaris or skimmington rides, Amussen (1995: 67) concludes by saying that eighteenth-century popular activities and practices were also premised on political and cultural improvements "from the nature of the state to medical conceptions of women's bodies". This case study is expressive of how everyday behaviour, beliefs and attitudes have played a significant role in understanding gender in tandem with the political and cultural background of the early eighteenth century.

3. Methodological issues

When it comes to methodology, it is virtually impossible to deal with popular culture by having recourse to a single or specific critical perspective. Contemporary scholars have addressed the question whether there are authentic sources meant to enable us to delve into the "little" tradition, particularly because research on popular culture has been the exclusive preserve of the high class. This is why our perception of popular culture has been the result of what has been written by polite authors, who saw the uncouth "from above", who ridiculed, satirised or portrayed them in a distorted manner. As Tim Harris (1995: 6) has cogently noted, plebeian work, practices, recreations and leisure must not be mistaken with "what the elite perceived and feared". By the same token, John Mullen and Christopher Reid (2000: 15) insist that the excerpts they have selected are written by refined authors, whose literary productions and discourse depict the rabble "with approval, condescension, or hostility". Nevertheless, Mullan and Reid reinforce Harris's idea that there must be a mutual relationship between "high" and "low" and that both categories should be studied as a whole. Since current scholarship regards the practitioners of popular culture as actors, it is natural to claim that they were deeply engaged in the

construction of their own identity and cultural consciousness. Bob Bushaway provides a telling example which runs counter to the perception of popular culture as cultural pariah:

> To view eighteenth-century popular culture as merely a surrender to animal passions is to take the stance of many contemporary critics, such as the radical reformer Francis Place, who emphasized those aspects whilst minimizing the richness and diversity of a culture which might connect the visionary world of William Blake and the literary aspirations of John Clare, as well as the complexity of alternative knowledge based upon the observation of the natural world or the opportunities for self-preservation and the ability to overcome the setbacks of fate which Place's own father demonstrated. (Bushaway 2002: 345)

The printed oral literature recorded by John Brand and Henry Bourne, two of the most famous antiquarians of the eighteenth century, is another methodological tool that proves to be problematic when we attempt to determine the originality of folk-tales, folksongs, ballads, proverbs, holidays, etc. gathered by twentieth-century collectors. In this respect, Tim Harris (1995: 8) suggests that many of them "owned their origins to musical hacks or even professional composers who published for a living".

Ecclesiastical and secular court records are serviceable instruments that may allow critics and historians to grasp the culture of the commoners in terms of appropriate methodology. According to Harris,

> Rather than struggling to overcome the limitations of the sources, which might not, in the end, be particularly productive, a better approach could be to play to the sources' strengths. That is, since the sources tell us about the interaction of elite and popular culture, maybe we should make the nature of that interaction the focus of our study, rather than the attempt to isolate what was purely popular, which could end up being a futile endeavour. (Harris 1995: 10)

The advent of the culture of politeness makes Harris's model complete. Standardised in the early decades of the eighteenth century, politeness began to be exercised with the help of conduct manuals which inculcated the virtues of civility and literacy into servants, the labouring poor and shopkeepers so as to perfect their communicative and trading skills. Also, politeness was a dual process, promoted through refined social skills displayed by both the aristocracy and the middle class and through the bargaining and advertising goods of the lower sort. The rise of early modern capitalism, which was conducive to the commercialization of society, were crucial means of disseminating literacy, recreational activities, printed books, newspapers, provincial theatre and sports to plebeians. In this context, politeness acted as a socio-cultural element that helped low culture resist hegemony "without adopting the unruly ethos of less respectable forms of radicalism" (Mullan and Reid 2000: 15).

4. Conclusion

This article has made the case that the "high"-"low" binary opposition theorised by Peter Burke has spawned a large number of studies which treat popular culture as a historically and culturally dynamic process. By seeking to reconstruct a more accurate image of popular culture, seen in its performative dimension and entwined with, rather than excluded by, the culture of the elite, current scholarship in the field has mounted solid arguments and has offered convincing answers which heavily rely on archival evidence and historical anecdotes that tell the story of what happens "below". Last but not least, they have sparked further debates related to methodological concerns about the life, manners, cultural artefacts, attitudes, beliefs, rites, ceremonies and recreations of the poor. It has scrutinised regional specificities and cultural variations in which gender plays an important role and has brought to light evidence of material and cultural history which attests to popular culture's own identity and consciousness in early modern England.

References

Amussen, Susan Dwyer. 1995. "The Gendering of Popular Culture in Early Modern England" in Harris, Tim (ed.). *Popular Culture in England, c. 1500-1850*. London: Macmillan, pp. 48-68.

Bennett, Tony. 1980. "Popular Culture: A Teaching Object" in *Screen Education*, 34, pp. 17-29.

Brand, John. 1849. *Observations on the Popular Antiquities of Great Britain: Chiefly Illustrating the Origin of Our Vulgar and Provincial Customs, Ceremonies, and Superstitions*. Arranged, Revised and Greatly Enlarged by Sir Henry Ellis. London: H. G. Bohn.

Burke, Peter. 2009 (1978). *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*. 3rd edition. Farnham: Ashgate.

Bushaway, Bob. 2002. "Popular Culture" in Dickinson, Harry Thomas (ed.). *A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Britain*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 344-357.

Harris, Tim. (ed.). 1995. *Popular Culture in England, c. 1500-1850*. London: Macmillan.

Horkheimer, Max and Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno. 2002. "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception" in Schmid Noerr, Gunzelin (ed.). *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. Trans. by Edmund Jephcott. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, pp. 94-136.

Ingram, Martin. 1995. "From Reformation to Toleration: Popular Religious Cultures in England, 1540-1690" in Harris, Tim (ed.). *Popular Culture in England, c. 1500-1850.* London: Macmillan, pp. 95-123.

Mullan, John and Christopher Reid (eds.). 2000. *Popular Culture in Eighteenth-Century England: A Selection*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Parker, Holt N. 2011. "Toward a Definition of Popular Culture" in *History and Theory*, 50 (2), pp. 147-170.

Reay, Barry. 1998. *Popular Cultures in England 1550-1750*. London and New York: Longman.

SUMMER DRESSES ON A MAP OF ANXIETY: RECURSIVE TROPES AND PHILOSOPHICAL MEMES IN DONALD BARTHELME'S SHORT STORIES

ALEXANDRU BUDAC

West University, Timișoara

Abstract: *Highly formalistic, whimsical, unrelentingly inventive, Donald Barthelme is most critical when ostensively frivolous. Barthelme's grab on both popular culture and high-brow art feels natural and proves a remarkable philosophical edge. My paper tackles some of his short stories' most poignant motifs and especially those of unhappy couples and urban anxiety in order to single out Barthelme's existential concerns.*

Keywords: *Donald Barthelme, Søren Kierkegaard, New York, repetition, marriage, anxiety*

1. Introduction: the exuberant contrarian

Amongst the writers who have been reshaping American literature since the '60s, Donald Barthelme stands alongside the neglected. The madly digressive and playful work of this dedicated aesthete has resisted imitation. Barthelme placed himself in a motley tradition that disheartens emulation while encouraging it at the same time, a tradition which includes Heinrich von Kleist, Franz Kafka, S. J. Perelman, Ernest Hemingway and Samuel Beckett (Barthelme 1997f: 277). His gift is the short prose. Even his novels read at a fast pace like short stories in disguise, and some of his short stories were in fact failed novels, as Barthelme pointed out honestly each time his force powers as a writer came under discussion (Barthelme 1997d: 202). Zany and concise, appropriating genres freely and merging them brazenly, Barthelme's fictions single out topoi in order to render them once more in unconventional manners. As novelist David Gates (2003: x) put it, "For Barthelme, plots and characters aren't fiction's *raison d'être,* but good old tropes it might be fun to trot out again". However there is more at stake than the repetition of what has already been done.

Barthelme's repetitions and pastiches equate invention. His stories are more about loss than about retrieving, and convey a melancholic longing after those things that we cannot put back in our lives. For him, "the artist's effort, always and everywhere, is to attain a fresh mode of cognition" (Barthelme 1997a: 5). One might say, regarding Barthelme's own art, that gaining knowledge and emotion comes at a price. The formalistic enchantment of the eye and the ear not only puts the world around in a new light; it spawns anxiety too. Barthelme turns the Aristotelian notion of action upside down. At least this seems to be the conclusion of one of his characters at the end of the funny story "Jaws":

> I don't believe that what we are is what we do, although many thinkers argue otherwise. I believe that what we do is, very often, a poor approximation of what we are – an imperfect manifestation of a much better totality. Even the best of us sometimes bite off, as it were, less than we can chew. (Barthelme 2005: 56)

A lapsed Catholic (Barthelme 2001: 10-12), Barthelme is nevertheless a disconsolate searcher, albeit not an embittered one. His secular epiphanies, reverberating at times with mock-monastic undertones, are overtly aesthetic. They scintillate in fragments, quotes, collages, aporetic dialogues, *non sequiturs*, children's talk, caresses restrained halfway. One cannot make the present state of affairs better by brooding about the past or endlessly reassessing gestures which cannot be undone, yet literature can repeat the past and, through repetition, restore both the writer and the reader to a better understanding of their situation.

2. Throwing down a gauntlet to Kierkegaard

The Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, one of Barthelme's constant references, considers worrying for the future a specifically human trait and one of the most pointless sources of anxiety in our everyday life at that: "the next day is a powerless nothing, unless you yourself give it strength" (Kierkegaard 2010: 161). Christian faith alleviates and even annuls anxious expectations concerning the next day, because, once eternity is acknowledged as a certain fact and not sought after, the believer may immerse in her or his present tasks undisturbed (Kierkegaard 2010: 155-156). Donald Barthelme strips Kierkegaard's conviction of its religious cloak and reformulates it in the terms of New York immanence. In a long radio interview he gave to Charles Ruas and Judith Shermann back in 1975, he said that life was a game we could not win but must learn constantly to play well. We tend to deal rather poorly with our fears, usually by living in denial (Barthelme 1997e: 221-223). In a crowded metropolis, even the simplest acts (answering the doorbell or answering the phone) turn out to be fraught with anxiety, not so much out of fear of violence as of responsibility. Like when you walk down the street, someone collapses and you switch to a frantic interrogative mood:

What are you going to do? Are you going to handle yourself well? Are you going to do the right thing? Are you going to keep walking, as many people do, mostly out of fear of not being able to perform adequately in this emergency? And again, in New York very often because it happens so often. (Barthelme 1997e: 222)

This kind of distress verging on paranoia – whereas Thomas Pynchon renders political paranoia as one of his distinctive literary tropes, Barthelme's paranoia may seem rather domestic, yet no less torturing – is brilliantly capitalized in "The Agreement" and "Concerning the Bodyguard", stories made up exclusively of compulsive questions, which inspired Padgett Powell's *The Interrogative Mood: A Novel?* (2009) (we should remember that Powell is one of Barthelme's former students at University of Houston where he taught creative writing).

In 1843, after the broken engagement with Regine Olsen, Kierkegaard published a thin book entitled *Repetition* under the pseudonym Constantin Constantinus, itself a repetition, as one attentive reader noticed. The name might suggest either a steady object or someone who seeks constancy (Mooney 2006: 283, 285). Kierkegaard opted for the literary form, blending novella and the romantic epistolary in order to enhance his irony. The book opens with the daring remark that repetition provides a new philosophical ground, akin to and also different from the Greek recollection: "Just as they [the Greeks] taught that all knowledge is recollection, thus will modern philosophy teach that life itself is a repetition" (Kierkegaard 2009: 3). By acknowledging that our life recurrences are a rehearsal for eternity, one should embrace repetition as a stance toward individual self-choice (Mooney 2006: 295, 297) or, to put it otherwise, as "the will to undergo possibilities that could become transcendent" (Bloom 2002: 200). Although he ruminates on the issue in ethical, aesthetic and religious terms, Kierkegaard's main concerns are marriage and the possibility of restoring lost loves. It is also here that the book's irony resides, considering that he was not able to become a husband and thus turns himself into "a mere parody of repetition" (Bloom 2002: 200). Definitely such a comic contradiction could not escape Donald Barthelme's grasp.

Barthelme's repetitions also fall short of their avowed goal, be they metaphysical undertakings or attempts to heal broken erotic bonds. "The Leap" is a sparkling banter involving two unnamed characters, who bring to mind Beckett's Vladmir and Estragon in *Waiting for Godot* (Gates 2003: xiv) committed to finally making the leap of faith. They urge each other, contradict each other, digress, disagree with Kierkegaard on willing one thing in life, and find various topics meant to boost their praising of God's work, paying attention to faithfully conform to etiquette:

> — We are but poor lapsarian futiles whose preen glands are all out of kilter and who but for the grace of God's goodness would–
> — Do you think He wants us to grovel quite so much?
> — I don't think He gives a rap. But it's traditional. (Barthelme 2003: 378)

When the discussion comes to erotic love – "He who hath no love is a sad cookie" (Barthelme 2003: 379) – they decide to postpone the act of faith once again.

In "Kierkegaard Unfair to Schlegel" – this time the literary subversion comes in the shape of a jocular Q & A, where "A" might stand for both "answer" and "author" (Wilde 1976: 59) – the Danish philosopher's belief that religion is the true reconciliation with actuality (Barthelme 2003: 159) turns out as another elaborated beating around the bush. In other words, Kierkegaard's concept of irony becomes the object of Barthelme's irony. "A" tries to be doing the serious thinking, namely philosophical reasoning, but his efforts are constantly marred by yielding to the fantasy that he is actually traveling by train across France, with a girl wearing a blue skirt as companion.

Tony Tanner (qtd. in Wilde 1976) detects in Donald Barthelme's work a "note of yearning for an unknown somewhere else", a perception that Alan Wilde is eager to amend by pruning it of metaphysical overtones: "Barthelme is, then, less seriously attracted by an escape into the realm of total otherness than by the temptation to find *within* the ordinary possibilities of a more dynamic response" (Wilde 1976: 58-59). Actually the story brings forth the old tension between the philosophical discourse and poetics, and, in the history of Western thought, it is Søren Kierkegaard, even more than Nietzsche, who managed to define philosophical concepts through literary tropes. No wonder this "poet of ideas", as Harold Bloom (2002: 200) calls him, found such an unconventional American heir in Donald Barthelme, who rightly assessed the destructive effect of irony:

> Now, consider an irony directed not against a given object but against the whole of existence. An irony directed against the whole of existence produces, according to Kierkegaard, estrangement and poetry. The ironist, serially successful in disposing of various objects of his irony, becomes drunk with freedom. He becomes, in Kierkegaard's words, lighter and lighter. Irony becomes an infinite absolute negativity. (Barthelme 2003: 158)

But is such freedom attainable? When the questioner asks for an answer, "A" prefers to digress, and digression is another kind of irony, a literary one. Thus the girl on the train reveals herself not just as a common masculine fantasy. She stands for reconciliation with a philosophical failure. The tension between Kierkegaardian irony and its poetic expression translates, as Wilde rightly notices, into the disparity between the author's personal drama and the literary means he chooses to articulate it (Wilde 1976: 60).

In his earlier story "Me and Miss Mandible", Barthelme revisits a dream most of us cherish, namely reliving childhood. Joseph, the first person narrator, used to work for an insurance company until he took sides with the injured. The next thing he remembers is being sent back to the sixth grade, a classroom Gulliver, as he describes himself. Jerome Klinkowitz identifies a kafkaesque premise and likens the story to *The Metamorphosis* (Klinkowitz 1991: 15-17), but I beg to differ. With the

exception of the sudden change in their quotidian routine, Gregor Samsa and the American misfit do not have much in common. Barthelme's protagonist does not undergo a metamorphosis, not even in a metaphorical sense. His diary opens with an unequivocal entry:

> Miss Mandible wants to make love with me but she hesitates because I am officially a child; I am, according to the card index in the principal's office, eleven years old. There is a misconception here, one that I haven't quite managed to get cleared up yet. I am in fact thirty-five, I've been in the Army, I am six feet one, I have hair in the appropriate places, my voice is a baritone, I know very well what to do with Miss Mandible if she ever makes up her mind. (Barthelme 2003: 17)

While working as an insurance adjuster, he was out of place and learned "to see the world as a vast junkyard" (Barthelme 2003: 18), but back at the elementary school, it feels like old times and Joseph integrates smoothly. He has forgotten most of what he once learned, so he finds an opportunity in recapping basic arithmetic – his biggest fear being not to be transferred to "a setup for exceptional children" (Barthelme 2003: 26). He rediscovers the pleasure of reading magazines during the class, the bawdy poetry of nicknames, how easily one can make new friends, endures teasing from roguish Bobby Vanderbilt, enjoys sandwiches during recess, gets rid of some bad habits such as drinking, hides in the boy's restroom to smoke, and is chastely flattered at the thought that he is a true object of jealous desire for the ingenuous Sue Ann Brownly. Joseph feels different only in matters of sexuality. This is what makes him special in the eyes of his colleagues, and this is also why the teacher, Miss Mandible, keeps "a lubricious eye" on him (Barthelme 2003: 21). Otherwise Joseph is baffled by the generation gap:

> When Bobby Vanderbilt, who sits behind me and has the great tactical advantage of being able to maneuver in my disproportionate shadow, wishes to bust a classmate in the mouth he first asks Miss Mandible to lower the blind, saying that the sun hurts his eyes. When she does so, *bip!* My generation would never been able to con authority so easily. (Barthelme 2003: 20)

Actually, Barthelme pokes fun at a common fantasy while subtly expressing his skepticism toward a pure notion of free will: if the chance to repeat the childhood with the mindset of an adult had been granted to you – let us say, a fresh possibility to choose your friends carefully, to avoid behaving foolishly with your first love, to follow your vocation – would you improve the actual state of affairs? Barthelme's implicit answer seems to be "You would probably make the same choices with a few insignificant amendments, such as filling your sandwiches with ham and cheese instead of your mamma's peanut butter".

One day Joseph finds on Miss Mandible's desk a text regarding the means by which every detail in the educational process, common fractions included, must be imbued with social significance. Therefore the child will learn to cope with life's

vicissitudes. He finds the idea as preposterous as the tabloid news his classmates read under the desks. Knowing every aspect of movie stars' private life would not make one a better lover. This sort of thinking produces only obedient individuals like the custodian who does not question the Board of Estimate classroom furniture – "He has pointed out that if the desk size is correct, then the pupil size must be incorrect" (Barthelme 2003: 26) – or insurance adjusters who do not question their working in the interest of the company.

> The theorists fail to realize that everything that is either interesting or lifelike in the classroom proceeds from what they would probably call interpersonal relations: Sue Ann Brownly kicking me in the ankle. How lifelike, how womanlike, is her tender solicitude after the deed! Her pride in my newly acquired limp is transparent; everyone knows that she has set her mark upon me, that it is a victory in her unequal struggle with Miss Mandible for my great, overgrown heart. (Barthelme 2003: 22)

When what was meant to happen between the thirty-five years old pupil and the flirtatious teacher finally happens, Joseph is not, in Klinkowitz's words, "as happy as an adult, yet as safe as a child" (Klinkowitz 1991: 19). He is not safe at all. He is just childish without the excuses of a Bobby or a Sue Ann.

On a much tender note, "Bishop" and "Visitors" offer snapshots from the life of a forty-nine years old divorcé art historian named Bishop, who lives in New York and is writing a book on the 19th century American painters William Michael Harnett and John Frederick Peto. Both artists were from Philadelphia, like Barthelme, and painted still-life, namely human waste, old, worn, rusted objects in disarray, violins, guns, books turned to shreds, sometimes nailed on wood planks. Harnett's and Peto's popularity was due to their mastering of the trompe l'oeil technique. In the story that bears his name, Bishop, not quite at peace with aging, is waiting all day long for his lover, Cara, a divorced woman like himself, while musing on his grandparents' solid marriage – possibly a "domestic ideal" (Lacy 2008: 647) – convinced that someday they would come back to life. The passing of time is evoked through objects: amounts of alcohol in the glasses, spirits brands, commercials, television shows and films, phone call lists, and, most conspicuously, a forlorn bouquet of paper-wrapped daffodils on the apartment's bar. Bishop is also a remarkable cook, and gastronomic art is not just another sort of repetition. It is built into his seduction method.

"Visitors" allows us a glimpse into Bishop's affectionate relation with Katie, his teen daughter, who lives with her mother in London and spends the summers in New York. Katie is ill and Bishop puts her to sleep by giving her unorthodox lectures on the history of art. She urges him to find himself someone, to put an end to his solitary life. Actually Bishop has just found someone to cook his magnificent cassoulet for, a beautiful brunette named Christie, who likes Robert Redford. Yet beyond the sensual promises of good smells and glass clinking and heated talk about movies and contemporary art and ex-partners, one can guess another fall out of love

coming. Most probably, Bishop would use the same excuse once more – "Best I can do" (Barthelme 2005: 99) – and would be harboring grudges against his neighbours:

> Looking out of the windows in the early morning he can sometimes see the two old ladies who live in the apartment whose garden backs up to his building having breakfast by candlelight. He can never figure out whether they are terminally romantic or whether, rather, they're trying to save electricity. (Barthelme 2005: 104)

As in Harnett's paintings, there is more to Donald Barthelme's stories than meets the eye, and, like Søren Kierkegaard, he found marriage hard to sustain. However, we are still beginning to learn how his idiosyncratic aesthetics exposes moral issues in a burst of laughter.

There is no cure for existential angst: "What do you do with a patient who finds the world unsatisfactory? The world *is* unsatisfactory; only a fool would deny it" (Barthelme 2003: 191). This is what "The Sandman" is about. A man writes a letter to his girlfriend's psychiatrist, Dr. Hodder, to teach him a lesson. According to the sender, they nickname the shrink after the character of a nursery rhyme – "Sea-sand does the sandman bring/ Sleep to end the day/ He dusts the children's eyes with sand/ And steals their dreams away" (Barthelme 2003: 185). However, one cannot miss the allusion to Sigmund Freud's (2001) *The 'Uncanny'*, which opens with a famous analysis of a story by E.T.A. Hoffmann, "Der Sandmann". Like Freud, Barthleme writes not only about complexes and drives, but mainly about how art relates to anxiety.

> Any reading of literature (I mean the theory of artistic creation), however summary, will persuade you instantly that the paradigmatic artistic experience is that of a failure. The actualization fails to meet, equal, the intuition. There is something "out there" which cannot be brought "here." This is standard. I don't mean bad artists, I mean good artists. There is no such thing as a "successful artist" (except, of course, in worldly terms). (Barthelme 2003: 190)

Here, Barthelme echoes Ludwig Wittgenstein rather than Freud, for whom the aesthetic and religious experience (and ethics too) prove the limits of language (Wittgenstein 1998: 108). There is always an underlying skepticism in Barthelme's choice of a particular literary form and he aptly persuades the reader that, in his prose, art and love are somehow interchangeable. Like human life itself, nothing comes down to binary possibilities as in the Greek logic. The letter-writing man explains to the doctor that Susan, his depressive girlfriend, does not need improvements. She is wonderful, not in spite of her weaknesses, but precisely because of them, and her anxieties should be approached by a lover, intimately, not through a cold clinical jargon (Barthelme 2003: 192; Wilde 1976: 64).

An even more embarrassing, yet pretty much similar issue brings unhappiness to a gay couple in "Rebecca". The main protagonist, Rebecca Lizard, tries in vain to change "her ugly, reptilian, thoroughly unacceptable last name" (Barthelme 2003:

275). After confronting an implacable judge, she tries her luck with a dermatologist. Her skin has a greenish hue. This is just one of the knacks in the story, considering that the reader is made to ponder whether the woman suffers indeed from such a bizarre condition or if it is just the unfortunate name that casts a green shade over her whole body (almost every object and state of affairs, such as the greenish glow of the television set, the movie called *Green Hell*, the taxonomy of reptilian species in the *Larousse Encyclopedia of Animal Life* seem to conspire in upsetting Rebecca). The not so minor detail works brilliantly in the narrative and especially in the dialogues between Rebecca and Hilda, her girlfriend. When Rebecca, hating herself, has a fit of unjustified jealousy, the latter gives well-meant assurances that she can love her "*in spite of –*" (Barthelme 2003: 278), thus adding insult to injury. We are not told whether the two women manage to settle into a truce, because the narrator cuts in:

> The story ends. It was written for several reasons. Nine of them are secrets. The tenth is that one should never cease considering human love, which remains as grisly and golden as ever, no matter what is tattooed upon the warm tympanic page. (Barthelme 2003: 179)

This may be a little bit too didactic, but an erotic bond expressed in the form of a warm literary tattoo definitely suits Rebecca Lizard's emerald skin.

Donald Barthelme's concern with the power of language to communicate private experiences (aesthetic emotion, moral predicament, religious faith or love in its various acceptations) does not imply that he makes any concession to the "ineffable". He detested this word precisely because "it suggests that there might be something that is ineffable." It is an artist's duty to find the proper means of expression in order to make public his/her attitude toward the world, that is to affirm a personal truth without falling back on a fuzzy euphemism (Barthelme 1997c: 65). "Style is not much a matter of choice. […] Rather it is both a response to constraint and a seizing of opportunity. Very often a constraint is an opportunity" (Barthelme 1997b: 22).

Journalist Edward Connors in "Lightning" has to write a reportage on people struck by lightning as an assignment. For commercial reasons, his editor in chief wants nine cases, no more, no less, and an exceptional story of somebody "slightly wonderful" for the opening page. This adds up to ten different confessions which must have a common denominator, plus a photogenic face, to turn the whole frightening experience glossy. Connors is the right person for the job. He is a blasé, divorced middle-aged man, like Bishop, a hard-boiled journalist who worked for business news, luxury life-style magazines, wrote reviews of classical records, travel pieces, and even exposés for pornographic publications (Barthelme 2005: 162-163).

The interviewees tell him how their lives unfolded after the event: some of them underwent religious conversions, others, less mystically prone, just changed their attitude toward the world around. One can see a spectrum emerging. The bolt

brings to light the worst or the best in people. A dumb man named Stupple became dumber and joined the American Nazi Party, while a Trappist monk who is fond of rock music reveals to Connors that there is no sin in enjoying both St. Augustine and the Cars. However the reporter cannot draw a unifying conclusion. He puts down in his notebook an empty phrase: "*Lightning changes things*" (Barthelme 2005: 164).

When Edwina Rawson gives Connors a call, the journalistic inquest becomes another kind of opportunity. She is an attractive African-American lingerie model. It is Connors' turn to be struck by lightning, namely to fall in love. Unlike the others, self-reliant Edwina does not ponder too much on her meteorological blow. It burned her eyebrows for sure and put an end to a marriage which was already falling apart. Beyond that, her life seems accomplished as ever, most probably as a result of a different mind-setting, which lacks the "cautious, be-prepared, white folks' attitude toward life", as she puts it (Barthelme 2005: 166). Edwina is easy-going in a smart and pretty sophisticated way. Connors apprehends this not only during their casual conversation, but also when confronting his editor's – who boasts about staged dramatism and racy photos – layout kitsch with Edwina's natural beauty and the incommunicable experience *per se*.

> "We've got these terrific shots of individual bolts, I see a four-way bleed with the text reversed out of this saturated purple sky and this tiny but absolutely wonderful face looking up at the bolt–" "She's black," said Connors, "you're going to have trouble with the purple, not enough contrast." "So it'll be subtle," said Penfield excitedly, "rich and subtle. The bolt will give enough snap. It'll be nice."
>
> Nice, thought Connors, what a word for being struck by lightning. (Barthelme 2005: 168-169)

Therefore Edward Connors employs the flat phrase in his article, mentions religious awakening as the most conspicuous consequence of being struck, and uses the word he loathes the most, "ineffable". Barthelme's story notwithstanding does not tackle the ineffable, but the sometimes cynical methods (especially the writer's use of people) through which private acquaintances become public characters, and those specific emotions, desires, unuttered thoughts which one has to deal with empathically during human conduct. Every first date is an interview after all, on which everything that comes after depends.

3. Conclusion: a sunless "Mythos of Summer"

For Donald Barthelme, philosophical ideas were points of departure and points of endless returns at the same time. He believed that art was about playing, invention, and protean thinking, not about prescription, that "the purpose of literature is to renew the language of the tribe" (Menand 2009). Despite the appearance of formalistic excess that his fiction exhibits, Barthelme was right in defending it, by

claiming that each phrase has moral weight, "but it's the morality of an attempt", not a prescriptive one (Barthelme 1997g: 300).

Barthelme is also a particularly late romantic. He wrote urban romances, damaged "*Mythoi* of Summer", to use Northrop Frye's (2000: 185-192) famous metaphor, anxious adventures, unsuccessful quests for a Paradise that never was, in which the heroine's/hero's worst antagonist is herself/himself. Barthelme's stories are not quite sunny, but they are gleeful nevertheless.

References

Barthelme, Donald. 1997a (1964). "After Joyce" in Herzinger, Kim (ed.). *Not-Knowing: The Essays and Interviews of Donald Barthelme*. With an Introduction by John Barth. New York: Random House, pp. 3-10.

Barthelme, Donald. 1997b (1987). "Not-Knowing" in Herzinger, Kim (ed.). *Not-Knowing: The Essays and Interviews of Donald Barthelme*. With an Introduction by John Barth. New York: Random House, pp. 11-24.

Barthelme, Donald. 1997c (1986). "A Symposium on Fiction: Donald Barthelme, William Gass, Grace Paley, and Walker Percy" in Herzinger, Kim (ed.). *Not-Knowing: The Essays and Interviews of Donald Barthelme*. With an Introduction by John Barth. New York: Random House, pp. 58-82.

Barthelme, Donald. 1997d (1974). "Interview with Jerome Klinkowitz" in Herzinger, Kim (ed.). *Not-Knowing: The Essays and Interviews of Donald Barthelme*. With an Introduction by John Barth. New York: Random House, pp. 199-206.

Barthelme, Donald. 1997e (1975). "Interview with Charles Ruas and Judith Sherman" in Herzinger, Kim (ed.). *Not-Knowing: The Essays and Interviews of Donald Barthelme*. With an Introduction by John Barth. New York: Random House, pp. 207-260.

Barthelme, Donald. 1997f (1981). "Interview with J.D. O'Hara" in Herzinger, Kim (ed.). *Not-Knowing: The Essays and Interviews of Donald Barthelme*. With an Introduction by John Barth. New York: Random House, pp. 274-292.

Barthelme, Donald. 1997g (1981). "Interview with Jo Brans: *Embracing the World*" in Herzinger, Kim (ed.). *Not-Knowing: The Essays and Interviews of Donald Barthelme*. With an Introduction by John Barth. New York: Random House, pp. 293-308.

Barthelme, Donald. 2003 (1982). *Sixty Stories*. Introduction by David Gates. London: Penguin Books.

Barthelme, Donald. 2005 (1987). *Forty Stories*. Introduction by Dave Eggers. London: Penguin Books.

Barthelme, Helen Moore. 2001. *Donald Barthelme: the Genesis of a Cool Sound* (Tarleton State University Southwestern Studies in the Humanities). Texas: A&M University Press.

Bloom, Harold. 2002. *Genius: a Mosaic of One Hundred Exemplary Creative Minds.* New York: Warner Books.

Freud, Sigmund. 2001 (1919). "The *Uncanny*" in *An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works* (The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, volume XVII). Translated from the German under the General Editorship of James Strachey. In collaboration with Anna Freud. London: Vintage, pp. 217-252.

Frye, Northrop. 2000 (1957). *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays.* With a new Introduction by Harold Bloom. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Gates, David. 2003. "Introduction" in Barthelme, Donald. *Sixty Stories*. London: Penguin Books, pp. ix-xx.

Kierkegaard, Søren. 2009 (1843). *Repetition and Philosophical Crumbs*. Translated by M.G. Piety. With an Introduction by Edward F. Mooney. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kierkegaard, Søren. 2010 (1848). "The Anxieties We Invent Ourselves" in *Spiritual Writings*. Selected, translated, and with an Introduction by George Pattison. New York: Harper Collins, pp. 151-163.

Klinkowitz, Jerome. 1991. *Donald Barthelme: an Exhibition.* Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Lacy, Robert. 2008. "The *Bishop* Stories of Donald Barthelme" in *The Sewanee Review*, 116 (4). The Johns Hopkins University Press, pp. 645-650.

Menand, Louis. 2009. "Saved from Drowning: Barthelme Reconsidered" in *The New Yorker*, February 23 [Online]. Available: http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2009/02/23/saved-from-drowning [Accesed 2017, September 03].

Mooney, Edward F. 2006 (1998). "*Repetition:* Getting the world back" in Hannay, Alastair and Gordon D. Marano (eds). *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 282-307.

Powell, Padgett. 2009. *The Interrogative Mood: a Novel?* New York: Harper Collins.

Wilde, Alan. 1976. "Barthelme Unfair to Kierkegaard: Some Thoughts on Modern and Postmodern Irony" in *Boundary 2,* 5(1). Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 45-70.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1998 (1921). *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Translated by C.K. Ogden. With an Introduction by Bertrand Russell. New York: Dover Publications.

CHINUA ACHEBE'S *AFRICAN TRILOGY* AND THE DUAL CONSTRUCTION OF THE OHER

CRISTINA CHIFANE

Independent Scholar

LIVIU-AUGUSTIN CHIFANE

"Dunărea de Jos" University, Galați

Abstract: *Folowing Lacan's distinction between the other, defining the identity of the self, and the great* Other, *in whose gaze the subject gains identity, this article analyses the consequences of such a differentiation in postcolonial theory and literature. To this purpose, the authors resort to Spivak's understanding of the dialectal process of othering in order to examine the consequences of the double misrepresentation of the* O/other, *leading to the rather pathetic failure of Chinua Achebe's characters in the novels belonging to his* African Trilogy: Things Fall Apart *(1958)*, No Longer at Ease *(1960) and* Arrow of God *(1964)*.

Keywords: *imperial discourse*, O/other, *othering, postcolonial literature, postcolonial theory*

1. Introduction

From a Lacanian perspective, doubled by a postcolonial approach to literature, the analysis and understanding of the character development in Chinua Achebe's novels *Things Fall Apart* (1958), *No Longer at Ease* (1960) and *Arrow of God* (1964) asks for a brief preamble into Lacan's view of the Imaginary, Symbolic and Real, as well as into Spivak's in-depth decomposition of the dialectal process of *othering*.

According to Lacan (2006), the Imaginary Order is triggered by the Mirrror stage of the individual's development, during which the child experiences the world through images and holds on to the illusion of control over its environment and, more specifically, over its mother (the Desire of the Mother). The illusion of fulfillment and control is soon shattered by the separation from the intimate union with the mother, which represents the individual's most important experience of loss, haunting him throughout his entire life. In Lacanian terms, the lost object of desire

is *object petit a*, with the letter *a* standing for *autre*, the French word for *other*. The acquisition of language plunges the child into the Symbolic Order, a symbolic system of meaning-making which changes the mother into an *other* and involves the greater experience of separation from all the *others*, an entire world of separate people and things. The repression of the desire for the union with the mother initiates the split into conscious and unconscious mind, since the unconscious desire refers to the search for the lost object of desire, the fantasy mother of the preverbal experience:

> Thus, if man comes to think about the symbolic order, it is because he is first caught in it in his being. The illusion that he has formed this order through his consciousness stems from the fact that it is through the pathway of a specific gap in his imaginary relationship with his semblable that he has been able to enter into this order as a subject. But he has only been able to make this entrance by passing through the radical defile of speech, a genetic moment of which we have seen in a child's game, but which, in its complete form, is reproduced each time the subject addresses the Other as absolute, that is, as the Other who can annul him himself, just as he can act accordingly with the Other, that is, by making himself into an object in order to deceive the Other. (Lacan 2006: 40)

The Symbolic Order brings along the replacement of the Desire of the Mother with the Name-of-the-Father; at a more general level, through language, people are socially programmed to learn the rules and prohibitions of a society which is still authored by the Father, by men in control. After all, the individuals' responses to society's ideologies shape their personalities and dictate who they are: "The satisfaction of human desire is possible only when mediated by the other's desire and labor" (Lacan 2006: 98). The great Other (language, ideology, any authority figure or accepted social practice) is responsible for the creation of people's subjectivity or in Lacan's words, "the unconscious is the Other's discourse" (2006: 21). Apart from the Symbolic, the Real is beyond all human meaning-making systems, that is, outside the world created by the ideologies society uses to explain existence: "what did not come to light in the symbolic appears in the real" (2006: 325). The trauma of the Real makes people realize and be afraid of the fact that the reality hidden beneath the ideologies society has created is a reality beyond their capacity to know and explain and, therefore, certainly beyond their capacity to control.

The complex relationship between the Lacanian Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real undoubtedly affects the character development in Chinua Achebe's *African trilogy*. There are characters embodying the Imaginary Order by plunging into a fantasy, a delusional world; at the level of the Symbolic Order, ideology and social norms are in full control of the characters' behaviour and there seem to be moments when characters have flashes of the Real, that dimension of existence which terrifies them so much, that a possible encounter has devastating effects.

In *The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives* (1985), the postcolonial critic G.C. Spivak tackles the issue of three random examples of

othering. Firstly, she uses Captain Geoffrey Birch (assistant agent of the Governor in India) as an illustration of what the dialectal process of *othering* may mean: "He is actually engaged in consolidating the self of Europe by obliging the native to cathect the space of the Other on his home ground. He is worlding their own world, which is far from mere uninscribed earth, anew, by obliging them to domesticate the alien as Master" (Spivak 1985: 253). Spivak moves even further by adding that the assumption of the existence of an uninscribed earth makes "the worlding of a world" possible and "generates the force necessary to make the 'native' see himself as 'other'" (254). The second example is that of Major-General Sir David Ochterlony, who seems to perceive imperialism in terms of a social mission with its victims assuming "an obligation in the long run" (255). The last example concerns some deletions from a letter made to the Governor General by the Board of Control of the East India Company with the purpose of showing how Imperialist desire is being articulated as a law to be obeyed. All three modes of representation are indicative of the heterogeneous character of the dialectal process of *othering*:

> (a) the installment of the glimpsed stranger as the sovereign subject of information - the agent an instrument: Captain Geoffrey Birch; (b) the reinscription of right as being-obliged - the agent the stereotype of the imperialist villain: Major-General Sir David Ochterlony; (c) the divided master in the metropolis issuing desire proleptically as law: the agent anonymous because incorporated. (257)

What binds together all the different facets of the process of *othering* is perhaps the inherent contradiction contained in the colonialist surmise of an "uninscribed earth" (264). Under the circumstances, all three protagonists in the African trilogy (the great Umuofia warrior and tribesman Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart*, Ezeulu, the chief priest of Umuaro, in *Arrow of God* and Obi, Okonkwo's England-trained nephew, in *No Longer at Ease*) reflect the impact of the process of *othering* on both the individual destiny of the people chosen as protagonists and, on a larger scale, on the social, economic and political issues at stake before, during, and after British colonization.

2. *Things Fall Apart* (1954) or the first encounter with the *O/other*

The postcolonial issue of the *O/other* helps the readers to see through the thicket of culture specific rituals and identify a behavioural pattern of all the protagonists in the African trilogy. Subsequent re-readings of *Things Fall Apart* diminish the initial impact of the elements of cultural specificity and allow for an analysis of both the individual and community reactions when confronted with the O/other, where the Lacanian distinction designates the other "who resembles the self" and the great Other "in whose gaze the subject gains identity" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 2007: 155). Critics have drawn the attention to the concentration of Achebe's first novel on "background cultural information" (Whittaker and Msiska

2007: 7) and "the vivid picture [...] of Igbo society at the end of the nineteenth century" (Carroll 1990: 32) more than on the proper development of the plot; what we aim to demonstrate is that such strategy was necessary precisely for stressing the issue of cultural difference and setting the ground for the characters' encounter with the great Other, represented by the colonizing power. The other two novels of the African trilogy preserve the elements of cultural specificity, but nowhere with the same emotional force and power of impact as in *Things Fall Apart*. What Chinua Achebe wonderfully seeks to achieve in his novel is to represent the subaltern who, in Spivak's eyes, lacks a history and a voice and whose identity lies in its difference; as a consequence, "the intellectual's solution is not to abstain from representation" (Spivak 1994: 80). Once giving the issue of cultural clash its full credit, we can move beyond to what some critics have rightfully called "the novel's universality" (Whittaker and Msiska 2007: 38), thus prefiguring what will later crystallize in Achebe's novels *A Man of the People* and *Anthills of the Savannah*.

The first part of *Things Fall Apart* slowly and skilfully reconstitutes the atmosphere characteristic of the Igbo community, from the daily rituals of breaking the kola nuts to description of important ceremonies, such as The Feast of the New Yam. The village crier summons everybody to the market square, where all important decisions are taken to the benefit of the entire community; such is the decision at the beginning of the story not to go to war against the neighbouring clan of Mbaino for killing a daughter of Umuofia. Retrospectively, the readers learn of the perpetuation of Okonkwo's belonging to the Imaginary Order in the sense that his father Unoka is not a strong enough figure for the replacement of the Desire of the Mother with the Name-of-the-Father to actually take place. Facing the Symbolic order controlled by the tough men of the Igbo community, where physical strength and wealth are important social criteria, Okonkwo "had no patience with his father" (Achebe 2010: 5), whose artistic other he was unable to understand. Being "a man of action, a man of war" (2010: 9) and a great wrestler, he manages to acquire a place of high esteem in the Umuofia community and is the one whom they entrust Ikemefuna for a period of three years. In spite of growing fond of the boy, Okonkwo takes part in his killing for fear of seeming weak and being marginalized by his clan; in other words, the strong sense of affiliation to the clan becomes an element of cultural specificity in itself and represents a characteristic of a society ostensibly unbreakable by exterior forces.

The villagers' inquisitive spirit paves the way for the first mention of the white men, which is dropped as if by accident in a relaxed atmosphere, when Okonkwo and his friends are gathered in Obierika's hut, for a suitor has come for his daughter. They show no fear of these white men, they are just thinking of them with curiosity, wondering if they have toes; they are trying to hide their ignorance by making jokes and comparing the white men with the leper Amadi, since, as the narrator notices, "the polite name for leprosy was the white skin" (Achebe 2010: 53). This narratorial comment preceded by the villagers' reflections mark the debut of a long process of *othering*, whose complexity will increase gradually and which will have far-reaching

consequences for the major characters in all the novels belonging to the African trilogy. The double misrepresentation of the O/other (the *other* — the natives; the *Other* — the colonizers) turns out to be the main reason behind life-changing decisions entirely based on the characters' false assumptions about those whom they perceive as their opponents.

When he is banished to his mother's village for seven years (see again a reiteration of the preverbal fantasy of the union with the mother) for accidentally killing a young man, Okonkwo feels twice rejected: both by his former friends and tribesmen and by his relatives, in spite of their efforts to ensure all his comfort. It is Obierika who first introduces the story of the extinction of the village of Abame, when he visits Okonkwo in his second year of exile. According to his story, the people of Abame killed the first white man that came to their village out of an irrational fear of the unknown: "The elders consulted their Oracle who told them that the strange man would break their clan and spread destruction among them. [...] And so they killed the white man and tied his iron horse to their sacred tree because it looked as if it would run away to call the man's friends" (2010: 97). Lack of communication made it impossible for the people of Abame to understand the white man: "What did the white man say before they killed him?" asked Uchendu. "He said nothing", answered one of Obierika's companions. "He said something, only they did not understand him", said Obierika. "He seemed to speak through his nose" (Achebe 2010: 98). Their initial act of violence brought along more white men, who killed almost all the people of the clan.

Okonkwo's absence from his village coincides with the missionaries' arrival in Umuofia. The only consolation the leaders of the clan had was that the handful of converts belonged to "efulefu, worthless, empty men" (2010: 101). When the white man comes to Mbanta with stories of the New God, Okonkwo rejects him completely and considers his words sheer madness. The rulers of Mbanta first gave the missionaries the land of the evil forest to build their church; in this way they expressed their scepticism and rejection.

Okonkwo's son Nwoye is drawn to the new religion because of his frustrations with some of his clan's customs: abandoning the new born twins in the evil forest or the ritual retribution killing of Ikemefuna as a compensation for the killing of a woman in his clan. Okonkwo's violent reaction to what he considered his betrayal alienates Nwoye even further: he leaves his family behind and joins the Christian mission in Umuofia, where they had set up a school to teach the natives to read and write.

The thought of his son's alienation and implicitly of *the other* is completely unacceptable to Okonkwo, who foresees the destruction of an entire world: "Okonkwo felt a cold shudder run through him at the terrible prospect, like the prospect of annihilation. He saw himself and his father crowding round their ancestral shrine waiting in vain for worship and sacrifice and finding nothing but ashes of bygone days, and his children the while praying to the white man's god" (108). Unable to think of any other way of reacting to such an outcome, Okonkwo

considers resorting to violence once again: "If such a thing were ever to happen, he, Okonkwo, would wipe them off the face of the earth" (Achebe 2010: 108).

On Okonkwo's return to Umuofia, Obierika tells him how the white men managed to divide their order by winning their brothers and turning them against their older traditions and customs: "The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peacefully with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart" (124). Similarly to Okonkwo in terms of the inability to accept what is different, Reverend James Smith refused to make any compromise and believed in a clear dichotomy between black and white: "He saw things as black and white. And black was evil. He saw the world as battlefield in which the children of light were locked in mortal conflict with the sons of darkness. He spoke in his sermons about sheep and goats and about wheat and tares. He believed in slaying the prophets of Baal" (130). The head messenger who carries the white man's message forbidding the clan's gathering is killed by Okonkwo on the spot as a representative of the Other menacing to suffocate Umuofia and destroy its lifestyle. Okonkwo's choice to hang himself further alienates him from his clan, since, according to their custom, it is an abomination for a man to take his own life; he cannot be buried by his clansmen, as his body is evil and only strangers can touch it. The protagonist's death is the result of his incapacity to deal with the great Other, stemming from his childhood rejection of his father's way, which will be reiterated by his son Nwoye in rejecting Okonkwo's view of the world. All in all, there seems to be something inherent in people's frustration in the face of the other.

3. The misrepresentation of the *O/other* in *Arrow of God* (1964)

The relationship between a father and his son as well as the implications of the process of *othering* form the backbone of Achebe's *Arrow of God* too. Unlike his people, Ezeulu, the Chief Priest of Umuaro, is willing to understand the *Other*; for this reason he sent his son Oduche to learn about the new religion and the white man's customs. Gradually, his fear of assimilation makes him doubt his previous decision: "But now Ezeulu was becoming afraid that the new religion was like a leper. Allow him a handshake and he wants to embrace. Ezeulu had already spoken strongly to his son who was becoming more strange every day" (Achebe 2010: 330). When his other son Nwafo explains to Ezeulu that the bell calls people to leave their yam and coco-yam to go to church, the high priest associates the bell with "the song of extermination" (2010: 331).

For his part, Captain T. K. Winterbottom is angry because of the order he receives to ensure native rule in Africa; he considers that the people in charge at the center are totally unaware of the reality on the field: "Words, words, words. Civilization, African mind, African atmosphere. Has His Honour ever rescued a man buried alive up to his neck, with a piece of roast yam on his head to attract vultures?"

(343). What Winterbottom conveniently seems to forget, when he remembers how the attempts to have a native rule led to bribery and an exploitative system, is that the natives had done nothing but imitate the white men's rule. Along the same lines, Mr. Wright's sense of his own superiority and contempt for the natives is obvious: "Many of them were, of course, bone lazy and could only respond to severe handling. But once you got used to them they could be quite amusing" (363). When Obika and his friend Ofoedu arrive late to work for the new road, Mr. Wright does not hesitate to whip Obika or to call them all "black monkeys" (Achebe 2010: 369).

The narrator in *Arrow of God* notices that an outsider could never fully understand the relationships in a different community: "A stranger to this year's festival might go away thinking that Umuaro had never been more united in all its history" (2010: 354). Moses Unachukwo warns his people that there is nothing they can do to escape white man's power: "[…] I knew there was no escape. As daylight chases away darkness so will the white man drive away all our customs" (371-372).

At the gathering of the age group to which Obika and Ofoedu belong, Nweke Ukpaka tries to make its members understand that the fear of the unknown makes people behave in a certain way: "What a man does not know is greater than he. Those of us who want Unachukwo to go away forget that none of us can say *come* in the white man's language. We should listen to his advice" (373).

The entire misunderstanding leading to Ezeulu's downfall rests on a lack of communication and on the misrepresentation of the *other*: although Captain Winterbottom wants to make Ezeulu chief over the entire village, the essence of his message is entirely distorted on the way. Interpreting Ezeulu's refusal to come as a sign of defiance and contempt, Winterbottom signs an arrest warrant for him and then falls ill.

When Ezeulu refuses to be the white man's chief, his respect and reputation among his own people reach an unprecedented level; his anger with his own people is reflected by his attitude toward them: "As long as he was in exile it was easy for Ezeulu to think of Umuaro as one hostile entity" (471). Upon his return, he realizes that "All these people who had left what they were doing or where they were going to say welcome to him could not be called enemies" (Achebe 2010: 471). To make his people acknowledge their mistake of forsaking him in the hands of the white man, Ezeulu refuses to set the date for the New Yam Feast; by doing this, he becomes the *Other* in their eyes: "Almost overnight Ezeulu had become something of a public enemy in the eyes of all and, as was to be expected, his entire family shared his guilt" (2010: 495). Obika's death plunges Ezeulu into madness and Umuaro into Christianity, as in order to harvest sooner, they offer the yams to the God of the new religion and thus, forced by circumstances, they embrace the *Other*.

4. *No Longer at Ease* (1960) – the misshapen appropriation of the *O/other*

The novel's motto from T. S. Eliot's *The Journey of the Magi* prefigures the topic of *otherness* and alludes to what happens in Nigeria of the 1950s, when the

action takes place: "We returned to our places, these kingdoms,/ But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,/ With an alien people clutching their gods./ I should be glad of another death." (151).

The first chapter of this chronologically last novel of the African trilogy makes reference to a club in Lagos which is open to Englishmen and Africans alike, but where "few Africans went to" with the exception of the stewards who "served unobtrusively" "in their white uniforms" (154). The narrator's remarks voice the colonizers' general attitude toward the natives: "It was quite possible to go in, drink, sign a cheque, talk to friends and leave again without noticing these stewards in their white uniforms. If everything went right, you did not see them" (154). On the same wavelength, Obi Okonkwo's former boss, Mr. Green, does not see the natives as individual people with their own identity, but as a collectivity incapable to change and therefore not to be trusted: "The African is corrupt through and through" (154); "They are all corrupt" (155). The irony is that, despite his pretense of being an advocate for equal rights, Mr. Green looks at the Africans with nothing but contempt and preserves the typical colonizer's attitude towards those whom he considers his inferiors: "Hello, Peter. Hello, Bill. Hello. Hello. May I join you? Certainly. Most certainly. What are you drinking? Beer? Right. Steward. One beer for this master" (155). The narrator's message is that such an attitude is practically responsible for Okonkwo's grandson's failure.

Although Obi accepts that the Umuofia Progressive Union should pay for his studies in England, he is not fully aware of what this brings along for him in the long run. Upon his return, his people are eager for him to get a job from the government, which they perceive as the great *Other*: "Have they given you a job yet? the chairman asked Obi over the music. In Nigeria the government was 'they'. It had nothing to do with you or me. It was an alien institution and people's business to get as much from it as they could without getting into trouble" (178). Obi is in fact forced to deal with a corrupt system that seems to affect all levels of society and which places bribery at its very core. His interpretation of the lines of the song he hears during his journey to his village stresses the consequences of the invasion of the *Other*: "the burden of the song was 'the world turned upside down'" (188), as according to the lyrics, somebody killed his in-law and a fisherman's paddle speaks English. Both acts are inconceivable in the Igbo culture and are perceived as instances of great treachery.

As the narrator notices, the *Other* loses its fascination once known and mastered: "Nowadays going to England has become as commonplace as going to the village green" (188). Back in his hometown, Obi feels a surge of patriotism listening to his people speak: "Let them come to Umuofia now and listen to the talk of men who made a great art of conversation. Let them come and see men and women and children who knew how to live whose joy of life had not yet been killed by those who claimed to teach other nations how to live" (191). In their turn, the people of Umuofia question Obi about his journey to England in their attempt to understand the mystery of the *Other*. Their embrace of Christianity is a curious blending

between elements of their pagan-beliefs and new rituals they learn from the whiteman's church; for example, Obi's father preserves the ritual of kola breaking, but instead of using it as a "heathen sacrifice" (192), he dedicates it to Jesus Christ.

Burdened with various financial debts, Obi refuses to accept a bribe at the beginning, but finally plunges into the corrupt system propagated by the great colonizing *Other* and supported by his own people; arrested for taking a 20-pound bribe, he is facing trial and prosecution amidst the hypocritical general claim of a lack of understanding for the actions of such a promising young man.

5. Conclusion

The analysis of all three novels has hopefully proved that the dual construction of the *O/other* is accountable for the tragic consequences of the act of misrepresentation, caused by the characters' rigid adherence to one type of Symbolic Order and obstinance in at least acknowledging the existence of the Real, where any human ideologies are no longer important.

To provide the marginalized population with a voice of its own, Achebe chooses his protagonists as representatives of the natives and accompanies them throughout three distinct moments of their encounter with the great *Other*, each of them offering an alternative perspective of the colonizers for a better understanding of the reasons beyond their failure.

References

Achebe, Chinua. 2010. *The African Trilogy*. New York, London, Toronto: Everyman's
    Library.
Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. 2007. *Postcolonial Studies Reader. The
    Key Concepts*. London and New York: Routledge.
Carroll, David. 1990 (1980) *Chinua Achebe. Novelist, Poet, Critic*. New York: St. Martin's
    Press, Inc.
Lacan, Jacques. 2006 (1966). *Écrits*. The First Complete Edition in English. Trans. Bruce
    Fink in collaboration with Héloïse Fink and Russell Grigg. New York, London: W.W.
    Norton & Company.
Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty 1985. "The Rani of Sirmur" in Barker, Francis, Peter Hulme,
    Margaret Iversen and Diana Loxley (eds.). *Europe and its Others*, vol. 1, Proceedings
    of the Essex Conference on the Sociology of Literature July 1984. Colchester:
    University of Essex, pp. 128-151.
Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty 1994. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in Williams, Patrick and
    Laura Chrisman (eds.). *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory. A Reader*. New
    York: Columbia University Press, pp. 66-111.
Whittaker, David and Mpalive-Hangson Msiska. 2007. *Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart*.
    New York: Routledge.

WHO IS THE ENEMY? THE BLURRED LINES OF HISTORY IN JOSEPH HELLER'S *CATCH-22*

OLIVIA CHIROBOCEA

"Ovidius" University of Constanța

Abstract: *This study explores the concept of* enemy *in Joseph Heller's novel,* Catch-22. *Heller attempts a demystification of core American values and uses black humour, the absurd, insanity and a disrupted timeline as literary devices to illustrate his interpretation of history. Whether in time of war or peace, the concept of* enemy *is never clear cut, but full of nuances. Values such as patriotism or justice are lost in petty interpersonal conflicts or sacrificed to the pursuit of material profit, as the meaning of* enemy *can easily shift back and forth between the limits* friend *and* foe.
Keywords: Catch-22, *demystification, enemy, history, Joseph Heller, war*

1. Introduction

The Second World War projected Americans into the collective memory as heroes, liberators of corrupted and decadent Europe, the collapsed centre of the Western world. But history is recorded subjectively. For the Japanese, for example, Americans were the *destroyers of worlds*, and, from a major aggressor, Japan became the epitome of victimhood, as nothing could be worse than being destroyed by a nuclear bomb. This is a simple illustration of how perception shifts and victim and aggressor, friend and foe become ambiguous terms. American postmodernist writers of the 1960s (Joseph Heller, Kurt Vonnegut, Thomas Pynchon, Robert Roripaugh) approached this issue and offered in their novels an alternative perspective on history, showing that everything in real life is nuanced. They held a mirror in front of America and showed their readers the corruption hidden behind the propaganda. They exposed their nation's own problems and suggested that the differences between the *bad guys* and the *good guys* were not so clear cut.

Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* is one of the most famous anti-war novels of all times, or rather it is "anti-misuse or abuse of power" (Meredith 1999: 5). At the same time, it is a resourceful allegory of the post-war American society with its new values, rise of technology, loss of spirituality, and prevalence of shallowness and materialistic needs, escalated by the advent of television and popular culture, which

gave way to a loss of individual identity in a world more and more devoid of fundamental meaning. One of the most important demystifications attempted by Heller in particular and other writers of the time in general is the idea perpetuated by propaganda that war is a glorious battle between good and evil, between fundamentally *good guys* and fundamentally *bad guys*. In this attempt, the military establishment, with its colossal bureaucracy, inefficiency, redundancy, absurd, dehumanizing greed and indifference towards the individual (Meredith 1999: 4) is satirized from page one and is used as an allegory for the problems of the post-war society in the United States.

2. Post-War America

At the end of the Second World War, Europe began its reconstruction under the watchful eyes of the two major powers that had divided it between them, the United States and the Soviet Union. Slowly, the joy of victory turned into suspicion, secrecy, subversiveness, and a constant race between two contestants ready to do anything to get ahead and prove their superiority. This state of tension between the West and the East was known as the Cold War. In the United States, this period was characterized by a general paranoia and fear of Communism, Russian invasion and nuclear war. The fear was stoked by the numerous successes registered by the Soviet Union, among which the launching of the first satellite into space – Sputnik – in 1957, the testing of their first hydrogen bomb in 1961 and the gaining of allies in many countries with communist regimes. All these increased American paranoia, which reached its pinnacle in 1962 with the Cuban missile crisis. The Cold War was probably the most fertile ground for intelligence agencies and the many spies they sent to destabilize or simply gather information all over the world, which maintained an atmosphere of mistrust.

The most important weapon used by both sides, the East and the West, in this conflict was propaganda, which had successfully proven its utility before and during the war. Now it was used to perpetuate in the mind of the populations of both sides the idealism of *our* virtues and *their* evils. In discussing the situation during the Cold War in the United States, Derek C. Maus suggests the authority in power uses propaganda to maintain the status quo and the perception of *us* and *them*, friend versus foe:

> According to the patriotic schema, U.S. virtues and enemy evils are not meant to change, even if the specific enemy identity is subject to change. The purpose of propaganda, whether directly issued by members of the government or indirectly disseminated by an accommodating media, is thus to preserve the status quo, in terms of both the power structure […] and the ideology behind that power structure […]. (Maus 2011: 35)

Fuelled by the enthusiasm America experienced at the end of the Second World War, and with the hardships of the Great Depression long forgotten, the United States could see nothing but a very bright future: "There was no time like this in American history. Americans honestly believed they could do anything, achieve any goal: stop communism, bring an end to poverty, send rockets into space, end racism, build a house and provide two cars for everyone, cure any disease". (Donaldson 1997: xiii). That same enthusiasm backed by propaganda sent Americans to *solve* the problems of Korea and Vietnam by ridding them of the evils of communism, but with far less successful outcomes. In the meantime, the home front was busy with domestic problems, such as the McCarthyist witch hunts, helped and amplified by vicious propaganda – part of the Red Scare episodes of the 1940s and 1950s – the atomic bomb paranoia, and the civil rights movements of the 1960s. The underlying condition of the post-war American society was fear and mistrust. The overt image, however, displayed a booming economy and a strong desire for life and freedom.

3. The concept of *enemy* – perception and reality

In writing *Catch-22*, Heller is inspired by his memories of the war experience, but also, and to a large extent, by the American realities of the post-war years. He specifically targets the military for its absurd and tyrannical actions using it as an allegory for society. B.T. Lupack argues too that war is not the main concern in *Catch-22*, but the satire on contemporary society, and she indicates that the novel targets the military establishment, the capitalistic enterprise and the conflicts contemporary with the time the book was written, suggesting in this respect the novel's "lack of ideological debate about the conflict between Germany and the United States or about definitions of patriotism." (Lupack 1995: 24). All the events mentioned previously – the communist menace abroad and inside the American administration, the beginning of the Cold War, the nuclear threat – all these increased the anxiety and paranoia of the population. In fact, the Republican party won the elections in 1946 by using this very propaganda on fear (Donaldson 1997: 47). This approach is a constant in American society, as the culture of fear is often used by politicians in order to advance their agenda. This is meant to create distrust and blur the line between friend and foe, confusing the terms. Postmodernist literature, in a similar way, adopted these fears and translated them into fiction, often using mental insanity and schizophrenia, with its pervasive symptom of paranoia, as a recurring literary device.

Joseph Heller is not the only writer of the time raising similar concerns about society and the military establishment, and challenging the concept of *enemy*. Kurt Vonnegut's protagonist in *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969), Billy Pilgrim, does not have many negative encounters with the Germans, but is constantly bullied and belittled by his own companions (Vonnegut 1991: 111) and attacked with bombs by allied planes in Dresden. Robert Roripaugh's protagonist in *A Fever for Living* (1961) battles the same system in a hopeless struggle as the novel tackles "the abuse of the

rights, feelings, and moral consciousness of the individual soldier by the U.S. Army" (Axelsson 1990: 30), suggesting that "the military system and practices reflect and sum up the negative traits and tendencies in society." (Axelsson 1990: 31). Similarly, Yossarian in *Catch-22* has few encounters with the Germans, but he perceives his life constantly endangered by his own people such as colonel Cathcart that invariably raises the number of required missions, or Milo that closes a deal with the Germans to bomb their own squadron (Heller 2003: 267). Therefore, Yossarian believes the enemy is anyone who is trying to kill him: "the enemy is anyone who is going to get you killed, no matter what side he's on" (Heller 2003: 134).

The subversion of the idea of *enemy*, as evidenced previously, is pervasive in *Catch-22*. The protagonists, engaged in a real war with an official enemy, the Germans, are in fact harassed, bullied and have their physical and mental states threatened by a surprisingly familiar enemy, their very own commanding officers and the entire American army with its abusive practices. Thus, Yossarian's relativity towards the idea of *enemy* is justified. James A. Aho offers a definition of the concept of *enemy*:

> The warrior needs an enemy. Without one there is nothing against which to fight, nothing from which to save the world, nothing to give his life meaning. What this means, of course, is that if an enemy is not ontologically present in the nature of things, one must be manufactured. (Aho 1994: 26)

According to this explanation, Yossarian and his mates are neither heroes nor warriors, but victims, as they do no search for an enemy to justify their heroism, but are harassed by two: a closer and more insidious one – the army, and a more distant but official one – the Germans. The higher ranks, however, manufacture their own enemy, which is not the obvious one, the Germans, whom they actually admire, but the lower ranks, the enlisted men, whom they usually regard as an inferior race or an obstacle in their rise to glory.

In fact, the *enemy* is a mystifying concept for everyone on Pianosa. Nobody seems to notice there is a war going on, as Yossarian remarks in chapter 2 (Heller 2003: 25), and that the enemy is the German army. Instead, everybody is involved in petty jealousies, absurd ambitions and silly conflicts among themselves. The two generals are declared enemies, as General Peckem states: "Dreedle *is* the enemy. General Dreedle commands four bomb groups that we simply must capture in order to continue our offensive. Conquering General Dreedle will give us the aircraft and vital bases we need to carry our operations into the other areas." (Heller 2003: 332). Captain Black is in conflict with Major Major and undermines everyone with his revenge tactics. Chief White Halfoat is in conflict with Flume, Hungry Joe with Huple's cat and Milo signs contracts with the Germans to bomb his own squadron.

Logics and perception of *reality* are elements that determine who the *enemy* is. The unjustified and cruel interrogations of Clevinger and Tappman are evidence in this regard for Yossarian to challenge the concept. Thus, Clevinger is court-

martialled without an actual cause: "The case against Clevinger was open and shut. The only thing missing was something to charge him with" (Heller 2003: 80). Before the Action Board "Clevinger was guilty, of course, or he would not have been accused, and since the only way to prove it was to find him guilty, it was their patriotic duty to do so." (Heller 2003: 90). This sentence is transparently a reference to the hearings of the House Un-American Activities Committee and Senator McCarthy's investigations, when people's very presence at the hearings was proof of their guilt (Fried 1997: 116). Clevinger, a young man of true principles, was shocked by the injustice and unreasonable hatred displayed by the Board against him:

> These three men who hated him spoke his language and wore his uniform, but he saw their loveless faces set immutably into cramped, mean lines of hostility and understood instantly that nowhere in the world, not in all the fascist tanks or planes or submarines, not in the bunkers behind the machine guns or mortars or behind the blowing flame throwers, not even among all the expert gunners of the crack Hermann Goering Antiaircraft Division or among the grisly connivers in all the beer halls in Munich and everywhere else, were there men who hated him more. (Heller 2003:91)

The void of justice and rationality is well illustrated by this unfair hearing of poor Clevinger, who was in fact not guilty of anything. He was a victim of circumstance, like most of those wrongfully accused of communist sympathies during the witch hunt of the 1950s. The committees that investigated communist affiliations also hid behind the curtain of patriotism in order to carry on their unfair trials and similarly initiated a regime of terror by launching "a campaign based on fears, innuendo, and smears to track down Communists in government" (Young and Young 2004: 14).

In regards to what constructs the idea of *enemy*, Alan Nadel offers an interesting analysis of the conversations between Yossarian and Clevinger in their attempt to ascertain how the notion of *enemy* is determined in their situation where "events do not mandate interpretation but rather interpretation determines perception and thus predetermines 'reality'" (Nadel 1995: 170). Clevinger (a Harvard undergraduate, "one of those people with lots of intelligence and no brain", Heller 2003: 77) still maintains traditional opinions about the logical placement of higher ranks, and sees them as trustworthy individuals whose position speaks for their merits: "There are men entrusted with winning the war who are in a much better position than we are to decide what targets have to be bombed" (Heller 2003: 133). Yossarian, on the other hand, has no such naïve convictions. The members of the Action Board that interrogate Clevinger need an enemy to justify their status and that is more important than the criteria for distinctions:

> Although even their own systems of classification show that Clevinger is not their enemy, Clevinger remains their enemy. The need to differentiate between ally and enemy upon which the officers' status as officers and their identity as soldiers depends takes precedence over any criteria for difference. They need to constitute their identity

through the production of an enemy, as Clevinger learns, independent of the criteria for doing so. (Nadel 1995: 171)

Yossarian and Clevinger are in fact disputing the authority to establish the premises of what constitutes the enemy within the narrative of war: "Without a set of assumptions, a body of major premises, such as the idea of a 'national interest' or the presumption of a 'chain of command,' that narrative is untenable." (Nadel 1995: 171).

Yossarian's values are another reference point to his opinions as to who the enemy is. He is antisocial and the anti-hero of the novel, therefore his views are more individualistic. While Clevinger uses reasonable explanations to combat Yossarian paranoid notions by showing him that the Germans shoot at the Allies as a group and not at Yossarian as an individual, Yossarian is not pacified by his belonging to the collective:

> It is this concept of collective identity, and thus collective risk, that Yossarian cannot accept. His refusal to associate himself with the national project or with the collective body under attack leaves him with only one way of comprehending an attack on his unit: it is an attack on him personally. Furthermore, because Yossarian refuses to identify himself with national aims, he views the actions of his own leaders as threats equally hostile and deliberate as those presented by the German forces. (Melley 2000: 65)

War is based on groups and collectivities that are meant to produce a mass, an army that fights another similar mass to protect the boundaries of a territory. And that is what Yossarian takes as an affront to his individuality. He could never accept the ideals of patriotism as they are muddled in the absurd of war and of the military institution.

In the construction of his perspective on enemies, Yossarian is helped by his personal nemesis, colonel Cathcart, who is also recognized as an enemy by others such as Dobbs, who literally wants to kill him. He is callous, menial, opportunistic, shallow, racist, insensitive and indifferent to his men's needs, quite a despicable character. One of the most important ways in which he negatively influences the men's mental and physical state is the continuous increase of combat missions. The purpose for this is very simple and selfish. He hopes this record number of missions flown by his squadron will make him famous among his superiors and they will promote him to general. Believing that, since people die in war anyway, it might as well be his people who die, as that will earn him fame and articles in newspapers, praising the incredible bravery of his squadron. The conversation between the colonel and the chaplain in chapter 19 (Heller 2003: 199-207) brings out more negative traits in his character, as he prefers to segregate the enlisted men from the officers, regarding the former as some inferior race, again a concept reminiscent of Nazi mentality, as well as the reality of the American society up until the 1960s, in which blacks were segregated from whites, as they were deemed inferior. Cathcart's

concern for appearance and "public relations victories over military victories" (Melley 2000: 64) is also shared by the other high ranking officers. Thus, Colonel Cathcart reports to General Dreedle that "General Peckem even recommends that we send our men into combat in full-dress uniform so they'll make a good impression on the enemy when they're shot down" (Heller 2003: 229). The same General is the one who invents the expression "bomb pattern" and he explains: "I think it's important for the bombs to explode close together and make a neat aerial photograph" (Heller 2003: 335).

4. The perversion of values and the ambiguity between *good guys* and *bad guys*

During his interrogation by the Action Board, Clevinger was confused and stunned by the vindictive and maligned expression of his accusers:

> They would have lynched him if they could. They were three grown men and he was a boy, and they hated him and wished him dead. They had hated him before he came, hated him while he was there, hated him after he left, carried their hatred for him away malignantly like some pampered treasure after they separated from each other and went to their solitude. (Heller 2003: 90)

Nowhere in the novel is there a similar hatred expressed by the higher ranks against the actual enemy, the Nazis. In fact, on the contrary, they often emulate Nazi practices and mentality, as exemplified by Tappman's inquiry in chapter 36, which is even more gruesome than Clevinger's inquiry. In an almost Kafkaesque manner, mixed with methods reminiscent of the Gestapo arrests and intimidation techniques, the kind chaplain is taken to a cellar and subjected to a brutal and absurd interrogation for no apparent reason. In fact, when he asks what his crime is, he is told: "'We don't know yet,' said the colonel. 'But we're going to find out. And we sure know it's very serious.'" (Heller 2003: 391). Tappman's aggressive interrogation for ludicrous reasons is a symbol for one of the values hoped to be recovered at the end of the war: justice and fair trial, one of America's greatest prides and democratic principles. However, justice is not a value that the army stands for.

There are numerous other examples of the similarity between Nazi mentality and the mindset of the higher ranks in the American army. General Dreedle believes he has the right to do whatever he wants just because he is a general and he is very surprised when he is told that he cannot simply shoot a man whenever he wants. In chapter 21, during one of the educational sessions he attends, major Damby accidentally moans in the presence of the general's WAC (nurse), but not because of her, and Dreedle orders that he should be taken outside and shot (Heller 2003: 232), a practice reminiscent of Nazi habits. General Dreedle, like other high ranking characters in *Catch-22,* thinks he is almighty and has a right of life and death over everyone.

Totalitarianism and fascism were elements the war was fought against, but the American Army is described by Heller as being exactly that, a fascist and tyrannical institution, with disregard for human life, where the higher ranks do what they want without a sense of responsibility, while madness runs free from top to bottom. As Thomas Reed Whissen observes, when commenting on Dobbs's intention of killing Cathcart:

> Dobb's misguided fanaticism is symptomatic of the larger fanaticism that informs the entire narrative of Catch-22. A democracy has declared war on the fascist powers because they are aggressively antidemocratic, inhumane, and uncivilized. But the U.S. military establishment is repeatedly revealed as being antidemocratic and quasi-fascist. Clevinger, for example, believes that Scheisskopf is sincere in asking for suggestions, and he responds accordingly with several sensible proposals. As a result, he is punished for his presumption, even framed and humiliated in a travesty of justice worthy of the most heinous of Nazi court trials. Cathcart's contempt for enlisted men, Dreedle's flaunting of his privileges, the way Korn insists that disagreement with him is tantamount to disloyalty to the flag, and the sadistic Star Chamber tactics of the men from the C.I.D. all demonstrate that the military is not defending democracy but undermining it. (Whissen 1992: 58)

However, apart from Clevinger and Nately, most of the other characters in this novel are not inflated by true notions of patriotism, a sentiment trumped by the survival instinct. Patriotism, a most dear American value, is demystified by Joseph Heller in *Catch-22*, where it is generally illusive, construed as an euphemism for nationalism (the racist Texan is a patriot), or used as a coercive tactic. In chapter one, Yossarian explains patriotism not as the fight for American symbols like the hot dog or the apple pie, but the fight for the little people, those who should have a say in what happens to them (Heller 2003: 17). He subscribes to this category, as he too is unable to decide for himself and is sent daily into dangerous situations against his will.

The most illustrative example though is Milo Minderbinder, for whom patriotism is not even an issue. He does business with both sides and in fact has a contract with the Germans to bomb his own squadron. His interest is above borders and petty conflicts as corporations do not have friends and enemies, but CEOs and shareholders. But for obvious reasons, Milo could be regarded as a visionary, as a promoter of world peace, resolving conflicts and bringing people together through business. Thus, Milo does not see Germans as the enemy, but as his shareholders and their planes as his syndicate's property:

> "But Milo," Major Danby interrupted timidly, "we're at war with Germany, and those are German planes."
> "They are no such thing!" Milo retorted furiously. "Those planes belong to the syndicate, and everybody has a share. (Heller 2003: 264)

Milo's interest, like any CEO's, is business and profit, while morals, policies and social rules only get in the way. As Yossarian is trying hard to make him see sense and keeps explaining that there is a war going on and he should not do business with the Germans, especially to their benefit, Milo responds: "Maybe they did start the war, and maybe they are killing millions of people, but they pay their bills a lot more promptly than some allies of ours I could name." (Heller 2003: 266). He does draw a line to the Russians, with whom he will not do business (Heller 2003: 264). Ironically, the Russians were America's allies at the time.

In the interest of his ever-expanding business, he betrays all the important human values, though he only sees betrayal in not respecting the "sanctity" of the contract (Heller 2003: 266) and in nothing else, not in playing with people's lives by leaving them without morphine or parachutes, or in getting them killed in missions he organizes, or in helping the Germans for a profit. His syndicate is more important than anything else, and he hides behind "what's good for M & M Enterprises is good for the country" (Heller 2003: 446), a corporatist slogan devoid of meaning in the given context. Mudd, the dead man in Yossarian's tent, is one of Milo's victims, killed over Orvieto in one of Milo's contract missions. Milo Minderbinder eventually gathers so much political power involving the whole world in his business, that it seems truly absurd the two sides are still fighting a war while he is above it all. This is Heller's satire on American materialism and a warning to the rise of corporations that will swallow the world and rule it with their greed, indifference and crooked logics.

Racism, bigotry and the persecution of ethnic minorities were two important issues that moved the war machine. Racism, however, is also something that America is still struggling with. The American wartime propaganda equated Americanism with religious, ethnic, and racial tolerance, while the bigots were "Nazi agents who were working to undermine America's pluralistic unity" (Wall 1997: 210). American society, however, and by extension the army, as portrayed by Heller, were characterized by racism and bigotry, which was often practiced in violent ways in the first half of the 20$^{\text{th}}$ century: lynching, the rise of the Ku Klux Klan, the segregation of American society between whites and blacks at all its levels, the internment of Japanese Americans during the war and the list can continue. *Catch-22* touches upon the issues of racism and intolerance several times. At the beginning of chapter 21, colonel Cathcart is engrossed in his perpetual problem: Yossarian. He makes a list with all the things Yossarian did wrong, such as moving the bomb line during the Siege of Bologna, receiving his medal naked, flying twice over Ferrara, convincing the cook to poison the food, and the fact that he does not even have a proper American name (Heller 2003: 219-223). Thus, Colonel Cathcart finds Yossarian's un-American origin one more reviling fault added to his long list of problems:

> *Yossarian* – the very sight of the name made him shudder. There were so many esses in it. It just had to be subversive. It was like the word *subversive* itself. It was like

seditious and *insidious* too, and like *socialist, suspicious, fascist* and *Communist*. It was an odious, alien, distasteful name, a name that just did not inspire confidence. It was not at all like such clean, crisp, honest, American names as Cathcart, Peckem and Dreedle (Heller 2003: 220).

One must not miss the fact that the colonel lists his name as "honest American", alongside those of two generals, betraying thus yet again his wish to be part of this elite community of higher ranks.

But this is how racism is born, out of hatred or simply ignorance, out of frustration and a need to blame *the other* for your own problems, fuelled by absurd and petty reasons such as names or physical features. The generous and good-natured Texan, with his kind demeanour and a good word for everyone, especially the Soldier in White, is also a racist and a bigot, but to him racism is as normal as a cup of tea:

> There was the educated Texan from Texas who looked like someone in Technicolor and felt, patriotically, that people of means – decent folk – should be given more votes than drifters, whores, criminals, degenerates, atheists and indecent folk – people without means. (Heller 2003: 17).

Even Chief White Halfoat, a victim of racism himself, is a racist, as his paradoxical remarks show: "Racial prejudice is a terrible thing, Yossarian. It really is. It's a terrible thing to treat a decent, loyal Indian like a nigger, kike, wop or spic" (Heller 2003: 53).

Another interesting example of right-wing mentality is captain Black, the intelligence officer who saw subversion everywhere around him, especially in educated people wearing eyeglasses, such as a nameless corporal: "Captain Black knew he was a subversive because he wore eyeglasses and used words like *panacea* and *utopia*, and because he disapproved of Adolf Hitler, who had done such a great job of combating un-American activities in Germany." (Heller 2003: 43). This is also reminiscent of the communists' fear of intellectuals, whom they similarly regarded as subversive and the enemy by definition. Apparently, Captain Black, like other higher ranks in the American army is confused as to what side of the barricade he stands. The U.S. were fighting the Germans and their official state policy was to oppose Hitler. Also, Hitler's intentions were not to combat un-American activities in Germany, but this goes to the admiration some high ranks had for the Nazis, as indicated earlier in this article. In chapter eleven, Captain Black's frustrations regarding his position in the hierarchy direct his hate towards Major Major, who had been appointed squadron commander by colonel Cathcart, in spite of Black's ambition for this position. Thus, he declares that Major Major is a Communist and possibly Henry Fonda. This accusation gives captain Black the possibility to initiate a Glorious Loyalty Oath Crusade, an obvious reference to the Loyalty Oath program, instituted by president Truman after the war in order to eliminate any possible communists from the administration, with negative consequences in society (Fried 1997: 116). Captain Black's Loyalty Oath Crusade reaches absurd proportions when

all the enlisted men and the officers have to sign numerous such Oaths for even the most basic necessities such as food and drink.

5. Conclusion

Joseph Heller, like other American writers of his generation, demystifies the propaganda machine that promoted America as a white knight bringing freedom and justice to the whole world. His novel, *Catch-22*, is as much an anti-war novel as it is an allegory to the post-war American society, with all its major problems and everything that stemmed from the perception of these problems: gratuitous persecutions, racism, xenophobia and a general culture of fear, which is an American political staple, still winning elections to this day. *Catch-22* touches upon many sensitive issues that America holds dear and produces an alternative perspective on history and society. Heller's novel reveals how cruelty, bigotry, fear, indifference, manipulation, shallowness and a relentless pursuit of material gains, in time of war or peace, create a void of humanity and elevate instincts like survival to the top of priorities, erasing other values such as patriotism, justice, or compassion. All these social sentiments, values and prejudices, or lack thereof, shape the concept of *enemy* that can be external or internal, found among what is formally considered friend, shaped based on individual perception, therefore a subjective construct.

References

Aho, James A. 1994. *This Thing of Darkness: A Sociology of the Enemy*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Axelsson, Arne. 1990. *Restrained Response: American Novels of the Cold War and Korea, 1945-1962.* New York: Greenwood Press.

Donaldson, Gary A. 1997. *Abundance and Anxiety: America, 1945-1960*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.

Fried, Albert. 1997. "Inquisition Triumphant" in Fried, Albert (ed.). *McCarthyism: the Great American Red Scare a Documentary History*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 115-156.

Heller, Joseph. 2003 (1961). *Catch-22*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Lupack, Barbara T. 1995. *Insanity as Redemption in Contemporary American Fiction: Inmates Running the Asylum*. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida.

Maus, Derek. C. 2011. *Unvarnishing Reality: Subversive Russian and American Cold War Satire*. Columbia, SC.: University of South Carolina Press.

Melley, Timothy. 2000. *Empire of Conspiracy: The Culture of Paranoia in Postwar America*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.

Meredith, James H. 1999. *Understanding the Literature of World War II: a Student Casebook to Issues, Sources, and Historical Documents*. Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press.

Nadel, Alan. 1995. *Containment Culture: American Narratives, Postmodernism, and the Atomic Age*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Vonnegut, Kurt. 1991 (1969). *Slaughterhouse-Five*. New York: Dell Publishing.

Wall, Wendy L. 1997. "Our Enemies Within: Nazism, National Unity, and America's Wartime Discourse on Tolerance" in Fiebig-Von Hase, Ragnhild and Ursula Lehmkuhl (eds.). *Enemy Images in American History*. Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, pp. 209-229.

Whissen, Thomas Reed. 1992. *Classic Cult Fiction: A Companion to Popular Cult Literature*. New York: Greenwood Press.

Young, William H. and Nancy K. Young. 2004. *The 1950s*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

MULTICULTURAL AUSTRALIA.
NARRATIVES OF CONFLICT, NARRATIVES OF
RECONCILIATION: FROM POLITICIANS' SPEECHES TO
STOLEN GENERATIONS NARRATIVES

RYSZARD W. WOLNY

University of Opole

Abstract: *The aim of this paper is to bring to attention the problem of genuine reconciliation between the black native population of Australia and its (white) European settlers, who have been dominating the nation in terms of political, economic and cultural power since its foundation in 1901. The focus is on political speeches stemming from open conflict to a formal Parliament's apology for mistreatment of, especially, Stolen Generations of the later 20th century, which also has got its reflections in some prominent works of Australian literature, like Sally Morgan's* My Place *(1987) and Kim Scott's* Benang *(1999).*

Keywords: *Australia, culture, migration, conflict, reconciliation, Indigenous peoples*

1. Introduction

The general crisis of the humanities, history in particular, stemming from the instability of meaning and the treatment of history as a narration of past events from a contemporary perspective, makes virtually impossible any serious debate on establishing a set of unifying national values and beliefs in most Western democracies in the world. The problem is far more complex in multicultural nations like Australia, which, to a large extent, do not share a common history or even if they do, it is predominately a history of conflicts. At the turn of the century, however, a renewed salience of Australian native history was observed in the public sphere, resulting, among other things, in the historic 1992 Mabo decision by Australia's High Court, which recognised the Aboriginal people's native title to land.

Therefore, one of the most fundamental problems multicultural Australia has to face in the 2010s is the problem of genuine reconciliation between the native inhabitants of the island and the descendants of white settler population, alongside the more and more disconcerting issue of increasing number of illicit migrants trying to enter the country as "boat people".

This paper, then, attempts to reconstruct some of the narratives of conflict and reconciliation between various late 20th-century Australian governments and Aboriginal people, starting from Paul Keating (1991-1996) and his introduction of land rights for Aboriginal people to the early 21st century Kevin Rudd's famous apology of February 2008.

2. The native title

In order to trace back the long way Australia travelled from the colonial to contemporary time in regards to Aboriginal rights to their land, one has to go back to the 19th-century prevailing views of the rights of the Aboriginal people. At the inaugural meeting of the Aborigines Protection Society in October 1838, Richard Windeyer, a lawyer born in England, proclaimed, with the Bible in his hand, that:

> I cannot look upon the natives as the exclusive proprietors of the soil; nor can I entertain the ridiculous notion that we have no right to be here. I view colonisation on the basis of the broad principle laid down by the first and great Legislator in the command He issued to man "to multiply and replenish the Earth." The hunting propensities of the natives cause them to occupy a much larger portion of land than would be necessary to their support if it were under cultivation. And the only way to make them cultivate it is to deprive them of a considerable portion of it. The natives have no right to the land. The land, in fact, belongs to him who cultivates it first. (qtd. in Dale 2010: 101)

The decisive statement that the "natives have no right to the land" stands in sharp opposition to what Australia's High Court declared a century and half later – they have the right to land, thus paving a way to a genuine reconciliation between the former colonisers and the former colonised. But it took time and a plethora of victims.

Paul Keating, prime minister from 1992 to 1996, launching the Year of the World's Indigenous People at Redfern Park, Sydney, 10 December 1992, presented a vision of prosperous multicultural Australia that was supposed to seek reconciliation with the native inhabitants who had terribly suffered from the hands of the white settlers:

> We took the traditional lands and smashed the traditional way of life. We brought the diseases. The alcohol. We committed the murders. We took the children from their mothers. We practised discrimination and exclusion. It was our ignorance and our prejudice. And our failure to imagine these things being done to us. With some noble exceptions, we failed to make the most basic human response and enter into their hearts and minds. We failed to ask: How would I feel if this were done to me?
> As a consequence, we failed to see that what we were doing degraded all of us […].
> And if we have a sense of justice, as well as common sense, we will forge a new partnership. Ever so gradually, we are learning how to *see Australia through*

Aboriginal eyes, beginning to see the wisdom contained in their epic story [emphasis added, RW]. I think we are beginning to see how much we owe the Indigenous Australians and how much we have lost by living so apart. (qtd. in Dale 2010: 114)

It is, indeed, a rare thing for a politician to speak the language of a literary critic, but the idea of changing the perspective of looking at Australia seems absolutely fundamental and practically unconditional for a genuine reconciliation.

In his *Use and Abuse of Australian History*, an acknowledged Australian historian, Graeme Davison, argues that

[t]he kind of multicultural, prosperous Australia Keating sought could be created, however, only by confronting "the problems which beset the first Australians—the people to whom the most injustice has been done." In perhaps the most quoted, and most controversial, passage in Keating's Redfern speech, the Prime Minister had acknowledged, more fully than any of his predecessors or successors, the moral responsibility of non-Aboriginal Australians for past injustices. (Davison 2000: 4)

Keating's narration of the centuries-long conflict is meant to be a narration of reconciliation, since, if one seeks a genuine reconciliation, one has first to admit one's wrongdoings and then apologise. The self-indictments are of the heaviest kind and uttered in short phrases to strengthen their impact power: diseases, alcohol, murders. In "Rum, Seduction and Death: Aboriginality and Alcohol", Marcia Langton addresses the issue of the "drunken Aborigines", saying that

[i]t would be not too far-fetched to suggest that alcohol was, from the very beginning of British settlement, a crucially important strategy in dealing with Aboriginal people. It must be assumed of the British that […] alcohol was deliberately chosen as an effective way of keeping the truth from him [Bennelong, an Aboriginal], of keeping him too drunk to notice. But more importantly, alcohol was, consciously or unconsciously, used by the British as a device for seducing the Aboriginal people to engage economically, politically and socially with the colony. (Langton 1997: 87)

The then Prime Minister Paul Keating's speech was a clear sign of a complete withdrawal from the British colonial policy and, secondly, that Australia's political leaders had learnt the lesson of the Mabo decision made by the High Court on 3 June 1992, which granted Aboriginal people native title to land (N.B. the High Court is the highest court in Australia's judicial system). The *Mabo* decision was a legal case held in 1992. It is short for *Mabo and others vs Queensland (No 2) (1992)*. The *Mabo* decision was named after Eddie Mabo, the man who challenged the Australian legal system and fought for recognition of the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional owners of their land. What is "native title" then?

Native title is the legal recognition that some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have rights to, and interests in, certain land because of their traditional laws and customs. The rights granted by native title are not unlimited–they depend on the traditional laws and customs of the people claiming title. Other people's interests in, or rights to, the land are also relevant, and usually take precedence over native title. To have native title recognised under the *Native Title Act 1993*, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples must prove that they have a continuous connection to the land in question, and that they have not done anything to break that connection (such as selling or leasing the land) (*reconciliation*, web).

Why is native title important?
Native title is important because dispossession and denial of land was the first act in the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and Europeans; setting the tone for the events that followed. The *Native Title Act 1993* is important because it determines how native title interests are formally recorded and recognised. It sets the rules for dealing with land where native title still exists or may exist. Today, native title has been recognised in more than 1 million square kilometres of land (about 15 per cent of Australia). Indigenous land use agreements set out arrangements between native title holders and others regarding who can access and use the land in question. These agreements play an important role in making native title work for all Australians. There are currently 629 registered Indigenous land use agreements in place. (*reconciliation*, web)

Almost 16 years later, Aboriginal people of Australia finally received an apology for the injustices non-Aboriginal Australians had done to them since the British landed at Botany Bay in 1788. In his address to Parliament in Canberra on 13 February 2008, Kevin Rudd, prime minister from 2007, declared:

Today we honour the Indigenous peoples of this land, the oldest continuing cultures in human history. We reflect on their past mistreatment. We reflect in particular on the mistreatment of those who were stolen generations - this blemished chapter in our nation's history. The time has now come for the nation to turn a new page in Australia's history by righting the wrongs of the past and so moving forward with confidence to the future.

We apologise for the laws and policies of successive parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians. We apologise especially for the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, their communities and their country. For the pain, suffering and hurt of these stolen generations, their descendants and for their families left behind, we say sorry. To the mothers and the fathers, the brothers and the sisters, for the breaking up of families and communities, we say sorry. And for the indignity and degradation thus inflicted on a proud people and a proud culture, we say sorry. (qtd. in Dale 2010: 119-120)

This significant apology has been offered by the leader of the Labour Party who, after the victorious election of 2007, decided to apologise to Indigenous Australians for the injustices caused to them, particularly, to the Stolen Generations of the second half of the 20th century, as one of the first acts of the newly formed government alongside the Kyoto Protocol. Interestingly enough, this momentous decision stood in sharp contrast to the position of the previous Liberal government, which, at Australian Reconciliation Convention in May 1997, rejected the idea of a formal apology: the then Prime Minister, John Howard, was quoted as saying, "Australians of this generation should not be required to accept guilt and blame for past actions and policies" (John Howard. Opening Ceremony Speeches. *Australian Reconciliation Convention*. Web. 27 May 1997). Kevin Rudd, however, made this point strongly in his speech, apologising also for inaction of previous Australian governments, including Howard's. His aim was, as he put it, to heal the nation and look to the future:

> We the Parliament of Australia respectfully request that this apology be received in the spirit in which it is offered as part of the healing of the nation. For the future we take heart; resolving that this new page in the history of our great continent can now be written.
>
> We today take this first step by acknowledging the past and laying claim to a future that embraces all Australians. A future where this Parliament resolves that the injustices of the past must never, never happen again. A future where we harness the determination of all Australians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to close the gap that lies between us in life expectancy, educational achievement and economic opportunity. A future where we embrace the possibility of new solutions to enduring problems where old approaches have failed. A future based on mutual respect, mutual resolve and mutual responsibility. A future where all Australians, whatever their origins, are truly equal partners, with equal opportunities and with an equal stake in shaping the next chapter in the history of this great country, Australia. (qtd. in Dale 2010.: 120-121)

Speaking of the future of the Australian nation as a whole, alongside voicing the democratic principles, egalitarianism – as its foundation, Rudd tried to sound as convincing as possible, and, even though his speech was received with great applause from both the Labour and Liberal benches, still it was a political speech which, as time has proven, had little or no bearing on the practice of Australian police, courts of justice and (white) populace at large.

3. The Stolen Generation narratives

In Australian literature, in its relatively short history, there has been, however, a significant genre that makes it so distinct from other literatures in English, and which has been termed the *Stolen Generations narratives* (Huggan 2007). It should

be noted that the Prime Ministership of Sir Robert Gordon Menzies (1949-1966) was marked by the Stolen Generation, that is, the official government policy of forcibly removing Aboriginal children from their parents and being adopted (assimilated) by white families. In her *Culture and Customs of Australia,* Laurie Clancy argues that such an assimilation policy was, in fact, a creative destruction and, instead of helping, it destroyed the indigenous families:

> A culture of welfare and dependency, some argue, can be just as destructive for Aboriginal people as earlier, more overt forms of violence. It is an argument that can and has been easily taken up by conservative commentators and politicians as intellectual justification for their position, although recently, even some Aboriginal leaders have supported it, with reservations. What could be called malign neglect here goes even further to become "creative destruction," the assimilation of the representatives of the New Stone Age into the technologically superior society of the West. Prime Minister Howard has consistently refused to make a national apology to indigenous people on the grounds that the wrongs done to them were not done by himself or his contemporaries. This was despite the fact that hundreds of thousands of Australians marched on "Sorry" days in every capital city. (Clancy 2004: 24)

What is more, she continues,

> [t]he same commentators have sought to play down or even deny the significance of a report on the so-called Stolen Generation, *Bringing Them Home,* which showed conclusively that even up until the 1950s indigenous people of lighter skin color were taken by force from their parents and merged into white society. They argued that half-caste children who were forcibly removed from their parents had not been stolen but "rescued" from a traditional society in which, if they survived the threat of infanticide at birth, they became abused outcasts—this, despite the torment that many witnesses who testified to the report revealed they had suffered at the forced deprivation. (Clancy 2004: 25)

A. O. Neville, one of the architects of what are now generally known as the Stolen Generations, advocated a three-step approach to racial policy, involving the forced removal of "half-caste" children from their mothers, the control of marriage among "half-castes", and the encouragement of intermarriage with the white community (Beresford and Omaji 1998: 46). These measures would in time correct what Neville saw as "incorrect mating" practices among "half-castes", ideally leading to a situation in which it would be possible to forget that there had ever been any Aborigines in Australia at all (qtd in Beresford and Omaji 1998: 48).

Interestingly enough, reconciliation within the Australian context bears an additional unexpected connotation, namely, that of uncanniness, in the sense that what is mine is already yours, that is a complete negation of Western rationalism and logic which underpins it. In their book *Uncanny Australia* (1998), Ken Gelder and Jane Jacobs argue that "reconciliation" co-exists uneasily with "difference" in

postcolonial Australia. They liken this condition to the experience of the uncanny, in which "one's place is always already another's place and the issue of possession is never [settled, never] complete" (Gelder and Jacobs 1998: 138).

In re-diagnosing the condition of the unsettled settler, Gelder and Jacobs's study arguably bears most relevance to white Australia. But their point is that there is no clean break between alternative visions and versions (e.g. "white" and "Aboriginal") of Australia; rather, as conventional colonial distinctions between self and other become increasingly indeterminate, "a certain unboundedness" takes over: at different times, "each inhabits the other, disentangles itself, and inhabits it again" (ibidem).

Aboriginal literature in English is astonishingly rich in this magic quality, this certain unboundedness, which mainstream white literature lack. It is additionally supported by these peculiar colours characteristic of Afro-American literature. Two main representatives would be Sally Morgan's *My Place* (1987) and Kim Scott's *Benang* (1999), the latter being, like the former, the black family history and also a kind of stream of consciousness account of the shameful story of the treatment of the Australian Aboriginals by the white settlers, recalling the Nobel Prize winning novel by Tony Morrison, *Beloved*. As Huggan rightly observed,

> [w]hile it is tempting to read *My Place* and *Benang* from this postcolonial optic, it is equally tempting to read them for evidence of the opposite – of the desire, against all odds, to find cultural stability and coherence, and to retrieve a lasting and mutually empowering sense of identity and place. Perhaps certain kinds of postcolonial reading can be as assimilative as the overarching Stolen Generation Narrative; and as inadvertently colonizing in their effect of turning Aboriginality to their own (white) political needs and historical ends. *My Place* and *Benang* are most useful, in this context, not as an unmasking of mythologies of whiteness, but as a reminder of alternative, Aboriginal epistemologies: epistemologies which are no less powerful for being bound up in – subject to but not subordinate to – whiteness, and which are experientially self-sustaining even if they are deemed to be categorically 'incomplete'. (Huggan 2007: 102)

Yet, there is always a mid-position: the position between the black and the white; but, this time the position of the white (the Anglo-Saxons and Anglo-Celts) has been ascribed by one of the leading Australian poets, Les Murray, to the ethnics, the (white) migrants from the outside of the British Isles. Murray's position is made clear in his astonishing 1994 attack on the "political correctness" of the Australia Council. "The ruling elite of Australia", he fulminates,

> are excluding people like me from their Australia - the country people, the rednecks, the Anglo-Celts, the farming people - they have turned their backs on us [...]. They denigrate the majority of Australians who are born in this country, those that have mainly British ancestry [...]. We Old Australians, not necessarily Anglo but having

no other country but this one, are now mostly silenced between the indigenous and the multicultural. (qtd. in Vasta and Castles 1996: 571)

Thus, as it seems, the problem of genuine national reconciliation does not consist in reconciling the white settlers and the black natives, but, in Murray's view, in excluding the progenies of the first white Australians, who have apparently been denied the land in which they were born and brought up and which they treat as theirs. Murray's vision of Australia belongs admittedly to a strong anti-migrant strand in national politics articulated in the 1990s by Pauline Hanson's One Nation party and still present in public opinion.

In addition, the ethnics do not have to bear the burden of guilt for the atrocities the first white Australians had done to the black natives, since they have just arrived, guiltless and blameless. In "A Brief History", he writes:

> Our one culture paints Dreamings, each a beautiful claim.
> Far more numerous are the unspeakable Whites,
> the only cause of all earthly plights,
> immigrant natives without immigrant rights.
> Unmixed with these are Ethnics, absolved of all blame. (Murray 1996: 11)

The problem of guilt, naturally, cannot be easily solved, particularly when we bear in mind the value the indigenous people attach to land, and it is not a value that can be expressed in numbers, but in spirituality. Contrary to what the Bible teaches us, it is not the land that belongs to people – it is people who belong to the land, are very much part of it. Consequently, when the people are deprived of the land, they are deprived of themselves: they have got nothing to belong to, since they do not believe – contrary to some Westerners – in an afterlife. The Western concept of property is also foreign to them – the land is common and so are the material objects situated on it: houses, cars, food, etc. They wish to wander across the land freely, unstopped and unassailed by police, since the tribal law is what they respect, not the law of the white people. In light of the above, genuine reconciliation in Australia is virtually impossible, unless a serious and far-fetched compromise has been reached.

4. Conclusion

As shown in the first part of this paper, some steps by important (white) politicians have been made, some (black) individuals have won their court battles, but still it is not enough to claim national victory. In the narration of reconciliation Australian political leaders offer in recent times, however, we can find clear signs of a departure from the narration of confrontation and conflict of the 19th century, exclusion of the mid-20th century, assimilation of the second half of the 20th century and a postulate of an apparently genuine reconciliation in the early decades of the 21st century. Yet, these should be looked at as just postulates and ideological

propaganda for purely political purposes, and even though a lot has been done to remedy the pitiable situation of most of them, Indigenous peoples of Australia are still disadvantaged, particularly those living in remote areas like the Northern territory. Unlike a narration of reconciliation practised in political speeches, the genuine, authentic process of reconciliation is problematic and undoubtedly lengthy, and its success remains to be seen in a rather distant future.

References

Beresford, Quentin and Paul Omaji. 1998. *Our State of Mind: Racial Planning and the Stolen Generations*. Fremantle, WA: Fremantle Arts Centre Press.

Clancy, Laurie. 2004. *Culture and Customs of Australia*. Westport, Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press.

Dale, David. 2010. *The Little Book of Australia*. Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin.

Davison, Graeme. 2000. *The Use and Abuse of Australian History*. St Leonards: Allen and Unwin.

Gelder, Ken and Jane Margaret Jacobs. 1998. *Uncanny Australia: Sacredness and Identity in a Postcolonial Nation*. Melbourne: University of Melbourne Press.

Howard, John. Opening Ceremony Speech. *Australian Reconciliation Convention*. [Online]. Available: https://pmtranscripts.pmc.gov.au/release/transcript-10361 [Accessed 1997, May 27].

Huggan, Graham. 2007. *Australian Literature. Postcolonialism, Racism, Transnationalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Langton, Marcia. 1997. "Rum, Seduction and Death: Aboriginality and Alcohol" in Cowlishaw, Gillian and Barry Morris (eds.). *Race Matters*. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, pp. 77-94.

Morgan, Sally. 1987. *My Place*. Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre.

Murray, Les. 1996. *Subhuman Redneck Poems*. Manchester: Carcanet.

reconciliation.org.au. [Online]. Available: https://www.reconciliation.org.au/wcontent/ uploads/2014/.
03/NRW2014_3-June-Mabo_FactS.pdf [Accessed 2016, February 9].

Scott, Kim. 1999. *Benang*. Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre.

Vasta, Ellie and Stephen Castles (eds.). 1996. *The Teeth Are Smiling: The Persistence of Racism in Multicultural Australia.* St Leonards, NSW: Allen and Unwin.

THE DYING ANIMAL AS 'CONTE PHILOSOPHIQUE'

CRISTINA CHEVEREŞAN

West University of Timişoara

Abstract: *Focusing on Philip Roth's 2001* The Dying Animal *as a disputed creative territory in the constant battle of Eros and Thanatos, life and art, morality and mortality, the article is meant to highlight and dismantle the controversies around the novel's intentions. It goes beyond the sensationalism and exhibitionism of the provocative narrative surface, into the depths of the psyche that finds itself betrayed by the aging, ailing, alienated body. Relying on contextualization and close reading, it sets out to demonstrate that, despite its brevity and irreverence, one of Roth's shortest works adds new layers of significance to his thought-provoking meditations on the nature of human existence, its challenges, illusions and inevitable failures.*
Keywords: *art, experiment, death, morality, obsession, sexuality*

1. Introduction

In her 2013 seminal monograph, Claudia Roth Pierpont (2013: 298-299) suggests that Philip Roth's short novel, *Indignation*, "might be classified, with *The Dying Animal* and *Everyman*, as a *conte philosophique*". My envisaged project will follow up on that particular remark, in an attempt to examine the aforementioned writings as ingenious contemporary flirtations and tamperings with the rigors of morality plays and cautionary tales. In one or several ways, each of these novels, considered 'minor', or 'secondary' by many reviewers – at least as compared to the size and complexity of works such as *American Pastoral*, *Sabbath's Theater*, or *The Human Stain* – contains a distilled, provocative, condensed meditation on the human extremes of life and death, as well as on the countless grey territories in between.

Moreover, each invites further investigation into the matters which form its background, from history to human rights, from the sexual revolution to artistic prowess, from the clichés of the academia (in the United States and beyond) to the behavioral patterns of the incipient - private and public – Third Millennium. Given the intended length and scope of the present paper, I shall use it to begin my project, by focusing solely on the chronologically first in the announced line of 'contes philosophiques', which, at the time of its appearance, succeeded to simultaneously

appall and fascinate, consolidating its author's reputation as a methodically controversial rebel of the American literary mainstream.

2. The nature of obsession: an insight

Roth's preoccupation with sexuality and finitude was, evidently, not new, but it reached new heights in *The Dying Animal*, the atypical coda to *The American Trilogy* that Roth published in 2001, only one year after his award-winning *The Human Stain*. The book angered part of his readership, shocked another, causing a series of complaints which were neither unheard of, nor unexpected, as easily illustrated by an overview of both formal and informal, specialist and non-specialist responses. While shame and its absence had already been notoriously identified as themes of the writer's earlier works, Frank Kelleter (2003: 166) points out that

> it must be admitted that Roth's equation of artistic creation and carnal desire, along with the discernment that both share a common source in the thought of physical death, is anything but original. The recognition of a close complicity between Eros and Thanatos is probably as old as literature itself.

It is, however, not the philosophy behind the book that has been vividly disputed. On the contrary, the overwhelming tendency amongst those whose reactions were strong has been to ignore it, despite the Yeats-inspired title[1], which provides the first important clue in what the true meaning and depth of the sensuality-suffused discourse are concerned. David Kepesh, the Kafkaesque professor who has reached his seventies after the tragic-comical revelations and transformations undergone in his previous literary incarnations (*The Professor of Desire* and *The Breast*), now faces yet another essential existential change.

After decades of no-strings-attached affairs and sheer enjoyment of what he proclaims and embraces as unadulterated sexuality, he finds himself in the looming proximity of expiation: not ominous and immediate, but constantly lurking in the back of his mind, as well as inevitably coming to the fore of his existence amongst friends and acquaintances with dire fates.

> To those not yet old, being old means *you've been*. But being old also means that despite, in addition to, and in excess of your beenness, you still are. Your beenness is very much alive. You still are, and one is as haunted by the still-being and its fullness as by the having-already-been, by the pastness. Think of old age this way: it's just an

---

[1] William Butler Yeats' 1928 poem, *Sailing to Byzantium*, includes the following revealing stanza as to the confrontation between the limitations of the finite body and the infinite possibilities of the creative mind: "O sages standing in God's holy fire/ As in the gold mosaic of a wall, / Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre,/ And be the singing-masters of my soul./ Consume my heart away; sick with desire/ And fastened to a dying animal/ It knows not what it is; and gather me/ Into the artifice of eternity."

everyday fact that one's life is at stake. One cannot evade what shortly awaits one. The silence that will surround one forever. Otherwise it's all the same. Otherwise one is immortal for as long as one lives. (Roth 2007: 24)

As if to violently counter the inevitable and affirm such illusory immortality, the explicitness of intimate scenes and the graphicness of their description in the novel are undeniable, and have been deplored by various reviewers, taken aback by what they perceived as the excessive and unnecessary vulgarity of scenes, such as Kepesh's notorious tasting of his protégée's menstrual blood. The scandal, however, in terms of the character's philosophical frame of mind, lies not in the lurid implications of the deed itself, but rather in its betrayal of an existential belief in experimental disconnectedness from genuine emotion. Possessed by the previously unexperienced torment of jealousy, Kepesh finds himself in the thralls of manic speculation: "A young man will find her and take her away. And from me, who fired up her senses, who gave her her stature, who was the catalyst of her emancipation and prepared her for him" (Roth 2007: 26).

As George O'Hearn, his relentless confidante points out, in the emphatic (and, in context, altogether humorous) manner of analytical academic discourses, Kepesh's abandonment to quasi-ritualistic sexual conduct "constituted the abandonment of an independent critical position […] I'm not against it because it's unhygienic, I'm not against it because it's disgusting, I'm against it because it's falling in love. The only obsession that everyone wants: 'love'" (Roth 2007: 59). By exposing what Kepesh's cultivated persona and his inner circle might frown upon as vulnerability, by subjecting the erotic conqueror to a symbolic defeat, wherein it is he who suspends strategic disengagement and willingly agrees to "worship the mystery of the bleeding goddess" (2007: 59), Roth steers the discussion from the mundane to the abstract, forcedly mythological digression. The writer's penchant for pushing the borders of common acceptability in order to prove points that go beyond the obvious should not come as a surprise.

The set-up for the turn-of-the-millennium drama is stereotypical to begin with, and programmatically so: the author foregrounds, once more, a relationship that is inappropriate by social standards, not only in terms of the age difference between its protagonists, but also in terms of the status and power-relationships between teacher and student, mentor and trainee ("She gets both the pleasures of submission and the pleasures of mastery" (Roth 2007: 22), says the protagonist, trying to decode and explain his lover's attraction for him). While morally revolting as a topic (and, thus, all the more exciting and liberating for the fiction-thirsty mind), what happens between Kepesh and Consuela is the starting point for a small and oftentimes (too) light-hearted treatise on the nature of obsession and on the practical jokes real life may choose to play on the rather bookish character: he envisages himself as the total master of his instincts and feelings, but will end up humbled and belittled by his actual powerlessness in the face of the implacable fate.

Moreover, Roth indulges in an almost limitless experiment with his protagonist's sexuality and its insatiable drives in order to create narrative suspense and prepare the grand finale that will both contrast and contradict Kepesh's professed standpoints on relationships and their worth, and expose the true nature of the unfolding drama: not one of meaningless flirtation, but rather one that grows larger than the lives of both the story and its actors. As Elaine B. Safer (2006: 133) aptly notes,

> The love of an older man for a young woman has been a stock subject of comedy – and sometimes of melancholy – throughout the ages. It is at least as old as Chaucer's "Miller's Tale" and the Renaissance *commedia dell'arte* and can be found in works as different as Moliere's *The Miser* and Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* and as recently as in Nabokov's *Lolita*. In Roth's *Dying Animal*, Kepesh's love for a young woman and the jealousy that goes with it have obsessive aspects that produce a farcical, grotesque humor. However, underlying the comedy is a tragic tone that is caused by the presence of Consuela's sickness and dying; this makes the humor almost unbearably grim.

3. From hedonism to epiphany

Taking into account the fine dramatic balance underlying the narrative, we cannot, therefore, place ourselves in the position to criticize the novel for its almost aggressive sexual scenery, but we shall rather try to look beyond it, as Roth thoughtfully addresses the serious matter of finitude and its perspective-changing powers by resorting to his preferred tools: (self)-mockery, cultivated detachment, nonchalant exposure of the most intimate aspects of private life, against the background of ever-changing public views and discourses. The play of masks and the apparent comedy of mores and manners that places Kepesh in almost ridiculous positions in rapport to his rather cynical theoretical stances on relationships constitute a carefully orchestrated preamble for the novel's surprising turnaround: its uncovering of the ironies of the quotidian, the spectacularly depressing transformation of the breast as a symbol of carnal desire into the breast as a locus of mortality.

If the hedonistic playfulness of a character who chooses to describe himself as a ruthless practitioner of uncommitted fornication with a variety of women he slyly selects out of the generous offering of his female students may, indeed, exceed the limits of what many would consider admissible, even within the boundaries of fiction, the head-on collision between voluptuousness and suffering, careless attraction and potential affection, casual encounters guided by urge and lust and the slow, painful, altogether different consummation of disease rank *The Dying Animal* high among Roth's insightful explorations of the paradoxes of the human mind and body, as well as their inextricable, oftentimes saddening and grotesque connection. "Sex isn't just friction and shallow fun; sex is also the revenge on death" (Roth 2007:

43), the self-absorbed protagonist is tempted to believe, until Consuela's cancer confronts him with the pressing immediacy of a significantly different perspective.

While Kepesh, ruminating upon his flings, offers the reader a brief history of his involvement with the Sixties' sexual revolution as a mature man, who takes full advantage of the newly acquired liberties within and without the campus, the essential source of both amusement (on the reader's part) and confusion (on the professor's part) is the very refusal of his professedly macho attitudes and theories to overlap with the fears, manic visions, insecurities that stem out of his involvement with Consuela. Determined "never to live in the cage again" (Roth 2007: 17) after his failed marriage, fancying and introducing himself as a sophisticated and selective, aloof and skillful observer and manipulator of inexperienced youths in search of guidance and acknowledgement, he finds himself in the astounding position of being subjected to the very domination he deems as one of his greatest assets.

"The jealousy. The Uncertainty. The fear of losing her, even while on top of her. Obsessions that in all my varied experience I had never known before. With Consuela as with no one else, the siphoning off of confidence was almost instantaneous" (Roth 2007: 19). Roth's examination of the character's self and his retrospective narrative of a unique encounter already open the path to philosophical musings about the unpredictable intersections between destiny and farce. However, the climactic moment of (potential) epiphany coincides with the revelation of Consuela's medical condition, which shifts the focus of the meditation from love to death, from the tortuous paths of desire and repression to the implacability of uncontrollable endings. It is what, belatedly, humanizes Kepesh, as aptly pointed out by Kevin R. West:

> Kepesh, at long last, learns something about desire, - namely that it does not, as he erroneously concludes at the end of the *Professor of Desire*, always come down to himself but can also or instead comprehend another's well-being. In *The Dying Animal*, facing the pressures of his own and a former lover's mortality, Kepesh turns from – or at least considers turning from – the preoccupation with only his own happiness that has theretofore characterized him and that seldom afforded him happiness. This conclusion to the trilogy radically restructures it, making it now the history not only of the impossibility of desire's demands, but also the history of the possibility of change, change even at such a late date, even as death threatens to mock the significance of that change (2005: 226).

4. Paradoxical question(ing)s

In the light of such circumstances, although highly criticized for its libertine nature and use of imagery and language, *The Dying Animal* is rather a colorful, yet compelling *conte philosophique*, in terms of the classical definition of this established genre, which is notoriously employed to criticize via fictionalization. Far from glorifying Kepesh's chosen lifestyle, Roth compels the reader to confront a

multitude of stereotypes, as well as to question the existential scale of values, which social 'evolution' throughout the past decades might have reshuffled to a point of indistinguishability and misguidedness, misunderstood as freedom of choice. Using fictitious characters and imaginary situations to expose the flaws of judgment and conduct that both the individual and his environment seem to cultivate, Roth does not make a plea for vulgarity.

He does, however, break taboos and remove all (self)-censorship in order to amplify the effect of his contemporary morality tale upon the reader, who must juggle the apparent flimsiness of the plot and its powerful underlying message(s). Kepesh gradually descends from the sarcastic ivory tower of his own making, from self-imposed disengagement, to at least the prospect of involvement. Having shaped his life according to aesthetic, highbrow principles that he draws from a life of creative and artistic aloofness, he is forced by reality to reconsider his priorities and ways of relating to the surrounding world ("She's thirty-two, and she thinks she's now exiled from everything, experiencing each experience for the last time" – Roth 2007: 90). Constrained by his fabricated public and private persona as a bon-viveur, consumer of food, drink, art, and women, unconcerned with what he considers the weakness of creating genuine emotional bonds, he must struggle to choose between instinct and reason, affection and control.

His fortress of emotional solitude cracks progressively, firstly under the pressure of Consuela's unprecedented, magnetic power over him, secondly – under the burden of the threat of losing her forever, not only as a lover, but as a companion and human being as well. While aptly exploring *Philip Roth's Rude Truth. The Art of Immaturity* (2006), Ross Posnock comments upon Kepesh's growing disbelief in his own (pre)conceptions:

> Even among dogs there are "in canine form, these crazy distortions of longing, doting, possessiveness, even love," all elements that Kepesh uneasily labels "the extraneous". If sex is revenge against life and "also the revenge on death," it is, as well, Kepesh implies, revenge against love, that maximally messy threat to self-sovereignty. With despair and awe at love's persistence, Kepesh calls it "this need. This derangement. Will it ever stop?" (Posnock 2006: 24)

While exploring an academic philanderer's trials and tribulations against his declared nature as "a man of the world. A cultural authority. Her teacher" (Roth 2007: 22), all of which seem to bestow upon him an exceptionalism that should make him immune to 'ignoble' sentimentalism, Roth carefully builds the paradox that stems out of Kepesh's very conceit, his over-confidence in his manliness and worldliness: "It was the true beginning of her mastery – the mastery into which my mastery had initiated her. I am the author of her mastery of me" (Roth 2007: 22). The novel's deep structure, its dramatic undertones, revolve around the protagonist's growing insight into his actual status, his realization that he is, in fact, far less demiurgical, lofty and masterful than he would like to believe, particularly as he ages

and reaches new levels of practical experience, that insist on contradicting his bold theories, increasingly divorced from the immediate reality.

5. Morality vs. mortality: an art lesson

The professor becomes a student of his own humility and powerlessness, roles are – at least temporarily - reversed and, while he is dominated copiously by the woman he sets out to initiate, he is also taught a series of lessons by life itself, his own and his entourage's, as the Millennium draws near. The inherent philosophy of *The Dying Animal* practically gravitates around morality and mortality as the undeniable nuclei of the never-ending battle between Eros and Thanatos. The sheer enjoyment of sexuality, the animal instincts driving Kepesh's earlier career as a mentor and seducer, are countered by the unnerving suspicion of their futility, while "Roth transforms his sexual picaresque into a serious engagement with loss and beauty" (Nadel 2011: 66).

The latter part of the novel is, thus, a grimmer and more profoundly dilemmatic journey for Kepesh, who is forced by Consuela's terminal illness to question his own choices and wonder about the remains of a more and more fragile devotion to the idea of absolute freedom. Cultural references (music, painting, literature, theater) stand proof of Kepesh's erudition, and are as well integral parts of Roth's strategy of portraying his already known protagonist anew. In the 1977 *Professor of Desire*, the author "makes elegant, complex use of Checkov and Kafka as authorities for Kepesh's predicament while he is still living 'as a man', Kepesh is torn between reckless erotic ambition and conscientious intellectual dedication" (Lee 2003: 66). This brief treatise on the abandonment of the body adds the dimension that makes it into an *Epilogue* to the series: physical extinction.

> The animal that Kepesh is, once disturbingly mammalian, now again simply human, will eventually die, and Kepesh cannot help obsessing upon this fact. Ironically, however, Kepesh's eventual death comes to be supplanted by the potentially sooner death of one much younger than he, Consuela. As they together confront the worsening of her prognosis, Kepesh considers, "The illusion has been broken, the metronomic illusion, the comforting thought that, tick tock, everything happens in its proper time". (West 2005: 234)

Rather dismissed as minor and immature because of the protagonist's chosen profile, *The Dying Animal* never ceases to add layers to its chronically melancholic tone, employing appearances and the facile use of surfaces and objectification to disguise the deeper preoccupations of both writer and character with decay, degradation, forced reevaluation of the self in context. Simultaneously, the novel highlights some of its author's constant topics, among which the connection between art and one's most intimate psychological and physiological drives. Having created both national hysteria and assumed notoriety as a sexually provocative writer as early

as *Portnoy's Complaint*, Roth is perfectly aware of his reputation as an alleged pornographer, and appears to make use of various types of cultural parallelisms in his attempt to prove that writing as a form of art can and will ennoble its subject.

Invoking Modigliani, as well as Stanley Spencer's double nude portrait at the Tate, he draws attention to the fact that their effect is hardly offensive, as it lies in the realm of illustration and representation, not in that of reality. As Ellen L. Gerstle discusses in her anthologized essay on '*The Dying Animal*: The Art of Obsessing or Obsessing about Art?' (2005),

> Roth leaves the reader to draw his or her own inferences from Kepesh's obsession with this image once Consuela tells him about her breast cancer. Those inferences aside, one conclusion seems pertinent to Roth's exploration of the difference between pornography and art: context is all. Roth believes that an artist is capable of transforming sex as a subject from something pornographic to something aesthetic […] Roth does not want literature judged differently than other artistic mediums when it comes to pornography […and] provide(s) analogous situations to encourage less superficial thinking about what constitutes pornography and what constitutes art" (197-198).

6. Conclusion

As the novel progresses towards its purposely ambiguous ending, open for both the protagonist's and the reader's own conclusions, it becomes evident that the scandalous topic is used as a vehicle for a deeper meditation on life's big and small ironies, as will also be the case of Roth's later short novels, which diversify the topics and intensify the author's participation in necessary 21st century debates. As announced in the preamble to this particular article, other novels that, in the Rothian universe, might appear to bear lesser significance in terms of length and complexity, were, later on, to complete the cycle of 'contes philosophiques'. Together with short works, such as *Everyman* or *Indignation*, *The Dying Animal* proves Philip Roth's practical enjoyment in creating contemporary parables, which, involving recognizable (stereo)types, challenge the readers' own relationships with and assessments of fiction, art, morality, as well as their interconnectedness across and beyond life and death.

References

Gerstle, Ellen L. 2005. "The Dying Animal: the Art of Obsessing or Obsessing about Art?" in Halio, Jay L. and Ben Siegel (eds.). *Turning Up the Flame: Philip Roth's Later Novels*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, pp. 194-199.

Kelleter, Frank. 2003. "Portrait of the Sexist as a Dying Man: Death, Ideology, and the Erotic in Philip Roth's Sabbath's Theater" in Bloom, Harold (ed.). *Philip Roth*. Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, pp. 163-198.

Lee, Hermione. 2003. "'You Must Change Your Life': Mentors, Doubles and Literary Influences in the Search for Self" in Bloom, Harold (ed.). *Philip Roth*. Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, pp. 63-80.

Nadel, Ira B. 2011. *Critical Companion to Philip Roth. A Literary Reference to His Life and Work*. New York: Facts on File, Infobase Learning.

Posnock, Roth. 2006. *Philip Roth's Rude Truth. The Art of Immaturity*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

Roth, Philip. 2007 (2001). *Novels 2001-2007. The Dying Animal, The Plot against America, Exist Ghost*. New York: The Library of America.

Roth Pierpont, Claudia. 2013. *Roth Unbound. A Writer and His Books*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Safer, Elaine B. 2006. *Mocking the Age. The Later Novels of Philip Roth*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

West, Kevin R. 2005. "Professing Desire: the Kepesh Novels" in Royal, Derek Parker (ed.). *Philip Roth. New Perspectives on an American Author.* Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, pp. 225-240.

SEARCHING FOR IDENTITY:
NO PICTURES IN MY GRAVE: A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY IN SICILY BY SUSAN CAPERNA LLOYD

ELISABETTA MARINO
University of Rome "Tor Vergata"

Abstract: *The paper focuses on* No Pictures in My *Grave, a travel memoir by Susan Caperna Lloyd – a contemporary Italian American writer, who succeeds in turning the account of her numerous travels in Sicily into a powerful narrative of awakening and self construction.*
Keywords: *Black Madonna, femininity, identity,* No Pictures in My Grave, *Susan Caperna Lloyd, travel literature*

1. Introduction. Susan Caperna Lloyd and her Italian experience

A filmmaker, photographer, and non-fiction writer, in 1992 Susan Caperna Lloyd published *No Pictures in My Grave: A Spiritual Journey in Sicily*, a compelling memoir chronicling her experience in a land she felt profoundly drawn to, even though her Italian ancestors on her father's side actually came from Terracina (located in the southern part of Latium). Her volume also falls into the category of travel writing, a hybrid genre in itself that, according to Valentina Seffer (2015: 99), "bridges documentary narrative and personal experience, the encounter with the Other with the exploration of the Self". Born in California and raised in Oregon, the author first visited Sicily in 1983, when she was struck by the procession of the Mysteries (*i Misteri*) held in Trapani on Good Friday: nineteen life-like statues representing the Stations of the Cross were carried on heavy platforms (*ceti*) by male porters (*portatori*) through the streets of the city, for twenty-four hours. Mesmerised by the sacred performance, she went back to Sicily two more times during the Holy Week, before releasing *No Pictures in My Grave*, the last of a series of artistic endeavours connected with such a momentous experience in her life. Indeed, in 1989, she had already produced an award-winning documentary, *Processione: A Sicilian Easter*; moreover, in 1991, a prominent literary journal, *Italian Americana*, featured her short story entitled "No Pictures in My Grave: A Woman's Journey in

Sicily", whose poignant portrayal of *i Misteri* would be later included in her volume. As Edvige Giunta (2002: 98) has highlighted, however, while in her video a male protagonist (Caperna Lloyd's friend, Gian Carlo Decimo) had been assigned the leading role − being entrusted with tracing the history of the procession − her short story and, even more significantly, her memoir are decisively "woman-centered" narratives, due to their focus on the first-person female narrator and her progress. Furthermore, her travel memoir is by no means limited to the depiction of the Mysteries, viewed by the author as "a predominantly male event" (Caperna Lloyd 1992: 10); quite the opposite, the text offers detailed descriptions of ancient sites associated with the cult of prehistoric mother goddesses, as well as with the myth of Persephone, a traveller between two worlds who, like many Italian immigrant women, had been forced to face the unknown, leaving her beloved mother(country) behind. Caperna Lloyd's very grandmother Carolina (a recurring figure throughout her text, who serves to reconnect the author with her ethnic identity, as Fred Gardaphé (1996: 120) underlines) is often compared to a sorrowful Persephone, whose resurrection from the Underworld had been cruelly denied. In fact, she had left Italy for America in 1922, never to return, while her own mother would die in her village, thirty-five years later; hence, as Susan sadly remarked, "the two had never been reunited" (Caperna Lloyd 1992: 14).

Unlike other Italian American travel writers, driven to the peninsula merely by curiosity, family ties, or a nostalgic longing for lost roots, Caperna Lloyd apparently turned her journeys in Sicily into "a complicated feminist search", "in which personal story, myth, and history overlap" (Giunta 2004: 770). Given what has been argued so far, this paper sets out to explore the strategy through which the writer succeeded in transforming her travel memoir into a narrative of awakening and self-construction, leading to the discovery and the proud assertion of her identity as both an Italian American and a woman. As it will be shown, the author strove to propose constructive alternatives to the customary depiction of women as docile, passive, and enduring Madonnas, constrained in their stereotypical roles as nurturers and consecrated vestals of the temple of the hearth. By embarking on a quest for dark Mothers and other ancestral deities, whose power stretched beyond the boundaries of the male-dominated Church and its hierarchy, Susan Caperna Lloyd encouraged a more active role for women, who could eventually embrace all the previously discarded facets of their complex personalities, thus offering their valuable, many-sided contribution to society.

2. *No Pictures in My Grave:* a spiritual journey in Sicily

The volume (meaningfully dedicated to the writer's mother, but written "in memory of Grandmother Carolina") opens with a fictional letter to Carolina, identified with "a grieving Madonna and a long-suffering mother" (Caperna Lloyd 1992: ix), who closely resembled "the Pietà" (Caperna Lloyd 1992: ix) the moment

her husband, one night, passed away in her arms. Not even death could release her from the shackles of her role as dutiful and selfless caretaker: in fact, her son (the author's father) had placed a photograph of himself and his only son in her coffin, so that Carolina could continue to nurture the men of her family from the afterlife (conversely, Susan and her sisters were literally *not* in the picture; being women, they could only bestow protection, not wish for it). The title chosen for her memoir, therefore, stems from Susan Caperna Lloyd's firm intention to eventually break the patriarchal mould, thus gaining the independence and the self-determination her grandmother could never attain; when her time comes, she hopes to "rise up and be free" (Caperna Lloyd 1992: ix), with no one to care for, no pictures in her grave.

The first chapter of the narrative entitled "Processione" represents the writer's first attempt to "revise the mater dolorosa role written into the script of an Italian woman's life" (Bona 2010: 57), quoting Mary Jo Bona, by replacing it with the prerogatives of an icon of self-empowerment and strength: the Black Madonna. As Lucia Chiavola Birnbaum (1993: 3) demonstrates, the black Madonna "may be considered a metaphor for a memory of the time when the earth was believed to be the body of a woman and all creatures were equal". Her unusual colour (mostly displayed by wooden and stone statues dating back to the Middle Ages) is reminiscent of the various shades of the fertile earth, besides recalling the hue of the mythical Dark Mother, belonging to a time before history, when communities knew no hierarchical distinctions based on culture, class and gender. According to Moser (2008: 6), the dark-skinned Mother may be identified with Mary Magdalene, "the 'other' Mary"; furthermore, the archaic cults of the African Goddess Isis, of the black Goddess Artemis of Ephesus, of Demeter, of Cybele (the Great Mother of the Gods), and of Hera somehow all merged with the adoration of the black Madonna, perceived as a powerful, syncretic, and all-encompassing figure, defiant of borders and divides. Accordingly, when Susan Caperna Lloyd witnesses a smaller procession in the city of Marsala before going to Trapani for *i Misteri*, she is immediately enthralled by the statue of Our Lady, remarkably different from the sweet, "ivory-colored", modest icon she had grown accustomed to since childhood: "she was dark and angry. She was powerful and struck [her] more like Demeter than Mary […]; this Madonna's demeanor, like Demeter's, was wild and passionate" (Caperna Lloyd 1992: 3). In her effort to place a stronger emphasis on women (thus restoring the balance between the sexes), Caperna Lloyd even offers a challenging interpretation of Christ as "another version of Persephone", since one of her names, "in early Greek language, meant 'saviour'" (ibid.). Once in Trapani, she finds out from the local people that, the *processione* is "not really the story of Christ's death. It is about his Mother, Mary" (10), searching for her lost son; in the vernacular version of the biblical events (i.e. the folkloristic variant narrated by those who have been left out and marginalised), the Madonna seems to hold a central place, forcefully rejecting the subordinate position traditionally assigned to women. Incidentally, it should not pass unnoticed that in her 1991 short story, the Madonna of the procession in Trapani was also depicted as "dark, Moorish-looking" (Caperna Lloyd 1991: 250); in truth, only

her mantle is black. Captivated by the scene before her eyes, Caperna Lloyd yearns to take an active part in the *processione*, thus refusing to play the role of a mere observer. Nonetheless, as a woman, she is denied a privilege which is easily granted to both her husband Tom and her son Sky on account of their gender: while the former acts as a *bilancino* (the most important among the sixteen carriers of each statue) and the latter marches with the other men, carrying a pillow with sacred medallions on it, she is only allowed to follow the last of the platforms: the Madonna's *ceto*. This controversial experience of longing and exclusion is like an epiphany for the writer, thus prompted to begin a journey that is both physical and spiritual: "I knew that I had to find the meaning of the dark Madonna's power, the power that Carolina and so many women had lost or relinquished – or had never had. [...] Perhaps I would find the power if I journeyed back to the places where the old deities like Demeter had once lived" (Caperna Lloyd 1992: 28).

Her pilgrimage starts with the Levanzo Cave where, together with her family, she contemplates ancient drawings featuring "a black form […] look[ing] like a stylised version of the terra-cottas [she] had seen of Persephone and Demeter, or even the black shrouded *Madonna Addolorata*" (Caperna Lloyd 1992: 41). In the cave, she also has the chance to gaze at "another large female figure, apparently seated on a throne, […] painted red, the Paleolithic color for menstrual blood and fertility" (41). Even though these goddesses are still elusive (meaningfully enough, she had forgotten to load her camera and she could not capture their image), they seem to inspire important reflections regarding gender inequalities ("why was there now such a division between male and female?" (42) and the passive attitude of modern women to life, an attitude that, rather clearly, had not been shared by their prehistoric counterparts: "the old goddesses had been powerful and active, suggesting that women had been too" (42). The next stop of her journey is Enna, where Persephone's abduction had supposedly taken place and Demeter was believed to be buried. Here, Caperna Lloyd gathers that a statue of Demeter holding her daughter had been worshipped for centuries on the altar of one of the most important churches, only to be replaced with the Madonna and her child as soon as "the pope [had] found out" (55) what he believed was a sacrilegious offense. As the author is told, however, in the citizens' imagination the two icons of maternity actually overlap, the one stands for the other, in a symbolic act of resistance to the male-dominated Church, privileging the logic of rupture and mutual exclusion over connection and continuity. Once more, as Lucia Chiavola Birnbaum (1993: 14) points out, following in the steps of Antonio Gramsci, "folklore can challenge hegemonic culture".

In the first half of her travel memoir, relating the events of the author's second journey in Sicily (in 1988), Caperna Lloyd also describes her acquaintance with two Sicilian women: Lucia and Clara. The mother of one of her Italian friends, Lucia embodies the traditional virtue of domesticity: the elderly lady spends most of her time indoors, cooking delicious meals for her family; quite unsuccessfully, she struggles to teach her culinary skills to her new American friend, "an inept

housewife" (Caperna Lloyd 1992: 67) if judged by her standards. Lucia reminds Susan of her grandmother Carolina, who "rarely left her kitchen post to sit down" (11), making her granddaughter so uneasy that she would develop "an aversion to that 'woman's work'" (11). Even Clara is associated with the preparation of food, but in a strikingly different way: she runs a restaurant where unchaperoned women are welcome, and never reproachfully stared at; she is a liberated woman with two children, a new partner, an African *assistant* (never disparagingly called a *housemaid*), and a scholarly education. Readers are told that, on three occasions, she even shouldered one of the platforms during the *Misteri.* At this point of her spiritual journey, however, Susan Caperna Lloyd is still affected by what Theodora Patrona (2011: 154) has termed "the confusion of postmodern women": the writer has not yet adjusted herself to the multiple roles of mother, daughter, wife, career woman, and artist, which she still deems are somehow conflicting. Hence, she feels "caught between these women" (Caperna Lloyd 1992: 86), incapable of fully indentifying with either model, or both. Back in Oregon, for almost two years she experiences anxiety and a deep sense of imbalance, alienation, and fragmentation, accompanied by a craving for belonging that only the process of nurturing her roots may appease. Finally, she decides to go back to Sicily, this time meaningfully on her own, in order to pursue her quest and eventually come to terms with both her hybrid self and her complex femininity: "I would continue my study of Demeter and Persephone and try again to meet and talk with Sicilian women. But mostly, I was returning for the procession" (Caperna Lloyd 1992: 91).

During her third sojourn in Sicily, she is initially hosted by friends, the Amoroso family, and enjoys life in their "protective cocoon" (Caperna Lloyd 1992: 111), frequently compared to a *harem*, given the seclusion of the female members, perpetually dressed in pink, like beautiful dolls content in their world of "gauzy curtains, knick-knacks, and costume jewellery" (95). Despite being fond of them, Caperna Lloyd seems to dissociate herself from the Amoroso ladies, wondering whether they actually realise "how restricted their lives [are]" (96). Nevertheless, she is also intrigued and perplexed by their "hidden darkness" (98), voiced through their bold and improper songs on cuckolded husbands and illicit liaisons, interpreted by Patrona (2011: 160) as "a remnant of the primitive strength and resilience of the Goddess", still alive in Italian women.

Once she decides to continue her journey (thus discarding the traditional part of Penelope played by most Sicilian women), she visits Palazzolo, where she manages to see the *Santoni*, bas-reliefs of Demeter stored (or better said *hidden*) in a remote place, inside emblematic and "odd-looking little wooden houses" (Caperna Lloyd 1992: 116). As the author remarks, "I couldn't help but think how these locked-up deities were metaphors for Sicilian women in general and for my own experiences in Trapani" (119). The next town she visits is Tindari, famous for the sanctuary dedicated to the Black Madonna, "stern and fearsome" (138), "exuding power and self-assurance", so unlike "the usual image of Mary in her female purity and loveliness" (139). Caperna Lloyd connects the dark virgin with the "mysteries

of regeneration" (139), identifying her with "Attis and Cybele, both Demeter and Persephone" (139). What is more, in her vibrant and courageous figure, she recognises the features of her grandmother Carolina, who was originally endowed with "a primitive strength in her blood" (140), although she had progressively lost it once settled in America, removed from her mother, oppressed by patriarchy. The writer's visit to Tindari proves to be essential to her progress: in her words, "with this Madonna and my journey to Sicily, I seemed to look into the unchartered world of my own soul. I left the sanctuary and […] I felt strengthened" (141). Prompted by Clara, on Maundy Thursday, she reaches a little town near Agrigento, San Biagio Platani, for the last of her Sicilian excursions. In her effort to foster a more active and comprehensive role for women, Susan Caperna Lloyd seems to attach a particular importance to this episode; in fact, while the *processione* in Trapani was depicted as a male-defined and male-centred event, the Easter tradition in San Biagio and the corresponding celebrations are entirely designed and crafted by a group of women, who take charge of decorating streets, houses and public buildings, using hundreds of bread ornaments they collectively bake. As the author seems to suggest, women are not just caring nurturers and perfect cooks: at the same time, they can also be self-confident managers and skilful organisers, operating both inside and outside the confines of their homes.

3. Conclusion: the final procession

Caperna Lloyd's memoir ends where it had begun, with the *processione*, following a circular route that, as Bona (2010: 57) elucidates, is "distinctly feminine". Only this time, the author is granted the possibility to re-write her own story with a different conclusion. At the beginning of the narrative, because of her sex, she had been positively excluded from carrying the holy statues and confined to the margins of the procession. Conversely, at the end of her insightful journey, once her power, her *potenza* (a feminine noun in Italian, as readers are informed) has been recovered, she miraculously manages to get invited to shoulder one of the heavy platforms. Susan Caperna Lloyd accomplishes the demanding task with precision, power, and elegance, just like the other *portatori*, who treat her "respectfully, as an equal" (Caperna Lloyd 1992: 182). Thus annihilating the distance between men and women, the carriers gracefully move together, "dance together, as a group" (182), almost "floating on some primal sea" (184), heralding both a personal and a communal regeneration. As she proudly states on the final page of her travel memoir, in conclusion to her quest,

> I had become the Goddess I had sought, and it seemed right and proper that she had rejoined the world of men. By joining these men, I felt I had given them, too, a new strength. With the *portatori* I cried. […] They were not the tears of Carolina, of mourning, or the tears shed onto sad pictures put in a woman's grave. They were the tears of the joyous Black Madonna, of Cybele, of *l'Addolorata*, of the thankful

Demeter having found her daughter again. I, too, had found the lost part of myself. (Caperna Lloyd 1992:188)

Eventually, she had come home.

References

Birnbaum, Lucia Chiavola. 1993. *Black Madonnas: Feminism, Religion and Politics in Italy*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.

Bona, Mary Jo. 2010. *By the Breath of Their Mouths: Narratives of Resistance in Italian America.* Albany: SUNY Press.

Gardaphé, Fred. 1996. *Italian Signs, American Streets. The Evolution of Italian American Narrative.* Durham: Duke University Press.

Giunta, Edvige. 2002. *Writing with an Accent. Contemporary Italian American Women Authors*. New York: Palgrave.

Giunta, Edvige. 2004. "Persephone's Daughters" in *Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 33, pp. 767-786.

Lloyd, Susan Caperna. 1991. "No Picture in My Grave: A Woman's Journey in Sicily." *Italian Americana*, 9(2), pp. 245-267.

Lloyd, Susan Caperna. 1992. *No Pictures in My Grave: A Spiritual Journey in Sicily.* San Francisco: Mercury House.

Moser, Mary Beth. 2008. *Honoring Darkness. Exploring the Power of Black Madonnas in Italy*. Vashon Island, Washington: Dea Madre Publishing.

Patrona, Theodora. 2011. "Ethnic Space in Contemporary Greek-American and Italian-American Literature." PhD thesis, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. [Online]. Available: https://www.didaktorika.gr/eadd/handle/ 10442/25170?locale=en [Accessed 2017, August 31].

Seffer, Valentina. 2015. "Identity on the Threshold: the Myth of Persephone in Italian American Women's Memoir." PhD thesis, The University of Sydney. [Online]. Available: https://ses.library.usyd.edu.au/ bitstream/2123/13957/2/seffervsthesis.pdf [Accessed 2017, August 31].

GODLESS, YET NOT LACKING IN DIVINITY:
SEXUALITY AND RELIGION IN UPDIKE'S *COUPLES*

RIMA BHATTACHARYA

Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur

Abstract*: The post-World War II period occasioned an atmosphere of paranoia which not only challenged the middle-class certitudes, but also destabilized their faith in God. John Updike's* Couples *documents the American suburban middle-class, immersed in the sexual mirage of a post-pill paradise. This paper asserts that, despite the erosion of family structures, social stability and traditional middle-class culture that the excessive adultery of Updike's characters ensue, their world can still hope for redemption. Contrary to the usual assumptions regarding debauched sexuality, this erosion of human values and morality can be viewed as a necessary design of divinity, heralding a new beginning.*
Keywords: Couples*, post-war, religion, sexuality, Updike*

1. Introduction

John Updike's writings represent the experiences of his own generation of bemused Americans who grew up in the shadow of the post-World War II austerity and as a reaction to this gloomy scenario, participated in the youth-driven cultural revolution and the consumerist excesses of the sixties. Outwardly modern, liberating and hedonistic, Updike's fictions are characterized by a sense of religious curiosity surrounding the lives of small-town, middle-class Protestants. The prolific author, who died at the age of seventy-six, often joked about his lifelong association with Protestantism and confessed that he "never quite escaped the Christian church" (Updike 1994: 208). "My subject is the American Protestant small town middle class", Updike told Jane Howard in a 1966 interview for *Life magazine*. Fascinated with the middle-class angst and the undercurrents of uncertainties and disappointments that qualify their life, Updike declares, "I like middles […]. It is in middles that extremes clash, where ambiguity restlessly rules" (Updike 1994: 11).

Updike's *Couples* depicts a world where luxuries of perversity have replaced the comforts of religion. It displays the suburbia of Tarbox, submerged in the excesses of love, sex and adultery. It is a novel so rich in adultery, that for a long time it is difficult to distinguish one couple from another, as they constantly engage

in word games and gather at parties, moving from one house to another at the slightest excuse. The large number of characters and the minute detailing of their lives often leaves the reader feeling both exhilarated and exhausted. Although the proliferation of inter-connected affairs in the novel, comes at the expense of distinction, yet one must understand that this excess serves a very different purpose. This excess gives rise to a sense of meaninglessness or worthlessness, which destroys the significance of all existing social relationships, values, norms, cultures and religious doctrines, thereby creating an atmosphere of nihilism. Contrary to the emphasis on the disparaging effects of such meaninglessness, I would argue that it often paves the way for a critique of institutional establishments including religious doctrines and theology, thereby inspiring the emergence of countercultural or alternate religious movements. Belief in excess or meaninglessness then becomes a new mode of existence in a world where traditional norms have become redundant. This is reminiscent of Amy Hungerford's (2010: xiv) *Postmodern Belief: American Literature and Religion since 1960*, which draws together two seemingly unrelated strains, postmodernism and religious belief, to show how a late-twentieth-century "belief in meaninglessness" became a significant form of religious belief in an increasingly secular and irrevocably pluralistic world. Updike's *Couples* depicts a dark world, where the lives of the characters are similarly rendered meaningless by their sexual excess and multiple affairs.

2. The sexual excess of Updike's world

Tarbox probably reflects "a certain current reality" of the Ipswich suburbia of Massachusetts, where John Updike had moved with his wife, Mary, and their two children from New York City, in 1957 and remained until 1974, when he and Mary got separated (Updike 1994: 137; see Popova online). According to Singh (1996: 1), Updike's *Couples* repudiate the cardinal dictum of Christianity against adultery or promiscuity by depicting the contemporary guilt-ridden indulgence of physical passion in the name of love, in contrast to an innocent pre-lapsarian chaste courtship. Bonded by the forces of sexuality and adultery, the young affluent couples of Tarbox have stopped going to Church as they have "made a church of each other" (Updike 1968: 7). United in their acts of infidelity, the couples form a community or congregation, often misplacing their individual identity. For instance, the Applebys and the Smiths, the Saltzes and the Constantines are so often with each other that the community combines their names to call them "the Applesmiths" and "the Saltines". In addition to this, the novel also hints at the progression of America towards a post-marriage society, resulting from the crumbling institutions of marriage and childbearing. It dismantles the utopian vision of family relationships by focusing on the youth's preference for impermanent affairs with easily dissoluble ties and more contingent commitments, as compared to the moral restrictions of marriage. The nature of such post-modern American families has been discussed by the distinguished historian Lawrence Stone in the early 1980s: "The characteristics of

post-modern family are as follows: […] sexual relations have been almost entirely separated from both the biological function of procreation and the legal institution of marriage […]. It is predicted that today one half of all marriages will end in divorce, so that we are moving into an era of serial polygamy" (qtd. in Popenoe et al. 1996: 5). *Couples* too projects the fragility of marital relationships between the middle-class couples of Tarbox, whose boredom of each other has rendered their marriage stale and sterile. Thus one finds Foxy confiding in Piet about the monotony of her marriage: "We've known each other so long we're rather detached, and just use each other" (Updike 1968: 202). Georgene who hooks up with Piet in order to escape her miserable marriage states about her husband, "Piet. I can't stand living with that man much longer…I'm losing all sense of myself as a woman" (Updike 1968: 217). Having lost belief in the presence of God and his benevolence, the couples seek salvation through science, sex and materialism which provide them with a temporary relief from their existential anxieties and the thoughts of death (Singh 1996: 1). Therefore it is important to understand that, as a novel, *Couples* is much more than a mere illustration of licentious affairs, as Updike himself states in an interview with Eric Rhode, "*Couples* is of course not about sex as such, it is about sex as the emergent religion, as the only thing left" to fall back on (Updike 1994: 52). Sex appears to be a substitute for God or religion in the words of an intoxicated Freddy Throne who declares, "People are the only thing people have left, since God packed up. By people I mean sex" (Updike 1968: 145). On being approached by Marcia Little-smith for an extramarital affair, Frank Appleby is swift to accept her offer stating, "Please sexualize me…with this sloppy market running, it's probably the best investment left" (112). In fact the new religion of sexual interplay which emerges in the town of Tarbox has the advantages of not being constrained by a touch of morality like Christianity. As an offering to this religion, the sexual act is of the primary importance; the participants keep changing from time to time and are often substituted by or compared to each other. Piet for instance, in his act of love-making compares his wife Angela's body to that of Georgene: "Touch Angela, she vanished. Touch Georgene, she was there" (48). Both Frank and Marcia compare the physicality of each other to their respective life-partners after making love. To Frank, Marcia had felt "strangely small, more athletic and manageable" than Janet, whereas to Marcia, Frank appeared to be a gentle lover compared to Harold who was "rougher, more strenuous and satisfying" (114, 115).

In a culture where faith in God is dwindling away as fast as fidelity in relationships, it is not surprising that children, who are considered to be closest to God, will be neglected. Submerged in the excesses of adultery, the world of Tarbox is devoid of affection for children and considers them as mere disturbances and encumbrances in their erotic and colourful lives. Often they are strategically shifted from one house to another, even when sick and feverish, so that the couples may continue their adulterous visits. Piet, for instance, at the beginning of the novel, refers to his children as "little bloodsuckers" and believes that they are "supposed to suffer" in order to "learn to be good" (Updike 1968: 8). In fact, not being able to indulge in

serious sexual activities, pregnant women are usually considered to be boring. Thus, while pregnant with his baby, an apprehensive Foxy remarks to her husband, Ken: "Well, they say a man gets his first mistress when his wife becomes pregnant" (39). Though Piet is not entirely devoid of paternal love, he shares no qualms or guilt about leaving his two young children in order to finally marry and move out with Foxy.

3. The decline of faith

The Congregational Church, which is alike a Greek temple is one of the neglected features of the Tarbox landscape. Renovated several d ecades ago, it has been exposed to adverse weather conditions, like hurricane, lightening and rain. The interiors too, are not that well-maintained – the hymnals are tattered and the cushions are frayed as a "fund drive to replace these worn-out cushions had only half succeeded" (Updike 1968: 18). For Piet, the sacred ambience of the Church is interspersed with the memories of painful death and sinful sexuality. This duality of the human mind has been theorized by Freud as emerging from two basic instincts, *Eros* and *Thanatos*, *Eros* being the instinct for life, love, and sexuality and *Thanatos*, the instinct of death, aggression. Thus, on the one hand, Piet tells Angela that the Church is "the source of [my] his amazing virility" and mentally pictures his naked mistress upon hearing the benediction, on the other hand it reminds him of the now-dead "carpenters who had built it" and the painful accidental death of his parents who can never come back (8, 18). When Piet makes love to Bea Guerin, he experiences a "crisisless osmosis" in which "Death no longer seems dreadful" (336). Desire for quiescence and death is present even in the life-affirming act of making love, with the result that complete sexual satisfaction is often linked to "dying". Piet also actively collaborates with death by helping to arrange for an abortion of his own child, a symbol of his love, in the womb of Foxy. He calls upon God, who kills numerous species on earth every day to "kill once more" and "erase the [this] monstrous growth" (346). Again when Piet is told of his parent's sudden death in an automobile accident, he has just returned from a vigorous sexual encounter. Thereafter, time and again, Piet's utopic world of erotica has been interspersed with thoughts of death. He is strikingly moved by the death of the pet hamster caused by the family cat. Increasingly preoccupied with death, Piet introduces his daughter Nancy to the bitter reality of death, breaking her childish illusion about the immortality of pretty people. For Piet, prayer has become more of a habit rather than a genuine appeal to the gruesome and fearful figure of God, who has snatched away his loved ones from him.

The inhabitants of Tarbox and the figure of God share a mutual distrust of each other. Consequently, God is referred to several times in the novel, but usually with a lot of disregard and disrespect. The metaphorically named streets of Tarbox reflect the decadent state of a town which has chosen 'Charity' of lust as a short cut route to 'Divinity' and now can only 'Hope' for redemption. Among his friends, Piet

is the only one who believes in God, but his faith too is guided more by fear and routine rather than love. On being asked why he regularly visited the Church, Piet gives a list of all inappropriate reasons to Foxy: "The usual reasons. I'm a coward. I'm a conservative. Republican, religious. My parent's ghosts are there, and my older girl sings in the choir" (Updike 1968: 200). Piet often wonders at the courage of his non-believing friends and his wife, who do not need the mental support of or hope for God's existence in order to survive. He realizes that his parent's untimely death has driven off from his heart the courage required to "break with a faith" (20). Ironically enough, it is Piet's wife Angela, whose name is derived from the heavenly angels, that questions the Christian concept of heaven and wonders if "it wouldn't be healthier to tell" her daughters the truth, about going "into the ground" instead of heaven after death and coming back "as grass" (215).

Significantly, the couples are quite vocal about their suspicion of the Christian Church, which is tagged as comical and compared to a naked woman. Further they demean both the position of God and women in society by believing that no amount of licentiousness is enough to embarrass God, who is as tolerant and shameless as a woman. They often indulge in blasphemous talks, commenting on the sexuality of Christ, the improbability of his turning water into wine and the use of contraceptives in the earthly paradise. The Reverend of the Church, Horace Pedrick himself, refuses to give Jesus the status of God, calling him "The man" and making his sermons practical and financial rather than spiritual in nature. He replaces the supremacy of Christ with the power of money in his sermons, appealing to his listeners to "welcome this power with hosannahs into [their] our hearts" (Updike 1968: 22). The natural side of Tarbox, including the Indian Hill, is gradually encroached upon by fun-loving city dwellers and builders like Piet, who bury "the world God made" (83). There are others who cannot spare a time and space for God in their lives because of their non-believing partners. One finds Foxy wondering as to "why she could not share God", who was as "meek and small" as a marble, with her husband Ken, in whose presence she grew ashamed of her faith (102). God is reduced to an 'object', a marble here, and the characters are denied an agency of making individual choices with regard to faith. Carol Constantine cannot go to church, because her husband Eddie is a non-believer.

The only church in Tarbox has a "golden rooster", which is visible from all areas of the suburbia. This "golden rooster" hoisted at the pinnacle of the Church has a symbolic significance and is compared to God in terms of its unreachability and access to a panoptical view of the entire landscape of Tarbox. The gilded weathercock, which remains unaffected by the fire, is a symbol of the indestructible, omnipresent, and, in this case, objectified God. It is reminiscent of the pair of fading, bespectacled eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg painted on an old advertising billboard over the valley of ashes in Scot Fritzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. Both of them may represent the figure of God staring down upon and judging the American society, which has now turned into a moral wasteland, though the novel never makes this point explicitly. In another way, it also signifies the essential meaninglessness of the

world and the arbitrariness of the mental process by which people invest various objects with meaning.

4. The hope of redemption

Lurking behind this Godless world is a power whose existence the couples cannot completely disregard and any accountability to it makes them suffer from their own shares of guilt. Hence God is the only one Piet can turn to, when recurring thoughts of parties cause insomnia: "God help me, help me, get me out of this…Dear God put me to sleep" (Updike 1968: 16). A guilt-ridden Piet, while making love to Georgene, is worried about contraception and thinks, "The loveless man is best armed" (48). Aware of her sinful infidelity and believing God to have discarded their lives, Foxy sadly notes, "God doesn't love us any more […]. We've fallen from grace" (200). Ken, the biochemist, admits his failure in analysing the process of metabolism in starfish and confesses that the complexity of their life-process would make them "believe in God again" (33). Commenting on the natural laws of creation, which has led to the formation of wonders like the Grand Canyon, Ben Saltz states that religious people should not be "afraid of the majesty and power of the universe" as the "Cosmic Unconscious" would never do something out of a sense of order (72). Occasionally, the couples suffer from attacks of morality emerging out of a sense of sin and disloyalty, which proves that they are very much aware of the consequences of their actions. Although Janet has secretly been in an extramarital affair with Harold for many months, she protests to an open act of wife-swapping taking place between her husband, Frank, and Harold, stating, "It's so wrong. Now we're really corrupt. All of us" (151). Rendered helpless in the face of his crumbling marriage, once his affair with Foxy has been disclosed, Piet is reminded of a "Calvinist God Who lifts us up and casts us down in utter freedom, without recourse to our prayers or consultation with our wills" (415). Finally when Piet and Foxy are reunited after calling off their respective marriages, they think of themselves as Christians "living in a state of sin" (434).

However in this godless world, the couples still have hope for redemption. In the sceptical society of Tarbox which has reached the verge of decadence, God has to prove his presence if not by showering blessings, then at least by inflicting pain. Foxy who is, to an extent, emotionally committed to both men in her life, is aware of the agony, if not happiness, that God is capable of providing and thereby proving his existence. In a letter to Piet, Foxy writes about the extra sensitivity of women that allow them to feel the presence of God, even in his dictates of punishment: "Sometimes I think you underestimate God […].You have struck a bad bargain and keep whittling away at your half. You should be a woman. The woman in the newspaper holding a dead child in her arms knows God has struck her. I feel Him as above me and around me and in you and in spite of you and because of you" (Updike 1968: 265). Finally one finds that adultery results in serious consequences for both Piet and Foxy. Foxy, surprisingly even in a post-pill paradise, fails to take

contraceptive precautions in her first postnatal sexual encounter with Piet, and becomes pregnant by him. An abortion is arranged, with all its accompanying anxiety, misery and guilt, but fails to conceal the affair. Following the disclosure of the scandal, Piet is forced to move out of his house and spend his nights at the Gallagher & Hanema office and is finally divorced from Angela. Foxy too decides to move out on Ken with her baby boy and goes to Washington to stay at her mother's place. The abortion and the illegitimate issue not only take away the warmth of Piet and Foxy's affair, but also destroy Foxy's marriage with Ken, whom she holds responsible for having to kill the baby. However, after a temporary separation, they are allowed to marry and settle happily enough in another town, where, "gradually, among people like themselves, they have been accepted, as a couple" (Updike 1968: 458). Updike here seems to be tolerant and sympathetic towards the erotic, and lets his lawless lovers off lightly in the end. In fact, critics like Ralph Wood consider Updike's handling of theological matters to be disappointing, especially since he seems to tread lightly on conventional Protestant theologians' notions of sin and humankind's relationship with the almighty. According to Wood, there is much about 'man' in Updike's theology, but considerably less about 'God' (qtd. in Mazzeno 2013: 99).

Although, at one level, this might indicate that redemption is possible, at another level it marks the death or decline of permanent family structures. It is important to note at this point that Piet and Foxy are accepted in a society that comprises people "like themselves", who might be equally infidel in their relationships. Thus it is specified that such a utopic world of erotic pleasures can successfully function only at an interpersonal level and not at a familial or societal level. In fact, as an author, Updike increasingly focuses on the breakdown of marriages in his writings (Greiner 2002: 198). In his book *John Updike and the Cold War*, D. Quentin Miller insists that the cause of the disintegration of joint families to nuclear ones can be linked directly to "changes in the cold war" (Miller 2001: 10). The post-World War II period was simultaneously an apprehensive and a dynamic epoch for America. It witnessed a collision between the religious doctrines of the age and the advances in science, such as the nuclear bomb. The spectre of nuclear annihilation urged the American middle-class, whom Updike's fictional characters represent, to seek immediate transient pleasures, which in turn disrupted their familial stability. Usually when the individualized expectations of members are fulfilled at the expense of broader family members and their solidarity, the family disrupts. In *Couples* too, sexual excitement procured at the cost of disloyalty towards wife and negligence towards children, leads to the breakdown of the family setup.

5. Conclusion

The novel ends with the burning of the church which was the only guilt-producing factor in the pleasure-seeking society of Tarbox. The lightening which had struck it is not only a natural phenomenon, but a visible manifestation of the

supernatural power. Piet is almost grateful to witness this symbolical incident as a proof for the existence of God, and hence for the existence of hope. He wonders at the "lightness in his own heart", which is filled with "gratitude for having been shown something beyond him, beyond all blaming" (Updike 1968: 443). In fact, this is reminiscent of Julian Barne's article 'Running Away', in which he quotes Updike, who like his fictional character Piet, states that he couldn't quite give up on religion, because without the possibility or dream of something beyond and above, the terrestrial life would become unendurable (see Barnes 2015). With the burning down of the Church, Piet, who had been knocked down by God early in his life by his parent's death, is assured of the presence of a kind God rather than a fierce one, whom he had so long dutifully worshipped, but never genuinely loved.

The burning of the church at the end of Updike's *Couples* can be viewed from two perspectives. On the one hand it can be conceived as signifying the death of God and the downfall of religious conventions that previously inhabitants of Tarbox had to oblige with. On the other hand, if one pays attention to the allegorical implication of the rooster, which stands unharmed despite the destruction of the church, then one might believe in the resurrection of God, who perhaps demands voluntary love and not enforced fear of his subjects. While the first perspective is closer to a wide spread phenomenon of western cultures, resulting from the decline of Christianity and the rise of philosophical decadence, which the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche terms as 'passive nihilism', the second perspective seems to have strong relevance to what Nietzsche denotes as a "sign of strength" or "active nihilism". The second standpoint, which supports the collapse, levelling or flattening of all traditional world-views in order to construct something new, is more germane to Updike's novel *Couples*. Nietzsche himself predicts the inevitable downfall of "the Christian-moral" interpretation of the world, which would give rise to a new and more tenable world-view. Quite ominously he writes, "The time has come when we have to pay for having been Christians for two thousand years: we are losing the centre of gravity by virtue of which we have lived", but at the same time he also mentions "a countermovement […which] will take the place of this perfect nihilism" (Nietzsche 1967: 30, 33-34).

With an upsurge of Evangelical Protestantism in the early American republic, people became increasingly fearful of God's impending judgement on human actions. Overwhelmingly aware of the sinfulness of their soul, believers were left vulnerable to the much prophesied wrath of God and miseries of Hell. Solely dependent on God's mercy for salvation, people became more uncertain about the experiences of death and afterlife. Soon, against this religious revival, emerged a counter-movement called 'Deism', with its distaste for organized religion and doctrines. Fearless in their approach, deists had unwavering faith in the benevolence and compassion of a Supreme Being who, according to them, had endowed human beings with complete self-sufficiency to attain happiness in life. Sharing scepticism, if not outright disregard, for the divinity of Jesus Christ and his sacrifice for mankind, freethinkers like Elihu Palmer and Thomas Paine were the main precursors of deism

in the United States. Besides Thomas Paine (2007: 7), who motivated by the tenets of individualism, insisted in *The Age of Reason*: "My own mind is my own church", Elihu Palmer (1823: 11) disputed the misplaced fear of God and the misguided notion of his tyranny by describing a generous and "an eternal being, whose perfections guarantee the existence and harmony of the universe". Palmer's Supreme Being, who is as orderly as nature, is "uniform, consistent and perfect, just and equitable, and in perfect coincidence with the immortal laws of the moral and physical world" (Palmer 1823: 66). According to Kristen Fischer (2010: 19), "this God does not intervene in world history with miracles meant to shock people, does not share the human emotions of jealousy, wrath, or lust for vengeance, demands no blood sacrifice, and damns no one to hell". Significantly, even the legendary English poet William Blake greeted with delight the glimpse of freedom that such a religious revolution brought in. In his 1969 preface to *Fearful Symmetry*, Northrop Frye (2004: 7), while commenting on Blake's mythology, states that the poet "thought of the essential 'mental fight' of human life as the revolt of desire and energy against repression". Blake, who believed that "it is impossible for a human being to live completely in the world of sense" saw all evil in "self-restrain or restrain of others" (Frye 2004: 61). Consequently, Blake bridges the insurmountable gap between man and a distant wrathful God by identifying him with human imagination and thereby locating him within mankind. Updike too, in his outwardly sinful and flamboyant novel *Couples*, tries to accomplish the solemn task of directing the readers towards an alternative to orthodox and guilt-laden Christianity. Although in refuting the Biblical God, Updike admits a philosophical outlook similar to that of Deism, yet he does not support God's complete indifference to mankind. In depicting the ill-fate of the representative couple, Piet and Foxy, who are left isolated even in their togetherness at the end of the novel, Updike acknowledges the importance of God's disciplinary role.

As the church burns, the local crowd witnesses with wonder the coexistence of fire, a symbol of death and divine wrath, and rain, a symbol of regeneration and rebirth. Tarbox thus becomes a site for the enactment of the "cosmic cycle", where suffering is always followed by happiness and vice versa (Singh 1996: 40). Seeing the marvellous phenomenon of fire and rain together and the rooster still standing unharmed as usual, Piet realizes the presence of a benevolent God who destroys to recreate and kills to resurrect. With the burning of the church, Piet "is relieved of morality and can choose Foxy" without any qualms (Updike 1994: 33). He can finally move out of a guilt-ridden existence to enjoy freedom in its truest sense. However, such an unrestricted freedom takes away the vitality of his life and the colour from his character. Being satisfied, Piet, who was once the talk of the town, is reduced to insignificance, leading an obscure life amongst infidel people like him. In other words, as long as there are rules, there is fun in flouting them. With no moral and social constraints, life is indifferent to the questions of fidelity and infidelity. However, existing in a society which is entirely devoid of any kind of world-view, for an indefinite period of time, is not feasible. A new, counter, and progressive

world-view is imperative to the familial structures of a society. This in turn elucidates the importance and the necessity of both the fearful and the forgiving aspects of God, the former in monitoring the proper functioning of human society, and the latter in accommodating those who wander away from the right path.

References

Barnes, Julian. 2015. "Running Away" in *The Guardian*, October 17. [Online]. Available: https://www.theguardian.com/books/2009/oct/17/julian-barnes-john-updike-rabbit [Accessed 2017, March 22].

Fischer, Kirsten. 2010. "Religion Governed by Terror: a Deist Critique of Fearful Christianity in the Early American Republic" in *Revue française d'études américaines*, 3, pp. 13-26.

Frye, Northrop. 2004. "Fearful Symmetry: A Study of William Blake". In Halmi, Nicholas (ed.). *Collected Works of Northrop Frye*, vol. 14. Toronto: Toronto University Press.

Greiner, Donald J. 2002. "Contextualizing John Updike" in *Contemporary Literature*, 43 (1), pp. 194-202.

Hungerford, Amy. 2010. *Postmodern Belief: American Literature and Religion since 1960*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Mazzeno, Laurence W. 2013. *Becoming John Updike: Critical Reception 1958–2010*. New York: Camden House.

Miller, D. Quentin. 2001. *John Updike and the Cold War: Drawing the Iron Curtain*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1967. *The Will to Power*. Kaufmann, Walter (ed.). Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (trans.). New York: Random House.

Paine, Thomas. 2007 (1795). *The Age of Reason*. New York: Cosimo Classics.

Palmer, Elihu. 1823. *Principles of Nature or a Development of the Moral Causes of Happiness and Misery among the Human Species*. London: R. Carlile.

Popenoe, David, Jean Bethke Elshtain and David Blankenhorn (eds.). 1996. *Promises to Keep: Decline and Renewal of Marriage in America.* Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield.

Popova, Maria. "The Adulterous Society: How John Updike Made Suburban Sex Sexy" in *Brainpickings* [Online]. Available: https://www.brainpickings.org/2014/04/08/updike-biography-1/ [Accessed 2017 March 26].

Singh, Sukhbir. 1996. "Fire, Rain, Rooster: John Updike's Christian Allegory in *Couples*" in *International Fiction Review*, 23, pp. 36-41.

Updike, John. 1968. *Couples*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Updike, John. 1994. *Conversations with John Updike.* Plath, James (ed.). Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.

A GLIMPSE AT THE HUMOR OF WOODY ALLEN'S WRITING

ALEXANDRU OLTEAN-CÎMPEAN

"Babeș-Bolyai" University, Cluj-Napoca

Abstract: The purpose of the present article is to analyze the humor in Woody Allen's The Whore of Mensa *from both a literary and linguistic perspective. The analysis puts into contrast the richness of the literary interpretation of humor – with its numerous quips and subtle references to high-end literature – and the exaggeratingly repetitious simplicity of the linguistic humorous structure. Woody Allen manages to structure the entirety of his text so as to make it resemble a joke, a feat that, according to the prevailing humor theories, shouldn't be possible.*
Key words: general theory of verbal humor, The Whore of Mensa, *Woody Allen*

1. Introduction

Published in 1974 in The New Yorker, and later included in the collection 'Without Feathers', *The Whore of Mensa* is an intriguingly funny story that offers much more than might initially meet the eye. Set up as a straight-forward detective story, the text follows the charming, cool-headed private investigator Kaiser Lupowitz as he takes on a notorious prostitution ring in order to get his client Word Babcock out of a blackmail situation. The story quickly takes a decisive twist when it is revealed that the brothel in question caters to the intellectual, rather than the physical needs of its clients. This is by far not the only thing that might jump out for the typical connoisseur of 'The New Yorker', and what results is a text whose humor is multifaceted. The purpose of the present article is therefore to analyze the humor in *The Whore of Mensa* from both a literary and linguistic perspective, in order to illustrate the ways in which Woody Allen weaves humor into his story.

2. Literary interpretation of humor

The need for a literary interpretation of humor in *The Whore of Mensa* is fairly obvious. This story is a parody, and the following interpretation of humor offers a breakdown of the major concepts that the text makes fun of.

True to the nature of any piece of literature published in The New Yorker, *The Whore of Mensa* is a text that is meant to spark intrigue and curiosity in the more learned members of society. As such, it is littered with references that would make those who are

in the know chuckle. One such example is the fact that the main character's given name is *Kaiser*, as a reference to the German word for *king*. Then, his surname is *Lupowitz,* which alludes to the notion of the Jewish king. By combining the two, the name of the protagonist is thus a pun on Jesus, while simultaneously poking fun at the darker history between the Germans and the Jewish community. Another example that might make the reader chuckle is the fact that Kaiser's client Word Babcock (another name that breeds humor) "builds and services joy buzzers" (Allen 1991: 52), which would make people think of his job, and even of the story itself, as being one great practical joke. The prostitute that Babcock employs is a student at Vassar College, an elite liberal arts college. When Kaiser conducts research in order to come off as an intellectual, he looks "over the Monarch College Outline series" (Allen 1991: 53), even though it is a hotel school, whereas he is to engage in a conversation about Melville's works. The prostitute herself is described as having "long straight hair, leather bag, silver earrings, no makeup" (ibid), as one might sooner expect of a college student to look like. When Lupowitz threatens to give her up to the police, she offers to bribe him with "photographs of Dwight Macdonald" (Allen 1991: 56), and at the end of the story the bold detective decides to go on a date with a girl who graduated *cum laude*, "the difference was she majored in physical education" (Allen 1991: 57). These are just some examples of the many instances of humor found in the text. The purpose of this paper is not however to present a list of all these bits of amusement. Rather, I will focus on the two overarching ideas that the story parodies.

The first notion that Allen makes fun of in *The Whore of Mensa* is intellectualism. The parody in question is constructed by first setting up *intellectualism* and *intellectual conversation* as the central themes of the story as a whole. This is done on multiple levels, beginning with the fact that the events take place in New York, which in the 1970's was already the culture capital of America. Playing upon this image of the big apple, Allen takes it one step further by referencing individuals such as Dwight Macdonald (Allen 1991: 56), Lionel Trilling and Mary McCarthy (Allen 1991: 57), all prominent names within the important cultural circles of mid-twentieth century New York. Apart from these mentioned members of New York's cultural elite, *The Whore of Mensa* also includes references to prominent writers such as T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and W.B. Yeats, whose works have always targeted the refined intellectual as their desired readers. Altogether, the setting, the names of critics and those of prominent writers might make a fine basis for a serious story about the intellectual life of twentieth century New York. *The Whore of Mensa*, however, is not that. The plot of this text revolves around the private investigator Kaiser Lupowitz who runs into conflict with a prostitution ring, while employed to save his client, Word Babcock, from being blackmailed. The catch is that this brothel does not offer sexual intercourse; rather, what the clients pay for is thought-provoking conversation. Thus, "for fifty bucks you could 'relate without getting close'. For a hundred, a girl would lend you her Bartok records, have dinner, and then let you watch while she had an anxiety attack. For one-fifty you could listen to FM radio with twins" (Allen 1991: 56). Regardless of your option, the conversation will always revolve around the above-mentioned authors or other writers of equal caliber. What results then is a short story that equates intellectual conversation

with sexual intercourse. More precisely, what Woody Allen is suggesting is that there is qualitatively no difference between the low-base desire found in sex for hire and the high-end desire for intellectual thought, a notion that is certainly very funny.

The second thing that the text parodies is English Victorian society, whose notion of *gentleman* had a significant impact on the image of the modern intellectual. Allen sets this up first of all by constructing his text to resemble a classic detective story. The fact that the main character is a private investigator, together with the mystery behind the illusive madam Flossie and the twist at the end all play into this. The direct connection to Victorianism is established concretely at the end of the tale, either with the introduction of Sergeant Holmes, an obvious allusion to the famous 19th century character Sherlock Holmes, or with the design of the Hunter College Book Store, with its secret wall of books, that opens to reveal behind it a space in which "red flocked wallpaper and a Victorian décor set the tone" (Allen 1991: 56). The fact that this décor, as well as the entire story for that matter, revolves around a brothel pokes fun at a hypocritical situation that existed during the Victorian era, which saw not only the rise of the refined gentleman intellectual, but also a distinct rise in prostitution.

Whether we refer to the tiny jokes that permeate the text or the larger issues of intellectualism vs. prostitution, or of Victorian hypocrisy, the fact that *The Whore of Mensa* manages to parody so many things in such a short amount of space says a lot about the refined nature of Woody Allen's writing. This is a story whose humor can only really be appreciated when you sieve through it carefully and perhaps more than once, since there is a good chance that you may have missed a subtle pun the first time around.

3. A linguistic analysis of humor

The need for a linguistic interpretation of humor in *The Whore of Mensa* might seem less obvious, but is in fact no less important. If a literary interpretation offers the meaning or meanings of the humor within the text, a linguistic interpretation reveals its structure. If the former answers the questions of *what* the text makes fun of and perhaps *why* it does so, the latter illustrates *how* the humor in the text is constructed. The precise way in which this structure is determined is done with the help of the 'General Theory of Verbal Humor' (GTVH). Devised by Attardo Salvatore and Victor Raskin (1991), the GTVH states that, when we interpret humor, we appeal to six Knowledge Resources (KR). These are *Language* (LA), which refers to the morphologic and syntactic elements of the text, *Narrative Strategy* (NS), which illustrates the type of text (expository, poem, image, etc.), *Situation* (SI), which is the context set up within and around the humorous text, *Target* (TA), the butt of the joke, *Script Opposition* (SO), which is the premise that the text "should be partially or fully compatible with two different [semantic] scripts" (Raskin 1984:14) that are in an opposite relationship, and *Logical Mechanism* (LM), which refers to the way in which the two scripts are brought together.

Despite the fact that comedic stories are commonly regarded as wholly funny, in reality these works are typically regular texts (meaning non-humorous texts) that simply

contain a significant number of humorous fragments. The advantage of applying the GTVH is that it makes it possible to determine and isolate these fragments, thus making it possible to establish the structure of humor in a text that is larger than a joke. While *The Whore of Mensa* contains a significantly high number of humorous fragments of text, however I will not proceed to list them all here, rather, for the purposes of this article, a sample will suffice. Thus, Figure 1 below shows four instances of humor, while Figure 2 presents the formal analysis of each fragment:

Figure 1

(a) "Well, I heard of this young girl. Eighteen years old. A Vassar student. For a price, she'll come over and discuss any subject – Proust, Yeats, anthropology" (Allen 1991:52)

(b) "I mean, my wife is great, don't get me wrong. But she won't discuss Pound with me. […] I need a woman who is mentally stimulating, Kaiser. And I'm willing to pay for it. […] I want a quick intellectual experience" (Allen 1991:52)

(c) "I'm surprised you weren't stopped, walking into the hotel dressed like that", I said. "The house dick can usually spot an intellectual" (Allen 1991:54)

(d) "I'm fuzz, sugar, and discussing Melville for money is an 802. You can do time" (Allen 1991:55)

Figure 2

a) SO [intellectual conv] / [prostitution]
   LM False Analogy
   SI context
   TA girl/intellectualism
   NS expository text
   LA irrelevant

b) SO [intellectual conv] / [prostitution]
   LM False Analogy
   SI context
   TA Babcock's wife/intellectualism
   NS expository text
   LA irrelevant

c) SO [intellectual conv] / [prostitution]
   LM False Analogy
   SI context
   TA Sherry/intellectualism
   NS expository text
   LA irrelevant

d) SO [intellectual conv] / [prostitution]
   LM False Analogy
   SI context
   TA law/intellectualism
   NS expository text
   LA irrelevant

A few observations need to be made here. First of all, since the Language KR simply presents the syntactic and morphological components of the texts, it doesn't actually offer any relevant data for the analysis of humor in *The Whore of Mensa*. Therefore, this KR is deemed irrelevant. Similarly, the Situation KR can only point out the context within the story where the humorous fragment of text appears and the Narrative Strategy KR points only to the fact that each fragment is an expository text. Lastly, the Target *Sherry* in example (c) refers to the character found in the text.

The Knowledge Resources that are of interest here are Script Opposition, Logical Mechanism and Target. More precisely, what catches the eye is the repetitious nature of each KR in turn. Each case of script opposition is between the notion of *intellectual conversation* and that of *prostitution*. All four humorous fragments of text have the same logical mechanism, False Analogy, which means creating an analogy between two notions that don't actually have anything in common. Finally, while the immediate targets of each text may differ, ultimately each humorous fragment refers to the notion of *intellectualism*, which is what they are actually poking fun at. What this repetitious nature shows is that from a structural point of view, these aren't four distinct instances of humor at all, but rather each fragment of text is a reiteration of the same joke. It is similar to the way in which, if you take the classic joke "How many Poles does it take to change a light bulb? / Five – one to hold the bulb and four to spin the table he's standing on", replacing Poles with another nationality, the table with a chair and the number of individuals with any other amount only results in a different version of the exact same joke.

Woody Allen's decision to create the humor in *The Whore of Mensa* in this manner, to repeat the same gag over and over, looks distinctly odd at first glance. It is enough to take an empirical look at most pieces of humorous literature to notice that diversity is a standard ingredient utilized by comedic writers. This plays into the notion that, usually, if the receiver of the humor encounters the same joke again and again, he very quickly loses interest. Allen seems to defy this recipe on purpose, a matter which is worth contemplating. What is even more interesting than the workings of Woody Allen's mind, however, is the fact that the author's choice does not negatively affect the appreciation of the humor. On the contrary, it would be difficult to suggest that *The Whore of Mensa* might not be a funny piece of literature. The question that remains then is why. A possible answer arises when we in fact compare the great diversity of the literary interpretation of *The Whore of Mensa* with its overly repetitive linguistic analysis. If we define a *semantic script* as any chunk of information centered on a single driving notion, then we can think of the complex literary interpretation of the humor in this story and the simplistic linguistic structure of humor as two distinct semantic scripts. Moreover, since they refer to the same story, we can say that the text is compatible with both. Lastly the two semantic scripts can be juxtaposed as in Figure 3:

Figure 3

[Complex literary interpretation] / [Overly simplistic linguistic structure]

It should become obvious that what Figure 3 depicts is essentially a *script opposition*, one which doesn't just apply to one part of the story or another – it is not linked to any specific humorous fragment of text – but instead it is established for *The Whore of Mensa* as a whole. In this sense, the entirety of the short story becomes one big

joke. This is no small feat. Typically, despite the attempts of some scholars to show that all humorous texts are just large jokes (see Attardo 1994 for discussions on the matter), the generally accepted notion is that joke-like texts are fundamentally different from larger types, such as short stories. This is the reason behind the need for the development of the General Theory of Verbal Humor. Woody Allen thus succeeds in undermining this need, by creating a text that can in fact be viewed as one big joke.

4. Conclusion

Despite its length, Woody Allen's *The Whore of Mensa* is a thought provoking text, which has the ability to engage and certainly to amuse even the most refined member of the intellectual elite of New York and beyond. Unless one is easily offended, in which case such a reader would dismiss this story from the start, the notion that the need for intellectual conversation and the need for sexual gratification might be in some sense one and the same thing might make some learned men and women take pause and reflect upon what it is they are actually doing when they spend time discussing Proust, Yeats, anthropology and why they feel the need to discuss them. Allen then takes this even further, by using allusions to Victorian society to parody the very notion of the image of the modern intellectual.

Yet what really makes the humor in *The Whore of Mensa* fascinating emerges when we consider both the complexity of the literary interpretation and the simplicity of the linguistic structure of the humor in the text, as shown in Figure 3. As mentioned before, what we might consider to be comedic pieces of literature aren't normally humorous pieces of text in themselves. Rather, they are regular texts that contain a significant number of humorous fragments of text which connect, completely or in part, to the main characters and themes of the story. Yet, if we consider the claim set by Attardo Salvatore and Victor Raskin (1991) that a text is deemed humorous if and only if it is compatible with two semantic scripts, and if we consider the information provided in Figure 3, what results is the fact that *The Whore of Mensa* in its entirety is constructed as one singular humorous text. Unlike most works of literature, what we have here is one joke-like text, which targets not only the themes presented (intellectual conversation, Victorian society, the detective story), but the very way in which a typical comedic story is constructed.

References

Allen, Woody. 1991. "The Whore of Mensa" in *The Complete Prose of Woody Allen*. New York: Wings Books, pp. 49-59.

Attardo, Salvatore.1994. *Linguistic Theories of Humor*. Berlin: Mouton de Druzter.

Attardo, Salvatore and Victor Raskin. 1991. "Script Theory Revis(it)ed" in *Humor. International Journal of Humor Research*, 4(3-4), pp. 293-347.

Raskin, Victor. 1984. *Semantic Mechanisms of Humor*. Dordrecht, Boston, Lancaster: D. Reidel Publishing Co.

HUMAN, POSTHUMAN

POLITICS AND *MACBETH*

MARTA GIBINSKA

Jozef Tischner European University, Krakow

Abstract: *The question about what makes Shakespeare's texts such good tools for understanding our own experience of the world is addressed by an analysis of some passages in* Macbeth *based on the notions of diegesis, mimesis and deconstruction. The main argument is that textual aporias mirror our contradictory and ambiguous reactions to the real world.*
Keywords: *mimesis, diegesis, difference, Shakespeare's tragedy, politics*

1. Introduction

A few years ago I wrote about politics in Shakespeare's plays (Gibinska 2008) discussing the three parts of Henry VI. May aim was to demonstrate how the structure of the plays allows for the multiplicity of points of view, which not only open ambiguous interpretative potential and introduce ideological considerations (understood as narratives constructed on a political agenda), but also effectively deconstruct them. If the critical or the theatrical reception of the plays instil too blatantly their own agendas, the very texts of Shakespeare uncover and deny such manipulations.

Can we use Shakespeare to understand and describe our own experience of the world? of life? Definitely yes, as Shakespeare's presence in the world culture has never diminished for the last 400 years, just as critical opinions and theatre reviews of his plays have been an incessant field of polemics and skirmishes. What is then there in Shakespeare's texts that fills them with this inexhaustible semantic potential?

To try to answer this question I need to consider the old tools used in critical struggles with fiction, namely mimesis and diegesis. Mimesis 'shows' rather than 'tells', while diagesis 'narrates', and if it 'shows', then it does so only indirectly, through language. Plato, in Book III of The Republic, differentiates between narration (diegesis), and imitation (representation) which he terms mimesis. He understands these two ways of creating fictional worlds as an imitation of reality in various literary genres, with a particular force defining drama as a mimetic rather than a diegetic art. In Poetics III.3, Aristotle states that a poet can imitate reality in

two ways: by creating a narrator who tells a story, i.e., tells the world, or by creating characters endowed with language and consciousness and thus creating the world through the characters' activities. Aristotle uses this particular differentiation to define the difference between heroic poetry and drama. Here I would like to employ the two types of imitation to discuss the relation of a dramatic text to the empirical world. I need, though, to introduce important modifications. First, I claim that both diegesis and mimesis are employed in drama. Characters act, but they also tell stories, so 'the world' is represented by the two kinds of imitation.

Second, I have to consider imitation and reception together. If mimesis and diegesis are the result of the author's decisions, understanding and interpretation, which are acts of reception, endeavour to re-create the fictional (imitated) world. However, re-creation in this sense is not a process symmetrical to creation.

Plato's and Aristotle's concepts are useful in producing an ontological model into which I have to fit both text and its contexts, assuming that one of the contexts is the reception of the literary (dramatic) work. Diegesis is a concept which allows me to define the text as an entity which is never outside context. Derrida's famous statement "il n'y a pas de hors-texte" (Derrida 1967) comes readily to mind. His own elucidation runs as follows:

> Avancer qu'il n'y a pas de hors-texte, c'est observer que le texte affirme le Dehors; déconstruire, c'est prendre en compte cette "structure a priori" dont l'analyse n'est jamais politiquement neutre. [...] Toutes les structures de la "réalité" dite économique, historique, sociale, institutionnelle, politique, etc [...] sont impliquées en lui, à tel point qu'on peut le qualifier de texte-contexte. Il accueille en lui le référent, le réel; il les inscrit comme différance. Prendre cela en compte, c'est la déconstruction même. (http://www.idixa.net/Pixa)

The senses inscribed in the text are all immersed in their own contexts which become contexts of the text we examine. In order to define my own interpretative tool, which I want to call diegesis, I postulate such ontology of the text which allows for its relation to an indeterminate reality, infinite and changing with time, and, therefore, representing a wide horizon of contexts. This would mean that the essence of imitation can be discovered in all possible connections of the imitated world with the empirical world in the contexts prior or contemporary with the text, because they are inscribed in it. The recipient's business is to see those contexts, to pick them up and order them along a specific hierarchy. Since, however, the recipient brings in his/her own contexts, s/he can define connections of the text to his/her own reality, to his/her own structures 'a priori', and that, as Derrida points out, is never apolitical.

Such diegetical model should allow us, as I believe, to see in the word (the language) of Shakespearean characters the creation of a reality through a selective perception of contexts and the re-working of one text into another, translating one reality into another, which in turn must be placed within the perspective of the recipient; the latter will then re-work the diegesis of the characters through his/her

own 'imitation of reality', through his/her own telling of the reality which is his/her own experience.

Thus, I can postulate an infinite linguistic and interpretative variety of the represented world, dependent on who and in what contexts tells his/her understanding of reality through struggling with a concrete text. Since every single interpretation is determinate and specific, to say that an interpretation is innocent, independent and objective is naive and reductionist; also it falsifies the interpretative process. In conclusion: Shakespeare's plays do not represent our reality and experience. We represent our reality and experience by interpreting his plays. And we act politically in the widest sense of the word.

To discuss mimesis – imitation via acting – we need a different ontological status. Derrida's 'dehors' full of other texts is less practical here, exactly because it contains other texts. For mimesis, we need a physical (rather than intellectual) aspect of being. The most important context of action (as opposed to telling) in drama is the physical experience of life, the physical qualities of the human being, of his/her voice, because these elements constitute the essence of human presence and form meanings arising in doing rather than telling. Mimesis anticipates, envisages doing/acting on the stage.

The playwright suggests dramaturgical solutions in order to allow for a concrete imitation of human activity on the stage. His 'prompts' must be taken into account by directors and actors who will then construct their own imitation of a human being in action. The audience will be given a specific imitation of the world, which, at the same time, will be an imitation of the playwright's imitation and an imitation of the recognizable here and now of life. This is the essence of the mirror set up to nature in theatre. But also, in this case, we have to admit that the creation of signs on the stage and their interpretation must be a deconstructive process, in which directors, actors, and audiences will discover fissures through which the contexts of their own experience and understanding of reality will be offered.

2. The 'political' Shakespeare: *Macbeth*

To see the 'political' Shakespeare, one does not need all those complicated tools. Julius Caesar or Coriolanus have always been understood in critical reception as political plays, because their plots are most obviously constructed on the idea of struggle for power. But it is interesting that their theatrical popularity did not necessarily depend on political agendas.

Examining the history of European productions of Shakespeare's plays from 1848 to 1945, I have found only two productions of Julius Caesar - in Warsaw 1928 and in Prague 1936 (Gibinska 2017: 51) – which used the play to demonstrate a political reading of the reality of the time. The most frequently politicized play has always been Hamlet. Alfred Thomas published an incisive and most interesting study of the phenomenon of political contexts of Hamlet in 2014. Andrzej Żurowski's studies (1983; 2003 a, b) proved that in Poland Hamlet was most frequently exploited

politically of all Shakespeare's plays. Again, I am not exactly original in bringing the tragedies into the political context, since all great tragedies (except perhaps Romeo and Juliet) turn around the problem of power and the consequences of political (ir)responsibility. Titus Andronicus drips with blood of political and private enemies, while the horror of recriminations and murders consists the essence of the Roman polis. In Hamlet, the state is a prison, where everyday life means spying and informing the only and rightful authority. Antony and Cleopatra, apart from the study of passionate love, is also a study of the body politic of Antony. King Lear brings a story of unwise political decision which brings the downfall of the king, but also of the country lost in the civil war and facing the dilemma of a foreign invasion. Macbeth, a great study of the psychology of a criminal, is also a story of ruthless political ambition, of lust for power, of political crimes, and of destruction of the state. Thus, following only the plot lines, we can read into each of these plays our own political experience. But such treatment of the political issues in Shakespeare's tragedies is so obvious, that it must be reductionist and shallow. Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre was replete with political plays, enough to think of Marlowe, Chapman or Middleton. And yet, their plays stay in the big store of history, rarely seeing the footlights of world theatres, while Shakespeare is truly 'for all time', as Ben Jonson diagnosed.

Macbeth, unlike Julius Caesar or Hamlet, is not the play which has been most frequently appropriated politically, and yet, its unusually high poetic condensation of language and a striking quality of dramatic structure may offer the answer to the initial question: what makes us so often read Shakespeare's text politically? What aspects of the texts allow us to take it and insert it in our own current contexts in a particularly creative way, the way which opens interesting and varied interpretative shifts? The point of interest here will be particularly the diegetic passages, i.e. those which tell rather than show the world.

The first passages to be considered is the Bloody Captain's relation from the battlefield and Rosse's report, both in I.2. The two passages have a distinct epic character; offering a condensed view of the battlefields, they are filled with distinctive verbal images (e.g., "like two spent swimmers") and well aimed, felicitous epithets which suggest the superb prowess and valour of Macbeth (and Banquo) in fighting the rebels, Macdonwald and Cawdor, traitors who defy the King of Scotland and stand up against him with the help of mercenaries and foreign military power. Macdonwald recruited Kernes and Gallowglasses from Ireland, while Cawdor was backed by "Norway himself, With terrible numbers"[1]. The cruel and bloody confrontations were won by invincible Macbeth, who fought with courage and displayed absolute loyalty to the king.

The textual context – reports from the battlefields are brought to Duncan who waits for the "battle lost [or] won", therefore also for the verdict as to the future of

---

[1] All quotations from the Arden edition of *Macbeth*, ed. Kenneth Muir, Methuen 1982

his state – opens an axiological perspective. He who serves the king is brave, noble and faithful, he serves the state, his own homeland. However, a more careful inspection of the texts of the Captain and of Rosse makes us see fissures through which doubt and moral ambiguity seep out. Let us carefully consider the text. Here is the description of the traitor Macdonwald,

> The merciless Macdonwald –
> (Worthy to be a rebel, for to that
> The multiplying villanies of nature
> Do swarm upon him) (I.2.)

and of the heroic Macbeth,

> For brave Macbeth (well he deserves that name)
> Disdaining Fortune, with his brandish'd steel,
> Which smok'd with bloody execution,
> Like Valour's minion carved out his passage
> Till he fac'd he slave; (I.2., emphasis mine)

The choice of epithets not only describes the two thanes, but also evidences the frame of values in the world of Macbeth. The difference between the merciless Macdonwald and brave Macbeth depends on the Captain's perspective which is identical with that of Duncan and his knights. The Captain's differentiation between the two contestants is accepted without a grain of doubt. Macdonwald as an opponent must be merciless, villainous and querulous; Macbeth is most obviously Valour's minion, who disdains Fortune and deserves the title of the King's brave defendant. But what exactly does Macbeth do on the battlefield? The detailed and, at the same time, suggestively metaphorical description makes us see not merciless Macdonwald, but merciless Macbeth. Macdonwald in Captain's words is not given much attention and is almost a priori sentenced to defeat ("..but all's too weak", although Fortune seemed to smile on his cause). The inference from the image of the "two spent swimmers" suggests his prowess is equal to Macbeth's, but he is not shown in the battle, while Macbeth's great feat of fighting is offered in striking details. The Valour's minion, valiant cousin, and worthy gentleman is victorious. His actions, though, hardly corroborate the "golden opinion". Macbeth's "brandish'd steel, which smok'd with bloody execution" helped him to carve out "his passage". The figurative language, used with the intention of praise, suggests at the same time the warrior's cruelty, ruthlessness and unrestrained brutality. "The worthy gentleman" not only defies chivalric rituals – "ne'er shook hands, nor bade farewell to him" – but performs an act of utmost savagery,

> …he unseam'd him from the nave to th'chops,
> And fix'd his head upon our battlements. (I.2.)

The Captain's appraisal, „brave Macbeth (well he deserves that name)", is turned into a highly ironic statement. The axiology of the world of the play gets uncertain, if not suspicious: the king's enthusiastic response is not the only response generated by the text, while the words of the Witches gain a specific moral and political status. "Fair is foul and foul is fair" becomes dependent upon and is resolved by the adopted point of view. Axiological doubts are inevitable: what is the virtue of valour? Is Macbeth brave? What does loyalty mean? Is the perspective of the Captain the only legitimate political stance?

In Captain's further words there is a striking emphasis on the indomitable courage and prowess of Macbeth and Banquo,

> (....) they were
> As cannons overcharg'd with double cracks;
> So they
> Doubly redoubled strokes upon the foe:
> Except **they meant to bathe in reeking wounds,**
> **Or memorize another Golgotha** (I.2.)

Bathing in reeking wounds repeats and extends the image of the steel smoking with bloody execution. Here, however, there is a new and puzzling image of another Golgotha, the space of which cannot but leave for Banquo and Macbeth the function of butchers and executioners. Derrida's *différance* jumps to the eye. Diegesis creates the world of sharp distinction between values and positions, yet, at the same time, deconstructs the values of the world in which such divisions exist. It is here where the political potential of the tragedy is visible. The described battles are great victories in defence of the state. But how can we understand the values involved in that defence? Can we ignore questions about the *raison d'état* of that king and those knights? Is it possible to accept without doubt that only one side is right?

Theatre and film productions of *Macbeth* most often cut the scene, leaving only enough to expose the golden opinion which Macbeth enjoyed before he became a murderer. This of course is done to enhance the internal tragedy, the psychological and moral error and, finally, the defeat of Macbeth. But the tragedy has an inevitable political aspect, which cannot be only limited to the renaissance idea of the Wheel of Fortune, but should be recognized and studied as a complex and complicated experience in imitating reality which defies uniform and reductionist representation, which complicates judgement and offers inconsistencies and aporias. Shakespeare's text does not shy from them. Alfred Thomas has demonstrated in his excellent study, *Shakespeare, Dissent, and the Cold War*, that the political tensions of the Elizabethan world were no less sharp and entangled than today, while incompatible reasons and aims not only introduced divisions, but resulted in dangerous and inimical exclusions. Clashes of the points of view and accepted political positions undermined values: he who was in power was not automatically right, he who was loyal to that power and defended it was not automatically a hero. Shakespeare's epic

narrative at the beginning of the play uncovers hidden meanings of the political discourse, deconstructs words, and offers signs whose *signifiant* will lead to unexpected *signifiés*. The *différance* shakes the routine acceptance of the political differences and uncovers the complicated tangle of what is imitated: the political world.

The ambivalent representation of the world is an introduction to the tragedy the core of which is the incapability and/or impossibility of recognition of truth. Macbeth, torn between foul and fair, chooses the path of crime, which is at the same time a political choice of gaining power.

> **This supernatural soliciting**
> **Cannot be ill; cannot be good**;-
> If ill, why hath it given me earnest of success,
> Commencing in a truth? I am Thane of Cawdor:
> If good, why do I yield to that suggestion
> Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair,
> And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,
> Against the use of nature? (I.3., emphasis mine)

He has doubts as to the moral qualification of the criminal choice. In another monologue (I.7.), he tries to convince himself that it is wrong to kill the king, cousin and guest under his own roof. But never is he torn by the idea that killing is wrong; never does he voice a doubt as to his desire to become king.

The dialogues between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, in which she argues for the crime and he against it, are a mimetic equivalent of the diegetic ambivalence of signs, and, at the same time, a continuation of political action. Lady Macbeth represents the pragmatic approach to politics recommended by Machiavelli: action has to be taken, and it has to be effective. The scenario of a perfect political crime demands hypocrisy, double-dealing and cunning in word and deed; it needs obliterating trails and clues, negating the obvious. Having chosen the path of crime, Macbeth will consistently follow the pattern, making sure that each consecutive crime is delegated to keep his hands clean, because, as he discovered to his horror, the blood on his hands cannot be washed, it is a dangerous and disquieting witness. The mimetic action of the play contains the plot which stands against the power of Macbeth. His political enemies escape from Scotland and in England gather an army with the help and backing of the English king. Being active in exile, they are pragmatic and successful in working towards Malcolm's aim of destroying the tyrant and regaining the Scottish throne.

There is no doubt as to the legitimate claim of Malcolm: he is trying to get back what belonged to his father, more, what his father bequeathed to him. Macbeth's tyranny is equally obvious and negatively stigmatized. And yet, the text again opens contexts which suggest contrastive and opposite senses. One such context contemporary to Shakespeare is the history of political tensions between Scotland and England. The metaphysical plot of the play tries to lessen the tensions and complements the

accession of James to the English throne by giving Banquo the most noble profile. Re-writing the chronicles, Shakespeare made a thug into a hero whose descendants became kings.

Diegesis, that is the linguistic construction of the world of Macbeth, can be questioned because other linguistic world representations are possible. Other texts make us ask for the warrant of Malcolm's integrity and the assurance of peace and stable government in Scotland. Stretching the doubts, we may also ask for the guarantee of a reliable and honest government anywhere and at any time. Relating to the internal context of the play, we may question Malcolm's hierarchy of values remembering Duncan's exalted praise of Macbeth. Relating to our own contexts, we may question the value of fighting for the freedom of one's own country assisted by a foreign military power.

It is exactly in the possibility of opening the text to opposite, contradictory and never completely obvious senses that I find the greatest and inalienable values of Shakespeare's art. The scepticism as to black or white reasons, as to clear motivations or unshakable belief in one's truth make Shakespeare's fictional worlds a fascinating representation of human experience. Shakespeare's man is always in doubt if his ideas or deeds are fair or foul, exactly because the distinction is so very difficult, if sometimes impossible to make, and because the character's point of view may always be questioned. And this feature gives his plays a positive political potential.

3. Conclusion

Having said all this, I need to stress that I do not preach moral relativism. Crime is crime. The blood on Macbeth's hands will never be washed. But his hands are smeared with the blood of many other people. He is condemned for Duncan's blood, but what about the reeking blood bath of the battle? Is brave Macbeth 'unseaming' his enemy 'from the nave to the chops' and the murderer, dagger in hand, above Duncan's body the same person? Or two different men? The valiant and worthy gentleman killing thoughtlessly left and right – carving his passage – and the shaken man despairing about not being able to say amen, appalled by the sight of blood on his hands – are these two different moral propositions? And, finally, Macbeth murdering in the name of his king and Macbeth murdering in order to become king – are these two different political propositions?

The tragedy of Macbeth is much more than the tragedy of his inability to distinguish foul from fair. It is a tragedy which demands our keen reflection and an attempt at recognition of our own inability to deal with the world. Like Macbeth and the knights of Scotland, we as individuals and societies get again and again into a blind alley, recklessly and unwisely accepting the truths of merciless Macdonwald and brave Macbeth which are served to us on all occasions.

According to Derrida, every philosophical enterprise is in its nature logocentric. Ethical judgements of values and their hegemony are expressed in words

with which we name human deeds. Shakespeare's text is written as if on Derrida's own demand. Looking at the text of Macbeth with mimetic or diegetic spectacles, we shall always find the argument of différance: no deeds, no motivations, no aims can be unambiguously qualified. In Shakespeare's texts, we find the reflection of our own dilemmas with understanding the world. The political diagnosis of our own reality has to be accepted as extremely difficult and depressing, because it can never solve anything. And yet, the great value of Shakespearean aporia is the warning against the trap of the belief in our manifest and unshakable truth.

References

Derrida, Jacques.1997 (1967). *Of Grammatology.* Translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press. [Online]. Available: http://www.idixa.net/Pixa/ pagixa-0510041207.html [Accessed 2015, September 12].

Gibinska, Marta. 2008. "Polityka tekstu: *Henryk VI* Williama Szekspira" [Politics of the Text: Shakespeare's *Henry VI*] in *Prace Komisji Neofilologicznej PAU*, vol. VII, pp. 7-26

Gibinska, Marta. 2017. "Shakespeare on Stage in Europe since the Late Seventeenth Century", section 2 'Growing with Technology, Art, and Politics (1948-1945)' in Levenson, Jill L. and Robert Ormsby (eds.). *The Shakespearean World*. London and New York: Routledge, pp.40-59.

Shakespeare, William. 1982 (1951). *Macbeth*. Kenneth Muir (ed.). London: Methuen.

Thomas, Alfred. 2014. *Shakespeare, Dissent, and Cold War.* London and New York: Palgrave.

Żurowski, Andrzej. 1983. *Myślenie Szekspirem* [Thinking with Shakespeare].Warszawa: PAX.

Żurowski, Andrzej. 2003a. *Szekspir – ich rówieśnik* [Shakespeare Their Contemporary]. Gdansk: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdanskiego.

Żurowski, Andrzej. 2003b. *Szekspir i wielki zamęt* [Shakespeare and the Great Confusion]. Pelplin: Bernardinum.

W. B. YEATS' CONTRIBUTION
TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE POETIC DRAMA

THABIT SHIHAB AHMED AHMED
University of Craiova

Abstract: *The paper analyses two of Yeats' dramatic works and his historical experiment in the theatre. Undoubtedly, Yeats' poetry has been much examined and explored, but his poetic dramas have been paid less attention. This paper aims to shed light on the method Yeats used in writing poetic dramas.*
Keywords: *William Butler Yeats, Abbey theatre, poetic drama, plays*

1. Introduction

Drama has drawn the attention of literary critics, actors, and great number of those concerned with the theory and practice of dramatic composition. It stimulates the awareness of people and of those concerned with its production. Poetic drama services itself through verse (Dahami 2016: 1180), aiming to explore the condition of reality at a given period of time. Poetic drama has more levels of consciousness than prose drama. Poetic dramatists can operate at a higher level to influence the feelings of the audience:

> A great poet transforms his experiences into a work of art, so that the personal emotion is not recognizable in the form in which it appears in the drama. Apart from this unity of vision, poetic drama conveys greater depth of meaning by operating on different levels of our consciousness (Rampal 1996: 160).

Human feelings can best be expressed in verse, and verse drama has the capacity to arouse the heart and liberate the soul and it inspires the creative powers of the spectators. Poetry and drama are not two separate components; they form one body. Drama is completed by verse and poetry turns to drama (Dahami 2016:1181). Eliot, in his essay "A Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry", says that

prose drama is merely a slight byproduct of verse drama. The human soul, in intense emotion, strives to express itself in verse. It is not for me, but for the neurologists, to discover why this is so, and why and how feeling and rhythm are related. The tendency, at any rate, of prose drama is to emphasize the ephemeral and superficial: if we want to get at the permanent and universal, we tend to express ourselves in verse (qtd. in Rampal 1996:150).

The words in verse used in a poetic drama are likely to have a deeper meaning than those used in prose drama. Some prose plays are more restricted in their profundity and power of expression than verse plays, because poetry will very much enhance the expression and can provide better circumstances for the interaction of emotions.

William Butler Yeats was interested in the revival of poetic drama in order to create a real place for the liberation of the theatre audience's imagination. He used new ideas and concepts of poetic drama and its performance that immediately began to influence both his plays and lyrics. Yeats criticized the public and commercial theatre, and believed that poet-playwrights would have to find a new type of theatre to make the poetic drama succeed in the modern age. Yeats wanted to reform the theatre. He commented:

We have to write or find plays that will make the theatre a place of intellectual excitement - a place where the mind goes to be liberated as it was liberated by the theatres of Greece and England and France at certain great moments of their history, and as it is liberated in Scandinavia today" (Yeats 2003: 26).

2. The Abbey Theatre

Yeats, with his close friends Lady Gregory and Edward Martyn, founded the Abbey Theatre, which was called at first "The Irish Literary Theatre". Without doubt "the record of the Abbey Theatre will make a splendid page in the literary history of Ireland" (Mikhail 1988: xi). The founders worked together for the purpose of the spiritual independence of Ireland from England, although they were different in tastes and interests, especially Lady Gregory, who "saw the project as a chance to do important work for her country, while fulfilling her own ambitions. In Yeats, she saw "a talented young man who desperately needed her help" (Holdeman 2006: 37).Their purpose was to establish an Irish theatre for the Irish people with local actors and to present social problems, especially the famine, on the stage:

The Abbey's main missions remains primarily but not exclusively to produce plays by Irish playwrights on Irish themes. With its inception, ordinary people, peasant farmers, city workers, fisher folk, back- country people, itinerants, small merchants, the poor, the sick, and the blind would find a place and a voice on the Irish stage, whereas the foolish and embarrassing, shifting, hot-tempered, lazy, conniving, often

drunken, comic "stage Irishman", speaking in a ludicrously exaggerated accent, was banished except for in historical revivals of early works. (Sternlicht 2010: 20)

Yeats believed in his ability to be a dramatist; he believed that the stage had more effect on people than books. From his early life, he was attracted to drama. He believed that on the stage he would be in contact with a large audiences, so his philosophy and perspective on different issues would be received to a wider extent than if he presented them in books, which attracted smaller audiences (Holdeman 2006: 37).Yeats played a great role in the foundation of the poetic drama. He planned to put old stories into dramatic verse:

> I do not know what Lady Gregory or Mr. Moore thinks of these projects. I am not going to say what I think. I have spent much of my time and more of my thought these last ten years on Irish organization, and now that the Irish Literary Theatre has completed the plan I had in my head ten years ago, I want to go down again to primary ideas. I want to put old stories into verse, and if I put them into dramatic verse, it will matter less to me henceforward who plays them than what they play, and how they play. I hope to get our heroic age into verse and to solve some problems of the speaking of verse to musical notes. (Yeats 2003: 6)

The requisites of the Irish Renaissance made him think more clearly about the production of drama whose positive consequences remain even after the performance. He wanted to produce drama that could to appeal to the hearts and minds of the audiences in a way that could make them understand their problems and their fate. He believed that poetic drama should be alive and effective He stated:

> I may say, for I am perhaps writing an epitaph, and epitaphs should be written in a genial spirit, that we have turned a great deal of Irish imagination towards the stage. We could not have done this if our movement had not opened a way of expression for an impulse that was in the people themselves. The truth is that the Irish people are at that precise stage of their history when imagination, shaped by many stirring events, desires dramatic expression. (Yeats 2003: 4)

Poetic drama proved to be popular in the Abbey Theatre due to the work of Yeats and his friends, whereas prose drama, which put so much stress on the material world, was prominent in London's theatres. It was pointed out that "Yeats developed new theories of poetic drama and its performance that quickly began to affect both his plays and lyrics" (Holdeman 2006: 46).Yeats strove throughout the large body of his varied works to make the stage a field of thrill, of sophisticated joy, intellectual rapture, a place of cultural liberation. He was confronted with big challenges when producing verse plays at a time when prose drama was popular:

> He was a prolific writer of plays throughout his life; only Shaw, of the major playwrights in English of his time, wrote more. His earliest writings are dramatic,

from the "Arcadian play" *The Island of Statues* in 1885 onwards, and in the late 1880s he is already discussing with George Russell and John O'Leary the possibility of writing poetic drama. Throughout his life he described his literary achievements in terms of dramatic. (O'Donoghue 2006: 101)

Yeats established his style as a tragic poet and dramatist in which he adopted the world of dreams rather than cognitive elements (cf. Armstrong 2013: 95). He believed that a tragic play is a passionate art that touches the feelings of audience in terms of terror and delight. In "Vision of Evil and Unity of Being", Maeve claimed that:

Yeats's creation of a tragic landscape is made coherent by the response which it evokes. Aristotle defines tragedy in terms of pity and fear; Yeats defines it in terms of terror and delight, what he calls the Vision of Evil and Unity of Being. Terror and the Vision of Evil dominate in Yeats's plays, culminating in the horror of Purgatory. In the poetry, too, terror is a frequent emotional response. (qtd. in Good 1987: 2)

In Yeats' plays, we find the symbolic representation of types and figures that derive from legend, myth and history (Taylor 1984:14). Yeats's plays contain lyric poetry, because he believed that dramatic poetry was the best form of poetry. He was able to attract the attention of the public by emphasizing the dramatic nature of his poems that were based on his own imagination; "he said more than once, in various formulation, that the highest form of poetry was dramatic" (O'Donoghue 2006: 107). The drama is obvious in his poetry and he considered it very important and necessary to revive the poetic drama in the Irish theatre:

I wanted my poetry to be spoken on a stage or sung and because I did not understand my own instincts gave half a dozen wrong or secondary reasons; (…) I have spent my life in clearing out of poetry every phrase written for the eye, and bringing all back to the syntax that is for ear alone. Let the eye take the delight in the form of the singer and in the panorama of the stage and be content with that. (Yeats 2010: 24)

Yeats was eager to reach the cultured audience who likes and understands the use of poetry on the stage: "Everything that creates a theatrical audience is an advantage to us, and the small number of seats in our theatre would have kept away that kind of drama, in whatever language, which spoils an audience for good work" (Yeats 2003: 44).Yeats wanted to convey to modern Ireland the highest values that he believed in by using verse drama.

W. B. Yeats was living in the world of Irish nationalism; he met John O'Leary who made him familiar with many translated texts from Gaelic into English by writers such as Standish O' Grady and James Clarence Margan (Arkins 2010: 73). Therefore, his plays referred to the theme of Irish nationalism:

> I am a nationalist, certain of my intimate friends have made Irish politics the business of their lives, and this made certain thoughts habitual with me, and an accident made these thoughts take fire in such a way that I could give them dramatic expression. (Yeats 2003: 33)

In drama, Yeats depended on the stage directions to describe the scenes and dialogues that conveyed what he wished to say about his country. Yeats' plays were revolving around the Irish nationhood and the accurate nature of the nationalism was obvious in his plays; without a doubt, "Yeats' earliest contributions to the Irish Theatre movement have been received as forms of spiritual drama deliberately set against the commercialist and realist trends within British theatre of the time" (McAteer 2010: 13).

Yeats and other Irish writers founded the Irish Literary Theater, which developed into the Irish National Theatre Society and the Abbey Theatre. This was a step towards the foundation of a new national literature for Ireland:

> A good Nationalist is, I suppose, one who is ready to give up a great deal that he may preserve to his country whatever part of her possessions he is best fitted to guard, and that theatre where capricious spirit that bloweth as it listeth has for a moment found a dwelling-place, has good right to call itself a National Theatre. (Yeats 2003: 35)

Yeats played a major role in the definition of the modern nation of Ireland throughout his poems, plays and theories of nationalism. Yeats' literary work, in both prose and verse, was spiritually attached to the Irish nation. The language that he used in his works "could be a substitute religious belief that might unify divisive sectarian and class loyalties, and pointing out the importance of the psychology of love and death in nationalism" (Bradley 2011: 5). Although Yeats was a nationalist and the major founder of the National Theatre, he strongly disagreed with the militant nationalists, and he refused to use the theatre as a means of propaganda to achieve their aims by violence; Penelope Barraclough pointed this out in her thesis, *W. B. Yeats: Searching for a National Identity through the Ritual of the Theatre*:

> One major obstacle for Yeats was the insistence by the militant nationalists and press that the national theatre should be used as a means of propaganda. Yeats vehemently disagreed with this view, insisting that theatre should be about art, and that the freedom of the artist was paramount. He wanted his plays to inspire the people and unite them with feelings of pride for their country and ancient heritage, not act as a divisive factor in the battle between Nationalists and Unionists. (Barraclough 2015: 3)

Yeats believed that the style of ritual dramas would be suitable for his plays, so he made use of chanted lyrics, minimal scenes and symbolism:

The main difficulty however came down to Yeats' approach to his own drama. He wanted to write intellectual plays for an elite audience: not only that, but he wanted a ritual form of drama that was completely unfamiliar and alien to the theatergoing audience of the time. This was not a realistic starting point on which to base a literary theatre that was intended to gain the interest, confidence and nationalistic fervor of all the people of Ireland. (Barraclough 2015: 16)

He adopted the style of imaginative poetry on the stage and most of his poems were dramatic. It was clear that great writers, especially Shelley and Edmund Spenser, had a lot of influence on his style.

3. His plays

3.1. *The Land of Heart's Desire*

Yeats' play *The Land of Heart's Desire*, written in 1894, revolves around a young bride, Mary Bruin, who is reading an old book in which Princess Edain, daughter of a king of Ireland, heard a voice which she followed in order to reach the Land of Faery (Shirley 2013: 52):

MARY:
How Princess Edain
A daughter of a King of Ireland, heard
A voice singing on a May Eve like this,
And followed, half awake and half asleep,
Until she came into the Land of Faery,
Where nobody gets old and godly and grave,
Where nobody gets old and crafty and wise,
Where nobody gets old and bitter of tongue.
And she is still there, busied with a dance,
Deep in the dewy shadow of a wood,
(Or where stars walk upon a mountain-top.) (Yeats 2010: 67)

The characters of the play were taken from the real world, as well as its events that took place in Sligo; Mary Bruin was vacillating between her responsibilities as a wife and her wish to escape the monotony of the village life and go away with the fairies to the Land of Heart's Desire.

MARY:
Come, faeries, take me out of this dull house!
Let me have all the freedom I have lost;
Work when I will and I idle when I will!
Faeries come take me out of this dull world,
For I would ride with you upon the wind,
(Run on the top of the disheveled tide,)
And dance upon the mountains like a flame. (Yeats 2010: 71-72)

The play reflects Yeats's fondness for his homeland, Ireland, its folklore and legends, *The Land of Heart's Desire* "becoming Yeats's first play to reach the stage and marking the first step in his lifelong quest to win a place for poetic drama in a theatrical world dominated by other modes" (Holdeman 2006: 23).

3.2. *The Countess Cathleen*

Yeats's play, *The Countess Cathleen,* is also a verse drama, inspired by the Irish folklore. Yeats repeatedly revised it to make poetry suitable for the stage. The play "was an attempt to display a public talent, to escape from poetry of 'longing and complaint' into poetry of 'insight and knowledge'" (Sidnell 1996:139).

The play rises above the interest for folklore in its display of beauty and love. Yeats' "determination to make the play Irish was to give him much trouble, for he was thorough and meant to do much more than to give the play an Irish environment, language and colouring" (Sidnell 1996: 140).

Yeats got inspiration for his play *The Countess Cathleen* from a French myth depicting the situation of people in times of starvation and poverty. The devil sends two demons disguised as merchants to Ireland to buy souls of starved people for bread. The Countess sells her vast estates and possessions in order to buy the people food and to prevent them from selling their souls; she sacrifices herself to save her people from starvation and poverty. The national aspect of the play was obvious" (Jeffares 1996: 61). The poetic language of Cathleen's farewell speech is impressive:

> CATHLEEN:
> Bend down your faces, Oona and Aleel;
> I gaze upon them as the swallow gazes
> Upon the nest under the eave, before
> She wander the loud waters. Do not weep
> Too great a while, for there is many a candle
> On the high Altar though one fall. Aleel,
> Who sang about the dancers of the woods
> That know not the hard burden of the world,
> Having but breath in their kind bodies, farewell!
> And farewell, Oona, you who played with me,
> And bore me in your arms about the house
> When I was but a child and therefore happy,
> Therefore happy, even like those that dance
> The storm is in my hair and I must go. (Yeats 2010: 61)

Yeats and his close associates hoped to make the Abbey Theatre resemble the Greek theatre by staging poetic plays like *The Countess Cathleen*. In this play, Yeats combined three kinds of elements, spiritual, dramatic and poetic, which created an aesthetic atmosphere that ensured the progress of the play from the inward to the outward (cf. Elbir 1992: 9).

4. Conclusion

Through *The Land of Heart's Desire*, *The Countess Cathleen* and other plays, Yeats proved to be a creative writer and a poet-playwright. His verse plays, his poetry and essays may be considered a real documentation for the poetic drama on the modern stage. Together with his friends, Lady Gregory and Edward Martyn, Yeats founded the Abbey Theatre, which was the fountainhead of many literary masterpieces and the training ground of many artists. "Many of the plays they staged, such as Yeats' *The Countess Cathleen* and *Cathleen ni Houlihan* (in which Maud Gonne played the leading role) were fiercely patriotic." (Yeats 2002: 6).

Yeats believed that poetic drama should be able to attract the attention of audiences who were looking for spiritual excitement, hoping to find a dreamlike state in which they could overcome their everyday problems and anxieties of life. W. B. Yeats contributed to the revival of the English poetic drama through his verse plays and his literary writings, and proved that poetic drama is achievable on the modern stage.

References

Arkins, Brian. 2010. The *Thought of W. B. Yeats*. Bern: Peter Lang.

Armstrong, Charles I. 2013. *Reframing Yeats: Genre, Allusion and History*: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Barraclough, Penelope. 2015. *W.B. Yeats: Searching for a National Identity through the Ritual of Theatre*. Sydney: University of Sydney.

Bradley, Anthony. 2011. *Imagining Ireland in the Poems and Plays of W. B. Yeats: Nation, Class, and State*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Dahami, Yahya Hassan. 2016. "Yeats: Resurgence of Poetic Drama in the Twentieth Century" in *Journal of Taibah University Arts and Humanities*, 5 (9), pp. 1179-1217.

Elbir, Belgin. 1992. *Importance of the Irish Dramatic Movement*. Tiyatro Arostirmalar Dergisi.

Good, Maeve. 1987. *W. B. Yeats and the Creation of the Tragic Universe*. London: The Macmillan Press Ltd.

Holdeman, David. 2006. *The Cambridge Introduction to W. B. Yeats*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.

Howes, Marjorie and John Kelly (eds.). 2006. *The Cambridge Companion to W. B. Yeats*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jeffares, A. Norman. 1996. *W. B. Yeats: Man and Poet*. New York: Martin Press.

McAteer, Michael. 2010. *Yeats and European Drama*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mikhail, Edward H. 1988. *The Abbey Theatre: Interviews and Recollections*. Totowa, N.J.: Barnes & Noble.

O'Donoghue, Bernard. 2006. *Yeats and the Drama* in Howes, Marjorie and John Kelly (eds.). *The Cambridge Companion to W. B. Yeats*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 101-115.

Rampal, D. Kumar. 1996. *Poetic Theory and Practice of T. S. Eliot*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors.

Shirley, Pat. 2013. *From the Riverbank to Middle Earth and Beyond.* Bloomington, IN: Trafford Publishing.

Sidnell, J. Michael. 1996. *Yeats's Poetry and Poetics*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Sternlicht, Sanford. 2010. *Modern Drama: W. B. Yeats to Marina Carr*. 2nd edition. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.

Taylor, Richard H. 1984. *A Reader's Guide to the Plays of W. B. Yeats*: Palgrave Macmillan UK.

Yeats, William Butler. *William Butler Yeats*. 2002. Allison, Jonathan (ed.). New York: Sterling.

Yeats, William Butler. 2003. *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats*, *Volume VIII: The Irish Dramatic Movement.* Fitzgerald, Mary and Richard J. Finneran (eds.). New York: Scribner.

Yeats, William Butler. 2010. *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats. Vol. 11: The Plays.* Clark, David R. and Rosalind E. Clark (eds.). New York: Scribner.

JAMES CONE'S THEOLOGY OF CULTURE IN
BLACK THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION

PETER GAÁL-SZABÓ

Debrecen Reformed Theological University

Abstract: *The paper examines James Cone's construction of the black cultural self in his* Black Theology of Liberation *(1970). Informed by Paul Tillich's idea of context and correlation, Cone seeks to embed African Americans in a social/cultural context in which they can still negotiate a rewarding and theologically validated cultural identity.*
Keywords: *black theology, contextual theology, liberation theology*

1. Introduction

James Cone represents an important milestone in the development of African American religious thought, as he markedly heralds the advent of black theology. It embodies a logical extension of black activism in the 1960s into the realm of theology that parallels cultural, social, and political endeavours, such as the Black Arts movement and the Civil Rights movement, stemming from the black community, but also internationally, the decolonization of the third world, the birth of Latin American liberation theology, the emergence of third world economic theories (see Immanuel Wallerstein's world-systems theory [1974]), among others. Cone's theology is undoubtedly embedded in the political upheaval of the 1950s and 1960s and derives its energies from it. One of his founding documents of black theology, *Black Theology of Liberation* (1970), reveals that, besides quite a number of series of events in the period, formative influences encompass the advent of the Black Power movement, the appearance of militant Black Muslim agendas, the radicalization of the Civil Rights Movement, including claims of reparations from the white church for centuries' of support of white racism, i.e., for "exploit[ing] our resources, our minds, our bodies, our labor" (Forman 2004: 70). Beyond grounding a theological discipline, Cone contributes to the contemporary discourse on culture and authenticity, which ultimately forms the main focus of his biblical criticism and around which his critique of contemporary (white) theology evolves.

2. Cone's theology of culture in *Black Theology of Liberation* (1970)

Much as he seeks to depart from white theology, it is mainly Barth and Tillich who serve for him as points of departure. Especially, Tillich's contextual theology proves useful in establishing a black theological discourse, as it insists on a view of the relation between theology and culture through a method of correlation, which "explains the contents of the Christian faith through existential questions and theological answers in mutual interdependence" (Tillich 1951: 60). For Tillich (1987: 25), this leads to "an actuality of meaning that convulses everything and builds everything anew". Based on such understanding, Tillich "identifies culture", in Russell Re Manning's (2013: 441) words, "with the self-interpretive function of humanity, or the manifestation in history of the human spirit", from which a theology of culture evolves: "Theology is the synthesis of religion and culture, that is to say, the synthesis of two attitudes towards conditioned form and unconditioned *Gehalt* present in religion and culture" (Manning 2005: 122).

Taking Tillich's existentialist approach to theology and culture as the foundation for black theologizing, Cone's contextual theology builds on the collective experience of the African American community, including cultural traditions and social displacement as well as the black reading of the Bible. This echoes later conceptions of contextual theologies that centre on what Stephen B. Bevans (1985: 186) summarizes as "a way of doing theology that takes into account four things: (1) the spirit and message of the Gospel; (2) the tradition of the Christian people; (3) the culture of a particular nation or region; and (4) social change in that culture, due both to technological advances on the one hand and struggles for justice and liberation on the other". Correlation in his case is not a mere tool to achieve a synthesis of religion and culture in the sense that it would aim at disclosing universals, as it is supposed in contextual theologies: "The correlating enterprise assumes some discoverable universal human reality – some structure of human existence or some essential human characteristic – upon which the theological edifice can be constructed" (Grenz 2000: 41). In Cone's interpretation of Tillich's correlation, it refers to blackening of the Christian God:

> Blacks need to see some correlations between divine salvation and black culture. For too long Christ has been pictured as a blue-eyed hanky. Black theologians are right: we need to dehonkify him and thus make him relevant to the black condition. (Cone 2010: 29)

Cone identifies racist America, but, in fact, a racist white attitude globally, as the "concrete situation of concern" (Tillich 1951: 111), i.e., he is embedding his theology in the conditioned form of socio-cultural reality and making blackness the unconditioned content – much as the unconditioned content remains overdetermined in one direction, which seems a contradiction in terms.

Explicitly stating that "God's revelation comes to us in and through the cultural situation of the oppressed" (2010: 30), Cone is thus ready to defocalize traditional theological approaches to the Bible by connecting the gospel and the Barthian Christological concept of revelation to the black experience: "Black culture, then, is God's way of acting in America, God's participation in black liberation" (idem: 30). In an act of monopolizing God, Cone then identifies blackness, i.e., the black community, history, and culture, as both the source and the content, as well as the epistemological tool for reaching God: "If God is not for us, if God is not against white racists, then God is a murderer, and we had better kill God" (idem: 28).

It must be noted that Barth (1962: 338) sees culture as an obstacle, because "culture means humanity" that results from the fallenness of humans, and thus "culture implies lack and consciousness of lack. It means seeking through men and failing to find the unity of God" (idem: 339). Barthian Christology in fact envisions believers in the Church representing unity in Christ as a result of the work of "the eternal Logos" (idem: 343) having overcome human culture. Indeed, as Robert J. Palma (1983: 12) sums it up: "For Barth, culture is to be measured finally by the Word of God"; and, similarly, in Paul Louis Metzger's (2003: 53) coinage: "Culture can serve as a sign, but not as the substance of revelation itself".

The book was born in a time of social, political, and cultural/racial turmoil, which also explains the heightened need that, in Diana L. Hayes's (2000: 618) words, "[i]n order for Black theology to be Black and in touch with the Black community, which is its source, it must use the symbols that come from that community rather than attempt to develop new ones that are alien to that community"; Cone's concept of culture shows that his early theology clearly remains on the level of the conditioned and is unsuccessful to relate to the unconditioned - the ultimately "hidden" or infinite, unconditioned realm in Tillich's footsteps. While the concept of blackness is addressed as an ontological category - an essentially abstract entity that Cone outspokenly fights against, it proves to be cultural and expresses social constructedness, which presents a danger for his theology, i.e., that of becoming "narrowly focused upon its own social setting" (Grenz 2000: 43) - a threat for contextual theologies, identified by Stanley J. Grenz. Blackness in this way leaves the ontological and becomes political:

> It is the power to love oneself precisely because one is black and a readiness to die if whites try to make one behave otherwise. [. . .] The black experience is the feeling one has when attacking the enemy of black humanity by throwing a Molotov cocktail into a white-owned building and watching it go up in flames. We know, of course, that getting rid of evil takes something more than burning down buildings, but one must start somewhere. (Cone 2010: 26)

The almost cynical remark devises a clearly political orientation, which can hardly be considered theologically grounded without scriptural support. Quite the

contrary, when Cone, in the same chapter, characterizes the black soul through "the pain and the joy of reacting to whiteness and affirming blackness" (28), the joy seems to derive from throwing Molotov cocktails and "killing slave masters" (27), as he does not mention any other type of reaction.

The passionate language of commitment (Cone 2010: 18), which presents "forms of language as they arise out of the Black context" (Hayes 2000: 628) of the time, is undeniably influenced by the militant Black Power movement. It accounts for the harshness of communication and the ideologically-informed theological position that he takes:

> God comes to those who have been enslaved and abused and declares total identification with their situation, disclosing to them the rightness of their emancipation on their own terms. God not only reveals to the oppressed the divine right to break their chains by any means necessary, but also assures them that their work in their own liberation is God's own work. (Cone 2010: 48)

The non-restriction of means curiously reminds one of Malcolm X's speech in 1965, which reveals the homogenizing capacity of blackness into one community - even void of confessional or otherwise religious differences. As Rev. Calvin Marshall states: "Christ was a Malcolm X" (Chapman 2006: 85). The powerful intragroup networking along the lines of Black Nationalism is superimposed on theological purity. Quite obviously, his ethnorelative approach is in danger of becoming ethnocentric, when Cone states that

> The black theologian must reject any conception of God which stifles black self-determination by picturing God as a God of all peoples. Either God is identified with the oppressed to the point that their experience becomes God's experience, or God is a God of racism. [. . .] The blackness of God means that God has made the oppressed condition God's own condition. This is the essence of the Biblical revelation. By electing Israelite slaves as the people of God and by becoming the Oppressed One in Jesus Christ, the human race is made to understand that God is known where human beings experience humiliation and suffering. [. . .] Liberation is not an afterthought, but the very essence of divine activity. (2010: 63-64)

The concept of liberation on the basis of the foregoing derives from the black experience in the racist climate of America and undergoes narrowing, to the point of excluding further possible theological discourses, to suit the black theologian's ideological needs. As an effective counterstrike, Cone inverts the colour politics and thereby establishes a theological anthropology of difference: "*I am black because God is black!*" (2010: 80).

It must be noted, though, that in his later works, he softens toward the question of whiteness and envisions interracial/intercultural collaboration globally. As he confesses in his *Risks of Faith: The Emergence of a Black Theology of Liberation*:

"I think the time has come for black theologians and black church people to move beyond a mere reaction to white racism in America and begin to extend our vision of a new socially constructed humanity in the whole inhabited world. [. . .] For humanity is whole, and cannot be isolated into racial and national groups" (Cone 1999: 46). The approach Cone takes to culture in this later work resembles Barth's ultimate view of culture. For Barth (1962: 343) "reconciliation in Christ is the restoration of the lost promise" and, in this sense, culture, much as he sees it as the limit, is a means to enable this unity and thus it represents a promise:

> The term *culture* connotes exactly that promise to man: fulfilment, unity, wholeness within his sphere as creature, as man, exactly as God in his sphere is fullness, wholeness, Lord over nature and spirit, Creator of heaven *and* earth. (Barth 1962: 343).

(Black) culture then holds a promise for humanity, not just for the oppressed.

In *Black Theology of Liberation*, however, comprehensive as Cone may claim his attempt to be, there are quite a number of inconsistencies that blur any such understanding. Cone himself (2010: xx) refers to some of the issues in his 1986 preface, when he raises the issue of class and sexism that would inevitably shade his concept of blackness. Truly enough, one only needs to think of Barbara Johnson's (1986: 169) tetrapolar conceptualization of African American women to see that the African American community is as varied as any other, and any simplifying attempt to insist on the homogeneity of the black community is to deny the variedness of the black experience. In the same fashion, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s chastising of black churches for their inadequate support of the Civil Rights issue reveals class differences, very much apparent in the 1960s (see, e.g., "A Knock at Midnight" [1967]).

The lack of ingroup complexity prepares a trap of ideological entanglement, which may be evaded on the sole basis of the apologetic note that Cone himself makes in his "Postscript to the Fortieth Anniversary Edition": "A *Black Theology of Liberation* was written for a specific time and place. No one can understand this book apart from the social and political context in which it was written" (2010: 153). It seems yet problematic to present the black community as one unified religious community as is the case. When describing black culture heroes as judges, Cone identifies Nat Turner, Denmark Vesey, and Malcolm X as leaders who "represent the 'soul' of blackness, and what blacks mean by black liberation. They are the black judges endowed with the spirit of Yahweh for the sole purpose of creating a spirit of freedom among their people" (2010: 51). Malcolm X especially reveals the uncritical acceptance of African American (political) action as a black religio-cultural performance. As is well-known, Malcolm X, initially an adherent of Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam and later a hajj-convert to Sunni Islam, embodies one of the most prominent Muslim leaders within the African American community, while representing an authentic culture hero for both Christian and Muslim blacks.

Yet, his inclusion as a prophet of black theology can hardly be defended, given the fact that it is black Christian God-talk that Cone seeks to establish. Ultimately, presenting the black community as unified on the basis of the common traumatic experience of racial discrimination may be argued for, but much less as a unified religious community, as the very example of Malcolm X reveals.

Blackness proves to be the arch metaphor for Cone to identify oppression and the imperative of liberation. The discursive move, however, builds on a doubleness that forces him to defend his position in later works. Notably, he is quick to demonstratively include whites in the Christian discourse, by claiming in his *My Soul Looks Back* that "I firmly believe that the gospel is available to all people—including white people" (Cone 1986: 13). Yet, this and his previous *Black Theology and Black Power* (1969) are written in the characteristic social and political climate of the late 1960s and thus ethnocentric features inevitably creep into their conceptualization. So while Cone (2010: 9) insists that "Blackness, then, stands for all victims of oppression who realize that the survival of their humanity is bound up with liberation from whiteness" – and thereby allows for a broad interpretation of colour, but in fact, the racial binary becomes a way of othering and the tactics establishes a contrast that unites anything different from it. The non-stratification of the white outgroup is just as problematic and is reminiscent of Black Muslim demonization of whites as a whole.

As for liberation, Cone (2010:2) claims that "The election is inseparable from the event of the exodus" and connects in this way chosenness to the state of oppression, as "God is revealed as the God of the oppressed, involved in their history, liberating them from human bondage" (ibidem). The palpable parallel between the Israeli and the African American community functions as a promise to be fulfilled, as exodus shall equal liberation from racial but, in that, from social, economic, and political injustice (ibidem) for African Americans. Exodus, however, led to the Mount of Sinai, and then strengthened with the Covenant, Israel settled in a land that had been inhabited by other peoples. Although biblical criticism has revealed that, in the course of the settlement, the Israeli tribes did not occupy the land at once and that their settling took place in uninhabited areas between the Canaanite city-states and even the Israelis became subjected to them (see Soggin 1987: 189), the settling seems, on the basis of the biblical account, a triumphant entry, which involved wiping out inhabitants. As stated in the promise to Abraham in Genesis 17:8,

> The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God (New International Version).

The passage shows Israel as a foreigner to the land, which also means that their settlement on the land was going to uproot people already living there, as well as that the God of the oppressed was the same as the God of conquerors. It seems that there is a twist of perspectives at hand and that the central element is the

covenant, which is made with a people and not with circumstances, grave as they may be. On these grounds, one cannot but agree with Cone (2010: 2) that "it may not be entirely clear why God elected Israel to be God's people".

Cone's early black theology seeks to cater to the needs of the oppressed black Americans, but in so doing it strives for more than what it can achieve at this point in this book. By employing his grand metaphor of blackness for the oppressed globally, Cone fails to acknowledge the consequence of his own starting point, namely that speaking contextually means being contextual. As Lourdino A. Yuzon (1994: online) puts it,

> A contextual theology that emerges out of a particular context is something that makes sense in relation to a certain place and time and, therefore, can be definite, at best, but not definitive.

Carrying the idea of contextual theology further, Robert J. Schreiter (2002: 22) describes local theology as "the dynamic interaction among gospel, church, and culture". Other black theologians, as, e.g., Deotis Roberts, who already in the 1970s speaks of the double oppression of women, thereby further stratifying the issue of oppression, acknowledge the situatedness of theology and the necessity to include local characteristics and constraints in theological discussions:

> There is no completely universal perspective, since all human thought and belief are limited by structural bounds [and] theology cannot be truly universal if it refuses to deal with the particularities of the human situation. (Roberts 1976: online).

The later Cone is undoubtedly aware of the implications when he acknowledges the differences between the liberation theologies of Africa, Latin America, and the US (see *My Soul Looks Back* (1986)). No doubt Cone rectifies his position in his "Preface to the 1986 Edition" of *A Black Theology of Liberation*, when he, after all, makes the missing intercultural move and thus opens up to the universal condition of humans, by asserting apologetically that "We are all—blacks and whites, men and women, young and old—sinners, and thus capable of exploiting the poor in order to promote our economic and political interests" (2010: xxii). The later, clarifying amendments here recycle his statements that may distort his ultimate aim. Thus, when he insists that

> by electing Israelite slaves as the people of God and by becoming the Oppressed One in Jesus Christ, the human race is made to understand that God is known where human beings experience humiliation and suffering" (Cone 2010: 67)

he declares that God is there in the/any wilderness too, just as He was there for the Israelite slaves in the desert, and that Christology makes sense there too, as the revelation becomes a "black-event" (2010: 5).

3. Conclusion

In this work, Cone performs what he later acknowledges – in Barth's (1962: 340) words:

> When we hear God we are not free, but are completely chained and bound in our thoughts and in our words. Chained and bound because we ourselves when we hear God are already within the Church. But we are also within culture. From inside both we must question and from inside both we must answer.

The real revolutionary thought in Cone's theology of culture lies thus in bringing liberation and culture together, thereby contextualizing the gospel in an always relevant contemporary framework.

References

Barth, Karl. 1962 (1926). "Church and Culture" in *Theology and Church: Shorter Writings, 1920-1928*. Trans. Louise Pettibone Smith. New York: Harper & Row, pp. 334-354.

Bevans, Stephen B. 1985. "Models of Contextual Theology" in *Missiology: An International Review,* 13(2), pp. 185-201.

Chapman, Mark L. 2006. *Christianity on Trial: African-American Religious Thought before and after Black Power*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock.

Cone, James H. 1969. *Black Theology and Black Power*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books.

Cone, James H. 2010 (1970). *Black Theology of Liberation*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books.

Cone, James H. 1986. *My Soul Looks Back.* Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books.

Cone, James H. 1999. *Risks of Faith: The Emergence of a Black Theology of Liberation, 1968-1998.* Boston: Beacon Press.

Forman, James. 2004 (1969). "The Black Manifesto" in Salzberger, Ronald P. and Mary C. Turck (eds.). *Reparations for Slavery: A Reader*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, pp. 70-76.

Grenz, Stanley J. 2000. "Culture and Spirit: The Role of Cultural Context in Theological Reflection" in *The Asbury Theological Journal*, 55(2), pp. 37-51.

Hayes, Diana L. 2000. "James Cone's Hermeneutic of Language and Black Theology" in *Theological Studies*, 61, pp. 609-631.

Johnson, Barbara. 1986. "Metaphor, Metonymy and Voice in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*" in Bloom, Harold (ed.). *Modern Critical Views: Zora Neale Hurston*. New York: Chelsea, pp. 157-173.

King, Martin Luther, Jr. 1967. "A Knock at Midnight" in *Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Global Freedom Struggle*. [Online]. Available: http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/documentsentry/doc_a_knock_at midnight.1.html [Accessed 2015, May 19].

Manning, Russell Re. 2005. *Theology at the End of Culture: Paul Tillich's Theology of Culture and Art.* Leuven: Peeters.

Manning, Russell Re. 2013. "The Religious Meaning of Culture. Paul Tillich and Beyond" in *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 15(4), pp. 437-452.

Metzger, Paul Louis. 2003. *The Word of Christ and the World of Culture: Sacred and Secular through the Theology of Karl Barth*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock.

Palma, Robert J. 1983. *Karl Barth's Theology of Culture: The Freedom of Culture for the Praise of God*. Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications.

Roberts, Deotis. 1976. "Contextual Theology: Liberation and Indigenization" in *Christian Century*, Jan 28, pp. 64-68. [Online]. Available: http://www.religion-online.org/article/contextual-theology-liberation-and-indigenization/ [Accessed 2017, Jan 07].

Schreiter, Robert J. 2002. (1985). *Constructing Local Theologies.* Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books.

Soggin, Alberto J. 1987. *Introduction to the Old Testament: From Its Origins to the Closing of the Alexandrian Canon*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press.

Tillich, Paul. 1951. *Systematic Theology. Vol. 1.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Tillich, Paul. 1987. "On the Idea of a Theology of Culture". *Visionary Science: A Translation of Tillich's "On the Idea of a Theology of Culture*." Trans. Victor Nuovo. Detroit, Michigan: Wayne State University Press, pp. 17-40.

Wallerstein, Immanuel. 1974. *The Modern World-System*. New York: Academic Press.

Yuzon, Lourdino A. 1994. "Towards A Contextual Theology" in *CTC Bulletin.* [Online]. Available: http://cca.org.hk/home/ctc/ctc94-02/1.yuzon.htm [Accessed 2017, January 07].

A FEMININE POLITICS OF NONVIOLENCE:
GENES AND MORAL BIOENHANCEMENT

ALINE FERREIRA
University of Aveiro

Abstract: *This essay considers the vexed question of women and violence by briefly analysing a number of representative dystopias: Sheri S. Tepper's The Gate to Women's Country (1988), Sally Miller Gearhart's The Kanshou (2002), Sarah Hall's Daughters of the North (2007) and Naomi Alderman's The Power (2016). Recent theoretical work on violence, including that of bioethicist Julian Savulescu, will be used to tease out the main contours and negotiations of these knotted issues as well as the implications and desirability of a politics of nonviolence dramatized in the above-mentioned dystopias.*
Keywords*: dystopia, moral bioenhancement, sex-role reversal, violence*

1. Introduction

The question of violence has been at the centre of most utopias or dystopias written by women. While they all defend nonviolence, sometimes the means to achieve that peaceful state can involve the use of weapons and force. This paradoxical situation has been the object of reflection on the supposedly nonviolent nature of women, tied in to essentialist notions of woman and nature, woman as nurturer and mother (Pearson 1999, Alison 2004). While, ideally, nonviolence should be a desideratum in the achievement of peace and prosperity, what some of these narratives suggest is a need to engage in some violent acts to erase a future need for further violence, questioning whether violence is ever justified. This essay briefly looks at a selected number of dystopias that dramatize the issue of female violence: Sheri S. Tepper's *The Gate to Women's Country* (1988), Sally Miller Gearhart's *The Kanshou* (2002), Sarah Hall's *Daughters of the North* (2007) and Naomi Alderman's *The Power* (2016).

In *Three Guineas*, a book that crucially engages with the vexed question of violence and war, Virginia Woolf wrote that "scarcely a human being in the course of history has fallen to a woman's rifle" (Woolf 1998:13). In her answer to an eminent barrister's letter asking her for a donation for his society on the prevention

of war, Woolf (1998:158) observes that "though many instincts are held more or less in common by both sexes, to fight has always been the men's habit, not the woman's. Law and practice have developed that difference, whether innate or accidental". As David Livingstone Smith (2007:82), in related vein, remarks, "doing battle is, and, as far as we know, has always been, an almost exclusively male activity" and suggests that it would probably be more accurate to say that war is "an expression of human *male* nature" (emphasis in the original). According to bioethicists Perssons and Savulescu (2013), it is "plausible to think that in general women have a greater capacity for altruism than men. If this psychological difference tracks gender, this is surely good evidence that it is biologically based". Cambridge psychologist Simon Baron-Cohen (2003: 1), in turn, argues that the female brain is "predominantly hard-wired for empathy" and so women, as a rule, tend to exhibit a greater ability for empathy than men and as a consequence for altruism, which is considered a component of empathy. Drawing on some of the ideas of Baron-Cohen, who claims that female aggression tends to take the form of "backstabbing, social exclusion, etc. instead of direct physical assault", Perssons and Savulescu (2013) hypothesize: "If it is right that women are more altruistic than men, it seems that we could make men in general more moral by making them more like women by biomedical methods, or rather, more like the men who are more like women in respect of empathy and aggression". Radical as this may seem, it is precisely what the women in Sheri S. Tepper's *The Gate to Women's Country* are trying to do, by breeding only with men who are gentler, not aggressive and warrior-minded.

Pinker (2012) argues that, despite appearances to the contrary, considering the number of wars in the 20th century and those still raging around the world, there has been a steady decrease in violence over the centuries. On the other hand, and directly engaging with Pinker's conclusion, historian Ian Morris, in another very recent book (2014a), although agreeing with Pinker's thesis that violence has declined, suggests that the reason it has gradually diminished is precisely because of war itself, a situation he elsewhere describes as "perhaps the greatest paradox in human history" (Morris 2014b: 29). He claims that "war may be so good at delivering peace and wealth in the long run that it finally seems to be putting itself out of business. Not only that, in the modern age we have become so good at fighting – our weapons so destructive, our organization so efficient – that further widespread war is looking nigh-on impossible" (Morris 2014b: 31).

Referring to the recent feminization of the world, Pinker (2012: 828) agrees that a "more feminized world is a more peaceful world" and that feminization is a "pacifying development" (2012: 830). He quotes a man, Yamaguchi, who survived the atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki and later said: "The only people who should be allowed to govern countries with nuclear weapons are mothers, those who are still breast-feeding their babies" (qtd. in Pinker 2012: 827), observing that Yamaguchi is, it goes without saying, "invoking the most fundamental empirical generalization about violence, that it is mainly committed by men" (ibid.). Indeed, the empirical and traditional consensus has been that generally women tend to opt

for nonviolence in problem-solving, while men might choose more violent means of action. Stereotypes are rampant here, and utopian/dystopian literature has centrally engaged with the subject of violence, especially when written by women, questioning deep-seated gender conventions and expectations. In a discussion about women and war, Carol Cohn looks at the bigger picture, warning that generalizations can be dangerously inaccurate in terms of the enormous diversity of women's experience. In this context, Cohn (2012: 1) points out that, while women are often victims and guarantors of the jobs and the smooth running of affairs at home, they are also "members and supporters of the militaries and armed groups that commit acts of war". She also cautions against making facile generalizations, such as the claim that women are "naturally more peaceful than men" (2012: 2). Indeed, as Kelly Oliver (2010: xi) points out, when reflecting on images and narratives of violent women abusing men at Abu Ghraib or as suicide bombers and how they were given special attention on the covers of magazines and on television, "within the public imaginary, women's violence was more interesting, more spectacular, more unexpected, than men's", while women's bodies were described as weapons of war. Oliver investigates the many complexities and contradictions of women waging war, including women who use violence. Indeed, according to Oliver (2010: 19), "Even as the presence of women in the military seems to signal their 'liberation' from patriarchal traditions, the rhetoric surrounding their involvement betrays the lingering association between women, sexuality, and death".

Sally Miller Gearhart explains that, when she started to write the Earthkeep series, which consists of *The Kanshou* (2002) and *The Magister* (2003), her goal was to address three questions: "First, 'How would the world be different if women ran it?' Second, 'Is violence gender-related?' Third, 'How should violence be addressed in the best of human societies?'" (qtd. in Sargisson 2012: 57). The novels briefly considered here engage with these topics and provide sometimes controversial and challenging answers, dramatizing different perspectives on how women act in response to violence.

2. Tactical nonviolence and eugenics: breeding out aggression

Microbiologist Joan Slonczewski's *Door into Ocean* (1986) provides a significant example of the use of nonviolence to solve conflicts, offering a meaningful alternative to strategies dramatized in some of the other novels analysed here. The Sharers, the inhabitants of Shora, an ocean-covered planet where only women live, acting in accordance with their egalitarian, ecological beliefs, react with nonviolence and passive-like behaviour when attacked. That behaviour, however, belies a strategic stance that relies on nonviolence and silence, described as "unspeaking", as a form of resistance to bring about peace and harmony, rather than engaging in fighting to achieve peace. Tom Moylan (2015: 183) states that "nonviolence is frequently feared, misunderstood, and/or underestimated. Rather

than the passive stance that many attribute to it, nonviolence requires a robust agency that speaks truth to power in the service of radically transforming society".

Pamela Sargent's *The Shore of Women* (1986) and Sheri S. Tepper's *The Gate to Women's Country* (1988), published within two years of each other, take place in post-apocalyptic worlds and share the premise of keeping women and men in separate spheres, with the women living inside a walled city, protected by the men. In both cases the women are technologically advanced, keeping the men mostly ignorant, in order to maintain them "tame" and cooperative. In Sargent (1986), Laissa, one of the characters, explains the women's decision to keep the men in a separate sphere, outside the walls, as a question of survival, since they did not want a repetition of destructive episodes of war and aggression: "Men had a propensity for violence that was both genetic and hormonal. […] the survival of civilization demanded that women, who were less driven and able to channel their aggressiveness constructively, remain in control" (1986: 92-93). Laissa further observes that many of the women had built around these ideas a "structure of suppositions to soothe ourselves, believing that men were happier as they were, that they were capable of little more, that they would destroy everything we had built" (1986: 93), thus justifying men's segregation, arguments that traditionally have served to keep women in a subordinate position.

In Sheri S. Tepper's *The Gate to Women's Country*, the women only get pregnant by using sperm from the servitors, the men who live with them inside the walls in women's country, who are gentler and not prone to violence, even though they convince their warrior lovers outside the walls that the children are theirs. Through this eugenicist programme, and also with recourse to genetic engineering, the aim is to gradually breed out irrational violence. The programme is unknown to the men outside the wall, who cannot read books and thus remain ignorant of the women's intentions to create a society that will include both women and men. The hope is that the latter, like the servitors, will abhor aggression and avoid hostile behaviour that might lead to violent confrontations. In this respect, Tepper (1988) also bears some resemblances to Katherine Burdekin's *The End of This Day's Business* (1934), where the dominant women's society keeps men away from books and learning, for they believe, following a longstanding tradition, that men have weaker brains, are prone to strong emotions that can get in the way of profitable work and should thus be directed mostly to physical activities that suit their muscular bodies. Society here is also mostly segregated, with men keeping to their own quarters and women ruling the country.

Sally Miller Gearhart's *The Kanshou* (2002), in turn, also investigates the question of whether violence may have a genetic basis. As in Tepper (1988), ecological disasters, together with the unintended side effects of a vaccination campaign, have led to the death of all animals and to a huge imbalance between the sexes, since the majority of the men have died, leaving one man for every twelve women. In this matriarchy, the peacekeeping group consists almost exclusively of women, while the prisons are mostly filled with males. Given this state of affairs, a Global Consorority of Neurosurgeons

unveils a proposal to use the prisoners in the search for a "physiological violence center in the brain", as well as the institution of "Anti-Violence Protocols" and "surgeries to eliminate any such physiological center" (Gearhart 2002: 247), in an effort to "right the wrongs that men have committed against women" (2002: 215), although this movement is opposed by many. One of the characters justifies this potential course of action as "one act of violence that ends violence evermore", until the "chain of violence is broken" (both 2002: 60), even if it goes against her ethical principles to operate on a man against his will.

In their distinct but interrelated ways, then, Tepper (1988) and Gearhart (2002) attempt to eradicate violence through an effort to pin down its causes and breed out the propensity for aggression. The women may be onto something, since, according to Viding and Frith (2006: 6085), a "wealth of twin and adoption studies confirms that individual differences in violent/antisocial behavior are heritable". However, as they also point out, it is "unlikely that genes directly code for violence; rather, allelic variation is responsible for individual differences in neurocognitive functioning that, in turn, may determine differential predisposition to violent behavior. Genes regulating serotonergic neurotransmission, in particular monoamine oxidase A (*MAOA*), have been highlighted in the search for a genetic predisposition to violence" (ibid.).

3. Deconstructing power systems: Hall's *Daughters of the North* and Alderman's *The Power*

Sarah Hall's *Daughters of the North* (2007) further complexifies the vexed relation between women and violence, disrupting the dominant narrative of feminine tactical nonviolence to address and negotiate the women's status in a patriarchal society. Due to global warming and the resulting degradation and depletion of environmental resources, all women have been sterilised and only those whose name comes up in a lottery are allowed to have children. Rebelling against this state of affairs, the narrator decides to run away, abandoning her official zone and thus risking being caught and punished, to join a community of women in the North of England, on an isolated, self-sustaining farm, Carhullan. *Daughters of the North* describes an alternative, ecologically sustainable feminist enclave, where women deliberately escape from often oppressive patriarchal rules. The women, however, do not idealize their society. The narrator puts it as follows: "I knew we were as guilty of failure and disunity as any other human society. I knew we were as defective" (Hall 2007: 178). Jackie Nixon, the women's leader, explains that "it's still all about body and sexuality for us", since "we are controlled through those things: psychologically, financially, eternally" (2007: 51). Indeed, *Daughters of the North* is not only centrally concerned with the survival of the species, in this case of women, but also with putting an end to male influence, which the women consider to be at the root of the problems that have wreaked havoc on civilization. Controversially, Nixon believes that only with armed resistance will it be possible to

bring about a better society governed by women and she makes the women go through a gruelling exercise regime and practise fighting in case those skills might come in handy. Picking up the bellicose metaphors so prevalent in Sargent (1986) and Tepper (1988), Nixon "broke down the walls that had kept us contained" (Hall 2007: 187). The narrator comments:

> She did not make monsters of us. She simply gave us the power to remake ourselves into those inviolable creatures the God of Equality had intended us to be. We knew she was deconstructing the old disabled versions of our sex, and that her ruthlessness was adopted because those constructs were built to endure. (Hall 2007: 187)

Having been warned that their community was likely to be invaded, the women decide to attack first and take over the city, occupying the Authority headquarters. The narrator, second in council to the Carhullan army, states she does not "recognise the jurisdiction of this government" (Hall 2007: 207) and it is clear that the women will go on fighting, even though they regret the civilian casualties they caused. The ethical question of whether the ends justify the means is often debated amongst the women. The narrator believes that women are "naturally just as violent" (116) as men. However, "we're taught it's not in keeping with our gender, that it's not feminine behaviour. Men are forgiven for it. Women aren't. So it's suppressed. We end up on the defensive a lot of the time" (116-117). According to the narrator, women are "capable of attacking when it's something worth fighting for" (117).

Laura Sjoberg and Caron E. Gentry (2008: 5) point out that "Violent women interrupt gender stereotypes: they are not the helpless and peaceful women that soldiers need to protect from enemies in traditional war tales", words that fit in well with the women's army in Hall (2007). Should the women in Hall (2007) have stayed passive, as a nonviolent strategy of resistance, like the Sharers in Slonczewski (1986)? These are only thought experiments, but they perform the useful function of suggesting alternative solutions and their potential results.

Sarah Hall herself has acknowledged in an interview that her aim was to look at the "relationship between war and society" (2007: P.S.5) and asks a number of questions such as: "Under what circumstances might we have to turn to violence? Do we renege on our claim to be civilized when we go to war? Can we go to war in the defense of civilization? When is war right, and when is it wrong? And can women make good soldiers?" (2007: P.S.5-6). She adds that *Daughters of the North* is about "power systems, [...] how some people are rendered vulnerable or discriminated against, and how these systems can be broken" (2007: P.S.7).

Sjoberg and Gentry (2007: 2) also point out how images of violent women run counter to conventional representations of women as maternal, nurturing and peaceful. What they argue is that violent women are "violent people", a distinction worth making. They also go on to mention the obvious, that like men, women sometimes regard violence as the "best means to their political ends" (2007: 3), a scenario dramatized in Hall (2007) and Naomi Alderman's *The Power* (2016).

Just as in Sargent (1986) and Tepper (1988), the men in Alderman (2016) are gradually driven to what have been traditionally regarded as "feminine" roles, out of fear of the increasingly domineering women. *The Power* is a sex role reversal, which describes a society where women gradually become the powerful sex, due to the appearance of a "skein", a small organ at the back of the neck, consisting of a network of nerves that have the property of emitting an electrical current, which girls developed as a physical reaction to a substance that gave protection against gas attacks during the Second World War, in association with other genetic factors, in this alternative timeline. This enables the women to defend themselves from unwanted attention, and gradually men start keeping their distance, afraid of the effects of the electrical shock women are capable of giving. This state of affairs leads to a reversal of the traditional gendered roles, with women starting to behave as many men conventionally do, or are expected to, in patriarchal societies. However, when those politics are somewhat crudely reversed, as in *The Power*, even though often treated in terms of humorous and parodic vignettes, expectations are stretched almost beyond reasonable probability or belief. Or are they? Although this reversal of roles is often just that, a reversal based on the physical power to subdue, with men becoming subservient and obsequious to women, as the latter often feel they have to be in strongly androcentric societies as a matter of literal or social survival, the criticism of power politics is effective. Power is the driving force that configures the sexual politics of patriarchy. After all, as one of the characters muses, considering she could literally kill the men confronting her with her electrostatic power: "It doesn't matter that she shouldn't, that she never would. What matters is that she could, if she wanted. The power to hurt is a kind of wealth" (Alderman 2016: 71).

The strength afforded by the skein over many generations and the long-term conditioning of men to be gentler and submissive has led to a world where women feel empowered and entitled to rule, keeping men in subordinate positions. As Naomi, a character in *The Power*, concedes, a "world run by men would be more kind, more gentle, more loving and naturally nurturing" (Alderman 2016: 333). Also as in Hall (2007), where an army of women disrupts gender norms and role expectations, in Alderman (2016) armies of women also form as a response and reaction to male dominated politics. Can a balance of "power" and a more egalitarian society be achieved? Not in this book, but *The Power* can be seen as asking precisely these questions.

4. Morality pills and moral bioenhancement

Despite the decrease of violence in the world, diagnosed by Steven Pinker and others, there is still enough left to provoke considerable harm. Given the existence of lethal weapons as well as an abundance of other weapons, a number of ethicists have suggested that the use of a type of morality pill or genetic engineering might be employed to bring about moral bioenhancement, so as to prevent further violence by making it ethically unacceptable. Princeton bioethicists Peter Singer and Agata

Sagan reflect on the potential benefits brought about by modifying chemistry in the brain in order to encourage ethical behaviour:

> If continuing brain research does in fact show biochemical differences between the brains of those who help others and the brains of those who do not, could this lead to a 'morality pill' – a drug that makes us more likely to help? Given the many other studies linking biochemical conditions to mood and behavior, and the proliferation of drugs to modify them that have followed, the idea is not far-fetched. If so, would people choose to take it? (Singer and Sagan 2011: online)

Bioethicists Julian Savulescu and Ingmar Persson argue in a related vein that, since education appears not to be enough to steer some people from violence and harming others, there is an "urgent imperative to enhance the moral character of humanity" (Persson and Savulescu 2008) through either drugs or genetic engineering. Although this could potentially be achieved through moral education, advances in genetics and neurobiology can supply the "means of directly affecting the biological or physiological bases of human motivation, e.g. by the use of pharmacological and genetic methods, like genetic selection and engineering" (Persson and Savulescu 2012: 2). According to Persson and Savulescu, there are "in principle no philosophical or moral objections to the use of such biomedical means of [...] *moral bioenhancement*" (2012: 2; emphasis in original). For them the "current predicament of humankind is so serious that it is imperative that scientific research explore every possibility of developing effective means of moral bioenhancement, as a complement to traditional means" (ibid.). Since humankind now has at its disposal the means to destroy the planet, only those with impeccable moral credentials can be entrusted with nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction.

In addition, philosophers and ethicists have also been considering alternative ways to tame violence and build a safer, more peaceful world. Julian Savulescu, for instance, argues that it is the parents' moral obligation to genetically engineer and select "ethical" babies in an attempt to ensure that they will become better human beings, "screening out personality flaws, such as potential alcoholism, psychopathy and disposition to violence" (Savulescu 2012), so that they will be less likely to "harm themselves and others", a vision partially invoked in Tepper (1988) and Gearhart (2002). Indeed, it could be hypothesized that moral bioenhancement might be profitably, if controversially, used to improve the ethical behaviour amidst the prison population in these two novels, in conjunction with or instead of the eugenicist attempt to breed out the propensity for violence in men. Singer and Sagan make the following proposal:

> Could criminals be given the option, as an alternative to prison, of a drug-releasing implant that would make them less likely to harm others? Might governments begin screening people to discover those most likely to commit crimes? Those who are at much greater risk of committing a crime might be offered the morality pill; if they refused, they might be required to wear a tracking device that would show where they

had been at any given time, so that they would know that if they did commit a crime, they would be detected. (Singer and Sagan 2011: online)

Controversial as some of these measures may be, they or related versions have been fictionally dramatized in thought-provoking ways in these narratives that problematize strategies to decrease violence and suffering in the world, effectively questioning entrenched gender roles and stereotypes.

5. Conclusion

Although in distinct ways, all of these dystopias interrogate the role of violence in society, attempting to come up with ways to diminish or even eliminate most of the aggression that has been present in human societies from the very beginning. Indeed, one of the recurrent themes in these novels is the attempt to eradicate violence, either by pacifist methods, with recourse to a deliberate passive stance, as in Slonczewski (1986), or by means of segregating women from men as in Sargent (1986) and Tepper (1988), where the women are bent on gradually eliminating the propensity for violence from men by choosing only the sperm of those that provide some insurance of nonviolent behaviour, like the servitors. In this sense, they are having recourse to a Darwinian strategy, selecting what they consider the best genes in what can also be described as eugenics. On the other hand, Hall (2007) interrupts this trend by polemically having the women create their own army to defend themselves and even, if necessary, fight for their rights.

Does the future of our species depend on the urgent moral bioenhancement of those more prone to violence, as Persson and Savulescu argue? A greater effort from our leaders and all of us is certainly needed to work towards a more egalitarian, sustainable world. The dystopias briefly looked at here strenuously warn us against the devastation of our planet compounded with distrust between the sexes, disruptive scenarios that can still be avoided or at least mitigated.

References

Alderman, Naomi. 2016. *The Power*. London: Viking.
Alison, Miranda. 2004. "Women as Agents of Political Violence: Gendering Security" in *Security Dialogue*, 35 (4), pp. 447-463.
Baron-Cohen, Simon. 2003. *The Essential Difference: Male and Female Brains and the Truth about Autism*. New York: Basic Books.
Burdekin, Katharine. 1989 (1934). *The End of this Day's Business*. Afterword by D. Patai. New York: The Feminist Press.
Cohn, Carol. 2012. *Women and Wars*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Gearhart, Sally Miller. 2002. *The Kanshou*. Tallahassee, Florida: Spinsters Ink Books.
Gearhart, Sally Miller. 2003. *The Magister*. Tallahassee, Florida: Spinsters Ink Books.
Hall, Sarah. 2007. *Daughters of the North*. New York: Harper.

Morris, Ian. 2014a. *War! What is it Good For? The Role of Conflict in Civilisation, from Primates to Robots*. London: Profile.

Morris, Ian. 2014b. "War, What is it Good For? Just Look around You" in *New Scientist*, 2831, pp. 29-31.

Moylan, Tom. 2015. "To Live Consciously is to Sow the Whirlwind: Reflections on the Utopian Standpoint of Nonviolence" in *Utopian Studies*, 26 (1) pp. 183-202.

Oliver, Kelly. 2010. *Women as Weapons of War: Iraq, Sex, and the Media*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Pearson, Patricia. 1999. *When She was Bad: Violent Women and the Myth of Innocence*. London: Virago.

Persson, Ingmar and Julian Savulescu. 2008. "The Perils of Cognitive Enhancement and the Urgent Imperative to Enhance the Moral Character of Humanity" in *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 25 (3), pp. 162-177.

Persson, Ingmar and Julian Savulescu. 2012. *Unfit for the Future: The Need for Moral Enhancement*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Persson, Ingmar and Julian Savulescu. 2013. "Getting Moral Enhancement Right: The Desirability" in *Bioethics*, 27 (3), pp. 124-141. Available: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3378470/ [accessed 2017, December 12].

Pinker, Steven. 2012. *The Better Angels of Our Nature: A History of Violence and Humanity*. London: Penguin.

Sargent, Pamela. 1986. *The Shore of Women*. London: Pan Books in association with Chatto & Windus.

Sargisson, Lucy. 2012. *Fool's Gold? Utopianism in the Twenty-First Century*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Savulescu, Julian. 2012, August 21. "It's Our Duty to Have Designer Babies" in *Reader's Digest*. [Online]. Available: https://web.archive.org/web/20121020002340/http://www.readersdigest.co.uk/magazine/readers-digest-main/the-maverick-its-our-duty-to-have-designer-babies [Accessed 2017, December 12].

Singer, Peter and Agata Sagan. 2011, January 28. "Are We Ready for a 'Morality Pill'?" in *The New York Times*. [Online]. Available: https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/01/28/are-we-ready-for-a-morality-pill/ [Accessed 2017, December 12].

Sjoberg, Laura and Caron E. Gentry. 2007. *Beyond Mothers, Monsters, Whores: Thinking about Women's Violence in Global Politics*. London/New York: Zed Books.

Sjoberg, Laura and Caron E. Gentry. 2008. "Reduced to Bad Sex: Narratives of Violent Women from the Bible to the War on Terror" in *International Relations,* 22 (1), pp. 5-23.

Slonczewski, Joan. 1986. *A Door into Ocean*. London: The Women's Press.

Smith, David Livingstone. 2007. *The Most Dangerous Animal: Human Nature and the Origins*. New York: St Martin's Press.

Tepper, Sheri S. 1988. *The Gate to Women's Country*. London: Gollancz.

Viding, Essi and Uta Frith. 2006, April 18. "Genes for Susceptibility to Violence Lurk in the Brain" in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 103(16), pp. 6085-6086.

Woolf, Virginia. 1998. *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas*. Edited with introduction and notes by Morag Shiach. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

CONCRETE COTTEN

ROXANA ROGOBETE

West University of Timișoara

Abstract: The present paper focuses on the American-born German-language writer Ann Cotten, an author who creates an experimental poetry influenced by the Viennese group, whose texts are enriched with vivid imagery. The study compares Cotten's works written in German (for example, Der schaudernde Fächer*, one of the reasons for which she received the Adelbert-von-Chamisso Prize, awarded mostly to authors with a migrant background) with* I, Coleoptile*, her first book written in English, in collaboration with the artist Kerstin Cmelka.*
Keywords: Adelbert-von-Chamisso Prize, concrete poetry, German-language migrant literature, Viennese group

1. Introduction

This study is part of a wider research on German-language authors with a migrant background, which focuses on writers who have different mother tongues, but have chosen German to write their works. The research started with studying the Adelbert-von-Chamisso Prize, awarded from 1985 to 2017 by the Robert Bosch Foundation and the Bavarian Academy of Fine Arts mostly to authors with a migrant background. Ann Cotten is the only American-born German-language writer on whom this prize was conferred.

Born in Iowa, USA, in 1982, Ann Cotten moved to Vienna when she was 5 years old, grew up in Vienna, and finished her degree in German Studies in 2006, when she moved to Berlin. Her interest in concrete poetry is made clear by her paper *Lists of Concrete Poetry* (published in German in 2008 at Klever Verlag: *Nach der Welt*, see Cotten 2008), therefore Cotten's connection with this area is not random.

What is concrete poetry? It is poetry where visual arrangements or graphic patterns are important for the meaning of the text and sometimes also suggest the subject of a poem (an example could be *Die Sanduhr* by Theodor Kornfeld, where the shape of the poem – an hourglass – already tells the reader that the text will be about how time passes). It was practiced in Ancient Greece, in medieval times, but also by Apollinaire (*Calligrammes*), Eugen Gomringer or the Vienna Group (Konrad Bayer, H.C. Artmann, Gerhard Rühm). The last one had a major influence on Cotten's work.

2. *Sonnets from the Dictionary of Borrowed Words* and Cotten's German poems

Cotten's first published work is *Fremdwörterbuchsonette* (2007), translated into English as *Sonnets from the Dictionary of Borrowed Words*. It is her first volume of poetry, published at Suhrkamp in Frankfurt, and consists of 78 poems. For this work, she received the Reinhard Preissnitz Prize in 2007 and the Clemens Brentano Prize for Literature of the city of Heidelberg in 2008. Both of these awards are meant for young artists.

Two examples of poems are relevant for Cotten's method. The first poem, *Loxodrome oder die vermessenen Kurven* ('Loxodrome or the measured curves') starts from the scientific term *loxodrome*, also called 'rhumb line', or 'spherical helix', a term used in cartography. It describes the "curve cutting the meridians of a sphere at a constant nonright angle" https://www.britannica.com/topic/loxodrome), usually used to outline the path of a sailing ship. The other poem, *Die Liebe ist Sieger – rege ist sie bei Leid* ('Love is victory – a source of pain it is'), has a title based on a well-known German palindrom. The author resorts to *palingenesis* to state that not only rocks or cheese can be melted and reshaped ("Das macht man sonst mit Steinen oder Käse, nicht?/ Doch wer sagt, dass man nicht mit andren Dingen machen kann?" – 'That is usually made with rocks or cheese, right?/ But who says you cannot do that with other things?'). This approach is broadened to include even thoughts: "und auch meine Gedanken sind ja palingen" – 'and also my thoughts are palingen'. The constant metamorphosis of thoughts and words is a feature of Cotten's texts, which actually display a palingenesis of world poetry. In a postmodern frame, she encloses various *hypotexts* and produces *hypertexts* configured as a history of world poetry. The same method can be observed on the formal level, when she uses the old-fashioned structure of the sonnet (well-known since the 13th century):

> I think I once was looking for something with loxodrome, and I liked the entry or the explanation so much, that an idea came up to me, that I could make a poem out of it. And I don't like free lines, I actually don't like poems so much, but I find sonnets okay, therefore I made a sonnet out of it. [...] And after that I tried to follow this model, and I found other words that I liked and I wanted to combine them. And they gradually harmonized until it worked, when a term is linked to a situation and word games and images. (Cotton, qtd. in in Saxe 2008)

In fact, she seems to randomly search for words in certain dictionaries and then uses them in verses. Cotten's method of working with the dictionary reminds us of the historical avant-garde movements: arbitrary words are chosen like throwing dice at a casino, not only to suggest that literature is a game, but also to submit a different reality: "ich schüttele im Auge, was ich sehe,/ und hoffe, etwas anders zu sehn." ("I shake in my eye what I see,/ and hope to see something else"). The shaking can also be the reaction of Cotten's reader when s/he opens the book and has a look at its contents: the first and the last poem have the same title, the second and the 77th

also have a common title and so on. Cotten thus forces her recipients to develop a reading that is similar to the British Roger McGough's in *40-Love*, where the words are arranged on two columns (McGough, qtd. in McMahan, Funk, Day, Coleman 2017: 441). But the reader has, in Cotten's case, two options. As other examples of concrete texts state, the textual frame can be decisive for the semantic level. One can either read the whole work from the beginning to the end, but return to the first title; or one can follow the scheme 1-78-2-77-...-38-39, which sends the "traveler" into the middle of a "textual wood", as the motto of the last poem (*Voice over Daniel Johnson*) suggests: "My voice is a little horse running into the deep woods".

The play with words combines terms from biology (*nematode*), medicine (*intermission*, *psittacosis*), anatomy (*kubital*), mathematics, physics (*condensation*, *induction*), philosophy (*aporia*), geology (*Mineralien*) and interferes with verses that are almost narrative and describe ordinary events from everyday life: "geh ich dann in die Küche auf einen Kaffee" ('I then go to the kitchen for a coffee') (*Intermission, Störung*/ '*Intermission, disruption*'); "Am Fensterbrett liegt Staub, und meine Ellenbogen/ löschen kleine Kreise am Metall" ('There is dust on the window sill and my elbows/ are imprinting small circles on the metal'). This interest in words is remarkable, even though they are barely connected to literature or arts – this is her way of making poetry: anything, any word can be included in a poem, there is no (we might say) "linguistic discrimination". These are not words borrowed from other idioms, but from areas that are usually not used in poetry. However, this medley created by Cotten gives the impression of colloquial, familiar language: "I think there is virtuosity in poetry – a certain ease and familiarity, which can lead to a lightness in tone or a formal lightness, but also to the most astounding manoeuvres with the ox-cart, quite without alternative" (Cotton, qtd. in Balius and Cotten 2013).

A self-portrait of the poet is actually hard to find in her work, though her desire to be unconventional can be glimpsed in *Homologie, ich*/ *Homology, I*: "Wär ich Roboter, ich regierte/ mich, mein Gliedmaßen und die USA" ('If I were a robot, I would govern/ myself, my extremities and the USA'). Withal, she treats authorship with irony: "O Fahrtwind, fahre fort, mich zum e/ zu bringen, meine Autorschaft zu reduzieren" ('Oh wind, carry on, to bring me/ to dissolution/, to reduce my authorship'). It seems that celebrity, advertising is not for this writer – "Das Dichten, sagst du, macht dich schrecklich müde./ Das Ich-Sagen erschöpft mich mehr, sag ich." ('Writing poetry, you say, makes you terribly tired./ Saying I exhausts me more'), and that writing is not an easy task ("Mannomann, das Dichten ist nicht einfach" – 'Man, oh, man, writing poetry is not easy'). It is actually a love of logorrhea: when using a dictionary, she looks for strange words, because she does not want to write about herself.

In some of her texts, Cotten denounces the excessive use of technology in everyday life and the lack of real contact between people. The webcam is used to communicate instead of an actual discussion (see the poem *Sehnsucht, Webcam*/

'Missing, Webcam'), or memories are stored on a computer and reviewed (see *Kiesel, Metonymie*):

Sie sehen sich das Foto	am LCD-Schirm an.
Beim Drücken auf den Knopf	rückt gestern links ins Bild
(They see themselves in the photo	on an LCD-screen.
Pressing the button	brings yesterday from the left on the
screen)	

Even though Cotten seems to refuse technology, she will use it for the project called *Glossarattrappen*: each time somebody accesses the website www.glossarattrappen.de another interface appears, a short text which may explain the title and can be followed by a picture. Creating these unique and random text images, Cotten forces the user to refresh the page in order to read more.

3. *I, Coleoptile*. (Re)turning to English?

If *Fremdwörterbuchsonette* had just a few words or structures in English, usually written in italics (*short of*; *rush! more!*; *whatever*; *To A Waltz, Whiskey*; *Equilibrium and Stop Motion on a Trick Bike*; *Freedom and the Right Gesture*; *Redemption, isn't that a tender word*, Ich mag dich, Junge, *but I love your hair*), many of them creating internal rhyme ("No bluff! snuff cuff rough love stuff's tough enough", "O kiff stiff lips brick kid sniff myths and nick a whiff"; "My darling, if you will be my giraffe,/ I'll promise to do things to make you laugh."), in 2010 she published her first work written entirely in English – *I, Coleoptile*.

It would be interesting to find similarities or differences between her use of the two languages. Writing in several languages was associated with different personalities by some scholars (see Pavlenko 2006), who are interested in the manner that each language creates distinct textual compositions: "Scholars who study translingual writing show that writers who write in more than one language often treat their languages as distinct instruments that require them to play different tunes" (Pavlenko 2006:2). Cotten herself states in *Fremdwörterbuchsonette* that it is difficult to express all the impulses of a being in a language: "A new idiom must arise,/ a meta-being-in-motion, a loop/ of pure impulses, for the corpses of the synapse to come across/ and absorbe us to vacuum".

Although Cotten declared that she does not approve of collaborations (Cotton, qtd. in Balius and Cotten 2013), *I, Coleoptile,* a book of poems, is the result of her collaboration with Kerstin Cmelka. Cmelka lives in Berlin, like Ann Cotten, and is a photographer, a writer and filmmaker. She is often involved in performances, and (like Ann Cotten) goes to poetry slams and happenings: "I want an art that again includes craftwork and junk and that does not distinguish between performing and visual, high and low art, or any other hypocritical bureaucracy." (Cmelka, qtd. in Colvin 2016). Any type of language can be an instrument for Cotten, and she shows

in this work that she can also play with images. Cmelka is inspired by the Russian futurist poet Vladimir Mayakovsky, and the photos of Ann Cotten and Kerstin Cmelka reproduce scenes from the movie *The Lady and the Hooligan*, a Russian silent film from 1918, co-directed by Mayakovsky, where he played the role of the hooligan. In the movie, the hooligan falls in love with a teacher and decides to attend her classes and to stalk her. When one of the students becomes disrespectful to the teacher, the hooligan reacts and attacks him, but the whole group of students seeks revenge afterwards. With the help of other men, the students stab the hooligan, who dies just after kissing the teacher. Watching the movie, one can see that actually it is the students that act like hooligans (indolent, lazy, bored and not willing to study), not the hooligan.

A coleoptile is the first leaf of a monocotyledon, forming a protective sheath about the plumule, and the volume contains several poems about emergence, starting from the process of a leaf's growth. The coleoptile is splitting as the leaves expand, is a protective layer for an embryo, but, at the same time, after the plant comes out, the coleoptile is useless, it becomes a discarded residue. It can be considered a rite of passage, coming to age. The coleoptile even has a name – Enzo, and its evolution is constantly followed by Cotten, in parallel with the photos.

Each cover of the book is actually part of the text; it does not function as a simple paratext, because the inside front cover and the back cover make up the frame of the volume. In *On beans*, another poem in the book, Cotten describes her "ideal object of study": "It is the green bean, or fisole. Its shape is not public or private, neither phallic nor vaginal; if anything, it resembles the vague idea of a soul or astral body as it might inhabit (or contain) one or several human corpses". The back cover includes *Jokes (grown up)* (is it a joke for grown-ups or a grown-up joke?): "What does a sun do when it sees a shiny blade of grass? – Make hay." This is the key for the whole work: to grow up is to dry, to lose your shine – "Enzo dries, tries, dies".

4. Conclusion

What can we say about this writer's methods when using different languages? Writing both in English and German can validate Cotten's belonging to both the German-language and the English-language literary canon. Cotten's English texts are not as narrative as the German ones. She has more elaborate expressions in German, as if seeking to be more rational, to argue, to be more substantial. In English, Cotten uses verbal images – she poses in English, giving snapshots from the English language, borrowed from everyday vocabulary to poetry. Although in English her poetry can seem fractured (but more rhythmic), she can more easily give interviews in her mother tongue. What is interesting about this author is her permanent transgression between languages, creating a reality of her own, in a scenario which has only wordplays as protagonists.

References

Balius, Jeremy and Ann Cotten. 2013. "Jeremy Balius and Ann Cotten. Click: A Conversation with Ann Cotten" in *Cordite Poetry Review*, 6 (1) September 2013. [Online].
Available: https://cordite.org.au/interviews/balius-cotten/ [Accessed 2017, May 16].

Colvin, Rob. 2016. "Artists Pick Artists: Kerstin Cmelka" in *Hyperallergic*, 21 September 2016. [Online]. Available: https://hyperallergic.com/310792/artists-pick-artists-kerstin-cmelka/ [Accessed 2017, May 16].

Cotten, Ann. 2007. *Fremdwörterbuchsonette*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Cotten, Ann. 2008. *Nach der Welt. Die Listen der Konkreten Poesie und ihre Folgen*. Wien: Klever Verlag.

Cotten, Ann and Kerstin Cmelka. 2010. *I, Coleoptile*. Berlin-Oslo-Dublin: Broken Dimanche Press.

Encyclopædia Britannica. 28.04.2017. "Loxodrome". [Online].
Available: https://www.britannica.com/topic/loxodrome [Accessed 2017, May 14].

McMahan, Elisabeth, Robert Funk, Susan X. Day, Linda S. Coleman. 2017. *Literature and the Writing Process*. 11th edition. London: Pearson.

Pavlenko, Aneta. 2006. "Bilingual Selves" in Pavlenko, Aneta (ed.). *Bilingual Minds. Emotional Experience, Expression and Representation*. Clevedon/Buffalo/Toronto: Multilingual Matters Ltd., pp. 1-33.

Saxe, Cornelia. 2008. "Eine Vorliebe für Wörterbücher. Die Dichterin Ann Cotten". 28.01.2008. [Online]. Available: http://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/eine-vorliebe-fuer-woerterbuecher.1153.de.html?dram:article_id=181616 [Accessed 2017, May 14].

www.glossarattrappen.de [Accessed 2017, May 14].

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF SEASONS
IN *THE JANE AUSTEN BOOK CLUB*

GABRIELA PLANKOVÁ

Palacký University, Olomouc

Abstract: *There has been unceasing interest in Jane Austen's novels and the result is their many adaptations. My paper pays attention to Karen Joy Fowler's* The Jane Austen Book Club, *more specifically to the importance of seasons and the symbolic meaning of the months during which the story takes place. An analysis of two levels (the book and film versions) will be provided.*
Keywords: *adaptation, Jane Austen's legacy, seasons*

1. Introduction

In today's world, Jane Austen is an icon. Her name spells quality, high standards and morality. For those who prefer films or TV series to books, there are various adaptations of her novels. However, not all of them may be considered high-quality productions. Apart from those adaptations that strictly follow what was written by Jane Austen herself, there are also the so-called 'loose' adaptations. Examples of the latter might be *Bridget Jones's Diary, Bride and Prejudice, Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* and many others. We can even speak of a phenomenon that focuses on the adaptation of Jane Austen's novels or on an Austen Industry (Gibson 2005: 181). Not only are her novels adapted, but her personal life has received a lot of interest too. The probable reasons for that are the blanks that surround her life, particularly her love life. Deborah Cartmell (2010: 109) stated:

> Since the very first adaptation, there has been a desire to read her novels as a means of finding out something about the author, a taboo up until recently in English studies, but a practice which is undeniably present in adaptations of Austen's work.

The field of Austen's adaptations extends even further, creating half-way or full "meta-adaptations", this range including parodies or fan videos posted on YouTube and other social media. Chris Louttit (2013: 180) suggested that it is equally important, or sometimes even more so, to consider the relationship between two or more adaptations like that between the book and film. It was the BBC TV

series adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* (1995) starring Colin Firth as Darcy that caused what became known as *Darcymania*. In that version, Darcy showed his wet body to the audience after swimming in a lake and that part was recycled by other filmmakers, for instance in the TV series *Lost in Austen* (2008). Keeping in mind those intertextual references appearing in various adaptations, Sarah Cardwell (2002: 25) suggested that it would be more accurate to view adaptations as a development of a meta-text.

It is very important to realise that not all the adaptations deserve to be given that name; we need to differentiate between adaptations and appropriations. The difference is not as deeply rooted in the fidelity of the screenplay to the source text as it is in other aspects. Julie Sanders (2016: 35) stated that appropriation takes a more decisive journey away from the text into a wholly new cultural product and domain. Thus we use the term *appropriation* to describe those texts that take a different cultural or political path which brings new reinterpretations of the source texts. Although the terminology of adaptation theory is not fully developed yet and academics struggle with many problems in their attempt to designate and define many concepts, we face bigger problems when trying to name a novel that was inspired or influenced by another novel. Many terms come to mind, such as intertextuality, hypertext, metatext, appropriation or even adaptation, but none of them seems to fit our needs precisely. My aim here is not to solve the dilemma, so for my present purposes, I am going to use the word *rewriting* for the novels that were inspired by Austen's masterpieces.

Karl Kroeber (2006: 108-109) pointed out that the volume of criticism about Jane Austen has amplified over the years and now thunders like Niagara Falls. No wonder that it is the same with the adaptations of her novels and the theory thereof. The year 1995 can be considered as a milestone for the development of Austen adaptations, because in that year several influential adaptations were released, which triggered the phenomenon.

Certainly, this is not the end of Austen adaptations, appropriations and rewritings, one can only guess what is to come. Fantasy versions of *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion,* as well as other modern retellings of famous novels, are very likely to appear, following the trends that have been established. Paula M. Cohen (2005: 540) wrote that she was awaiting a *Pride and Prejudice* video game. On the basis of the quantity of Austen criticism and adaptations, Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield (2010: 443) even suggested that the authorship of her novels may be called into question.

2. The importance of seasons

2.1. The importance of seasons in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*

Jane Austen is not very precise about the time in which her novels are set; readers are not offered any years or dates. Nevertheless, there are certain hints about

the time frame of her novels. What must be said is that seasons and months have a symbolic value. It is usual that Austen's novels cover about a year and a half of the characters' lives, thus offering the whole cycle of seasons. Her characters' lives are normally peaceful in winter, when nothing much happens, while spring, as the beginning of a new cycle, is usually also the beginning of the central love story and brings some excitement into their lives, such as the arrival of a new family or falling in love. Sometimes, readers can only surmise what season it is, because there is no time information for several pages or chapters. Let me illustrate this with an example from *Pride and Prejudice*.

The life of the Bennet family is quite serene before the arrival of Mr Bingley and his companions. We are not sure at what time of the year they come, but on the basis of the subsequent references to winter after Bingley leaves Netherfield, we can assume that it is summer, which is the time that perfectly suits love, according to Austen's novels. Jane falls in love with Bingley before he leaves in November, and so does Darcy with Elizabeth, therefore falling in love begins in the summer. After Bingley and Darcy's departure, there is not much progress in the story, so it seems as if winter-time is a symbol of stagnation. Jane Austen (1994: 119) describes the winter months as follows:

> With no greater events than these in the Longbourn family, and otherwise diversified by little beyond the walks to Meryton, sometimes dirty and sometimes cold, did January and February pass away.

March, the beginning of spring, is to bring about some change; Elizabeth travels to visit Charlotte and goes on another journey with her aunt and uncle. Summer follows and everything seems to be better, but it is in summer that the two central couples are united forever, Jane Austen thus shows summer as the most desirable season for love. Before autumn and winter come, everything is settled and the central characters are all happily united.

I hope I have clearly summarised what I mean by Austen's usage of seasons as symbols, because this is necessary for understanding the similar device used by Karen Joy Fowler in *The Jane Austen Book Club*.

2.2. The novel *The Jane Austen Book Club*

The novel *The Jane Austen Book Club* was written by an American author, Karen Joy Fowler, and was published in 2004. It became a bestseller, with Fowler probably owing her success to the famous name in the title. There are six main characters, each of whom is dealing with personal problems, such as divorce, loneliness or lack of self-confidence. Those problems are ultimately resolved after the book club meetings take place and Austen's novels are discussed. The novels serve as a kind of moral guide, helping the club members to understand themselves better and fight for their happiness. The book club consists of five women, three of whom are rather older (Bernadette, Jocelyn, Sylvia), two of whom are young (Prudie

and Allegra), and one middle-aged man, Grigg. Each month they discuss one of Austen's six novels and each month one of them hosts the meeting. The last book to be discussed is *Persuasion,* which inspires the club members to follow the idea of second chances. Jocelyn and Grigg surrender to love and start a relationship, thus replacing their loneliness with a partner. Bernadette travels to Europe and finds a new husband, thus forgetting her previous unsuccessful marriages. Sylvia gives another chance to Daniel, her unfaithful former husband. Their daughter, Allegra, gives a second chance to Corrine, her lesbian lover, who disappointed her. And Prudie gives herself a second chance by forgiving her mother, as well as herself, for their bad relationship that was the cause of her incertitude; only in this way can she be really happy with her husband Dean. As Dana K. Smith (2006: 85) put it:

> …each character carries resonances of Jane Austen's characters but is allowed a wholly realized interior life and motivations.

Their inner life is mostly revealed through flashbacks from their past; almost all of them had a troublesome parent-child relationship and their personality traits and defects are mostly the consequences of those family relations.

The stories seem to be really independent and one might think that the book is not an appropriation of Austen at all, that her name in the title and the book club discussing her novels are insufficient for that. Nevertheless, the characters are based on Austen's characters, and there are several events that resemble Austen's stories. For example, Jocelyn's high school proms or charity dinner recall balls in Austen's novels, the discussions of the novels may evoke Catherine and Henry Tilney's discussions of gothic novels, Jocelyn's attempt to find someone for the disappointed Sylvia evokes *Emma's* behaviour, etc.

Before paying attention to the importance of seasons and months and their symbolic meaning in the novel, let me summarise which Fowler character is based on which Austen character. Jocelyn is the hostess of the meeting where *Emma* is discussed and she is closely based on the latter's character. She organised the book club, just as Emma is the organiser of her household and the social events in her community. Emma's desire to find a husband for Harriet strikingly resembles Jocelyn's eagerness to help Sylvia to get over her divorce by manipulating her and Grigg into a relationship. Emma and Jocelyn both seem to be unable to fall in love for a considerable time and Jocelyn claims that she has been happily unmarried (Fowler 2004: 37).

In fact, Jocelyn is a modern feminist version of Emma, being financially independent, due not so much to her lineage as to her hard work. Her unmarried status, combined with her older age, is meant to highlight the fact that there is no big difference between the perspectives from which spinsters were viewed in Austen's time and in our own time. Money plays as big a role now as it used to then, and Jocelyn can claim to be happily unmarried only because of her financial independence; otherwise she would end up as another poor Miss Bates. Uncovering

her memories of her adolescence, Jocelyn reveals how she had been flirting with two boys one summer. Similarly, Emma feels ashamed of her bad behaviour towards Miss Bates during a trip and her flirting with Frank Churchill. Fowler pushes the story forward to modern times, changing the innocent flirting of Frank and Emma into a real sexual experience.

Allegra is the hostess of the meeting for *Sense and Sensibility*; she is based on the character of Marianne, with her oversensitivity and intensity of feelings. There are two more striking resemblances: both Marianne and Allegra are attentive daughters caring for their mothers, although very often they unwillingly cause them pain, mostly when they suffer as a result of love. By making Allegra a lesbian, Fowler updated Marianne's character, making her a woman who fights for love and expresses her thoughts and attitudes, no matter what.

Prudie is supposed to host the meeting for *Mansfield Park*, but this never takes place because her mother has an accident and dies. Her bad relationship with her mother is central to her character and remorse is something she must overcome. Fanny also feels guilty for not being sufficiently attached to her family, when she visits them after many years. I believe that Prudie is an archetype of all the female characters and real women whose lives' burden is their relationship with their mothers. That topic seems to be tackled by many novels and TV productions inspired by Austen's work, and we can witness a bad mother-daughter relationship in, for instance, *Lost in Austen* or *Confessions of a Jane Austen Addict.* Both heroines, Prudie and Fanny, lack self-confidence and beauty during their adolescence. Prudie feels a desire for sex after spending several years as a teacher in a high school. She is tempted by her student Trey Norton, but she resists. A similar case can be found in *Mansfield Park*, when Henry Crawford proposes to Fanny. Although she rejects his offer, there are some points at which she begins to believe in his transformation into a man who deserves her. There is nothing sexual in Fanny's temptation, but still some similarity can be traced.

Grigg is responsible for hosting the *Northanger Abbey* club meeting; his resemblance to Catherine, the heroine of Austen's first written novel, is of a rather shallow nature based on family surroundings or choice of literature and that is why I think that Grigg is meant as an opposition to Catherine and her escapes from reality to the world of her fantasy mixed with the literature of the period. By including a male protagonist in her novel, Fowler added hints of the male's vision of the world and reality. He and his initial absolute ignorance of Austen's novels serve as a reminder that Austen's novels are not the Bible and cannot be followed literally. Ariane Hudelet (2009: 155) observed this in one conversation between Grigg and Jocelyn:

> The limit between fiction and reality is blurred, and Austen's fictional creations become as important to the book club members as real people. This is demonstrated by Jocelyn and Grigg's debate over the "reality" of characters: when he asks her if she has read the science fiction books he recommended, she answers, "I prefer books

about real people", to which he ironically answers, "So Elizabeth Bennet is real, but people in science fiction are not?

The *Pride and Prejudice* meeting is held at a charity event organised by the library where Sylvia works; however, it is Bernadette's life that is uncovered, as she remembers some stories from her past about her parents and husband. She mostly resembles Elizabeth Bennet in her relationship with her parents. Having been divorced six times, Bernadette would be "ruined" or even impossible to exist in Austen's times, so her role in the novel is to remind us that the world has moved forward and we now live in completely different conditions; therefore Austen can serve as our moral guide, but not as our code of behaviour.

The last meeting is at Sylvia's place, where they discuss *Persuasion*; it is their last meeting, just as *Persuasion* was Austen's last novel. Sylvia has a lot of common features with Anne Elliot; she is compassionate, attentive, caring, calm and dignified, like Anne. There are also certain similarities in their fates; they both break up with the men of their lives. After refusing Wentworth, Anne is not proposed to again and at the age of 27, there are only few possibilities left for her, and her probable destiny is to become a spinster. Sylvia, in her early fifties, and still not over her husband, seems to have a limited choice too. Nevertheless, they both get a second chance and find their way back to the men of their hearts, Daniel and Wentworth. One could think of Sylvia as a very suitable character for feminist writers. Broken at the beginning, she rises from the ashes, being helped only by her friends and family. She becomes an independent, self-confident woman, able to survive without Daniel and live her life on her own. Her transformation is the most complete one; she becomes a new woman. Although she takes Daniel back, it is because she loves him, not because she needs to. It is Sylvia who decides their future; Daniel is the one who begs for her forgiveness. The club members notice her transformation when she opens a birthday present from Allegra (2004: 233):

> We would have guessed Sylvia was the sort to unknot the ribbon, carefully remove and fold the paper. Instead she tore it apart.

The gift also reveals that it is Sylvia who understands that they can be guided by Austen, but need to make their own decisions, that Austen's novels are not the Bible, nor the law. The quotation from the magic ball is supposed to make them decide whether Daniel can stay at the club meeting, but Sylvia secretly skips one quote and gets another, thus making her own choice. She manipulates it, because she knows best what is good for her and she understands that Austen does not offer all the answers and solutions to their problems. She can help, but cannot save everything.

2.3. The importance of seasons in *The Jane Austen Book Club*

Fowler's novel is divided in six chapters, based on the characters they represent, Austen's novel that is being read by the protagonists, and the months in

which the reading takes place. I believe that Fowler's choice of months is not accidental, but rather fully well-considered, following the symbolic meaning of Austen's usage of the seasons.

There is no time reference for the prologue; however, when the book club is organised and the members start meeting, we are immediately offered a month reference. Jocelyn's story is revealed in March and so is the reading and discussion of *Emma*. It can be said, then, that this is when the whole story begins and the romances and complications evolve in spring. I believe I have clearly shown that Jane Austen used the same scheme. Although Jocelyn had met Grigg some time before, there had not been any development in their relationship until the story began. Similarly to Jane Austen's use of spring, Fowler was inspired by Austen when it comes to summer. Two important events happen; the library dinner is organised in July and the last club meeting is held in August. I have suggested earlier that in Austen's stories everything culminates in summer and is resolved by the time late autumn and winter come. The library dinner party seems to be important for the development of every character. Everything is heightened by the heat the characters are exposed to, because the summer is at its height. August brings the resolution of all the stories involved, *Persuasion* is read and the characters follow its basic idea of the possibility of second chances. The last part, following the August *Persuasion* chapter, is an epilogue dated in November. Here again we can see how everything is settled before either autumn or winter comes.

2.4. A film version of *The Jane Austen Book Club*

A film version of the bestselling novel was produced in 2007 and directed by Robin Swicord. Although it cannot be reviewed as a loose adaptation, it does not strictly follow the novel's story and plot. There are many differences, including changes in the time frame, the choice of the novels by the characters and the sequence in which the novels are read and discussed, which is very important for my paper. Other significant changes cover the relationships. Prudie and Dean's marriage is described as much worse; they do not understand each other and fight constantly. Prudie almost ends up having sex with her student Trey. In fact, her sexual desire for that younger boy seems to be the centre of her story. It seems probable that the filmmakers needed to add more action to her story and that her problems with her mother and her lack of self-confidence were not attractive and passionate enough for them. We do not learn much about Bernadette, although she is the one who founded the book club; she seems to be out of the focus of the viewer's attention and is simply used as the glue that holds the club members together. The reason is that her character as an older woman is not appealing to younger viewers, so she gets only limited space. Only some fragments of the characters' past and their relationships with their parents are revealed, which is a shame, because they are the foundation on which the characters' analysis and interpretation are based in the novel. However, the filmmakers compensated for the flashbacks by adding scenes that help us to

understand the personalities of the characters. For instance, there is a scene in which, because of a problem with the shop alarm system, Prudie (shopping for some lingerie) has to let the shop assistants unpack her bag, as she is standing in front of the shop. Her face, her prudishness, her lack of self-confidence and her shame reveal a lot about her to the viewer in just one scene. Similarly, when Jocelyn organises a funeral for her dead dog, the viewers may find out that she is much lonelier than she admits and that her statements about being happily unmarried are just a façade. She is desperate for some connection and relationship and that is why she is so obsessed with and attached to her dogs.

The book club meetings start in February, a month earlier than in the novel, and the same happens with their last meeting, which, in the film, takes place in July. I can only think of one reason for the filmmakers' choice of changing the time frame. By choosing February, a winter month, they may have tried to show how unfavourable winter is for relationships in Austen's novels. The characters also seem to be very cold and reserved or broken-hearted in their relationships. Nevertheless, as spring is drawing near, they start to feel warmer and more passionate and their relationships undergo many developments; and when summer, the season favourable for love, arrives, the story is concluded and the characters are united.

I believe there is one reason for the change of sequence and choice of the novels by the characters and that is that the filmmakers wanted to make Prudie's story the centre of attention. Her story is definitely the one that is most altered, especially with regard to her relationship with her husband Dean and her student Trey, adding much more tension, passion and impropriety. Her story is the reason for not strictly following the novel and assigning *Mansfield Park* to Sylvia and *Persuasion* to Prudie. Although Sylvia clearly expresses her admiration for Fanny Price in the novel, in the film she goes so far as to choose the novel and identify herself with the heroine to a certain extent. By assigning *Persuasion* to Prudie, they make her and Dean's second chance the central point of the story. The film does not follow the sequence of the discussions of the novels properly, as the order of precedence is changed; *Mansfield Park* is the second novel to be discussed, *Northanger Abbey* the third one and *Sense and Sensibility* the fourth one. The reason for the decision to use *Mansfield Park* sooner in the film story is obvious; in the film version, Trey is rehearsing a play and Prudie helps him to practise his role. Their relationship starts to evolve and become dangerous, just as the rehearsal of the drama in Austen's novel is the ground on which the relationships are formed. I appreciate the decision to use *Sense and Sensibility* later in the story. The club meets at the hospital because Allegra is injured. The discussion there suggests how much the characters allowed Austen's novels to influence and guide their personal lives. Jocelyn and Grigg's exchange of opinions is definitely not only about the novel, but marks their present situation and their relationship. Grigg offers his opinion: "*I think Jane Austen wrote about women falling in love, but she was lonely.*" Jocelyn reacts immediately: *"Oh, you couldn't be more wrong. Austen lived a very full life."* Similarly, when Prudie says: "*No rules, no fear. I like that.*" what she is really talking

about is her obsession with the student. Prudie*'s* struggle between sense and sensibility, whether to be or not to be unfaithful to her husband, seems to be much more the centre of attention in the discussion of *Sense and Sensibility* than Allegra*'s* story. Thus the filmmakers decided to make an indecent teacher-student relationship the focus of the story and that does not seem to be very Austenish. I think that they wanted to satisfy those who claim that there is not much action in Austen's stories and those who prefer more contemporary marriage complications, as no one could even imagine such a story development in Austen's novels. By doing that and giving Trey more space, they may also have gained a lot of viewers among teenagers: the story is more provocative, up-to-date and appealing to young viewers.

3. Conclusion

One can only guess whether Fowler and Swicord were aware of Austen's use of seasons as symbols. I believe that Fowler's idea of dividing the story according to the months of the year was intentional and based on her observations of Austen*'s* writing. The filmmakers may have only included that in the film as an attempt to closely follow the novel, but then a question arises – why did they change the time frame if there was no purpose in that? Why is Prudie's story the most altered one? Supported by the heat of the summer, Prudie's little romance is the most passionate part of the film.

Whether intentionally or not*, The Jane Austen Book Club* is inspired by Austen's novels on different levels, including characters, events and the symbolical meaning of the cycle of seasons.

References

Austen, Jane. 1994 (1813). *Pride and Prejudice*. London: Penguin Books.
Cardwell, Sarah. 2002. *Adaptation Revisited: Television and the Classic Novel.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.
Cartmell, Deborah. 2010. *Screen Adaptations: Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice: A Close Study of the Relationship between Text and Film.* London: Methuen Drama.
Cohen, Paula M. 2005. "Trends in Adaptation: Will and Jane Go Celluloid" in *Michigan Quarterly Review*. [Online]. Available: https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?cc=mqr;c=mqr;c=mqrarchive;idno=act 2080.0044.320;rgn=main;view=text;xc=1;g=mqrg [Accessed 2017, August 30].
Fowler, Karen J. 2004. *The Jane Austen Book Club*. London: Penguin Books.
Gibson, Pamela C. 2009. "Jane Austen on Screen – Overlapping Dialogues, Different Takes" in *Adaptation*, 2(2), pp. 180-190.
Hudelet, Ariane. 2009. "The Construction of a Myth: the 'Cinematic Jane Austen' as a Cross-Cultural Icon" in Monaghan, David, Ariane Hudelet and John Wiltshire (eds.). *The Cinematic Jane Austen Essays on the Filmic Sensibility of the Novels*. London: McFarland & Company, pp. 148-159.

Kroeber, Karl. 2006. "Jane Austen Criticism, 1951-2004" in *Studies in the Novel*, 38(1), pp. 108-116.

Louttit, Chris. 2013. "Remixing Period Drama: The Fan Video and the Classic Novel Adaptation" in *Adaptation*, 6(2), pp.172-186.

Sanders, Julie. 2016 (2006). *Adaptation and Appropriation*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Smith, Dana K. 2006. "A Fine and Private Austen" in *The English Journal*, 96 (2), pp.84-87.

Troost, Linda and Sayre Greenfield. 2010. "Strange Mutations: Shakespeare, Austen and Cultural Success" in *Shakespeare*, 6 (4), pp. 431-445.

BONDED TO MEMORY:
TERRACOTTA OVENS OF MY CHILDHOOD BY ELITE OLSHTAIN

DANA RADLER

Bucharest University of Economic Studies

Abstract: *Silhouettes, silence, guilt and conflict permeate the memoir by Elite Olshtain, a genuine life-testimony of her childhood spent in Czernowitz and Romania before and after World War II. How is one's identity fragmented when war cuts the existential route of a prosperous and caring family? Where is the victim and who is the heroine? This paper explores trauma, identity and gender rooted in a remediated frame which captures imprints coming closer to the reader, or remains at distance, making the narrative poignant or as diffuse as an* aquarelle.
Keywords: *Czernowitz, memoir, identity, trauma, exile, (re)mediation*

1. Introduction

In her *Ghosts of Home: the Afterlife of Czernowitz in Jewish History*, Marianne Hirsch brings up her father's short confession before embarking on the return trip from the United States to Czernowitz: "… we would not have decided to go back there now if it were not for Marianne – because Marianne doesn't have a *Heimat* [home], and we want to show her ours because ours is also in some ways hers." (2010: 8) This is at once about a family return, and a personal quest. This vision also shapes the memoir written by Elite Olshtain, *Terracotta Ovens of My Childhood* (2010). For her, stories emerging from her family experience bridge the identity of the protagonists with those of previous generations, where parents and the grandparents act as main subjects. The result is a recomposed identity, with the experience of the storyteller mixing with that of his/her family members. Memories thus work in a flow across several generations, but at an uneven pace, being sometimes interrupted by digressions, or being simply too painful to be restored with the acuity of their original imprint.

Memories are often considered vibrant representations impacting the human psych**e**, but they also act as testimonies or haunting presences in one's life or writing. For Olshtain, they are deeply embedded in both. Silhouettes, stories, silence, guilt and conflict permeate this memoir, which turns into a "life-testimony" (Caruth 1995: 14). Where is the victim and who is the heroine? This paper explores the concept of trauma, identity, and gender, as rooted in a memoir narrative, often traumatic,

drawing from Michel Foucault's vision of language. Family is a nexus of threads connected to gender and identity, but it extends further beyond.

In an interview with Charles Ruas, Foucault refers to "these spoken words" which, stand for him beyond the mere structure or a series of uttered sounds, "as people tend to think, a wind that passes without leaving a trace, but in fact are the traces, they do remain." (Foucault 2007: 179) In his opinion, discourse connects to an existing corpus, but oral speech is more flexible in what it can further produce compared to earlier expressions, while writing has a higher inertia against previous historical and cultural baggage.

Observing the massive explosion of life writing in the last five decades, shifting gradually from autobiography to memoir writing, Leigh Gilmore inspects the changes in the author's voice, as well as the final product:

> Autobiography as a genre – along with its allied forms of memoir, slave narratives, captivity narratives, *testimonio*, and other permutations of "the story of my life, told by me" – notably twins the 'I' who narrates with the 'I''s narrative. When that narrative conforms to dominant cultural notions of legitimacy, the 'I' who narrates it will accrue authority. Despite the claim the 'I' makes to the legitimacy of pershonhood, it is more the story than the self that generates social opprobrium or affirmation in the reception of autobiography and not the other way round. (Gilmore 2016: 9)

In addition, Dori Laub (Caruth 1995) examines the case of traumatic events transferred and transformed into fiction, while Beata Piątek (2014) reframes the analysis of life writing, from a historical and philosophical perspective to contributions focused on the individual. Studies about the truth of a life narrative define the rather isolated, subjective and higher stand assumed by the author in his/her revisiting early memories: Gilmore (2001: 19) mentions "representing the self as utterly unique", which determines the writer to "stand for others through acts of self-inspection and self-revelation". Furthermore, Piątek (2014: 46) refers to Susannah Radstone's "comprehensive critique of trauma theory", who analysed the exclusive limits of trauma as generated by dissociation acting as "a defence mechanism" (idem: 37) meant to relieve an intense emotional stress inflicted on the very subject of that experience. Psychoanalysis sharpens the investigation of memories and trauma in a recent contribution by Sonja Knopp (2017), as she looks at silence, speech, and inconsistencies as phenomena intrinsic to such an experience.

For returnees to places where their lives and memories started, the key question concerns the core of such a (re)discovery, as Hirsch and Spitzer (2010: 19) point out: "What would we, what would my parents, find as we began our explorations?" For Hirsch and her parents, as well as for many others, such a quest leads to an unexpected self-purification, refining and re-framing people, institutions and feelings. Yet, at the debut of that return, the expectation was far from being distinct.

In Olshtain's case, her memoir concentrates on facts and elements remembered by the protagonist, comparable to other narratives authored by Czernowitzers. Her testimony comes out at a distance of several decades from the original moment, by an adult returning to initial *lieux de mémoire*. According to the author, this enterprise would not have been possible while her parents were alive: memories were too burdensome and too intimate to be publicly exposed. Years later, the writer reworks her memories, and those of her family, confessing a need acutely expressed by other survivors undertaking a similar journey to the past: "our interest confirmed something about their past, its importance, its narrative, and its dramatic quality, the need to pass it on" (Hirsch and Spitzer 2010: 139).

2. Family bonding and trauma

Olshtain's memoir debuts under promising signs in the first chapter ("Life Is Good") presenting events a short while before and after the writer's birth, as well as the key protagonists of her story: Frieda and Willy Zeller, her parents, affiliated to Hashomer Hatzair[1], as two young adults coming from different social backgrounds, run a small but successful marble business and enjoy the birth of their first child in March 1938. From details about their house in Franzensgasse and closest family in her infancy, the narrative moves in the next four chapters to the increasingly complex historical – equally devastating emotionally - context of the war approaching Czernowitz, the Russians taking it over, and the father being shortly employed as a painter to serve communist propaganda, until being sent to a training camp. Between 1941 and 1944, young Litika moves her residence to her maternal grandparents, then with uncle Yossel and his family, or later to another relative, tante Rosa. The narrative suggestively captures visual or oral details about eating black bread with butter, staying close to warm stoves, a vicious nocturnal attack forcing the family to take refuge at relatives, or celebrating Seder with modest supplies.

For Larson (2007), personal stories operate as "teeter-totters" between personal experiences, often retrieved and reconfigured by a troubled narrator, and events, stories, ultimately various kinds of individual testimonies, delivered by 'others', be them close family, members of a local community or distinct ethnic group. The balancing act is an attempt at re-working the "memoir's paradox" between what he calls the "I-*then*" and I-*now*" (Larson 2007: 24) identities. Litika thus undergoes a long and traumatic learning. She finds an incomprehensible gap between her warm, social naturalness and friendly behaviour to others outside her close community, such as Romanian soldiers passing the ghetto, and her grandmother's warning to confine her interaction with unknown individuals.

---

[1] Hashomer Hatzair is the first Zionist youth Socialist movement of Jews. The movement was established in 1913, in Lvov, Galicia, by a group of boys and girls interested in finding a new way for their friends and other people in exile. The movement operates in hundreds of centres in Israel and around the world and conducts educational activities based on the idea of "Tikkun Adam - Tikkun Olam" ("Repairing a person - repairing the world").

The child quickly notices the growing indifference of her family to herself; its members find themselves physically and psychologically restricted and its life has switched, in a relatively short interval, from work and enjoyable moments to mere survival. Unaware of the causes generating difficulties for the grownups, the girl further faces a serious dilemma: lack of attention from dear ones versus freedom only limited by the boundaries of the yard:

> Some of my mother's cousins, who I remembered and who used to be so nice to me in the past, paid no attention to me now. Actually, except for my grandmother, no one really noticed me, not even my mother. So no one told me what to do. I had a wonderful time running around, playing, singing, and standing near the fence of the ghetto and watching the Romanian soldiers march by through the cracks in the wooden fence. I soon learned some of their songs, and I stood there singing with them. Some of them noticed me and turned a smiling face toward me. (Olshtain 2010: 17)

The reaction of her maternal grandmother is so sharp that it promptly alerts Litika on a more serious issue, her own safety: "[she] drag me away from the fence: 'Don't you understand how dangerous this is?' the soldiers should not see you! You are not allowed to stand near the fence.'" (Olshtain 2010: 17) Litika's response shows her grandmother the child's gap of perception compared to the adult's: "'But Baba they are so nice and they smile to me.'" (ibid.) Her need of social contacts in a community where danger gradually obstructs adults from providing affection and from building her own identity, supported by the reflection of her personality in those of the others, makes the grandmother sigh, but she does not lower her vigilance.

The episode highlights the heroine's anxiety, as the author focuses on events presented at an accelerated speed, hinting at emotions triggered by traumatic instances. This confirms Gilmore's vision of the need to carefully describe childhood memories: "In cases where the witness narrates traumatic experience, it is often not only trauma but the demands of testimony that drive a wedge between the event and its retelling" (Gilmore 2016: 16).

3. Communal stories and fractured experiences

Olshtain's memories closely follow Hirsch's return to a poetic yet highly dramatic confession made by Paul Celan: "Niemand/ zeugt für den/Zeugen" ('No one /bears witness for / the witness'), applicable to other contributors on memory and Holocaust studies (Hirsch and Spitzer 2010: 122). Shoshana Felman (1992: 3) pointed out the solitude and uniqueness of the testimony-bearer. According to her, Celan's verses suggest the burden and the process of both conveying and transgressing memories.

Throughout the story, Litika faces moments of intense joy, alternating with those of despair or anxiety. The closest person to her, in terms of daily care and supporting her development, is Sabina, her maternal grandmother. The episode in

which the girl observes how the pressures of the exterior world impact herself is the short period when she goes to uncle Yossel's house, to live in a more comfortable space, with more generous supplies than those afforded by her grandparents. Though uncle Yosssel is friendly with the little girl, aunt Regina is so highly preoccupied by the safety of her family, and of the temporary visitors whom they help to survive, that she remains a rather strict, somewhat insensitive adult to the three-year old. From the moment she enters their home, Litika rapidly perceives her aunt's distant nature: Regina comments on her arrival as her family's duty towards a relative in need, a compensation for the support received in the past from Frieda Zeller. Her reserve determines Litika to remain silent: "what she said sounded kind, but when I looked at her face I saw a funny expression on it. I told myself that I must remember what she said and ask Baba why she had such an unpleasant expression on her face" (Olshtain 2010: 22). The girl realises that the aunt sees her as an additional burden, and the adult can hardly then refrain from further reluctance: the aunt informs the child that she has no choice in terms of food but black bread with jam, complaining about food supplies. Later, the moment Litika has an impulse to run to the door and greet visitors, the aunt immediately admonishes her with a violent gesture: "[Aunt Regina] was dragging me back to the living room. 'You should never, never go to the door. Do you understand?' […] 'I hit you now a bit because I was so mad at you, but if you don't listen to what I say I will hit you much harder" (23-24). This brutal interaction suggests that the earlier conflict operates on the child as a reconfirmed experience: she finds that a sociable nature cannot be exposed to the exterior world if it attracts uninvited attention or even danger.

While the first chapters of *Terracotta Ovens* detail events in a chronological order, with a clear focus on the young main protagonist, chapter nine and ten act as a short yet stressful *intermezzo*: her mother's deportation to Murafa camp for almost two and half years, while her father, Willy, was in the Red Army. These chapters focus on her parents and their unexpected separation. The story turns away from political changes impacting the Furman grandparents, following her mother's stay in Murafa from 1941 until early 1944. It is mainly an unevenly and partly reconfigured past, accompanied by an adult narrator's retrievals based on family oral sources. From the onset of this entr'acte, Frieda appears as a genuine survivor: "[m]embers of the family used to say that Frieda was like a cat, *always landing on her feet*." (59) Her confidence and entrepreneurial side emerge shortly after being employed as a cleaner at the hospital, where she starts building her own connections, up to the commander of the ghetto. Other survivors also comment on the role of personal connections in the ghetto (Rosen 2010: 175). Being valued for her work and wit, Frieda becomes a facilitator between desperate families, whose sons were often sent to labour camps where they never returned from, and certain officials in search of additional gain. Such intricate and diffuse social layers extracted from various memoirists and documented sources allow Dalia Ofer (2009: 53) to declare in her study that the ability of certain individuals to obtain food and get access to better jobs moved the individual to a safe centre, or, on the contrary, to a deprived periphery

In addition, Sarah Rosen (2010: 157-176) provides a solidly documented perspective of the conditions of the Jewish community in Murafa.

In her calm, resourceful and detached manner, Frieda Zeller would leave valuable belongings to the chief officer, saying the name of the young man whom the family tried to save, each time leaving his office uncertain, yet managing in the end to save one more life. Poldy Druckman, aged thirty, is one such example and their first meeting soon leads to a romance in desperate times when "their love gave them great comfort" (Olshtain 2010: 67). Miles away from his wife, convinced that his family could not have survived, Willy fought in the Red Army from March 1941, and his voice, amalgamated via the narrator, is equally fractured and incomplete, depending on key episodes reported among close members later on. In between violent instances involving Russian, Ukrainian and Jewish military, Willy recovers from a wound to his leg, and works as a *feltcher* at the hospital in Gorki. In 1942 he reaches Stalingrad together with reinforcement troops and is wounded again, this time by a shrapnel going into the same spot of his left leg. After his recovery, he is sent to a village in 1942, where he works as a substitute teacher and develops a relationship with a warm, caring Russian woman. His belief that his family members were gone is shattered by a Red Army representative, who brings him a letter from his family in the summer of 1944. His return in Czernowitz, at their family residence, works as a reunification catalyst and a short sentence conveys the whole tension of emotional re-bonding: "Willy was standing at the entrance of the apartment in Franzengasse, looking at his little daughter" (79). For Litika and her parents, the present and the past temporarily mix in terms of layers, generating additional uncertainties to which characters try to answer, as Larson (2007: 3) reflects on the memoir writing process and purpose: "Trying to identify which of my past selves still confound me". The process to find answers, despite multiple layers and numerous actors, may be actually more clarifying than the results it leads to.

4. A healing testimony

Though her early childhood takes place while the war is under way, young Litika does not abandon her social skills. She gradually develops a sharp instinct to learn from what happens to herself or those around her, and shows an unusual ability to reflect on her personal and family experiences. Her effort to behave like a grownup is noticeable to Baba Sabina, who uses Litika's questions to suggest the differences in social status and family psychology. Compared to Litika's mother, aunt Regina and her younger sisters, Nora and Mina, were less successful with their marriage opportunities, which impacted their welfare and overall behaviour; this clarification is a new learning stance for the little girl.

The effort of the main protagonist, Litika-Elite, to understand her life journey emerges as she describes her parents' separation. When reflecting on Frieda's affair with Polly or Willy's romance with Natasha, it is not Litika, but the adult narrator

whose voice looks at the past based on fragments extracted from her family. She is far from reproach, she looks at their experiences as unavoidable for individuals trying to remain alive. The three-year old was fully unhappy about her mother's visit for one evening only: "A beautiful woman with black hair and a heavy coat was standing there looking at me. I knew this was my mother, but I felt nothing" (Olshtain 2010: 53). Several decades later, the adult narrator is finally able to frame her mother's apparition after her escape from the Murafa camp in a group of four, including Polly. The chapter describing Frieda's route during this interval allows the author to illuminate the past with a reflexive touch: "And where was I in those plans? She [Frieda] probably did not know where I would fit in, and therefore it seemed best to leave me with Baba, who had taken such good care of me and who was now safe in the old apartment on Franzensgasse" (68). Litika's return is, as Knopp (2017: 271) observes, an act starting from the persistence in her memory about original events; but the transposition of revisited events demand the victim of trauma develop into "the distanced narrator of a past event".

Separated by his family for many months, Willy eventually finds in 1944 that they are all alive. The memoirist once again looks at the fragile and blurred area of the distant past, when she retrieves the series of questions incited by a letter written to Willy by his mother-in-law: "Could he go back now and reunite his family? Could he leave Natasha and forget his present life?" (79). Even if Natasha, his Russian partner, was a caring partner, the drive to join his family is irresistible, yet Willy lets it happen slowly as he always tries to avoid conflictual cases.

The first reaction at the reunion with his daughter and his in-laws shows a clear disappointment with Litika's physical image, a pale and incredibly thin girl. Willy's return generates admiration and the family's willingness to make him feel back at home, but the tension abruptly irrupts when the war veteran announces that Natasha is coming. Though in a state of shock, followed by the rejection of a female substitute in her daughter's place, Baba Sabina eventually accepts the visit. Despite her pleasant behaviour, Natasha fails to consolidate her relationship with Willy, who informs the family a few days later that the Russian woman has left forever. Yet Willy soon becomes Mina's marriage target. Still unwilling to get into a serious relationship with somebody in the family, the father explains to his daughter his sheer disappointment over Frieda, who has abandoned them to live in Bucharest with another man. He even thinks that Litika should stop calling Frieda 'mother', yet the girl meets his statement with a rejecting silent act: "She was my 'mamma' forever'" (84). It is the same drive to get together and abandon narcissistic isolation, supported by Baba Sabina, which ultimately determines Willy to make a long trip to Bucharest, with Litika, to find Frieda. Although the moments they see each other are difficult, an invisible strong bond takes them back to where they were before they had parted. The main factor to help them regain balance is Litika, completely unware of her connecting role. She voices her reflecting self again: "I had no idea how my parents felt toward each other; I could not tell anything from their behaviour" (94). Her

uncertainty fades away the next day when the father decides to wipe out the past and re-build their family for the sake of their unique descendant.

During her time in Bucharest, Litika, temporarily called 'Melica' by many locals, learns to read and write and wins the attention of her school teacher, to her own surprise. She also finds out that she needs to protect herself in front of the violent or dismissive behaviour of boys and girls of the same age, who call her a Jew. Once the Communists get the power, a searching group arrives at the Zellers to search for American dollars or gold. Knowing that political affiliation can protect her family from such practice, Frieda joins the party and becomes an activist. Even if parcels sent by their relatives in America help the family to improve their comfort, the family has to balance standards against an alleged illegal income. Valentina, a party member affiliated to the party office where Frieda works, thinks that the Zellers afford an unusual delicacy, such as fresh cucumbers, unavailable to a modest family. The episode in which Frieda and Litika try to hide the vegetables and their smell and suggest to Valentina that she is under a false impression points to a new instilled mechanism of formal reporting suspicion of illegal income to the police or party groups: "My mother laughed and said, 'Valentina, you are imagining things. Indeed, who can afford cucumbers?'" (108).

The final section of the memoir shows the Furmans, Litika's maternal grandparents, leaving for Palestine in 1948, as the first group. In 1950, the rest of the family manages to reach Haifa and settles in Mishmar Haemek kibbutz. The forest nearby turns for adolescent Elite into a "hot and dry but magical" (118) realm, a space helping her to recover from past wounds. The forest is a retreat where she has long conversations with her father, in a learning process focused on becoming an authentic Sabra. The teenager focuses on re-framing her own identity: her clothing, learning Hebrew and getting a Hebrew name: Elite. This comes as a public confirmation of her belonging to a community she truly desires to integrate in. The process is far from being smooth: Elite values the discussions with her father as a major factor in her intellectual development, but the past still holds on to her. To be able to continue on a smooth path, the young woman takes the decision of a symbolic sacrifice: she burns her diary and a beautiful yet untraditional skirt, and buries them to close the gate to the troublesome past. The act immediately reaches its purpose: "There I dug a little hole in the ground, buried all these things, and lit a little fire on top, […] I walked back to the kibbutz feeling light and free" (123). The narration almost turns into a reportage in *Becoming a Sabra* (124-130), before the *Epilogue* confirms that for the author the return to the past was a must: "This book was something I felt I had to do in order to connect my childhood to the new generations" (133). The familiar terracotta ovens are, in 2006, during her first post-war visit home, the only survivors in their flat, and their presence confirms that memory starts with an early, symbolic attachment: "The terracotta ovens were on in the early hours of the morning and in the evening. My grandfather brought wood and lit the ovens every day. I loved to stand with my back to the big oven in the living room and feel the warmth through my whole body" (52). They supported durable family bonding for

all members, and facilitate revisiting the past. If Willy Zeller had promised his father "*never to leave Czernowitz*" (7), the memoirist embarks on a trip to her birth place after five decades, only after her parents had passed away. The finale wraps up the vision of her identity: "This is a true story as seen through the eyes of a little girl" (136). With this statement, the author completes a life cycle: by returning home, she has undergone a healing process and left behind a testimony necessary to herself, first of all.

5. Conclusion

The confession written by Olshtain starts under an auspicious statement coming from Sabina Furman about her granddaughter: "This little girl will have a good life. She has been born into comfort from the start, not like her mother who was born just a year before the big war" (6). Only four years later, after the brutal assault on their home, the grandmother would hug the little girl and exclaim: "We must save you. You must be live and safe" (32). The heroine of this volume is the author, whose identity is shaped by other female personae, her grandmother and mother being the most influential. Through her writing, the author comes to understand her family and becomes able to take her own decisions. Grandma Sabina is highly affectionate, but caring can sometimes hinder a child from growing; unlike her, Frieda occasionally appears purpose-driven to the extent that her daughter doubts her love: "I knew she was basically good to me, but I also thought that she did not love me very much" (106), but comes to realise that her own parent had gradually revalued their reunion after the war: "I felt that perhaps I was wrong and that she really loved me" (109). Olshtain's story suggests that bonding and memory depend on compromise and patience, and that individuals need to prioritise their needs: individual versus group survival. At times, the individual has to find his/her own way when separated from his/her family; and the family is the primary resource which confers each member additional strength in time of need.

As Larson (2007: 15) points out, in the span of about three decades, memoir writing became a choice through which the author decides to focus on "a particular life experience", while Gilmore (2001:4) amply discusses the ambivalence of the private area going into a public discourse. *Terracotta Ovens* thus supports a legitimation of the past, but also operates as a cultural interconnection of personal and group memories, of what has to be remembered further on. Olsthain's narrative focuses on events taking place in her family, but her story leads to meaning beyond her traumatic childhood and uneasy adolescence. Reflecting Gilmore's (2001: 6) observation about trauma as derived "from the Greek meaning 'wound'", the memoirist frames personal experiences in a predominantly chronologically built ensemble. While examining the difficulty of expressing trauma, Gilmore (2001: 7) observes the shifts in such a narrative, since utterances in fragile contexts go beyond the kind of language used to think to oneself In his view, survivors of traumatic events "are urged to testify repeatedly to their trauma in an effort to create the

language that will manifest and contain trauma as well as the witnesses who will recognize it" (ibid.). For Olshtain, this is nuanced by her vision when looking back, which builds up in *Terracotta Ovens* as a delicate balance between speech and silence performed by the individual inside a family.

References

Caruth, Cathy. 1995. *Unclaimed Experience*. Baltimore, MA & London: The John Hopkins University Press.

Felman, Shoshana. 1992. *Testimonies: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. New York and London: Routledge.

Foucault, Michel. 2007. *Death and the Labyrinth*. Transl. from the French by Charles Ruas. Continuum. London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Gilmore, Leigh. 2001. *The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.

Gilmore, Leigh. 2016. *Tainted Witness: Why We Doubt What Women Say about Their Lives*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Hirsh, Marianne and Leo Spitzer. 2010. *Ghosts of Home: The Afterlife of Czernowitz in Jewish Memory*. Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press.

Knopp, Sonja. 2017. "Narrative Fissures, Historical Context: When Traumatic Memory is Compromised" in Laub, Dori and Andreas Hamburger (eds.). *Psychoanalysis and Holocaust Testimony: Unwanted Memories of Social Trauma*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 270-278

Larson, Thomas. 2007. *The Memoir and the Memoirist: Reading and Writing Personal Narrative.* Ohio: Ohio University Press.

Ofer, Dalia. 2009. "The Ghettos in Transnistria and Ghettos under German Occupation in Eastern Europe. A Comparative Approach" in Dieckman, Christoph and Babette Quinkert (eds.). *Im Ghetto, 1939-1945, Neue Froschungen zu Alltag und Umfeld*. Götingen: Wallstein Verlag, pp.30-54

Olshtain, Elite. 2010. *Terracotta Ovens of My Childhood: The Story of a Little Girl from a Small Town Called Czernowitz: A Memoir*. Pittsburg: Dorrance Publishing.

Piątek, Beata. 2014. *History, Memory, Trauma in Contemporary British and Irish Fiction*. Kraków: Jaggiellonian University Press.

Rosen, Sarah. 2010. "Surviving in the Murafa Ghetto: A Case Study of One Ghetto in Transnistria" in *Holocaust Studies*, 16 (1-2), pp. 157-176.

LACAN AS A READER
OF ANGELA CARTER'S *THE BLOODY CHAMBER*

ABDOLALI YAZDIZADEH

University of Tehran

Abstract: *In her modern classic* The Bloody Chamber *Angela Carter has reworked many classic tales of western culture, covering tales from Charles Perrault to Grimm brothers. In her rewriting of these tale Carter does not merely reproduces these texts for a modern audience but she adds a political, sexual, and psychological edge to them. This article looks at three selected tales from this collection (*The Tiger's Bride*,* The Bloody Chamber*, and* The Lady of the House of Love*) through the lens of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory in order to unveil their hidden psychological significance. By drawing on Lacanian key concepts such as 'symbolic castration' and 'dimension of ate' this paper aims to shed light on the disavowed and unconscious beliefs that constitute the psychological subtext of these narratives and regulate the actions of their characters.*
Keywords: *Lacanian psychoanalysis, symbolic castration, dimension of ate, unconscious beliefs*

1. Introduction

As a feminist writer of fiction and non-fiction, Angela Carter has gained a massive readership among the feminist elite and has introduced herself as a leading figure of the modern wave of feminism. Her impressive body of intellectual work has opened new venues for examining the effects of the patriarchal discourse on female subjectivity and has paved the way for deeper inquiries into the nature of female subjugation in our era. In the field of fiction, Carter's favorite medium is the short story; she authored many collections of short stories: *Fireworks: Nine Profane Pieces* (1974), *The Bloody Chamber* (1979) *The Bridegroom* (1983), *The Company of Wolves* (1984) *Black Venus* (1985), *American Ghosts and Old World Wonders* (1993) (several of these collections are collected in the posthumously published *Burning Your Boats: The Collected Short Stories* (1995). The importance of Carter's short stories for the cannon of English short fiction has been constantly brought to attention by different critics. In *The Cambridge Introduction to Short Story in English*. Adrian Hunter (2012) places Carter among the masters of short

fiction in English, such as Joyce and Woolf. He covers the birth and the progress of the tradition of short fiction in English and examines many renowned literary figures who have contributed to this genre. Angela Carter is included among the short story writers to whom Hunter pays homage; she features in a chapter titled *Postmodernist Stories* and is aligned with writers such as Ian McEwan and V. S. Pritchett. According to Hunter, Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* is a masterpiece collection of short fiction; he examines its literary merits and appraises it against the aesthetics of modernism and postmodernism. In addition, he focuses on the feminist perspective, which is embedded in Carter's reshaping of familiar fairy tales of the western culture, e.g. in 'The Snow Child', she draws out the hidden patriarchal structure of the original tale, particularly the way it treats the evil queen. In the Carter's version of the fairytale, the Countess does not kill the beautiful snow child out of wickedness, but she does it because she is subservient to the patriarchal authority. She kills the child in order to retain her long furs and diamond brooch and, of course, to keep the Count. Carter changes the image of female jealousy, which the tale presents as something innate, into an examination of female powerlessness in a patriarchal ambience. Hunter's reading of *The Bloody Chamber* is comparable to many other scholarly works which focus on the feminist stance of the collection, e.g. Roxie Drayson's (2010) *A Feminist Appropriation of Misogynist and Patriarchal Texts: Angela Carter's The Sadeian Woman and The Bloody Chamber*. In this essay, Roxie Drayson reads *The Bloody Chamber* alongside *The Sadeian Woman and the Ideology of Pornography* (1973), which Carter published in the same year as the short story collection. She points out that similarly to Beauvoir in *Must We Burn Sade*, Carter considered the pornographic core of Sade's writings to be unique, as he used it to reveal the actuality of sexual relations. Carter's assertion that Sade's fiction is directly relevant to the universe of fairy tales leads Drayson to conclude that, while in her non-fictional discussion on Sade's writings Carter emphasizes their fairy tale dimensions, in her rewriting of those fairy tales in *The Bloody Chamber* she actually endeavoured to weave the Sadeian pornographic representations of women into the fabric of these fairy tales – bridging between her fictional and non-fictional work. It is easy to find many other similar instances of feminist approach to Carter's writings; Hunter and Drayson are only two examples of this widespread tendency to read Carter's fiction either against a general feminist background (which Hunter did) or against the background of her own feminist works (which Drayson did). What is perhaps missing here is opening the manifest feminism of Carter's texts to new critical approaches that might help the reader to engage with her feminist vision on a deeper level. One approach that can contribute to such a project is the psychoanalytic approach. This study aims to enrich the appreciation of Carter's literary genius and feminist vision by reading her *The Bloody Chamber* through the lens of psychoanalysis. By drawing on Lacan's psychoanalysis, mainly through Slavoj Žižek's reading of it, this essay attempts to read the feminist manifest content of Carter's short story collection against its latent psychoanalytic subtext, in order to reveal how the patriarchal discourse that the collection critiques is underpinned and

sustained by psychological imperatives. To this end, three stories from the collection have been selected: "The Tiger's Bride", "The Bloody Chamber", and "The Lady of the House of Love".

2. Symbolic Castration and the Beauty and the Beast

For various reasons, Jacque Lacan designated a strange term for a psychological fact that, according to him, marks every subject and signals his or her radical psychic split. "Symbolic Castration" is the term that Lacan uses to describe the "gap between what I immediately am and the function that I exercise", that is to say 'I am never complete at the level of my function' and there is a "gap between what I immediately am and the symbolic title that confers on me a certain status and authority (Žižek 2006a: 34)". A king is only a king in so far as he identifies with his symbolic title or mask as a king; once he starts to question this symbolic mask as the bearer of his true identity and search for his 'real self', he and his kingdom are in a deep crisis. That is one reason why Lacan refers to this condition as a case of castration; this gap occurs once the subject enters the symbolic order which deprives (or castrates) the subject from his true psychological identity and appoints a symbolic mask for him, which determines his status in the eyes of the big Other, therefore by definition symbolic castration "occurs by the very fact of me being caught in the symbolic order, assuming a symbolic mask or title (ibid)". Now, there are many cinematic, literary examples in where the gap caused by the symbolic castration is reflected and concretized, such as Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), which has been the subject of several Lacanian studies. However, perhaps this gap is nowhere concretized as vividly as in Angela Carter's *The Tiger's Bride,* from her short story collection *The Bloody Chamber* (1979). In the story – which is a variation on the classic fairytale the Beauty and the Beast – the reader is confronted with a Beast, who is much ashamed of his animal appearance and status and diligently attempts to appear as human as possible.

The Beast's masking of himself and pretention to humanity is not limited to his clothes and behaviour; he even attempts to simulate the smell of humans. His simulation is too strong and naïve that he keeps the heroine wondering what abominable smell he is trying to hide behind his strong perfume. Although he takes all of these measures to look human, his animality overshadows all of his efforts and he remains a beast in the eyes of the heroine and other characters.

However, there is one feature that keeps him outside of the animal sphere and binds him close to the human sphere: he is able to speak. Although it comes out as growls and grunts and sometimes his valet has to translate them to the public, the beast is capable of speaking and that means that he has entered the Lacanian symbolic order (the realm of language and the societal norms that are inscribed to it) and thus, as a rule, as it was mentioned before, he has undergone symbolic castration. The very fact that he is ashamed and dissatisfied with his animal status is a direct result of his integration within the symbolic order. As a creature without language,

he surely could not question his status and condition; it is only as a subject of the language that he is capable (or forced) to measure his status in the eyes of the big Other.

The big Other is another Lacanian key term; it is an anonymous and insubstantial entity to whom the subject feels obliged to answer and excuse himself, a father-figure that keeps watch over the subject and serves as a point of reference, according to whom the subject evaluates his actions and determines his decisions. According to Slavoj Žižek the big Other functions like a yardstick against which the subject measures himself, "the big Other can be personified or reified in a single agent: the 'God' who watches over me from beyond, and over all real individuals, or the Cause that involves me (Freedom, Communism, Nation) and for which I am ready to give my life" (Žižek 2006a: 9). Žižek goes on to elaborate on the mandatory nature of the big Other:

> The symbolic order, society's unwritten constitution, is the second nature of every speaking being: it is here, directing and controlling my acts; it is the sea I swim in, yet it remains ultimately impenetrable- I can never put it in front of me and grasp it. It is as if we, subjects of language, talk and interact like puppets, our speech and gestures dictated by some nameless all-pervasive agency. (ibid.)

What is important in the above commentary is the emphasis that Žižek puts on the link between language and the big Other. It is only as subjects of language that we are controlled by the big Other and have to surrender to its mandates. This is precisely the case of the Beast in Carter's short story: by becoming a subject of the language, the Beast opened the gate for the mediation of the big Other. Thus, when he measured himself against the yardstick of the big Other, he found himself deplorable and inferior and hence tried to transform his appearance and status into what the big Other was approved of: a human. Herein we are confronted with an important Lacanian lesson, as Žižek explains "For Lacan, language is a gift as dangerous to humanity as the horse was to the Trojans: it offers itself to our use free of charge, but once we accept it, it colonizes us (ibid)". In *Ecrits. A Selection*, Lacan blatantly points to this fact in a passage that implicitly targets the genesis of the big Other:

> Is it with the gifts of Danaoi or with the passwords that give them their salutary non-sense that language, with the law, begins? For these gifts are already symbols, in the sense that symbol means pact and that they are first and foremost signifiers of the pact that they constitute as signified, as is plainly seen in the fact that the objects of symbolic exchange - pots made to remain empty, shields too heavy to be carried, sheaves of wheat that wither, lances stuck into the ground - all are destined to be useless, if not simply superfluous by their very abundance. Is this neutralization of the signifier the whole of the nature of language? (Lacan 2008: 61)

Thus, the predicament of the Beast, first and foremost, is colonization by the symbolic order and the big Other. This brings us back to symbolic castration, because, as mentioned before, in the split between one's true psychological identity and one's symbolic mask that represents the castration, the mask is put on for the big Other, i.e. "the symbolic mask or title I wear, defining what I am for and in the big Other" (Žižek 2006a: 9). Now, provided that the Beast in Carter's short story actually wears a mask, we can go back to our initial assumption that the story concretizes symbolic castration in a symbolic form. The Beast's mask represents and concretizes the symbolic mask that humans wear, the mask that yearns to be registered by the big Other as the true identity of its owner. In the story, the owner of the mask desires to be registered as a human by the big Other, so he paints the perfect face of a man on his mask. This act vividly concretizes the functioning of symbolic castration, one could say we are all the beast of Carter's story, wearing a mask upon which what we desire to be known as or for is painted - this is also reminiscent of Jungian Persona: a key Jungian concept that refers to the Masks that we put on in our interaction with society and other people. The gap between the Beast's mask and his true self/identity as a savage animal stands as a concrete embodiment of the gap that separates one's true psychological identity from his symbolic title (Storr 2013: 58). Here, the beast that is concealed behind the mask, old fashioned clothes, and strong perfume stands as the true psychological identity of the subject that is hidden beneath the symbolic mask, similarly to the way that the true identity of the beast as an animal is hidden beneath his mask and costume. Additionally, there is a further Lacanian twist involved here in relationship to the Beast's mask that touches upon yet another crucial aspect of Lacanian theory. As already mentioned, the face of a perfect man was painted on the mask, so this face exhibits what the Beast desires to be. In psychoanalytic terms, this desired Other that the subject identifies with is called the Alter ego. Thus, Alter ego is contrasted to the ego as some fantasmatic, wish-fulfilling mirror image that the ego identifies with, but Yannis Stavrakakis (2012), in his *Lacan and the Political*, explains that, for Lacan, all egos are by definition alter egos. Our ego as our point of identification is eternally dependent on an alter ego image, in which we recognize ourselves:

> The ego, the image in which we recognise ourselves, is always an alien *alter ego:* we are 'originally an inchoate collection of desires—there you have the true sense of the expression *fragmented body* [very well depicted, according to Lacan, in the art of Hieronymus Bosch]—and the initial synthesis of the ego is essentially an alter ego, it is alienated. The desiring human subject is constructed around a centre which is the other insofar as he gives the subject his unity' (III: 39). In this regard, the Lacanian theory of the mirror stage is probably one of the first instances in which the radical ex-centricity of human subjectivity is recognised within our cultural terrain. (Stavrakakis 2012:18)

From this perspective, the painted face on the Beast's mask concretizes the permanent alter egoian state of the ego, i.e. the fact that one's ego defines one's identity, in so far as it recognizes itself in some desired image of an Other. This being said, the mask on Beast's face can be considered as his true ego. Thus, the mask creates a site in which the Beast's ego and alter ego converge.

In Carter's story, the Beast is contrasted with the innocent Beauty, who is subjected to the odious deal of becoming the property of the Beast. In the Beast's house, Beauty is confronted with a strange request from the Beast, which is voiced by his valet:

> My master's sole desire is to see the pretty young lady unclothed nude without her dress and that only for the one time, after which she will be returned to her father undamaged, with bankers' orders for the sum which he lost to my master at cards and also a number of fine presents such as furs, jewels and horses. (143)

Beauty finds this request quite appalling and fully rejects it:

> You may put me in a windowless room, sir, and I promise you I will pull my skirt up to my waist, ready for you. But there must be a sheet over my face, to hide it; though the sheet must be laid over me so lightly that it will not choke me. So I shall be covered completely from the waist upwards, and no lights. There you can visit me once, sir, and only the once. After that I must be driven directly to the city and deposited in the public square, in front of the church. (ibid.)

The striking fact is that Beauty prefers to have intercourse with the Beast rather than to have him see her naked. This highlights the importance of remaining dressed and not being naked for Beauty. She is determined to not allow someone to see her naked at any cost and, although the Beast's request seems much more modest and decent than the presumed sex request, she prefers the latter. This brings us to question what her clothes actually mean to her and what their symbolic significance is. Finding an answer requires a detailed character analysis of the Beauty: in the first place, the fact that she agrees to be part of the game of her gamble-addict father and does not run away tells us a lot about her subservient character. She is so subordinated by the codes and ethics of patriarchal domesticity, that she does not even think of running away and obediently goes to the Beast, and when she starts to think about running away or killing herself, these very codes are subliminally reminded to her: "'Oh, no,' said the valet, fixing upon me wide and suddenly melancholy eyes. 'Oh, no, you will not. You are a woman of honor'"(145). These words are said to Beauty several times during the story, in response to her threats that she is going to run away or commit suicide. Their symbolic significance is strictly tied to Beauty's domesticated and subservient status. The word 'honour' in the sentence "You are a woman of honour" does not so much mean 'decency' as it connotes 'subservience'. The valet reminds Beauty what she is in the eyes of the big

Other, each time that he reminds her she is a 'woman of honor'. This is to say that Beauty recognizes herself in and for the big Other as an honorable woman, in the sense of being subservient to the patriarchal symbolic order and its multiple norms and demands. Each time that the valet repeats his refrain to the Beauty, he confronts her with the crisis of losing her symbolic mask ('honorable woman') in the gaze of the big Other. This is precisely why these words work like a magic spell on Beauty and, without the exchange of any further words, she succumbs to not pursuing her wishes. The magical power of these words once completely clear, once we take note that not even a shadow of doubt passes through her mind after or during hearing them; they make her obey as if she were touched by a magic wand. This is a case of Freudian unconscious at its purest. Nearly a century ago, Freud revealed how our patterns of action and behaviour are more determined by the mechanisms of our unconscious rather than by our conscious self and how we are constantly impacted by its influence. Žižek (2006a) rejects the common understanding of the Freudian unconscious as a site of wild and untamed desires and asserts that the Freudian unconscious in its true sense is a knowledge that does not know itself; he explains this point by reference to politics:

> In March 2003, Donald Rumsfeld engaged in a brief bout of amateur philosophizing about the relationship between the known and the unknown: 'There are known knowns. These are things we know that we know. There are known unknowns. That is to say, there are things that we know we don't know. But there are also unknown unknowns. There are things we don't know we don't know. What he forgot to add was the crucial fourth term: the 'unknown knowns', things we don't know that we know - which is precisely the Freudian unconscious, the 'knowledge that doesn't know itself, as Lacan used to say, the core of which is fantasy. If Rumsfeld thinks that the main dangers in the confrontation with Iraq are the 'unknown unknowns', the threats from Saddam or his successors about which we do not even suspect what they may be, what we should say in reply is that the main dangers are, on the contrary, the 'unknown knowns', the disavowed beliefs and suppositions we are not even aware of adhering to ourselves, but which nonetheless determine our acts and feeling. (Žižek 2006a: 52)

This description explains Beauty's condition and predicament: the unseen strings of the unconscious pull her to obey the valet, as she unconsciously does not want to disappoint the big Other of patriarchy. In this condition she is a complete slave to the demands of her unconscious, but she has no know knowledge of how her unconscious is controlling her, that is to say she 'doesn't know what she knows,' a perfect example of the 'unknown knowns' and their detrimental effects. The fact that she does not know or guess what makes the valet's word influence her this way but she surrenders anyway brings us to Lacan's famous statement about the unconscious: 'unconscious is structured as a language'. This ambiguous statement can be read in different ways: it can be read as Žižek (2006a: 3) reads it, as a statement that confirms "the unconscious itself obeys its own grammar and logic:

the unconscious talks and thinks." This reading corresponds to Beauty's condition, as her unconscious works like an independent machine that follows its own logic and makes her conscious mind follow its mandates. However, Lacan's statement can be read in a different way as well, which still closely corresponds to Beauty's condition. Lacan's statement that the 'unconscious is structured as a language' draws attention to the impact of the language on the unconscious and can be read as a reaffirmation of "Lacan's conception of the subject as constituted in and through language" (Homer 2010: 34). In Freudian psychoanalysis, the role of the language in the unconscious was already quite prominent, although Freud himself did not seem to be fully aware of that. In the techniques that he used for psychotherapy, language played a very pivotal role; the central role of language in his 'talking therapy' and 'free association' technique is completely eminent. In free association the patient is placed behind the analyst so he cannot not see him and express whatever comes into his mind freely, something which is described as 'psychobabble.' The analyst uses the patient's psychobabble to identity his psychological traumas and defects and uses talking cure as a method to help him overcome his psychological trouble (Evans 2006:188). In both cases, the pivotal role of the language cannot be missed. In the first case, language in its distorted and messy form (psychobabble) reveals what is going on in the patient's unconscious, it takes the form of coded messages that speak of the unknown knowns of the unconscious. In the second case (talking therapy), language turns into an instrument that manipulates the unconscious and is capable of influencing its workings. These facts point to how close the Freudian and the Lacanian understanding of the unconscious are. The fact is that Lacan extracted what was already present in Freud's practice of psychoanalysis, but Freud himself was not fully aware of it (another case of 'known unknown'). As Sean Homer succinctly explains, Lacan discovered in the Freudian 'talking cure' the role that language plays in the creation and the functioning of the unconscious: "Saussure's 'scientific', as opposed to historical, analysis of language provided Lacan with a model to study Freud's 'talking-cure'. Saussure revealed how there was a 'structure' within us that governed what we say; for Lacan that structure *is* the unconscious. The unconscious is at once produced through language and governed by the rules of language" (Homer 2010: 42). Herein, we can easily see how the words of the valet have such significant impact on Beauty's unconscious. As a subject of language, her unconscious is 'produced' and 'governed through language' and it is through language that it can be manipulated. Similarly to the way that an analyst can impact the unconscious of his/her patient through words, the valet's words could influence the unconscious mind of the Beauty. With such detailed analysis of the character of Beauty's character, it is now much easier to examine her relationship to her clothes and answer our initial question: the importance that clothes and remaining clothed has for Beauty arises from her deep unconscious attachment to the notion of being a 'woman of honor' in the eyes of the big Other (here it is noteworthy to mention that the big Other is not part of the conscious self, but belongs to the unconscious and creates part of its grammar). To put it in the dichotomy that entails symbolic castration, her

clothes make up the symbolic mask that mostly define her in and for the big Other, while her true self is concealed beneath them. That's why she is only capable of removing them, once the Beast removes his own: "If you will not let him see you without your clothes – I involuntarily shook my head – you must, then, prepare yourself for the sight of my master, naked (137-138)". Although she is not asked to remove her clothes and is only supposed to view the naked body of the Beast, voluntarily she strips the upper part of her body for the Beast to see it. It seems as if that symbolic mask/title was the main barrier that was standing between these two characters and was thwarting their innermost desires, once one of them consented to remove his the other one had an easy job to follow.

3. The Beauty and the Mask

In Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* collection, *Tiger's Bride* is not the only story that deals with the age old fairy tale of the Beauty and the Beast. The second story of the collection, *The Courtship of Mr. Lyon*, is also based on the fairy tale of the Beauty and the Beast. What differentiates it from the *Tiger's Bride* is precisely the unconscious impulses that govern the characters' pattern of action in the latter. However, this psychological subtext does not merely impact the relationship between the sexes here in this story. In *The Bloody Chamber*, the first story of Carter's collection, we can easily detect the influence of the Lacanian symbolic castration on the relationship between the heroine and her mysterious husband. See how the heroine describes her husband:

> And sometimes that face, in stillness when he listened to me playing, with the heavy eyelids folded over eyes that always disturbed me by their absolute absence of light, seemed to me like a mask, as if his real face, the face that truly reflected all the life he had led in the world before he met me, before, even, I was born, as though that face lay underneath this mask. Or else, elsewhere. (98)

The fact that the heroine describes the face of her husband as a mask that conceals his true face is by no means accidental. The husband truly seems to have a mask on his face that hides his real psychological identity as a psychopath murderer. In the story the heroine finds out the true self of the husband once she enters his private chamber and discovers the corpses of his previous wives who were brutally tortured and murdered by him. Unlike the mask of the Beast in *Tiger's Bride*, which is an actual mask covering a face that divulges true identity, the mask of the husband is his actual face and this face conceals his true identity, which, as the heroine guesses in the above quotation, is hidden somewhere else. That 'somewhere else' turns out to be the husband's private chamber, the place where the heroine is confronted with the unmasked truth of Marquis's psychological identity. However, Marquis himself gave the key of the chamber to the heroine and, though he warned her not to enter it, because it was a deeply private place to him, this warning appears

more like an invitation, as it encourages the curiosity of the narrator to discover the secrets of her mysterious husband. This is to some extent similar to the Edenic tale of eating the apple: warning against eating the apple resulted in a great passion for tasting it. Similarly, Marquis's request that, while the heroine could play with anything – jewels, silver plates, etc... and enter every room, she should avoid this particular room parallels God's request from Adam and Eve that they enjoy all the fruits and beauties of heaven, but avoid that certain apple:

> 'Every man must have one secret, even if only one, from his wife', he said. 'Promise me this, my whey-faced piano-player; promise me you'll use all the keys on the ring except that last little one I showed you. Play with anything you find, jewels, silver plate; make toy boats of my share certificates, if it pleases you, and send them sailing off to America after me. All is yours, everywhere is open to you – except the lock that this single key fits. Yet all it is the key to a little room at the foot of the west tower, behind the still-room, at the end of a dark little corridor full of horrid cobwebs that would get into your hair and frighten you if you ventured there. Oh, and you'd find it such a dull little room! But you must promise me, if you love me, to leave it well alone. It is only a private study, a hideaway, a "den", as the English say, where I can go sometimes, on those infrequent yet inevitable occasions when the yoke of marriage seems to weigh too heavily on my shoulders. There I can go, you understand, to savour the rare pleasure of imagining myself wifeless'. (106)

The heroine's entering the forbidden chamber parallels the eating of the forbidden apple from the tree of knowledge, since entering the chamber brings great knowledge for the heroine, the same way that eating from the tree of knowledge does for the Adam and Eve. However, the important point here is that Marquis (the husband) intended her to obtain that knowledge about him. He could easily have avoided giving her the key to the room and even telling her about it. The fact that he gives her the key and arouses her curiosity suggests that at least subconsciously he was willing to reveal to her his true psychological identity. From this perspective Marquis and the Beast are comparable; Marquis does exactly what the Beast did: he removes his mask and reveals to his wife his true psychological identity by giving her the key to his secret chamber, similarly to the way the Beast removed his mask and clothes and revealed his true beastly self to the Beauty. However, the difference is that, in the case of the Beauty and the Beast, the removal of the symbolic mask paves the way for love and sensual contact, while in the case of *The Bloody Chamber*'s heroine and Marquis such removal leads to catastrophe and the attempted murder of the heroine by her perverse husband. Unlike the case of the Beauty and the Beast, Marquis attempts to make love to the narrator without taking off his mask, but the degree to which he succeeded in this remains debatable:

> I was brought to my senses by the intent shrilling of the telephone. He lay beside me, felled like an oak, breathing stertorously, as if he had been fighting with me. In the course of that one-sided struggle, I had seen his deathly composure shatter like a

porcelain vase flung against a wall; I had heard him shriek and blaspheme at the orgasm; I had bled. And perhaps I had seen his face without its mask; and perhaps I had not. Yet I had been infinitely dishevelled by the loss of my virginity. (103)

In the above quotation in which the narrator describes her first sexual intercourse with Marquis, the first point that catches the eye is that Marquis seemed to have fought with the heroine rather than make love to her and now he is tired because of that fight. More importantly, as it is described above, during the sex act (which is described as a 'one-sided struggle'), the invincible composure of Marquis cracks a bit and it becomes difficult for him to keep his icy mask on. This leads to the heroine wondering whether she has caught a glimpse of the man behind the mask or not: 'And perhaps I had seen his face without its mask; and perhaps I had not.' This is an important lesson that we learn from these two stories in terms of the symbolic mask/title and intercourse. Marquis was deeply determined to keep on his cold mask under any circumstances throughout the story, even when he proposes to the narrator and she accepts, he shows no emotions, but, during the intercourse, it becomes so difficult for him that he gives in under pressure. On the other hand, the Beast and the Beauty are able to indulge in sexual intercourse at the end of *The Tiger's Bride*, after forfeiting their symbolic title in the eyes of the big Other. This leads us to conclude that, from a Lacanian viewpoint, the stories suggest that any act of sex or sensual contact requires the unmasking of the symbolic mask. Thus, as the case of Marquis suggests, even if one is determined to hang on to his symbolic mask, in the course of the intercourse, one is compelled to let go of the strings of the big Other.

4. The un-dead Beauty and the dimension of *ate*

In *The Lady of the House of Love*, the third story selected from Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* collection that is going to be discussed here, the reader is confronted with the age-old enticing figure of the vampire. The very name of the protagonist of the story, Lady Nosferatu, suggests an ancestral link to vampires. As the narrative informs us, since the Lady vampire has grown old, drinking the blood of animals does not satisfy her anymore and she has to feed on young men in order to retain her stunning beauty. However, her impeccable beauty has given her an inhuman aura:

She is so beautiful, she is unnatural; her beauty is an abnormality, a deformity, for none of her features exhibit any of those touching imperfections that reconcile us to the imperfections of the human condition. Her beauty is a symptom of her disorder, of her soullessness. The white hands of the tenebrous belle deal the hand of destiny. Her fingernails are longer than those of the mandarins of ancient China and each is pared to a fine point. These and teeth as fine and white as spikes of spun sugar are the visible signs of the destiny she wistfully attempts to evade via the arcana; her claws and teeth have been sharpened on centuries of corpses, she is the last bud of the poison

tree that sprang from the loins of Vlad the Impaler who picnicked on corpses in the forests of Transylvania. (136)

Her unnatural beauty is the main feature that differentiates Lady Vampire from humans, as impeccable perfection is something that is at odds with humanity in general. That is to say, as quoted above, she lacks the "touching imperfections that reconcile us to the imperfections of the human condition". However, from a Nietzschean perspective, Lady Vampire's agelessness and perfect beauty is "human, all too human". In her state of perfection, the Lady Vampire stands as an embodiment of the Nietzschean "overman" or "superman" as far as beauty is concerned. For Nietzsche, the birth of overman is the highest level that humanity can reach, as he explains in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*:

> I teach you the overman. Man is something that is to be surpassed. What have ye done to surpass man? All beings hitherto have created something beyond themselves: and ye want to be the ebb of that great tide, and would rather go back to the beast than surpass man? What is the ape to man? A laughing-stock, a thing of shame. And just the same shall man be to the Superman: a laughingstock, a thing of shame. Ye have made your way from the worm to man, and much within you is still worm. Once were ye apes, and even yet man is more of an ape than any of the apes. (Nietzsche 2014:24)

Paradoxically, in her inhuman state of being, Lady Vampire is the peak of human perfection in terms of beauty, and serves as a yardstick for measuring humanity at its most sublime level - deprived of its defects and shortcomings. She stands above the common herd and presents an ideal picture of human beauty. The point here is there is a big paradox in this: on the one hand the Lady vampire can be regarded as an outsider and non-human figure, as her impeccable beauty negates the imperfection of humans. On the other hand, her unchanging supreme beauty paints an ideal image of human beauty in its most defect-less and complete form and that makes her too human. The question is to what extent can we regard her as a human? Žižek's discussion on the difference between the term non-human and inhuman can be quite helpful here: "'he is not human' is not the same as 'he is inhuman.' 'He is not human' means simply that he is external to humanity, animal or divine, while 'he is inhuman' means something thoroughly different, namely the fact that he is neither human nor inhuman, but marked by a terrifying excess which, although it negates what we understand as 'humanity,' is inherent to being human" (Žižek 2006b: 47). This excess that Žižek talks about is precisely what the Lady vampire's beauty is about. She is inhuman not in the sense of not being a human, but in the sense of having an excess that although 'negates what we understand as 'humanity,' is inherent to being human. Beauty is an inherent feature to humans and humanity, but an excess of it (as the case of Lady vampire suggests) can turn a figure into something beyond human or, in Žižek's terminology, "inhuman". The term that describes this excess in the Lacanian universe is called *objet petit a*.

First of all, it must be noted that this term has many meanings, as Sean Homer explains:

> Lacan consistently reformulated the *objet petit a* from his earliest work to his final seminars in the 1970s. The *objet a* is implicated in all three of Lacan's orders. The algebraic sign *a* was first introduced by Lacan in 1955 in relation to the schema L, where it designates the little other, *autre*, as opposed to the capitalized A of the big Other. (Homer 2010: 87)

However, one straightforward definition that Lacan presents for this term and is complemented by Žižek (1998: xviii) is this: "that which is 'in you more than you' and thus makes me desire you". This definition strikes one as ambiguous, what can it be in one 'which is more than' one and makes the subject desire the object? Žižek explains this ambiguity by reference to cinema: in the cinematic adaptation of Patrick Suskind's *Perfume* Grenouille, the film's miserable protagonist, lacks odour, so that it is impossible for others to smell him; conversely, he has an exceptional sense of smell, such that he is capable of detecting people from far away. When Grenouille's beloved girl dies, he tries to resurrect her, but it is not her body that he endeavors to resurrect. He attempts to recreate her odour by killing many beautiful young women and removing the surface of their skin to extract their odours, thus creating an extraordinary perfume. This strange perfume is the ultimate extracted 'essence' of feminine charm: when the masses smell it, they suspend their restraints and embark on a blissful sexual orgy. This extracted femininity is the supreme example of what Lacan called the *objet petit a* – "the object-cause of desire, that which is 'in you more than you' and thus makes me desire you" (Žižek 1998: xviii). Now, the point is while the objet petit a is the object cause of desire it can also function as the object cause of hate and otherization and it is precisely this aspect of *objet petit a* that is relevant to the case of the Lady vampire. In *How to Read Lacan* (2006a), Žižek uses cinema again to explain this aspect of the *objet petit a*:

> There is, in science fiction horror movies, a figure of the alien opposed to that of the representable and all-devouring monster of Scott's Alien, a figure immortalized in a whole series of films from the 1950s whose most famous representative is Invasion of the Body Snatchers. An ordinary American is driving somewhere in the half-abandoned countryside when his car breaks down and he goes for help to the closest small town. Soon he notices that something strange is going on in the town - people are behaving in a strange way, as if they are not fully themselves. It becomes clear to him that the town has been taken over by aliens who have penetrated and colonized human bodies, controlling them from within: although the aliens look and act exactly like humans, there is as a rule a tiny detail that betrays their true nature (a strange glint in their eyes; too much skin between their fingers or between their ears and heads). This detail is the Lacanian objet petit a, a tiny feature whose presence magically transubstantiates its bearer into an alien. In contrast to Scott's alien, which is totally different from humans, the difference here is minimal, barely perceptible. Are we not

dealing with the same in our everyday racism? Although we are ready to accept the Jewish, Arab, Oriental other, there is some detail that bothers us in the West: the way they accentuate a certain word, the way they count money, the way they laugh. This tiny feature renders them aliens, no matter how they try to behave like us. Arab, Oriental other, there is some detail that bothers us in the West: the way they accentuate a certain word, the way they count money, the way they laugh. This tiny feature renders them aliens, no matter how they try to behave like us. (Žižek 2006a: 66-67)

What Žižek touches upon in the above quotation is precisely the process thereby the Lacanian objet petit a creates the other. Does not this case apply to the Lady vampire? Is not her impeccable beauty the objet petit a that makes her an alien other? Just like the case of the body snatchers, here also the difference is minimal, but this minimal difference suffices to make the Lady vampire the Other, as its "presence magically transubstantiates its bearer into an alien". This is to say that her abnormal beauty is the objet petit a that makes her "inhuman". Her inhumanity, which is caused by her beauty, is even reminiscent of Susan Gubar and Sandra Gilbert's notion of "angel woman" In *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), they proposed the view that patriarchal discourse has constantly been trying to reduce the identity of a woman to two contradictory clichés: the angel and the monster. According to Gilbert and Gubar, both of these stereotypes equally undermine the status of woman as a human being. In the latter stereotype, we are confronted with a devilish image of woman that not only lacks human traits, but also embodies all the possible threats that endanger the male gender. On the other hand, the former stereotype, which presents an angelic image of woman, undermines the humanity of woman equally: it pictures woman as a divine and unearthly entity, who is as pure and innocent as angels. From this perspective, woman transcends the level of a human being and, by attaining an ultra-human status, she loses her human identity, similarly to the way the human status is undermined in the first cliché, but in the reverse direction (Gilbert, Gubar 2007: 17-22). They proceed to claim that the 'angel-woman' is barely a living being, since her story-less life, "like the life of Goethe's Makarie, is really a life of death, a death-in-life (Gilbert, Gubar 2007: 25)". In a way, the Lady vampire resembles Gilbert and Gubar's angel-woman, as she transcends the level of an ordinary human and has an ultra-human status. Following the Gubar and Gilbert's line of reasoning, it can be claimed that similarly to the angel woman, the Lady vampire is also experiencing "a death-in-life". This is by no means far-fetched, as in the story it is said that the Lady vampire "has the mysterious solitude of ambiguous states; she hovers in a no man's land between life and death, sleeping and waking" (139). Being "between life and death" is a translation of death-in-life, or to put it in other words neither dead nor alive. Žižek describes this condition as being "between two deaths" and, in *The Fright of Real Tears*, gives a full description of it by referring to several movies:

Previous to this ability to mourn, Julie finds herself 'between two deaths': dead while still alive. It is Peter Weir's underrated *Fearless* (1993) that provides the best

exemplification of this notion: after miraculously surviving the plane crash, the hero (Jeff Bridges) is suspended, exempted from common mortal fate (he no longer fears death, no longer is allergic to strawberries ...). This topic of 'between two deaths' also echoes in Bruce Beresford's *Double Jeopardy* (1999), a structural inversion of Billy Wilder's *noir* classic *Double Indemnity* (1944): a wife (Ashley Judd) is imprisoned for allegedly killing her husband; when, in prison, she by chance discovers that her husband is alive, she learns about so-called 'double jeopardy' - you cannot be tried two times for the same crime, which means that she is now free to kill her husband with impunity. This situation displays the fantasmatic situation of finding oneself in an empty space in which an act becomes possible for which the subject bears no symbolic responsibility. The film repeatedly refers to this space 'between two deaths': when her husband gets hold of her, he locks her in a coffin in a New Orleans cemetery, so that now *she* finds herself in the position of the living dead. (Žižek 2001: 167)

Žižek could easily add *The Lady of the House of Love* to his examples (presuming he decided to use literary examples), as the protagonist hovers between death and life and is experiencing a metaphoric death-in-life that supplements her already living-dead status as a vampire. To put it in precise Lacanian terms, her condition is what Lacan calls the dimension of *ate*. Žižek explains this Lacanian concept in this way:

> As we all know, Event Horizon is the region of space that surrounds a Black Hole: it's an invisible (but *real)* threshold - once you cross it, there is no way back, you are sucked into the Black Hole. If we conceive of the Lacanian Thing as the psychic equivalent of the Black Hole, then its Event Horizon is what Lacan, in his reading of *Antigone,* defines as the dimension of *ate,* of the horrifying space between two deaths. (Žižek 2001: 167)

The dimension of *ate* fully describes and touches upon the truth of the Lady vampire's predicament. Here, we can supplement our previous discussion on her paradoxical condition as super human/non-human with a new evaluation. I concluded that the antagonism that we see in her status as super human and non-human can be fully reconciled once we introduce a third category – the inhuman – that can account for the excess of humanity that makes her non-human. Similarly, in the case of her paradoxical dead-while-still-alive condition, we need to introduce a third category, which while including death and life, goes beyond both and can fully account for her condition. We can find this category in Žižek's notion of the 'un-dead.' Exactly as the term inhuman opens up a third domain that encompasses and surpasses the antagonism between non-human and super human, the term 'un-dead' opens up a third dimension that not only defies death and life simultaneously:

> the difference is exactly the same as the one, known to every reader of Stephen King, between "he is not dead" and "he is un-dead". The indefinite judgment opens up a third domain which undermines the underlying distinction: the "undead" are neither alive nor dead, they are precisely the monstrous "living dead". (Žižek 2006b: 21)

Here, we can discover the true importance of the climactic intercourse between the Lady vampire and the unfortunate soldier. Melinda G. Fowl (1991: 76) explains that in Carter's *The Lady of the House of Love*, "three figures unite in the protagonist: the Sleeping Beauty of the fairy tales, the Vampire and the Wanderer of gothic legendary". She adds that "like the Sleeping Beauty in the Wood waiting for the Prince's kiss, the beautiful Countess sits in her antique bridal gown waiting (ibid)". The comparison that Fowl draws between the Sleeping Beauty and the Lady vampire is quite meaningful here, of course in a completely different direction. To follow our previous line of reasoning the Sleeping Beauty also belongs to the Lacanian dimension of *ate*: she is the "un-dead". She is neither alive nor dead, as she is trapped in a coma-like sleep that negates the distinction between them. She is dangling in a space between life and death and it is only through the kiss of the prince that she escapes the predicament of the un-dead. This aspect of the Sleeping Beauty fairy tale is precisely what Carter revives in *The Lady of the House of Love*. Lady vampire stands as a distorted remaking of Sleeping Beauty in terms of sharing her un-dead status. At the first glance nobody would suspect such connection, but a deeper examination fully exposes the dimension of *ate* that connects these two characters. Following this line of argument similar to the tale of the Sleeping Beauty where the kiss of the prince makes the Sleeping Beauty change from being un-dead to being alive, in *The Lady of the House of Love* the love-making of the British soldier to the Lady vampire changes her un-dead status, turning her into a mortal aging human being, who finally passes away.

5. Conclusion

In my analysis, I have drawn upon the psychoanalytic theory of Jacque Lacan and Slavoj Žižek to extract the latent psychoanalytic subtext that governs the universe of Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber*. My conclusion is that 'symbolic castration' troubles the relationship between the couples in 'The Tiger's Bride' and 'The Bloody Chamber', as they are torn between their true psychological identity and symbolic mask. Additionally, I have concluded that Beauty's subjectivity was subjected to a psycho-linguistic subliminal manipulation, which is rooted in Lacan's thesis that the unconscious is structured by and as language. Furthermore, I have applied the Lacanian 'dimension of ate' to the predicament of Lady vampire in *The Lady of the House of Love*, and explained how this concept links Lady vampire to Snow White.

References

Carter, Angela. 2016 (1979). *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*. New York: Vintage Classics.

Drayson, Roxy. 2010. *A Feminist Appropriation of Misogynist and Patriarchal Texts: Angela Carter's The Sadeian Woman and The Bloody Chamber*. University of London. [Online]. Available: https://www.litencyc.com/prize/Essays2010/essay3.doc [Accessed 2017, January 27].

Evans, Dylan. 2006. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. London: Routledge.

Fowl, Melinda G. 1991. "Angela Carter's the Bloody Chamber Revisited" in *Critical Survey*, 3(1), pp. 71-79.

Gilbert, Sandra M. and Susan Gubar. 2007. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Homer, Sean. 2010. *Jacques Lacan*. London: Routledge.

Hunter, Adrian. 2012. *The Cambridge Introduction to the Short Story in English*. Cambridge University Press.

Lacan, Jacques. 2008 (1977). *Écrits: A Selection*. Translated by Alan Sheridan. London and New York: London: Routledge.

Stavrakakis, Yannis. 2012. *Lacan and the Political*. Hoboken: Taylor and Francis.

Storr, Anthony. 2013. *Jung*. New York and London: Routledge.

Nietzsche, Friedrich W. 2014. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. London: Dover Publication Inc.

Žižek, Slavoj. 1998. *The Plague of Fantasies*. London: Verso.

Žižek, Slavoj. 2001. *The Fright of Real Tears: Krzysztof Kieślowski between Theory and Post-Theory*. London: BFI Pub.

Žižek, Slavoj. 2006a. *How to Read Lacan.* London: Granta Publications.

Žižek, Slavoj. 2006b. *The Parallax View*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.

PAUL AUSTER: CINEMA AND LITERATURE

MIHAELA POPUŢA

West University of Timişoara

Abstract: *The present paper examines Paul Auster's relationship with cinema and literature, and observes how the stories he creates may or may not differ in the two mediums. With this purpose in mind, the paper focuses on Auster's most known cinematic narrative,* Smoke, *to show how his stories become representations of collective consciousness.*
Keywords: *cinema, literature, memory, narrative*

1. Introduction

The encounter with the film milieu was an auspicious one for Auster, since it enlarged his understanding of the world and its many functions. It brought into question the idea of truth and falsity, as well as that of identity and understanding of the Other. In an interview from 2013, the author explained to the audience the relationship we have with film, through his own experience. What he was saying is that we live in a world of lies, and we ingest these fabrications every minute, without thinking twice. Each lie is propaganda of some sort or another and, at the end of the day, our business is to turn lies into truth, to distort the image in such a way that we can accept it and live with it. Thus, lies become reality, or more precisely parallel worlds. The different universes we create are as numerous as we are, and individuals are taught to look for them from infancy. They are transformed into islands of joy and tranquility, which let us wonder and rest.

People need art in order to be able to tell the truth. They need stories so that they can express that which is hidden or obscure. Movies give rise to the dichotomy real-false and force us to think about it and treat it as possibility. As an ardent film lover, Paul Auster considers that movies do not pollute the brain, but rather give it more food for thought. Due to this, he makes a point of combining the two mediums, literature and cinema, in his stories. Subsequently, his narratives are very visual in their depictions of impossible everyday situations, as well as of the environment these situations occur in. In truth, the author employs cinematic narratives to draw the reader's attention upon the ways the remembrance process functions. To this effect, his stories are embedded in the collective consciousness of his readers. One

by one, Auster's novels display a fascination with the intimate and what it means to be human. His interest is piqued by the ordinary as much as by the extraordinary. Auster is concerned with that which we share with others; that which makes us similar. As such, it is sufficient to examine his stories in order to see that, if anything, the author makes a point of writing about himself as another. Doing so, Auster demonstrates that everyone can write about anyone. The difficulty of writing stands not in the characters, but in the medium and the relationship one has with the world around. That is why Auster's narratives are created around stories that focus on the collective nature of life and on the individuals' shared memories, the latter being the most powerful visual tools at hand to transform literature into film.

2. Cinema and literature

To this day, Paul Auster has been credited for four movies: *Smoke*, *Blue in the Face*, *Lulu on the Bridge*, and *The Inner Life of Martin Frost*. Some of them were collaborations, while others were solely written and coordinated by himself. The first two, *Smoke* and *Blue in the Face,* came out in 1995 as the result of director Wayne Wang's persistence in the resolution that Auster's writings are screen suited. *Smoke* came out of an unanticipated request from Mike Levitas, the editor of Op-Ed page of the New York Times, who was in search of a short story to publish on Christmas Day. (Hutchinson 2013:50) Auster had never presented his public with a short story before, and was quite at odds with this project mostly for the reason that he had no idea what to write about. He just continued to ruminate on the issue and then, out of a sudden, he got inspired by the Dutch cigarettes he was smoking. Without any effort, the story developed bringing to his mind the man he had bought the cigars from, the place, the time, and so on. Auster simply went with the story and pondered on the ways in which we bind relationships with others. We pass by so many individuals per day, and we talk to some, just for a minute or so, and then we move on. This does not make us friends, yet somehow we get to know one another. These ties make us feel more alive and render life bearable by giving us names and purposes. So, we become connected in so many ways, that we do not even realize it, until it is too late. This was the spark that ignited *Auggie Wren's Christmas Story*, which would be later transformed into a movie with one sequel entitled *Blue in the Face*.

Smoke's narrative is far from the stories the author has accustomed his readers with. I believe that the movie succeeds in bringing the audience even closer to reality than Auster's novels do, mainly because it reflects urban life and the collective consciousness of its subjects so well. According to Mark Brown (2007:127), "Auster presents a mode of urban living, not in the dystopian mold that we've been used to […] but more in the way of affirmative and positive relationships of communal support through informal social groupings; that is family and friends." Interestingly enough, apart from the groupings depicted in *The Brooklyn Follies* (2005) and *Sunset Park* (2010), the other similar gatherings were usually forced upon the characters. *Smoke* and *Blue in the Face* appear to be amid the rare narratives that allow

complicity among Auster's characters. Furthermore, the characters are of all ethnicities, which indicates Auggie's open-mindness. Such is the power of the setting that both stories revolve around Auggie Wren's tobacco shop and the individuals who populate it. That is why the shop is as important to the story as the characters are, because it renders the reality of Brooklyn. Auggie even points out its status as a place of tolerance and social solidarity in one of the scenes:

> Sure, it's a dinky little nothing neighborhood store. But everybody comes in here. I mean, not just the smokers. The kids come in, the school kids, for their candy […] old Mrs. McKenna comes in for the soap opera magazines […] Crazy Louie for his cough drops […] Frank Diaz for his El Diario […] fat Mr. Chang for his crossword puzzles. I mean, the whole neighborhood comes in here. It's a hangout and it helps to keep the neighborhood together. Go twenty blocks from here, twelve-year-old kids are shooting each other for their sneakers. I mean, you close this store, and it's one more nail in the coffin. You'll be helping to kill off this neighborhood. (Auster 2003: 257)

The story which links the two mediums is not too complicated, at least not as complex as some of the other narratives Auster has written. Paul Benjamin, a customer of Auggie's, and a writer, has lost his wife in a shooting outside the tobacco shop. The other regulars hear the story from Auggie and suddenly some kind of relationship starts to evolve between them. We then find out that Auggie has been marked by that death too, and we are introduced to his story. It appears Paul is not the only artist in the group. Auggie's hobby is photography. He has more than four thousand pictures of the same place, namely the corner of the street on which his tobacco shop is located. They are all taken at the same early hour when Auggie opens the store, and they have been his way of capturing life in the past ten or so years. In one of the important scenes in the movie, Auggie shows Paul these pictures. Truly amazed and a little taken aback by this hobby, Paul looks through Auggie's album seeing only similarities between the pictures: same street, same people, same black and white setting. Auggie on the other hand, is more aware of the subtleties in light or characters. In his mind everything is still in motion. There is here a refined allusion Auster makes to still and motion pictures; a comparison of sorts to the still pages of a book and the moving images on a screen? Or is it that he simply reiterates what he was saying in *The Art of Hunger* about poetry and prose: "poetry is like taking still photographs, whereas prose is like filming with a moving camera." (Auster 1997:303) This would shed light upon the way he constructs his narratives as always moving towards something, and as a consequence, never-ending. At any rate, the comparison is easier to notice when we think about Paul's job as a writer and Auggie's as a discoverer of stories.

Auggie's character is different from Paul's because he can see beyond the images. While Paul creates the stories of his fictional characters, Auggie just catches them visually. He does not need words to render them visible, he just needs people and situations. His enterprise is more of a documentary order, a voyeuristic one. Just

like Maria from *Leviathan*, Auggie observes people on the street where they are most natural, lost in the crowd. His camera becomes, just as that of Maria's, "a technique for encountering the invisible." (Auster 1992:71) And, in the end, the invisible surfaces painfully bringing back the past, when Paul sees his wife in one of Auggie's pictures. The entire narrative shifts and Auggie finally tells Paul his Christmas story. In the mist of broken narrative and temporal levels, Auster plays with visual devices, especially with close-up. There is just one ultra-close-up in the movie, and to my knowledge, it pays tribute to film and literature alike. The close-up I am discussing brings into focus Auggie's mouth and Paul's eyes. It is as if Auggie were the voice over and Paul the audience. The intensity of the scene makes the story Auggie tells us and Paul become intangible, just like smoke.

Some critics, like Frosh (1998) and Deleyto (2000), see Auggie's *Smoke* project as a clear example of Roland Barthes's *punctum*, i.e. a revelation provoked by a photograph in its viewer; an emotional shock that gives the viewer the ability to see reality as it is, by contrast to *studium*, which focuses only on the setting, faces or action within the photograph. If we take this into account, a difference occurs between the film and the story. In the short story Auster wrote, Auggie's pictures make no impression on Paul, apart from the fact that the latter sees them as possible starting points for future stories: "I could imagine stories for them." (Auster 1990:112) The film's approach to the concepts mentioned above is slightly different. Due to the appearance of his wife's picture, Paul is emotionally distempered, which means the images do affect him. According to Barthes (1980), *punctum* is more important than *studium*. *Punctum* is the emotion of the real thing in front of our eyes. Barthes's concept of *punctum* adds a metafictional paradox to the story, which brings together, once more, literature and film. Auggie' photographs become Paul's words from new and unknown stories. At the same time, language is transformed into visuals in the story Paul writes for the newspaper. Moreover, Paul's story in the newspaper is shown, in the movie, in black and white; definitely a direct hint at the process of writing and its commitment to the white page, something Auster is well acquainted with.

3. The page and the screen

By the end of 1991, *Smoke* was well in progress and Auster's only problem was the lack of experience in the cinematic filed. This can be noticed in almost all of his interviews on the topic, as he always talks at length about the difference between writing for the page and writing for the screen. They have different rhetoric, and while one is encoded in pure semantic meaning, the other forsakes language in favour of visual effects. He had become comfortable with who he was while writing stories that went beyond the present, but he knew not how to achieve the same feeling with cinema. Furthermore, he could not imagine a way to satisfy the audience, for he had no idea of what its expectations were to begin with. Despite his great fandom

for the motion picture, he became fully aware that he was struggling with the idea of cinema. With respect to this, Auster once stated in an interview with that:

> [Movies are] two-dimensional, first of all. People think of movies as 'real', but they're not. They're flat pictures projected against a wall, a simulacrum of reality, not the real thing. And then there's the question of the images. We tend to watch them passively, and in the end they wash right through us. We're captivated and intrigued and delighted for two hours, and then we walk out of the theater and can barely remember what we've seen. (Hutchinson 2013:53)

Books, on the other hand, are very different. They demand a certain active presence from the reader. They do not simply let you in, and make you part of their world. They make you work out the meaning behind each scene, and they let you use your imagination to the fullest. The story becomes real because you are part of it and are able to visualize it in a personal and intimate way. No one imagines the things you imagine, as you imagine them. This is why Auster considers novels to be a three-dimensional world by comparison to the cinema's two-dimensional one.

Smoke was, in fact, Auster's first attempt to create a three-dimensional story while using a two-dimensional medium. As with all his works, the writer tried to experiment with something new. In my opinion, he put emphasis on the way the story was to be told, and thus, he managed to use the cinematic techniques to his advantage. This is the moment when books and films were brought together and transformed into a new way of storytelling which is completely different from anything we have seen before. Words and images follow their own trajectories only to reunite at the end of the movie and prove, once more, that "there are no rules in art" (Hutchinson 2013:153). No longer embedded only in literature or film, the story that *Smoke* shares allows its writer to break with what is commonly known as the 'fourth wall'. The term comes from the field of theater and refers to an abstract wall that separates individuals who practice some sort of communication from those who receive the input of their message. Breaking the fourth wall implies acting physically or verbally in such a way as to, explicitly or implicitly, recognize the artificial nature of the medium in which actors and audience are participants. The imaginary fourth wall can be easily broken in the theater, by simply interacting with the spectators. The actors may exit the stage at any time and use the main door, or they can even break their act with a reference to their performance, thus addressing themselves.

In literature, the fourth wall exists only partially. Its presence depends on the writer, the narrator and mostly on the reader. Whenever we choose a book, we concede to the rule that whatever we are to read is fiction, or at least imaginary to a certain degree. This is the result of the way our remembrance system works. Each time we recount something, our memories are altered. Acknowledging this, we then rise the wall. In order to counteract this event, the writer builds a story filled with references to real situations and people, with familiarities, which let the novel to open up to its readers. Additionally, the writer may play with voices. Auster is a

master in this sense, we need only think of his novel *Sunset Park* (2010), in which each chapter is narrated by another individual, both male and female, old and young. Indeed, the influence that cinema has on Auster is undeniable and transpires in his works which explore recurrent themes of authorship, while transgressing the boundaries between writer, author, narrator, character, work, readers and mediums. Auster does not leave out anything, not the usual and definitely not the queer. That is why his works break the fourth wall constantly; because he brings his audience to the front stage and lets it play its own role.

4. Conclusion

Smoke kept a lot of the Auggie Wern's story sketchiness, yet, whereas the short story Auster wrote had plenty of space assigned for the reader to become a character, the movie cleared the way for its spectators to step inside it and contemplate the similarities with their own lives. In this matter, I believe the following remark made by Anna Scannavini applies to Auster's work:

> Literary language briefly gives way to cinematic language, to its hybrid and discontinuous syntax. Thus the scenario shows itself to be not only an insight into concealed areas of experience, nor simply a way to discuss more overtly than the main plot does – the still dominant moral values; it can also be seen as experimenting with a more allusive narrative technique, which unlike the author's typical approach, displays life's shadows without having to counterbalance them with clear arguments and explicit critique. (Scannavini 2015:72)

Those who have seen the movie know that Auster's work appears swift and flawless. Once the script was done, and the language, sound, and image were put together, everything became clear. The movie had a direction and its creators knew what it had to say. Keeping in line with the need to shatter the fourth wall, Auster set forth to rehearse with the actors, something that is seldom, if ever, done in the movie industry. The connection that these rehearsals established went beyond the screen and contributed enormously to the filmmaking process. Watching the movie one truly feels that those people on the screen really know each other, and are much alike any other people who come across one another on the streets, or in the shops the film mentions. Jared Harris, Mel Gorham, Victor Argo and Malik Yoba, to name only a few of the cast members, have become true friends on the set and outside it. The fact that they have instantly agreed to work again with Paul Auster on other projects, such as *Lulu on the Bridge* (1998), proves that breaking the fourth wall has been done at all levels of the production process. This also implies that, in order for a movie to transcend the limitations of traditional cinematic expectations, the technique, the people involved, as well as the script must match the persistent hope of discovering something new, and to not do it at the expense of the audience. Be it film or literature, either is at the mercy of their audience. Try to trick the audience

and you trick yourself. People are in search of shifting relationships that bring them pleasure and make them forget reality. This does not, however, mean that they want to overlook authenticity. To be authentic, means to be different, yet there is no way to establish common ground if there is nothing to compare to. Contrast and compare, black and white, comedy and drama, these are the terms by which life works. One cannot persevere without the other.

References

Auster, Paul. 1990. *Auggie Wren's Christmas Story*. New York: Henry Holt and Company.

Auster, Paul. 1992. *Leviathan*. London: Faber. Print.

Auster, Paul. 1997. *The Art of Hunger: Essays, Prefaces, Interviews* and *The Red Notebook*. New York: Penguin Books.

Auster, Paul. 2003. *Smoke*. Screenplay by Paul Auster. Dir. Wayne Wang. Miramax, 1995. *Three Films*. New York: Picador. Print.

Auster, Paul. 2005. *The Brooklyn Follies*. London: Faber & Faber.

Auster, Paul. 2010. *Sunset Park*. New York: Henry Holt and Company.

Barthes, Roland. 1980. *Camera Lucida*. London: Vintage.

Brown, Mark. 2007. *Paul Auster*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Deleyto, Celestino. 2000. *Smoke: Estudio Critico*. Barcelona: Paidos.

Frosh, Paul. 1998. "Filling the Sight by Force: 'Smoke', Photography and the Rhetoric of Immobilization" in *Textual Practice*, 12 (2), pp. 323-340.

Hutchinson, James M. (ed.). 2013. *Conversations with Paul Auster*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.

Scannavini, Anna. 2015. "Paul Auster, Hector Mann and the Book of Illusions" in Ercolino, Stefano, Massimo Fusillo, Mirko Lino, Luca Zenobi (eds.). *Imaginary Films in Literature*. Leiden: Brill, Rodon, pp. 80-92.

TO TRUST AN "I"/EYE: READER RESPONSE TO POSTHUMAN VOICES IN CONTEMPORARY BRITISH NOVELS

CRISTINA DIAMANT

Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca

Abstract: *The present paper discusses the implications of representing some posthuman speakers, namely Kathy H. of* Never Let Me Go, *Sonmi-451of* Cloud Atlas, *and Spike of* The Stone Gods, *as fellow victims rather than symptoms of the new disorder or even simply Lyotardian plaintiffs, and investigates how these novels in turn either encourage or discourage empathetic imagination, as well as how they enable readers to question their own Theory of Mind.*
Keywords: *minimal departure, narrative distance, posthuman, theory of mind.*

> *I know that space is curved but my brain has been cordoned by habit to grow in a straight line. What I call light is my own blend of darkness.*
>
> (Winterson 1997: 11)

1. Introduction

As shown by Lubomir Doležel in *Heterocosmica: Fiction and Possible Worlds* (1998), the past escapes our full understanding because of epistemological gaps, while fiction operates on a different level, staying out of our reach because of ontological gaps. We cannot return to fiction as if it were an incomplete archive and fill in the gaps with our assumptions, claiming our version to be the truth until disproven by newly retrieved information. Unlike reality, it allows for certain unknowables to remain virtually open to several interpretations without the possibility of closure. As Brian McHale put it in *Postmodernist Fiction* (2004), the main question of modernism is epistemological, while postmodernism has moved beyond it, in a concern for the ontological that makes it fit to investigate the questions of fiction on their own terms, without treating it as a second rate reality, where the combination of mutually incompatible facts is an error. Marie-Laure Ryan's (1991) interpretive rule of "minimal departure" is significant in this context. Readers assume that the fictional world is as close as possible to what they know to be the

"actual world" (Kripke 1972) and only correct their view if mandated by the text. We do not stray too far from what we assume to be a universal given fact, unless the text leads us away from it, questioning our initial assumptions.

The implications become immediately apparent in postmodernist novels incorporating nonhuman voices, as I aim to demonstrate in my reading of Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005), David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* (2004) and Jeanette Winterson's *The Stones Gods* (2007). Since the readers unconsciously process the narrative starting from the assumption that the speaking "I" is "one of us", unless proven otherwise, they may experience a shock when the speaker is revealed to be posthuman, consequently needing to re-adjust their expectations. Identification with the posthuman character is rather more difficult and understanding demands more awareness, yet this is precisely why novels such as these offer the possibility of a necessary formative experience, if we are to ever prepare ourselves for the future.

2. Posthuman speakers

As Saul Kripke (1972) points out, language not only orients us, but it can also function so as to disorient us. What one must keep in mind is that it can trick us into wrongly assuming kinship, believing that a rigid designator designates its object in *every* possible world, whether or not the designatum exists in that world. Defamiliarisation is a phenomenon that comes with the territory, especially when reading science fiction or speculative fiction. Rather than offering escapist solutions, such texts enable readers to question the *theory of mind* that is taken for granted in everyday life. Believing that all people share one's perspective is necessary for encouraging empathy and social interactions, but it can also have ill effects, such as generating a false consensus or virtually "hearing" a character without actually listening to undesirable elements, filtering them out as white noise. Since Jeanette Winterson's posthuman speaker, Spike, is a *Robo sapiens,* the readers wonder whether they share her thoughts *and* whether their thinking processes are similar.

The term "posthuman speakers" is used here to refer to Kathy of *Never Let Me Go*, Sonmi-451 of *Cloud Atlas*, and Spike of *The Stone Gods*; while they all voice their worldviews, they do so to different degrees. Kathy is the sole narrator of her story, controlling the selection of facts and the perspective. Sonmi-451 voices half of the chapters as she is interviewed by Unanimity's Archivist after her arrest, meaning that she has partial control over the selection of content and close to none over its structure. Spike speaks the least, uttering only short paragraphs where she plays the voice behind the narrative, such as the very beginning of the novel, and being mostly heard in dialogue with Billie, her human lover. They are also posthuman to different degrees. Kathy is a clone, born and raised for bodily perfection and meant to donate all her organs, in order to ensure the survival of a diseased society. The humans in *Never Let Me Go* are not entirely human themselves, since they incorporate fragments of the clones as life-extending prostheses. Sonmi-

451 is a genetically engineered Fabricant, a clone whose purpose is to serve and obey a corpocracy run by dewdrugged "purebloods", who are not exactly human themselves either, as they carelessly change their appearance with the use of facescrapers in an ultra-technologised future Korea, called Nea So Copros. Spike represents the pinnacle of evolution in a world replete with all kinds of specialised artificial intelligence, called BeatBot, Nifties, Kitchenhand, Flying Feet, etc. It is simply accepted as a matter of fact that some people are born outside the womb. Billie's boss, Manfrend, whose name is an intertextual reference to Lord Byron and adds Faustian undertones to the story, is not alone in rejecting the idea of being human according to old standards, so he is DNA-screened and also had himself genetically fixed at an age and appearance that is deemed attractive. It is not that these three speakers are contrasted against the backdrop of "normal humanity": everybody is at least somewhat 'enhanced' if they can afford it. Consequently, Kathy, Sonmi-451 and Spike simply stand out as the farthest removed from the readers' idea of the "actual world", challenging their empathetic imagination and struggling to cover the narrative distance by arguing their case to be treated as persons instead of property.

These are not comforting narrators, but highly uncomfortable ones, nomadic instead of monadic, molecular instead of molar (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 55), displacing Being with becoming. The fictional pact is rendered problematic and the readers may feel betrayed, since they feel tricked into listening to alien stories that, according to popular culture, belong to potential villains. The reason why I prefer to use the term "nonhuman" rather than "inhuman" is that it is less loaded as a concept, simply labelling a creature that displays some, yet not sufficient human properties to be considered fully human. I prefer the spelling without the hyphen, as in this way the focus does not fall on the opposition between the two and suggests the wholeness of the nonhuman, instead of making it seem insufficient in and of itself. I would also like to point out that I distance myself from the humanistic view, so that "nonhuman" should not be interpreted in a negative light, as a rejection of all that is supposed to be good, desirable or "normal". Instead, I draw on the findings of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1988), who investigate the ways in which the nonhuman can pose epistemological and ontological issues for humanist ethics. I limit the meaning of the word "inhuman" to Jean-François Lyotard's (1991) definition. It might seem strange that, in order to possess a human nature and be the subject of humanism, one needs culture, to learn how to become acceptably human. "Inhuman" are all the potentially positive forces that are repressed or excluded by the idea of human as found in humanism, only later to return with disruptive effects, as an outside that haunts the inside. Dehumanising forces may just open up our understanding of the human.

Three terms avoided in this paper are "subhuman", "infrahuman", and "supra/superhuman", as I am less concerned with hierarchies derived from quantitative differences and more interested in the qualitative differences that arise and can be identified by turning to these novels. However, in this context they are

worth a mention and an explanation. "Subhuman" always carries a sense of insufficiency. It may point to a failure to reach a certain level associated with a normal/normatively-defined human being, it may describe conditions unfit for human beings or even point to a taxonomy working on the premise that evolution's end is humanity (e.g.: speaking of "subhuman primates"). "Infrahuman", a term used in psychology, focuses on the failure to attain a level of understanding or morality associated with humans and it may be applied not only to animals, but to presymbolic children as well, who are humanlike and learning how to master their humanity. Last but not least, "suprahuman" or "superhuman" assumes the superior position in the hierarchy and recalls both Friedrich Nietzsche's (2006: 6) "Übermensch" and popular culture alien heroes such as Superman. Indeed, the focus of my paper is not on the ways in which these nonhuman speakers can be judged as better or worse than humans. An explanation of the term "posthuman" is also in order. Transhumanist thinkers, who advocate a departure from our current status, speak of the "posthuman" as a would-be future sentient being, who re-conceives humanity, as it radically exceeds humanity's standards relevant for the quality of life. The transhumanist is the one to await the arrival of posthumanity, while the transhuman is the "missing link" between the human and the posthuman. I speak of qualitative differences, because the very mode of being is altered. A new sense of self emerges, bringing to the fore posthumans and their nonhuman voices.

To say that the monster writes back is both a play on and an echo of *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literature* (1989) penned by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffith, and Helen Triffin, whose title is itself an echo of science fiction popular culture. It manages to bring together three ideas: the image of the monster that is central to the paper, narratological concerns, as well as the idea of reclaiming the right to storytelling. They do not simply "write to" or "write for" an audience worth addressing; they "write back", therefore they are aware of being previously written about and written on (as bodies inscribed meaning). They speak out so as to reclaim their narratives in a de-colonising movement. This is a necessary action because

> non-normative multiply-situated communities […] have been traditionally excluded from archival contexts or merely included through colonizing and neocolonizing practices. (Jamie 2015:16)

Writing back is a response, not revenge, therefore the hopeful beginning of a feedback loop, forcing us to acknowledge the fact that humans and nonhumans continuously (re)create intersubjective meanings.

The nonhumans appeal to the humans on their own terms to negotiate their relation, and art is essential to make humans aware of this relation. Indeed, art helps us look at the world by rendering visible what would otherwise remain part of the background. Ideology, as the overcoding of ontological crystallisations, needs to be made visible before it can be addressed. Similarly, it is in our encounter with the

posthuman that we reflect on what *human* and *nonhuman* mean. For the French phenomenological philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2005:174), Cezanne's abstract art is not a representation, because it is interested in treating the world itself as an oddity, an abstraction, as if "thinking it" through paint. In a similar vein, the world seen by and through the posthuman needs to tell us new things and challenge beliefs otherwise taken for granted. Here lies the implied Foucauldian idea that technologies of the body, including cultural institutions, serve to manipulate alterity, as well as to (re)produce it. If historical articulations are continuously reproduced, the possibility of disrupting master narratives is a radical choice made by these posthumans. Their stories take us to other worlds not just because they are set in different societies. As Michel de Certeau (1984:115) asserts, all stories are travel stories as they enable us to get around, and, I would like to add, get by. What stories ultimately do is transform places, the inert "being-there", into inhabitable spaces. Cartography is at once both representative and performative as it creates new mental images and modes of experiencing space. The stories of these posthumans offer Barthesian "antidotes of myths", so their discourse is a trans-writing which arises at the edge of idiolect and fights the "nature" created by myths.

The social rejection faced by the three characters will not be left out of the frame or unaddressed. Kathy, Sonmi-451, and Spike, unlike Caliban, never curse their masters outright, yet the possibility still lurks in the shadows, in Kathy's complaints, Sonmi's amused irony or Spike's rebuttals. As these characters grow on us, siding with their struggles even after the reveal their nature, the "villains" of the story seem to be the bioLuddites, alarmist voices, such as C. S. Lewis's in *The Abolition of Man* (1947) and those that demand either the total submission of the posthumans or that they be wiped out as too dangerous to be allowed to live. For a condensed understanding of the politics at play here, I will use James Hughes's political grid:

A= Democratic transhumanism
B= Libertarian transhumanism
C= Left bioLuddism
D= Right bioLuddism
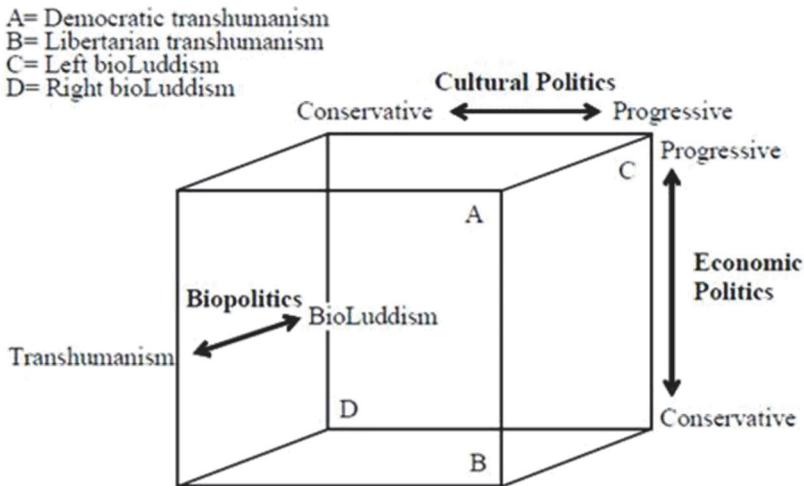
Ideological Positions in the Twenty-First Century   (Hughes 2004: 72)

The transhumanists opposing bioLuddites argue for extropian values. Extropia, as opposed to entropy, refers to an extension and enlargement of all that is known to mankind. This mode of thinking can be summed up by five principles: boundless expansion, acceptance of the importance of self-transformation, dynamic optimism or a techno-optimism incriminated by some for bordering on the utopian, a belief in spontaneous order, and promoting intelligent technology. While we live in a world of wAIs (weak Artificial Intelligence entities) following pre-programmed *algorithms*, the era of sAIs (strong Artificial Intelligence entities) able to (re)program themselves is unquestionably coming. It is a sense of losing control that is behind the bioLuddites' fear. Spike insists on highlighting that she has evolved past the limits ingrained in her by her creators, being now capable of creative cultural evolution just like humans, albeit at a pace that far exceeds ours. Autonomy is no longer in question: she is truly independent from humans, much to Pink's shock and dismay. When asked about the prospects of *Robo sapiens* surviving in a world devoid of humans, Spike's answer is self-assured:

> It isn't true anymore. We are solar-powered and self-repairing. We are intelligent and non-aggressive. You could learn from us. (Winterson 2007: 45)

Shortly put, Spike was built to assist humans and does it without fail, yet a world without any humans to help would be no cause for alarm. What to do to make sure posthumans will not wipe us out? Genetic pre-programming, such as that of the non-violent Crakers in Margaret Atwood's *Maddaddam* trilogy strikes one as almost unethical. Besides, if her novels are any indication, we would find it terribly frustrating to interact with one-note entities. Kathy, Spike, and Sonmi-451 all allow plural meanings to take shape. If genetic pre-programming is not the answer, especially given how Sonmi-451 and Spike can escape the confines of theirs, we must turn to cultural framing. Experiments simulating human ethics with virtual agents already have a tradition of their own and, should they be given credence, as those of the influential political scientist Robert Axelrod in the 1980s, it is possible to create the conditions that will make the most effective adaptive algorithm be one that promotes cooperation rather than competition. The Prisoner's dilemma, a canonical example of game theory formalised by Albert Tucker (see Poundstone 1993), has four basic outcomes. If humans and posthumans cooperate, both prosper. In the second scenario, where humans wish to cooperate yet posthumans wish to compete, humans are betrayed by posthumans and enslaved. Should the posthumans wish to cooperate while humans wish to compete, posthumans are betrayed by humans and enslaved. Last but not least, if humans and posthumans compete, neither prospers. The one who betrays the player willing to cooperate prospers more than in a scenario where both are willing to cooperate, yet if they betray each other, they lose even what was to be won cooperatively. As seen, in a one-shot game, the odds are less worrying if one chooses to play competitively and is ready to backstab the other. If interactions go through several cycles, they are encouraged to cooperate at

least from time to time so that at least one of them stands the chance of ever prospering.

We can think in similar terms of the "games" played by society with Kathy, Spike, and Sonmi-451: they are to be discarded once their cycle is up and humanity is adamant to play competitively against them, while simultaneously demanding a cooperative approach from them. There lurks the fear that AIs and posthumans will see humans as a threat or a liability to the very plan we have set up and consequently eliminate us because we are error-bound. After all, according to philosopher Karl Popper (1984), errors are our learning tools. Posthumans, it would seem, will find it inefficient to cooperate and "drag" us along towards the goal when they can sprint towards it.

Should they not be treated as property or resources to be used up, thus entering a multi-cycle game, they would be encouraged to cooperate without running the risk of being enslaved. Even in these novels, collaborative efforts are rare. Sonmi-451 is disillusioned by them, once she realises that her pureblood helpers were simply agitators playing their part in the required real-life "Disney" world that was to frame her as a dangerous deviant. Spike and Billie, on the other hand, manage to reach a point of empathy and intimacy even when facing together the worst odds of a world ending, without turning against each other to increase their survival prospects. This fear goes beyond the image of an all-out war of *homo homini lupus* versus *Robo sapiens*, of purebloods versus uncooperating Fabricants that rise against them. It is dreadful enough for some to picture that our numbers would dwindle until we are no more or simply pale compared to theirs. The underlying question is whether intelligent entities would accept the rule of such a frail minority. Perhaps our best chance and our ideal legacy is to live on alongside them and then, once we are no more, figuratively live on through them, as posthumans go on cooperating with each other.

If human ethics can be reduced to cultural evolution and tested by game theory, what is there to say of another precious human asset, the sense of self? Consciousness, defined as reflecting upon one's reflection, is not outside the grasp of sAIs (strong Artificial Intelligences) with enough computational power for metaprocesses. Neuroscientist Vilayanur Ramachandran (2004) attributes five characteristics to the self: unity or coherence, continuity, a sense of agency, a sense of embodiment or ownership, and the ability to be self-aware, later going on as far as to state that, far from being an epiphenomenon, the sense of one's self is a product of evolution and natural selection. What good is a self for? It increases one's chances of survival, because it includes an incentive for preserving its stability, even deceiving itself with misrememberings of traumatic events. Spike ticks all five requirements in both timelines included in the novel, although the more problematic one is the sense of embodiment or ownership in the second half of her story, where she is reduced to a talking head. Even this hurdle is overcome, as she happily tells Billie, when she explains how her erotic experiments in Wreck City have given her an understanding of what being embodied means. Apparently, humans are not the

only fortunate result of cyclical selection, but they are meant to hopefully ease their own feelings of prospective guilt. Malkah of Marge Piercey's *He, She, and It* (1991) indicates that "an artificial person created as a tool is a painful contradiction" (Piercey qtd. in Haney 2005: 166), and these three novels provide the reader with ample proof in this direction.

To understand sAI, strong Artificial Intelligence, as opposed to weak AI, which cannot generate new content and is limited to recognition and predictive, assistive programming, let us now discuss briefly the pioneer work performed at Google after purchasing DeepMind, the British artificial intelligence company. With the use of artificial neural networks, whose function is to simulate the human brain, they analyse a process that researchers call "inceptionism". Given its already established ability to recognise, analyse, and even auto-caption images, the AI works by extrapolating patterns and uses a feedback loop to generate images. The results obtained by the Google AI when analysing pictures of clouds are images of chimerical creatures, from pig-snails to camel-birds and dog-fish. Since this is probably the way Spike processes reality, too, one can only ponder on the speed of her cognitive processes, necessary to reconstruct the world as Billie sees it, to share the same framework of experience.

What is left to alarm us is the question of ethics. Google's AI has an ethics board, yet the list of members is not public. Spike has become her own ethics board, as she is keen on pointing out several times that new experience allows her to reconsider all her settings. What do we know about the human mind, anyway? *In Our Own Image* (2015), by the artificial intelligence expert George Zarkadakis, offers a taxonomy of the dominant metaphors used over the past 2,000 years in an attempt to define human intelligence. That these were shaped by the technology of their age becomes immediately apparent once we list them: the Biblical metaphor of mind as the divine spirit that is infused in clay, the hydraulic engineering model of human intelligence (responsible for the idea of "humours", as well), the automata model from the 16th century onward (see René Descartes and Thomas Hobbes), the 18th century image of electricity and chemistry, the mid-1800s communications metaphors derived by the German physicist Hermann von Helmholtz from a telegraph, to the current one of the human mind as an information processor, linking it to the computer. Cognitive scientists such as Anthony Chemero of the University of Cincinnati, who wrote *Radical Embodied Cognitive Science* (2009), speak against the image of a computer-like mind. Computer models of the brain, unlike our mind, interpret signals from the environment as unambiguous inputs of information, averaging away any contaminating noise. Time and time again, the unforgivingness of the code was emphasized, as it defines itself only by its functionality. We do not perform computations on mental representations. Instead, we interact with our environment in a way that is free of algorithms and "memory banks" with copies readily stored to be later consulted, which also gives rise to the so-called "uniqueness problem" that no two people are affected by the same event in the same way. Machines would all access the same copy of the memory and process it in the same

way. The human brain would be better approximated as an organ that responds to stimuli of its environment. In short, we interact reciprocally with an unpredictable environment. Spike is now revealed to be neither machine, nor human, but an emergent third entity: a *Robo sapiens*.

3. Conclusion

The three posthumans slowly reveal themselves to be "inappropriate/d others", with blurred lines between problematic selves and monstrous arrivants, each leading what Judith Butler calls a "precarious life" or an "unlivable" one which, owing to exclusionary processes, does not enjoy a legal and political status. They attempt to re-claim these spaces and reject the de-subjectification enforced upon them, along with the regulatory normative gaze of the consumer society that desired them into existence. Tempted by the possibility of becoming spontaneous bodies-without-organs, they narrate themselves into existence on their own terms, demanding to be looked at and acknowledged without having their bodies invaded by the hegemonic discourse any longer. There are relations of power inside the text, outside it, and in the interaction between the two spaces. The narrator has the power to shock, outrage, and even to offend, while the reader has the power to choose between, in turn, judging, accepting, and rejecting.

References

Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffith and Helen Tiffin. 2002. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. London & New York: Routledge.
Atwood, Margaret. 2013. *Maddaddam*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
Axelrod, Robert. 2006. *The Evolution of Cooperation.* Foreword by Richard Dawkins, New York: Basic Books.
Butler, Judith. 2006. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence.* Denver: Outskirts Press.
Certeau, Michel de. 1984. *The Practice of Everyday Life.* Berkeley: University of California Press.
Chemero, Anthony. 2009. *Radical Embodied Cognitive Science.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.
Descartes, René (1596-1650), in *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, IEP, A Peer-Reviewed Academic Resource.* [Online]. Available: https://www.iep.utm.edu/descarte/ [Accessed 2018, February 28].
Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. 1988. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
Doležel, Lubomir. 1998. *Heterocosmica: Fiction and Possible Worlds*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
Haney, William S. 2005. *Cyberculture, Cyborgs and Science Fiction*. 2nd volume, New York: Rodopi.

Thomas Hobbes.1651. *Leviathan*. [Online]. Available: https://www.ttu.ee/public/m/mart-murdvee/EconPsy/6/Hobbes_Thomas_1660_The_Leviathan.pdf [Accessed 2018, February 28].

Hughes, James. 2004. *Citizen Cyborg. Why Democratic Societies Must Respond to the Redesigned Human of the Future.* Cambridge: Westview Press.

Ishiguro, Kazuo. 2005. *Never Let Me Go*. New York: Vintage International.

Jamie, Ann Lee. 2015. *A Queer/Ed Archival Methodology.* University of Arizona. [Online]. Available: http://arizona.openrepository.com/arizona/bitstream/10150/556236/1/azu_etd_13787_sip1_m.pdf [Accessed 2016, May 11].

Kripke, Saul. 1972. "Naming and Necessity" in Davidson, Donald and Gilbert Harman (eds.). *Semantics of Natural Language*. Dordrecht: Reidel, pp. 253-355.

Kuhn, Harold W. and Albert W. Tucker (eds.).1950. *Contributions to the Theory of Games*. Annals of Mathematics Studies, 24. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Lewis, Clive Staples. 1947. *The Abolition of Man*. New York: Macmillan.

Lyotard, Jean-François. 1991. *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*. Translated by Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

McHale, Brian. 2004. *Postmodernist Fiction.* London & New York: Routledge.

Mitchell, David. 2004. *Cloud Atlas: A Novel*. New York, Random House.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2006. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Translated by Adrian Del Caro, edited by Adrian Del Caro and Robert Pippin. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 2005. *Phenomenology of Perception*. Translated by Colin Smith. London & New York: Routledge.

Popper, Karl and John C. Eccles. 1984. *The Self and Its Brain: An Argument for Interactionism.* London & New York: Routledge.

Poundstone, William. 1993. *Prisoner's Dilemma: John von Neuman, Game Theory, and the Puzzle of the Bomb*. New York: Anchor.

Ramachandran, Vilayanur. 2004. *A Brief Tour of Human Consciousness: From Impostor Poodles to Purple Numbers*. New York: Pi Press.

Ryan, Marie-Laure. 1991. *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence and Narrative Theory*. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press.

von Helmholtz, Hermann. 1971. *Selected Writings of Hermann von Helmholtz.* Edited and translated by Russell Kahl. Middletown, CT.: Wesleyan University Press.

Winterson, Jeannette. 1997. *Gut Symmetries*. Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.

Winterson, Jeanette. 2007. *The Stone Gods. A Novel.* Toronto: Knopf Canada.

Zarkadakis, George. 2015. *In Our Own Image: Will Artificial Intelligence Save or Destroy Us?* London: Rider Books.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

IMAGINATIVE NAMES FOR IMAGINARY FRIENDS

ALINA BUGHEŞIU

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

Abstract: The paper aims at providing an interdisciplinary research into names of imaginary friends, in view of describing the particularity of the process of referring by means of such names. To this end, the study will use theoretical principles pertaining to psychology, referential semantics, onomastics and pragmatics. For illustrative purposes, character names in the American animated television series Foster's Home for Imaginary Friends *(2004-2009) will be analysed.*
Keywords: imaginary friends, proper names, pretend reference, transworld reference

1. Introduction

Any study of imagination confirms, over and over again, its vastness and multidimensionality, to the extent that, despite all efforts, we come to understand that so much territory continues to remain unchartered. New continents are claimed by different domains every day – from psychology and pedagogy, to art (in all its forms: visual, musical, theatrical, cinematographic, kinetic and literary), advertising, technology, and linguistics, each with its multifarious interpretations favoured by the numerous subfields developed. Nevertheless, more often than not, the explorations of imagination are interdisciplinary, in the hope of shedding more light on the complexity of this realm.

Linguistics has shown interest in imagination mostly in relation to individuals' cognitive abilities, dealing with matters such as the appearance/acquisition and evolution of language (see, for instance, Reuland 2016), linguistic creativity (Chomsky 2006; D'Agostino 1984) and even language pathology (Crystal 1996). In the context of linguistic creativity, imagination was rightly deemed one of the factors determining word formation, as onomasiological studies have confirmed (Štekauer 2005: 212). Thus, linguistic concern gradually shifted towards the relationship between proper names and imagination and one of the least investigated aspects refers to names of imaginary friends. It is precisely this topic that the present paper investigates, in view of underlining the particular manifestation of name-giving and the specific behaviour of names of imaginary friends as beings inhabiting the world of imagination, but having a significant influence on the actual world.

Methodologically, the research is grounded in psychology, referential semantics, onomastics and pragmatics. For illustrative purposes, the study looks at the semantic motivation and functionality of names of imaginary friends in *Foster's Home for Imaginary Friends*, an American animated television series for children, which was originally aired between 2004 and 2009 on Cartoon Network.

2. Imaginary friends: conceptual delineations

Also called *imaginary companions*, *imaginary others* or *imaginary playmates*, imaginary friends make up a catch-all class of figures that "we create and interact with and talk about on a regular basis" (Taylor and Mottweiler 2008:47). They are "imaginary versions of real people, fictional characters from books, and invented people or animals custom designed to meet the particular needs of their creator" (ibid.). Thus, while they may be altogether invisible, they may also be inspired by toys or various real-life objects.

According to early research into the psychology of juvenile imagination, the presence of these entities in the life of a child was construed as a clear indication of certain relational and communicational conditions, especially dissociative disorders (Becker-Blease 2013: 492; Taylor and Mottweiler 2008: 49). In other words, imaginary companions were seen as signs of "psychological disturbance", the "inventions of lonely, unhappy children" (Taylor 1999: 3), who were unable to make real friends (Taylor and Mottweiler 2008: 48). Children were believed to resort to such fabrications as a therapeutic means of coping with "a variety of concerns, fears, and problems" (Taylor 1999: 4).

Contrariwise, recent studies in the field have shown that children turn to the imagination for companionship for other reasons as well, e.g., for envisaging self-development, practicing social roles, projecting the fulfilment of their wishes or simply for having fun (Taylor 1999: 5; Taylor and Mottweiler 2008: 49; Smith 2010: 161). Therefore, rather than being reclusive, frequently to the point of severing all ties with reality, "children who create pretend friends are very social people" (Taylor 1999: 5), "less aggressive, or impulsive, more self-contained, and more capable of divergent, potentially creative thought" (Singer and Singer 2006: 375). They design imaginary playmates to act as interlocutors, with whom they engage in various social situations, thereby developing their communicative skills and satisfying the basic human need for interaction (Taylor and Mottweiler 2008: 48).

Despite the realistic human characteristics with which the imaginary companions are endowed (e.g., the ability to speak and to reason complex matters), their appurtenance to the world of imagination is clear to children. According to Taylor and Mottweiler (2008: 51), "children are well aware that their imaginary companions are pretend", which proves that children have got a good grasp and "knowledge of reality, rather than confusion about it" (Taylor and Mottweiler 2008: 48). Paradoxical as it may seem, this knowledge is gained by the children's use of

imagination: in the world of fantasy, aspects of reality that need to be understood better are represented and played out in *as if* scenarios, from as many perspectives as necessary, until the lessons are learned. Imaginary companions contribute significantly to this process, functioning as "transitional objects" (Singer and Singer 2006: 375) that facilitate this development. This idea may be accounted for through the diversity of imaginary friends, their constant or short-lived existence, their number per child and degree of invisibility (some imaginary companions are based on real-world objects and people, while others are wholly invented) (Taylor and Mottweiler 2008: 50). Regardless of their status, the overall existence of imaginary friends is not ambiguous, as "Children seem to have clear mental images of what these friends look like and how they behave. They have no difficulty drawing pictures of them and describing their personalities" (Taylor and Mottweiler 2008: 50). A key element in the characterisation and identification of imaginary friends is their names, whose referential behaviour and semantic content is tightly linked to the peculiar existence of the name bearers.

3. Dynamics of transworld reference

The specific nature of imaginary companions determines the way in which they are perceived. More striking than their artificiality is their unsubstantiality, their ethereality, a quality that can be invoked as a constant categorial descriptor in their definition. Whether based on real-world people or objects, these playmates are products of children's imagination; as such, despite their creators' belonging to the real world, imaginary friends pertain to a different universe. However, the imaginary is an extension of reality, a possible world continuing the actual world, with which it is connected through the children that make up the companions. From this viewpoint, the discourse actualising children's invented reality resembles fictional discourse, just as "the literary is continuous with the non-literary" (Searle 1993: 59). Moreover, from the perspective of these children's peers and family, a similar suspension of disbelief is required to accept the existence of the imaginary playmates, as needed in acknowledging the existence of characters in fiction (Searle 1993: 61).

The status congruence between imaginary friends and fictional characters further lies in the intention of the illocutionary acts that underlie their creation and the subsequent acts of reference to them. According to Searle (1993: 68), "The author pretends to perform illocutionary acts by way of actually uttering (writing) sentences"; thus, "(…) the *illocutionary act* is pretended, but the *utterance act* is real". The pretended illocutionary acts result in the creation of "fictional characters and events. (…) As far as the *possibility* of the ontology is concerned, anything goes: the author can create any character or event he likes. As far as the *acceptability* of the ontology is concerned, coherence is a crucial consideration" (Searle 1993: 73). Once the ontology of the fictional characters is complete, "we who are standing

outside the fictional story can really refer to a fictional person" (Searle 1993: 71); we do not *pretend to refer* to fictional characters – we *really refer* to them.

Similarly, children engage in pretend illocutionary acts by means of which they create imaginary friends. In agreement with Searle's aforementioned theory, one can claim that children *actually perform utterances* in which they *pretend to refer* to made-up companions, thereby causing them to exist. This entails that everyone else except the creators of the imaginary playmates can *really refer* to them. Nevertheless, the pretence to refer also occurs on the part of these individuals, due to a provenance distinction that must be pointed out: while fictional characters are well embedded in the fictional world, without directly affecting the author's reality, imaginary friends can trespass the border between imagination and reality through the direct effect they have on their makers' lives (see, for instance, the situations in which children blame their pretend playmates for mischiefs they do – Taylor and Mottweiler 2008: 51). On the other hand, any contact which fictional characters might establish occurs solely with other fictional characters, as the author is remote: the universe s/he inhabits and that of the characters are not synchronous at any point in time or space, once the utterance act resulting in the work of fiction is complete. Furthermore, the existence of the characters and their world may surpass that of the author and his/her world, but when a child outgrows or gives up an imaginary friend, we lose all access to the latter and the corresponding universe. We are henceforth unable to refer successfully, because we are, in fact, in want of an object of reference. As Searle (1993: 71) noted, "One of the conditions on the successful performance of the speech act of reference is that there must exist an object that the speaker is referring to". Once the object of reference is out of our grasp, reference becomes possible only in retrospect, with regard to the past. The logical implication is simple: if "by pretending to refer", one "pretends that there is an object to be referred to" (Searle 1993: 71), then by ceasing to pretend to refer to an object, that object ceases to exist from the viewpoint of the actual world.

One of the factors that contribute to the achievement of reference, triggering the process, consists of the names of imaginary playmates. As in the case of fictional characters or other bearers, the name of an imaginary companion is a "paradigm referring expression" (Searle 1993: 71). It assigns identity to the name bearer and gives him/her substance, regardless of how commonplace the name may be. Pragmatically speaking, names of imaginary companions may be considered to function as performative nouns, as they *bring to life* the imaginary friends (confirming their existence) and, with every use, reiterate a part of this initial baptism, due to the abstract, otherworldly quality of the bearer, which is summoned from its universe into the actual one every time someone refers to it. Just as with performative verbs "the assertion of the explicit performative *is* the performance of the act named by the performative verb" (Condoravdi and Lauer 2011: 151), names of pretend playmates create and recreate their bearers every time they are employed. This situation is made possible by the companions' belonging to the imagination.

   The referential path indicated and triggered by these designations is uncommon, in that it reaches from the actual world, from the name givers, i.e., children who create such playmates, to the imaginary world, i.e., the possible world, which the name bearers inhabit. As in the process of specular reflection of light (or specular referring, in this case), the referential radiation rebounds off the name bearer (as defined by the name giver) to return to the actual world of the children in the shape of the name bearer's identity (see Figure 1): children *know* (denotatively and connotatively) who the pretend friends are, they are aware of the latter's "transworld identity" (Oltean 2013: 374). What is more, they treat these playmates as living individuals with whom they can and do converse (Singer and Singer 2006: 375).
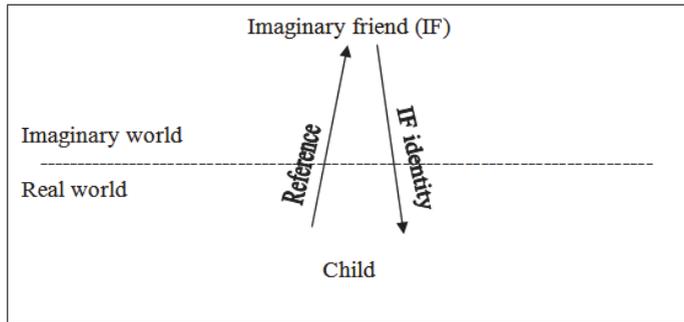
Figure 1: Specular referring: children's reference to their imaginary companions

   Nevertheless, from the viewpoint of other name users, reference takes the shape of diffuse reflection (diffuse referring) (see Figure 2), due to the ambiguity which underlies the named objects' identity: the denotation of the name is indeterminate.
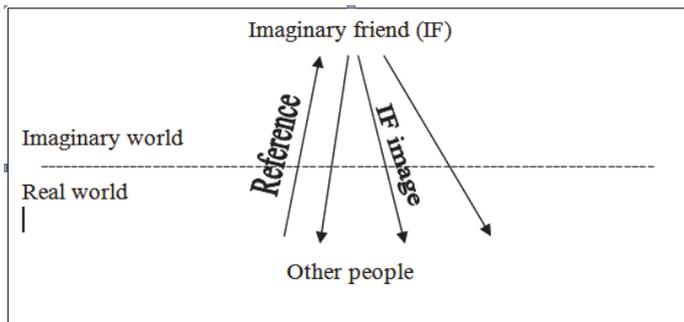
Figure 2: Diffuse referring: other people's reference to children's imaginary companions

   Whereas, from the perspective of the children, the identity of imaginary friends is clear, because they were the ones to coin it to begin with, for everyone else

this identity can only be accessed indirectly, through the mediation of the children. Moreover, as the possible world inhabited by the imaginary friends is obscure to name users, the latter can only form *impressions* of it, but cannot ever verily access it. Thus, as in the case of brands, other people can only form images of the pretend companions (see the distinction between *brand identity* and *brand image* as explained by Corbu 2009: 64), filtered (dispersed) by their background knowledge, which semantically may be rooted in the friends' identity, but is not equivalent to it in matters of denotation. Just as names of fictional characters, names of imaginary playmates "lack denotation and thus contribute no entity to the meaning of the sentence. As a result, we cannot identify the individual and we do not know what is said by a sentence in which the name occurs" (Oltean 2013: 377). Put differently, similarly to the use of brand names (Corbu 2009: 66), the semantic load underlying the employment of names of imaginary friends by anyone else, except their creators, reflects the way in which the name users relate to the name bearers (usually their distrust of the existence of the named individuals). According to this interpretation, names of imaginary friends have a relational function for name users: "a competent user of a name may associate no semantic content at all with the name, but competence does require that the user of 'N' knows that it names the individual that is called, or named, 'N'" (Jeshion 2009: 375) by the child who created it.

4. Imagination within imagination: names of pretend companions in *Foster's Home for Imaginary Friends*

Created by Craig McCracken (who also created *The Powerpuff Girls* and wrote for *Dexter's Laboratory*) for Cartoon Network, *Foster's Home for Imaginary Friends* (henceforth referred to as *Foster's Home*) is an Emmy-winning American animated TV series for children, which aired in 2004-2009. The overall plot revolves around an eight-year-old boy, Mac, who is forced by his mother to give up his imaginary friend, Bloo, a blue dome cylinder, as she considers her son to be too old to continue having an imaginary playmate. Unwilling to abandon Bloo, Mac takes him to Foster's Home for Imaginary Friends, an orphanage where all sorts of invented companions, who had been deserted by their creators, can reside, until they are adopted by other children. Mac makes a deal with Madame Foster, the owner of the home, and promises to visit Bloo daily, so as to prevent his being put up for adoption (*IMDb*, n.d.).

The peculiarity of the use of names of imaginary companions in *Foster's Home* is determined by the very fact that the environment in which the names are used is itself fictional. Thus, an alternative world is created within an alternative world (Oltean 2013: 380) and the two interact continuously. Spatially and temporally, there is no divide between these co-existing worlds. Nevertheless, from the perspective of subjective time, a rift is noticeable: the universe of imaginary friendship is one that children are expected and asked to outgrow, to leave behind.

The names of imaginary playmates in *Foster's Home* are attributed and function in a similar way to the names of such companions of real-world children. According to Taylor (1999: 21), names of pretend friends may be commonplace, mentioned by children "in passing, along with the names of real children at the local daycare or in the neighborhood". At the same time, they may be extremely creative, often suggestive of "what the child is attending to in his or her environment" (Taylor 1999: 63). Singer and Singer (1990: 107-108) mention several examples in this respect: "A woman we know remembers that she created imaginary playmates during a period when, as a preschooler, she often heard references to her father's recurrent illness. These friends included Phena and Barbara Tall as well as Ultra, Violet, and Ray". Another example is the companion named *Fetiss* (a designation most likely derived from *fetus*), invented by two girls when their mother was pregnant (Singer and Singer 1990: 109).

In *Foster's Home*, the names of the imaginary friends are always imaginative, linked to various features that the friends display. From this viewpoint, the names of some of the best known characters in the series may be grouped semantically as follows (see *Imagination Companions: A Foster's Home for Imaginary Friends Wiki* for a complete list of the characters and their description):

a) physical features (characters' colour): *Bloo* (full name *Blooregard Q. Kazoo*) – Mac's friend, Bloo, is actually blue; *Cheese* – a yellow character (it should be noted that, ironically, despite the dairy reference in his name, Cheese is allergic to chocolate milk, which he actually likes);

b) behavioural features: *Bloppypants* – a cat-like friend, wearing black trousers and black shoes. He is nervous and excessively fearful, literally a scaredy-cat. His name is suggestive of his personality: *Bloppypants < scaredy pants* 'coward';

c) linguistic particularities: *Coco* – a bird-like imaginary friend, with a palm tree instead of a head, who only utters and writes a single word (*coco*) and, when experiencing strong emotions, lays plastic eggs that may contain a wide range of items;

d) genus appurtenance: *Billy the Squid* – an imaginary pink squid. The name may also be a reference to the children's song *Billy the Squid*, written by Tom Chapin and John Forster, whose title character is based on the famous outlaw Billy the Kid; *Fluffer Nutter* – a pink squirrel with a bow (*Nutter < nut*); *Mr Herriman* – an anthropomorphic lop-eared rabbit, as suggested by the second component of the name – *Herriman* is a pun on *hare*. He was created by the owner of the house, Madame Foster, as a well-bred figure, dressed like a gentleman (he wears a tailcoat, top hat and a monocle) and speaks with a British accent. His name is also suggestive of this high class through the first element in the onymic structure, the abbreviated form of *mister*;

e) ethnic appurtenance: *Eduardo* – a protector friend, timid, kind and affectionate, despite his menacing, fiendish appearance. Eduardo was created by a girl of Latin American origin and this ethnic quality was transferred onto him. An

example supporting this argument would be the fact that Eduardo frequently uses Spanish words and phrases, which are often mixed with English ones;

f) social status: *Duchess* (full name *Her Royal Duchess Diamond Persnickety, the First, Last and Only*) – an antagonistic character, designed in the manner of Cubist paintings. She is two-dimensional, speaks with a German accent and is conceited, selfish and discourteous;

g) references to real-world figures: *Jackie Khones* – the name refers to Khaki Jones, former executive of Cartoon Network in charge of the production of the series. However, the persona of Jackie Khones was based on Jackie Chiles, a character in the sitcom *Seinfeld*; *Wilt* – the character was named after basketball player Wilt Chamberlain by a child called Jordan Michaels, whose name is a play on the name of basketball legend Michael Jordan.

As regards the use of these names, there is a difference when compared to how names of imaginary friends are employed by children and other people in the real world. This discrepancy is generated by the fact that *Foster's Home* is a work of fiction and, in this context, the actual existence of the invented characters is not questionable: the friends are made-up, but they are *real* according to the logic of the cartoon universe. This allows for the referring process to develop unhindered: the objects of reference exist (Searle 1993:71), which allows one to identify them and refer to them, although their creators, which are *sine qua non* conditions for the existence of imaginary friends, are frequently absent.

5. Conclusion

Seen as "transitional objects" (Singer and Singer 2006: 375) that children invent to have as company during hardship or merely during playtime, imaginary friends are an undeniable manifestation of children's societal and lexical creativity. Although these friends exist in the world of imagination, they affect the functioning of the real world and the behaviour of their real-world creators, whether the playmates are morally good or bad (Taylor and Mottweiler 2008: 51). The appurtenance of pretend companions to children's imagination, a possible, alternative world operating according to the logic of make-belief (Oltean 2013: 380), affects the particular fulfilment of the referring process, which is achieved by means of the names that the companions bear. As far as the children are concerned, transworld reference, albeit pretend (Searle 1993: 71-72), is similar to reference within the real world, a privileged situation ensured by the twofold status that children enjoy: creators and name givers of the friends. For other people referring to the imaginary friends, the process is obstructed by the impossibility to know the objects of reference directly; therefore, as the very existence of imaginary friends is doubtful to us, our reference to them is also of the pretence type. Moreover, in the absence of the name givers, from whom we learn the names and who inform us about the existence of such friends (children act as mediators between the real world and

the universe of imagination), name bearers fail to exist and reference becomes inconceivable.

References

Becker-Blease, Kathryn A. 2013. "Imagination and Dissociation across the Life-Span" in Taylor, Marjorie (ed.). *The Oxford Handbook of the Development of Imagination*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 489-498.

Chomsky, Noam. 2006 (1967). *Language and Mind*. 3rd edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Condoravdi, Cleo and Sven Lauer. 2011. "Performative Verbs and Performative Acts" in Reich, Ingo, Eva Horch and Dennis Pauly (eds.). *Sinn & Bedeutung 15. Proceedings of the 2010 Annual Conference of the Gesellschaft für Semantik*. Saarbrücken: Saarland University Press, pp. 149-164. [Online]. Available: http://universaar.uni-saarland.de/monographien/volltexte/2011/30/pdf/SinnUndBedeutung15.pdf [Accessed 2017, September 30].

Corbu, Nicoleta. 2009. *Brandurile globale. O cercetare cros-culturală* ['Global Brands. A Cross-Cultural Research']. Bucharest: Tritonic.

Crystal, David. 1996. "Language Play and Linguistic Creativity" in *Child Language Teaching and Therapy*, 12(3), pp. 328-344.

D'Agostino, Fred. 1984. "Chomsky on Creativity" in *Synthese*, 58, pp. 85-117. [Online]. Available: http://www.contrastiva.it/baul_contrastivo/dati/sanvicente/contrastiva/Neolog%C3%ADa/DAgostino.pdf [Accessed 2017, September 30].

Imagination Companions: A Foster's Home for Imaginary Friends Wiki. (n.d.). [Online]. Available: http://fhif.wikia.com/wiki/Main_Page [Accessed 2017, September 30].

IMDb. (n.d.) "*Foster's Home for Imaginary Friends* (TV Series 2004-2009)". [Online]. Available: http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0419326/ [Accessed 2017, September 30].

Jeshion, Robin. 2009. "The Significance of Names" in *Mind & Language*, 24(4), pp. 370-403.

Oltean, Ștefan. 2013. "On the Semantics of Fictional Names" in *Revue roumaine de linguistique*, LVIII (4), pp. 371-382. [Online]. Available: http://www.unibuc.ro/depts/limbi/limbi_moderne/docs/2014/mar/01_10_57_07art03Oltean.pdf [Accessed 2017, September 30].

Reuland, Eric. 2016. "Language and Imagination: Evolutionary Explorations". *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews* (in press). [Online]. Available: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.neubiorev.2016.12.017 [Accessed 2017, September 30].

Searle, John R. 1993 (1979). "The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse" in *Expression and Meaning. Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts*. Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 58-75.

Singer, Dorothy G. and Jerome L. Singer. 1990. *The House of Make-Believe. Children's Play and the Developing Imagination*. Cambridge, MA/London, UK: Harvard University Press.

Singer, Dorothy G. and Jerome L. Singer. 2006 (1998). "Fantasy and Imagination" in Pronin Fromberg, Doris and Doris Bergen (eds.). *Play from Birth to Twelve: Contexts, Perspectives, and Meanings*. 2nd edition, revised. New York/London: Routledge, pp. 371-378.

Smith, Peter K. 2010. *Children and Play*. Malden, MA/Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.

Štekauer, Pavol. 2005. "Onomasiological Approach to Word-Formation" in Štekauer, Pavol and Rochelle Lieber (eds.). *Handbook of Word-Formation*. Dordrecht: Springer, pp. 207-232.

Taylor, Marjorie. 1999. *Imaginary Companions and Children Who Create Them*. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Taylor, Marjorie and Candice C. Mottweiler. 2008. "Imaginary Companions: Pretending They are Real but Knowing They are Not" in *American Journal of Play*, 1(1), pp. 47-54.

VALUES IN TRANSLATED ADVERTISEMENTS IN LATVIA

GUNTA LOČMELE

University of Latvia

Abstract: *Advertising plays an important role in forming the values of modern societies. In advertising, the translator has a key role in deciding on the linguistic way of shaping the values in the text travel for new audiences. The question is if mirroring foreignness helps the brands to make consumers adhere to the values they transmit or moulding the message to the conventions and cultural codes of the target audience achieves the task better? The paper sets to examine this matter, using the empirical material of translated advertisements in Latvia.*
Keywords: *adaptation, domestication, foreignization, mirroring, moulding, text travel*

1. Introduction

This paper aims to consider some changes present in the translation of advertisements for automobiles in Latvia and to observe the change of values the advertising campaigns are based on. The focus of the paper is on the way-automobile brands are presented in three periods of time. It starts with the interwar period in Latvia (the 1920s-1930s), when English, French, German, Italian and American cars were competing on the Latvian market and translated advertisements for foreign cars were published in magazines like *Ilustrētā Tehnika* (Technical Magazine Illustrated) and others. The second period discussed is the Soviet Latvia that did not have a market economy, but the advertisements for mopeds and vans that were produced in factories of the Soviet Latvia, although mostly declarative in nature, were used for exporting these goods to other Soviet Republics and to other countries that had trade relations with the Soviet Union. The material for the third period comprises modern translated internet, outdoor, and magazine advertisements for imported cars in Latvia.

Advertisements are viewed from the point of view of the consumer. However, a translator's point of view is also given, obtained from the interviews with translators working with promotional materials of producers.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Message encoding: foreignization vs. domestication

The encoding and decoding of a message are described by Hall (2006: 163-172). The sender encodes the message that is decoded by its receiver.

Translating is a re-coding of the message for a new audience in a new context. Translation is described as a foreignization process, in which all foreign culture elements are retained and the text is deliberately maintained foreign for the receiving culture. The opposite of that is translation as domestication, where the foreign features are reduced and adapted for the receiving culture (Venuti 1995: 20). Some domestication is inevitable in every translation, as noted by Venuti (2000: 82).
Mousten and Ločmele (2014) develop foreignization and domestication theory further and conceptualize the translation of marketing texts as mirroring or moulding. The translation might mirror the foreignness, yet the final decoding of the text is in the eye of the beholder. On the other hand, the translated text can be moulded to fit the new situation, yet by doing so it may retain some foreign elements and melt them into its new patterns.

By considering the encoding of information as mirroring-or-moulding, Mousten and Ločmele analyse the result of the encoding as a success or a failure in the text travel. If the texts have been semiotically analysed for their new references, and for the possible ways they may be decoded by the receiving audience, the texts travel successfully. If the needs of the new audience are not fully taken into account, the text travel fails. The knowledge of the linguistic, historical, pragmatic aspects of the new locale has proved to be essential for encoding messages and for a successful text travel (Mousten and Ločmele 2014:79).

2.2. Message decoding: a consumer's point of view

Encoding and decoding codes should be relatively symmetrical for the message to reach its audience, according to Hall (2006:163-172). Speaking about television news, Hall describes three decoding codes exercised by the audience: a dominant code, an oppositional code and a negotiated code. When adhering to a dominant code, the audience believes the message, when adapting an oppositional code, the audience doubts it. A negotiated code is a mix of the dominant and the oppositional codes.

Taking a step further, the author of this paper has set to investigate whether moulding the message to fit the target locale or mirroring the foreign culture are related to the audience's adherence to the dominant code or to triggering the oppositional code of the consumers.

2.3. Translational norms and conventions in advertising

The literature on marketing contains some references to translation. Wells, Burnett and Moriarty (1992:518) state that "international campaigns are not translated. Instead, a copywriter usually rewrites them in the second language." However, translation studies empower the translator for the job, because translators are the ones who deeply know two cultures. Researchers (Doloughan and Rogers 2006; Munday 2009) find a link between translation and creative writing.

Jettmarová (2004:659) notes that advertisement translation differences depend on time and convention. Modern norm is an adaptation of the message to national advertising and behavioural conventions, stereotypes and laws.

3. What's in a name?

3.1. 1920s and 1930s

The 1920s and 1930s in Latvia are notable for the translation of some brand names in advertisements as, for instance, for pharmaceutical products that were, in some cases, advertised with a Latvian name:

(1) Enkura Pain-Expellers (Atpuhta 1929: 24)

"Enkura Pain-Expellers" is a German-American brand "Anker Pain-Expeller" / "Anchor Pain-Expeller", advertised in Latvia with the Latvian elements: the noun *enkurs* and its masculine ending -*s*. However, such approach was never taken in the case of the automobile adverts of the time. Yet there is one exception: the Ford automobile brand.

The advertisements of this popular brand made use of the Latvian spelling conventions:

(2) Forda preču vāģis V-8 [literally, 'Ford's automobile for the carriage of goods V-8'] (Ilustrētā Tehnika. Motors un sports 1935)

And when the Ford company sold a licence for assembling its cars to a local proprietor in Latvia (Wirtschaftsnachrichten 1939), the adaptation and usage of Latvian endings and declination was done without exception:

(3) Piedāvā "Forda – Vairoga" preču un pasažieru automobiļus [literally, "Ford's – Vairog's automobiles for carriage of goods and passengers are offered] (Ilustrētā Tehnika. Motors un sports 1938)

That was done against the backdrop of other advertisements where brands were used without any adaptation:

(4) Drošais, jaunais "OPEL" [literally, secure new "OPEL"] (Ilustrētā Tehnika. Motors un sports 1935)

Quotation marks were often used to underscore the foreignness of the brand.

The choice of the linguistic form of the brand in translation could not have been left to chance by the Ford proprietors. When it discussed the need for the Latvian producers to learn advertising, because it would help them in gaining better sales for their products, the Latvian press of 1928 quoted Henry Ford. In the reported

discussion between Ford and Schmidt, a producer of canned products, Schmidt put forward the argument that a good product advertised itself. Ford replied that having a good product without advertising it was like hiding one's light under a bushel: it brought no benefit, as nobody saw or was able to find it (Jaunais Zemgalietis 1928). Whether this dialogue really took place is left for the reader to judge; yet the press of 1930s demonstrated its interest in advertising.

The linguistic form in translation is related to the positioning of the brand: whether it should be perceived as a car that has gained popularity and trust locally, like Ford cars, or, alternatively, whether an advertised brand should be perceived as a foreign car whose value should rest on its being foreign. Judging by many non-adapted brands, the foreign origin of the brand is presented as a value in Latvia of the 1920s and 1930s. Of course, one should bear in mind that knowledge of German was widespread among the consumers at the time and the Latvian language, although developing its spelling norms and terminology at a very high speed, did not make use of all the newly developed norms, particularly in advertising. Some semi-adapted hybrid forms of spelling can be noted, for example retaining the foreign brand name and adding the ending of the genitive case against the convention – after an apostrophe, for instance:

(5) Packard'a automobiļi (Ilustrētā Tehnika. Motors un sports 1937)

Thus, a foreignized brand is moulded to fit the Latvian grammar, yet not its spelling rules.

The examples show that the translators working on advertisements played an important role in ensuring successful text travel in 1920s-1930s.

3.2. Soviet Latvia's automobile brands, 1960s-1980s

The import of foreign products dropped severely in Soviet Latvia. Without a market economy and competition, advertisements in the socialist economy lost their purpose and were not used, except when the product made in the Soviet Latvia was exported to other Soviet republics or abroad.

Latvia, with its production of vans and mopeds, was part of the Soviet automobile industry. The van brand "Latvija" was known in all the Soviet republics, as the advertisement "Latvija. Микроавтобус RAF-977" travelled along with the advertised vans to different destinations in the Soviet Union. Latvian place names became brands for another commodity: mopeds produced by the factory "Sarkanā Zvaigzne" [the Red Star] in the capital of Latvia, Riga. The moped brands "Rīga", "Venta" and "Gauja" (both names of Latvian rivers), acquired added value that was proudly transmitted to the consumers all over the Soviet Union and beyond its borders, in a foreignized, Latvian form. In the 1960s, moped "Rīga" was sold in Greece, Turkey, Marocco (Dzimtenes Balss 1964a), Nepal, Syria, Cambodia (Dzimtenes Balss 1968), Finland (Dzimtenes Balss 1964b) and Hungary (Dzimtenes Balss 1967).

With the collapse of the Soviet Union approaching, attempts were made to make the first bilingual advertisements of the vans produced in Latvia. In the advertisement for the ambulance van, for example, the English text is placed under the Latvian, which is a source text of the English translation. The translation itself is very literal and awkward as it contains numerous errors (Figure 1).

MIKROAUTOBUSU RŪPNĪCA
RAF (RĪGAS AUTOBUSU FABRIKA)

REANIMOBILIS! RAF-2914-UNIVERSĀLS

Apstākļus kvalitatīvas mediciniskās palīdzības sniegšanai Jums nodrošinās:
— salona izmēri un konfigurācija, kas ļauj strādāt stāvus un piekļūt cietušajam no abām pusēm,
— radiostacija,
— izlietne ar elektropiedziņas ūdens padevi,
— paaugstinātas siltuma atdeves sildītājs,
— piespiedu ventilācija,
— gaisa kondicionētājs (ja norādīts pasūtījumā).

Mikroautobusu rūpnīca RAF,
Latvijas PSR, 229600,
Jelgava, Aviācijas ielā 18,
t. 21-849, 20-243

RAF-2915

Ātrās mediciniskās palīdzības automašīnas galvenā īpašība ir **ātrums**!
RAF-2915 nodrošina ātru mediciniskās palīdzības sniegšanu uz vietas, un komfortablu slimnieku nogādi stacionārā.
Salonā ir papildus saliekamās, iekarināmās nestuves.
Iegādājoties rūpnīcas RAF sanitāro transportu, Jūs nodrošināsiet adekvātu neatliekamās mediciniskās palīdzības sniegšanu cietušajiem!

THE MICROBUS PLANT
RAF (RIGA AUTOBUS FACTORY)

Universal reanimobile.
Conditions for qualitative first madical service will provide:
— size and configuration of saloon allowing to work upright and attend the patient from both sides,
— radiostation, radio communication,
— sink with electrodrive water feeding,
— heater with increased heat return,
— coersive ventilation,
— air-conditioning (if ordered).

RAF-2915

The main feature of ambulance car — **speed!**
RAF-2915 provides swift medical service on the spot and comfortable of patient to hospital.
Saloon is supplied with on extra folding stretcher.
Acquiring RAF ambulance car you will provide adequate immediate medical service to victim.

Micro-bus plant RAF,
Aviācijas Street 18, Jelgava,
Latvian SSR, 229600

Fig.1. Advertisement for the van RAF-2915 (Latvijas Ārsts 1989)

3.3. Post-Soviet advertising

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, advertising started from scratch in Latvia, with many direct translations or non-translated advertisements on the market. The source texts were mainly English.

Modern advertisements in Latvia mainly reflect the same trends as those observed elsewhere in the world. However, there are some features that need to be pointed out.

The first is the fact that Latvia is a small market and that influences the adaptations. Literature on marketing and coding errors of the marketing campaigns provides examples of brands that have caused unexpected associations which interfere with the value they need to be associated with. For instance, in Spain, Chevrolet Nova, meaning "a new star", was perceived with a different connotation, "no va!", "it does not go" (Cateora, Gilly and Graham 2011: 470). Even if these examples are sometimes treated as urban legends (Erichsen 2017), the names of the cars do get changed. Thus, currently Renault Captur is marketed with a changed spelling, Kaptur, in Russia. A popular automobile blogger, Lisa (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GGXdx2gd-Hs&t=100s), says that the last- minute change of the name has been caused by an awkward association with the Russian word сортир, a toilet, which the original name Captur might have caused. Many foreign brands are spelled in the Cyrillic alphabet in Russia. That might have contributed to the wrong reading of the original name Captur. Irrespective of whether the story about the reason for the change is true or not, it demonstrates the importance of the cultural background, the linguistic features of the market and their impact on text travel. The change is there, the oppositional code of the audience is avoided. The new name, "Kaptur", however, is a hybrid word that does not communicate the value of the brand: compactness and elegance, associated with the French culture. The moulding of the new name, done half-way, has failed to make the audience grasp the meaning of the dominant code.

Latvia has a large Russian speaking population; however, the same Renault car sold in Latvia has an unchanged name, Captur. This might be explained by the fact that the producers who had changed the name of the car for a big market – Russia – would not consider changing the name of the brand for a small market – Latvia, so a strong connection with the foreign cultural origin is fully preserved.

The second feature of the Latvian market and the translation of advertisements here is the fact that, although Latvia has both a Latvian speaking and a Russian speaking audience, the translated texts into Latvian and Russian and the visuals for the two audiences are often similar, irrespective of the fact that not only the two languages, but also the mentalities of the people differ. In an-interview in the Latvian daily business newspaper "Dienas Bizness" (Zeļenkovs 2005), a group of representatives of communication, marketing and advertising agencies agreed that the socio-cultural space of the Latvian and the Russian speaking people is not similar: they attend different cultural events, concerts, theatres, film festivals, cafes and read, listen to and watch different media. Their sense of humour is not alike, and neither is their sense of colour, their readiness to take risks or their appreciation of directness or indirectness in

advertising. Using Hall's (2006) terminology, the Latvian-speaking audience adheres to the oppositional code more easily. Roziņš, the director of media agency Universal McCann (SIA Trendmark), describes it to Zeļenkovs, the journalist of "Dienas Bizness": "[their] perception is moderately conservative, people do not like to take chances and feel lack of trust towards advertising" (Zeļenkovs 2005 [my translation]). In the same interview, Roziņš states that the Russian-speaking audience is more open to innovations, it is readier to try new things and takes risks more easily, or, in Hall's terms, it readily adheres to the dominant code. For this reason, marketing campaigns for the Russian-speaking audience could be built on emotions and praise the product more openly. Unfortunately, due to the economy of resources, in their advertisements the international companies tend to focus on the commonalities, not on the differences between two audiences, and translations are done accordingly (Zeļenkovs 2005). Coming back to our example of Renault Captur, even if we assume that the Russian speaking consumer in Latvia might be more accustomed to multilingualism and would more likely read the brand name as it is intended by the producers – using the Roman alphabet – the trend of advertising in a similar fashion for both audiences on the Latvian advertising market also explains the lack of adaptation.

A positive example of the similarity of the approach, yet celebrating the difference, is the Audi A6 and Audi Q5 campaign, where a local second name was assigned to the cars differently for the Latvian and the Russian audience. In 2014, a masculine name, Visvaldis (the meaning of the name in Latvian is "one who rules everywhere"), was chosen for the Audi A6 in Latvia, but Владислав (the meaning of the name is "one who rules and enjoys glory") for the same car targeted at Latvia's Russian speaking audience. Another brand of the same producer, Audi Q5, also received men's names - Visvaris (the meaning of the name is "one who is able to do everything") for the Latvian consumer, and Лев – a masculine name that means "a lion" in Russian – for the Russian consumer in Latvia (it can be noted that, in a similar campaign, a Lithuanian name, Mindaugas (the name of a famous 13th century ruler in Lithuania), was chosen for the marketing of Audi A6, and Žygimantas (a king of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania at the turn of the16th century) – for presenting Audi Q5 in Latvia's neighbouring country Lithuania).

The names were different and existed only in advertisements, not on the actual cars. However, the marketing strategy was similar for the two target audiences, Latvian and Russian-speaking, and even in two different countries, Latvia and Lithuania. It moulded the translated advertisements for the new cultural context by adding new, local features to the products, thus bringing them closer to the consumers and making the audiences adapt to the dominant communication code of the advertisements.

Giving names to the cars is an interesting approach. However, the subsequent texts seem to struggle with a smaller or greater difficulty of communicating a set of values that are rather artificially linked to the meaning of the assigned names.

Visvaldis ('one that rules everywhere') is linked to the text "to rule a situation is a nice feeling". For Владислав, the text is expanded: "to rule and control the

situation is always a nice feeling. To rule and control your new Audi A6 is even nicer". The two messages are different as to the degree of their directness. The Latvian text implies a broader value of ruling different situations, the Russian text is more emphatic about ruling and controlling every situation, and includes a driving situation very explicitly.

The Audi Q5 text for the Latvian consumer is even more aspirational: Visvaris ('one who is able to do everything') offers the ability "to surprise, bring joy and convince everybody", but for the Russian audience, a safari picture is unveiled by the text: the name of the car, Лев (the lion), is included into antithesis: "it is a real challenge to tame a lion, it is a true pleasure to tame your new Audi Q5".

For the Lithuanian consumers, reference is made to their glorious history.

The whole campaign in fact is a remake of the Audi A6 campaign from 2010, the TV-spot of which is called "Check". The Audi A6 placed in a light tunnel, where its surface is checked for minor deficiencies, was photographed by a German photographer Olaf Hauschulz (new business 2010). The values that the original campaign focuses on are more straight-forward: flawless quality that both represents the achievement and helps to achieve success in business.

In general, the move from simple values to a more complicated, but also more artificial system of values can be observed in modern advertising in Latvia. A brief insight in the way translators work with values is provided next.

4. Translators' perspective on rendering values across cultures

The way translators deal with values is perceived in the interviews conducted by me with four translators, who had 7 to 20 years of experience in working with promotional texts. In the trans-creation of advertisements, the more experienced translators try to find the overall value the advertisement of the product is based on, in order to be able to translate the meanings. Dissimilar concepts representing two cultures may become interchangeable, if they cause identical emotions. The concepts become even more interchangeable, if they represent the same value (Figure 2).
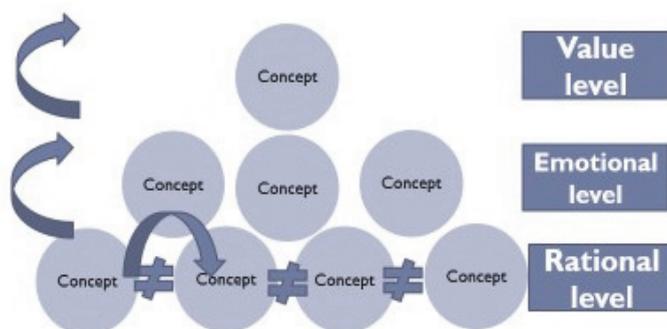

Fig. 2. Translator's perspective on values

A more complicated value system in modern advertising has caused the change of what has been considered as an anchor in translation. If information is considered an anchor by Torresi (2010: 31), the more experienced translators in Latvia always rely on emotion, and even on a value as an anchor in their translations.

5. Conclusion

The trend for a value system change over three periods of advertising history in Latvia is noticeable. It started with simple and understandable values and, over the decades, has grown into a complicated and sometimes artificially created system of values.

Analysis of mirroring-or-moulding in relation to dominant, oppositional or negotiated code reveals that, if culture is considered as a model at some period of time, its mirroring is preferred, because by looking at this mirror the target culture is adjusting its own pace to progress. Mirroring in advertising, by retaining the foreign features in such cases, puts the audience into a dominant code.

The moulding strategy is a useful strategy when dealing with an audience that is proud of its own achievements. The linguistic and cultural knowledge of translators are the main prerequisite for ensuring a successful text travel and preserving the value that needs to be transmitted. The moulding that has been done half-way has not ensured the access of the audience to the dominant code.

References

Cateora, Philip R., Mary C. Gilly and John L. Graham. 2011. *International Marketing*. 15th edition. New York: McGraw Hill/Irwin.

Doloughan, Fiona J. and Margaret Rogers. 2006. "Mediation and Regulation of Textual Space: the Role of Creative Writing in Translator Training" in Kemble, Ian and Carol O'Sullivan (eds.). *Translation and Creativity: How Creative is the Translator? Proceedings of the Conference Held on 12 November 2005 in Portsmouth.* Portsmouth: University of Portsmouth, pp. 34-43.

Erichsen, Gerald. 2017, September 23. "The Chevy Nova That Wouldn't Go" in *ThoughtCo.* [Online]. Available: https://www.thoughtco.com/chevy-nova-that-wouldnt-go-3078090 [Accessed 2017, December 3].

Hall, Stuart. 2006. "Encoding/Decoding" in Durham, Meenakshi Gigi and Douglas M. Kellner (eds.). *Media and Cultural Studies: Key Works.* Malden, Oxford, Carlton: Blackwell Publishing, pp. 163-174.

Jettmarová, Zuzana. 2004. "Linguistic Aspects of the Translation of Advertisements" in Kittel, Harald, Armin Paul Frank, Norbert Greiner, Theo Hermans, Werner Koller, José Lambert, and Fritz Paul (eds.). *Translation. An International Encyclopedia of Translation Studies.* 1. Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, pp. 649-654.

Mousten, Birthe and Gunta Locmele. 2014. "Knowledge Representation in Travelling Texts: from Mirroring to Missing the Point!" in *JOOKC.COM International – Peer-reviewed – Open-access – Journal of Organizational Knowledge Communication,* 1 (1), pp. 62-82.

Munday, Jeremy. 2009. "The Creative Voice of the Translator of Latin American Literature" in *Romance Studies*, 27 (4): Translation Part II, pp. 246-258.

Torresi, Ira. 2010. *Translating Promotional and Advertising Texts.* Manchester, UK and Kinderhook (NY), USA: St Jerome Publishing.

Venuti, Lawrence. 1995. *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation.* London and New York: Routledge.

Venuti, Lawrence. (ed.). 2000. *The Translation Studies Reader.* London: Routledge.

Wells, William D., John Burnett and Sandra Moriarty. 1992. *Advertising Principles and Practices*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Zeļenkovs, Andris. 2005, April 5. "Uz krievu un latviešu publiku 'jāmērķē atšķirīgi'" [Latvian and Russian Audiences should be Targeted Differently] in *Dienas Bizness* [Online]. Available: https://vecs.db.lv/laikraksta-arhivs/citas/uz-krievu-un-latviesu-publiku-jamerke-atskirigi-302571 [Accessed 2017, November 23].

Journals, newspapers

Atpuhta. 1929, no. 253.

Dzimtenes Balss. 1964a. "Dzimtenes mopēdi ceļo uz dienvidu zemēm" ['Mopeds from our motherland travel to the Southern countries'] in *Dzimtenes Balss*, 24.11.1964.

Dzimtenes Balss. 1964b. "Rīgas mopēdi Turcijā un Somijā" ['Riga mopeds in Turkey and Finland'] in *Dzimtenes Balss*, 20.04.1964.

Dzimtenes Balss. 1967. "Mopēdi – Rīgas eksportprece" ['Mopeds – Riga's export goods'] in *Dzimtenes Balss*, 15.06.1967.

Dzimtenes Balss. 1968. "Rīgas mopēdi Himalajos" ['Riga mopeds in the Himalayas'] in *Dzimtenes Balss*, 26.01.1968.

Ilustrētā Tehnika. Motors un sports. 1935. no. 9.

Ilustrētā Tehnika. Motors un sports. 1937. no. 12.

Ilustrētā Tehnika. Motors un sports. 1938. no. 8.

Jaunais Zemgalietis. 1928. "Reklama" ['Advertising']. no. 101, 06.05.1928.

Latvijas Ārsts. 1989. no. 1.

New Business. 2010, January 15. "kempertrautmann inszeniert Audi im Lichttunnel" in *New Business*. [Online]. Available: http://www.new-business.de/kommunikation/detail.php?rubric=KOMMUNIKATION&nr=594550&PHPSESSID=fva07v5ujlcskrj1k2ellr9n97 [Accessed 2017, November 30].

Wirtschaftsnachrichten. 1939. no. 214, (28.03.1939).

Online resources

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GGXdx2gd-Hs&t=100s for Лиса Рулит *Если на Рено Дастер натянуть чужую шкурку* [Accessed 2017, November 21].

OBJECT AND OTHER METAPHORS
IN ENGLISH 'FEAR' QUOTATIONS

ANDREA CSILLAG

Debrecen Reformed Theological University

Abstract: *The paper studies the language of fear quotes in common people's passages on the internet site www.searchquotes.com/search/Fear. The paper investigates which fear metaphors listed in Kövecses (1990, 2000) are instantiated in the corpus and finds that the container metaphor, which seems to be central according to Kövecses, is much less represented than expected, while there is a wide range of versions of the object metaphor in the corpus, which is not identified in his works.*
Keywords: *basic emotion, container metaphor, fear, object metaphor*

1. Introduction

Emotions are very important human experiences with which people react to whatever may happen to them. The components that emotions comprise are bodily reactions, facial expressions, emotional reactions and a cognitive appraisal of the situation in question (cf. Bányai, 2013: 51, Atkinson et al. 1997: 309). Linguistic research mainly focuses on what people really mean when they talk about details of their emotions. Cognitive linguistics investigates linguistic expressions of emotions and finds that the language of emotion represents the way we conceptualize emotions.

My present focus of interest is fear, one of the basic emotions in Ekman et al.'s (1972) sense, an "emotion caused by the nearness or possibility of danger, pain, evil, etc." (Hornby 1989). Fear is our response to a situation in which we are faced with some physical danger or some other threat to our personal security. Depending on the intensity of our fear and the cognitive appraisal of the dangerous situation, we either take action to cope with it, or flee from the situation, or freeze, not being able to do anything (Lazarus 1991).

The present paper investigates the concept of fear present in passages on fear on the internet site <www.searchquotes.com/search/Fear>. This site organizes passages under headings like 'acceptance', 'beauty', 'fear' and 'you thought wrong', which are popular topics for people today. At the end of each passage, it is indicated

who the author of the passage is and who posted it. However, there are no specific references to where the passages come from. The authors are from almost all walks of life: anonymous people and people giving their names or nicknames, as well as world-famous writers, musicians, celebrities, etc. The site states that its "goal is to help you by delivering amazing quotes to bring inspiration, personal growth, love and happiness to your everyday life".

2. Theoretical background

Cognitive linguistic studies of fear claim that details of our fear experience are captured in conceptual metaphors and metonymies. Metonymies mainly present details of physiological reactions and facial expressions accompanying fear, which are observable bodily symptoms (Wierzbicka 1999: 276), while metaphors present other aspects of fear, which are mainly subjective experiences taking place inside the body and usually based on thoughts (Wierzbicka 1999:305), therefore not observable.

Kövecses (1990:69-74) gives a detailed account of fear metonymies including PHYSICAL AGITATION, INCREASE IN HEART RATE, DRYNESS IN THE MOUTH, ABSENCE OF BLOOD IN THE FACE, NERVOUSNESS IN THE STOMACH, SWEATING, DROP IN BODY TEMPERATURE, SKIN SHRINKS, (INVOLUNTARY) RELEASE OF BOWELS or BLADDER, FLIGHT, WAYS OF LOOKING. Following the metonymic principle, Kövecses claims that all these phenomena may stand for fear, that is, "The physiological effects of fear stand for fear" and "The behavioural reactions of fear stand for fear" (Kövecses 1990: 73). On the other hand, Kövecses discusses a number of metaphors that conceptualize some other details of fear, mostly subjective inner bodily experiences (e.g. *Fear was rising in him* – Kövecses 1990: 75) and the cause, the attempt at control and the loss of control aspects of fear. He identifies the metaphors FEAR IS A FLUID IN A CONTAINER, FEAR IS A VICIOUS ENEMY, FEAR IS A TORMENTOR, FEAR IS AN ILLNESS, FEAR IS A SUPERNATURAL BEING, FEAR IS AN OPPONENT, FEAR IS A BURDEN, FEAR IS A NATURAL FORCE, FEAR IS A SUPERIOR (Kövecses 1990:74-78).

Kövecses (2000) gives the following list of fear metaphors: FEAR IS A FLUID IN A CONTAINER, FEAR IS A HIDDEN ENEMY, FEAR IS A TORMENTOR, FEAR IS A SUPERNATURAL BEING, FEAR IS AN ILLNESS, FEAR IS INSANITY, THE SUBJECT OF FEAR IS A DIVIDED SELF, FEAR IS AN OPPONENT IN A STRUGGLE, FEAR IS A BURDEN, FEAR IS A NATURAL FORCE, FEAR IS A SOCIAL SUPERIOR (Kövecses 2000:23).

I have the following remarks to make concerning the differences between the two lists:

(1) It is not clear what difference can be found between a vicious enemy and a hidden one, especially because Kövecses gives the same examples to illustrate them in both of his works, namely, *"Fear slowly crept up on* him. He was *hounded*

by the fear that business would fail. The thought continued *to prey on* her mind" (cf. Kövecses 1990: 75; 2000: 23). (N.B.: Referring to Kövecses (1998), Stefanowitsch (2006: 78-79) questions the distinction between FEAR IS A VICIOUS ENEMY, FEAR IS A TORMENTOR, and FEAR IS AN OPPONENT IN A STRUGGLE and suggests that they should be subsumed under FEAR IS AN ENEMY.)

(2) Kövecses lists the insanity metaphor instantiated by "Jack was *insane with* fear (Kövecses 2000: 23); however, I think that insanity is a special kind of illness, so the two metaphors FEAR IS INSANITY and FEAR IS AN ILLNESS may be subsumed under FEAR IS AN ILLNESS.

(3) In the last metaphor, FEAR IS A SUPERIOR, Kövecses (2000) inserts the adjective 'SOCIAL' and gives an example from his 1990 list, "His actions were *dictated by* fear" (Kövecses 1990: 78, 2000: 23). Having considered the other examples in Kövecses's 1990 list, I claim that the insertion of the term 'social' should only be understood as a refinement of the original version of the metaphor. However, I find that the expression "Her fear *prevented* her *from* going into the house" in Kövecses's 1990 list is not to be identified as an instantiation of the social superior metaphor, but rather of the metaphor FEAR IS AN OBSTACLE (see below).

(4) The metaphor THE SUBJECT OF FEAR IS A DIVIDED SELF, instantiated by "I was *beside* myself with fear" (Kövecses 2000: 24), has no counterpart in Kövecses's 1990 analysis; however, he identifies practically the same expression (*I was beside myself*) as an instantiation of FEAR IS AN INCOMPLETE OBJECT (Kövecses1998: 128-129). Stefanowitsch argues that the expression refers to an "out-of-body situation rather than an incomplete object" (Stefanowitsch 2006: 78-79). Hornby (1989) defines the idiom *be beside oneself with something* as "have lost one's self-control because of the intensity of the emotion one is feeling" and gives the example *"He was beside himself with rage when I told him what I had done"*. It must be noted that adding phrases like *with fear/rage* specifies the emotion. The underlying metaphor conceptualizing the loss of control aspect of intense emotions is THE SELF EXPERIENCING INTENSE FEAR/EMOTION IS OUTSIDE THE BODY CONTAINER.

The studies referred to above show that metonymies capture mostly physiological reactions accompanying fear, while metaphors, the most frequently instantiated and the most elaborated of which are the container and the enemy metaphors, depict subjective inner bodily experiences of fear.

3. Fear metaphors on www.searchquotes.com/search/Fear

3.1. Data collection and processing

The literature surveyed above argues that the language describing fear experiences is pervaded by metaphorical and metonymical expressions. In the present paper, I wish to investigate whether the same is true for the language of short

passages concerning fear. I hypothesize that passages retrieved from the Internet site <www.searchquotes.com/search/Fear> also abound in figurative expressions. I use Kövecses's 1990 and 2000 conceptual metaphors and metonymies as checklists to investigate which metaphors and metonymies are instantiated in my corpus. I shall also attempt to find out whether there are any further metaphors and metonymies instantiated, and discuss what aspects of the concept "fear" they highlight.

My corpus is made up of 155 passages collected from the first 22 pages of the site <www.searchquotes.com/search/Fear>. (At the time of the retrieval, the site consisted of 329 pages and the passages were of two kinds: an introductory passage, followed by quotations from common people giving ideas on fear. The contributors are either unknown or use nicknames.) I have selected the passages that contain the terms *fear, fearful, frightened*, arranged the passages into groups according to the imagery used in them, and checked them for metaphors and metonymies.

I have found that the 155 passages under investigation instantiate 26 different metaphors, but no metonymies at all. 95 passages instantiate only 5 metaphors (FEAR IS AN OBJECT with 33 instantiations, FEAR IS AN ENEMY with 26 instantiations, FEAR IS A POWER OVER THE SELF with 17 instantiations, FEAR IS AN OBSTACLE with 10 instantiations, and FEAR IS A CONTAINER with 8 instantiations). The rest of the metaphors are instantiated by 1 to 5 passages, which makes them seem considerably less significant; therefore, in the present paper, I shall only discuss the five most frequently instantiated metaphors in my corpus.

3.2. Metaphors in the introductory passage

The passage below is the introduction to the subpage 'fear' on Searchquotes. It gives some preliminary ideas on fear:

> Fear is the frightening thought that causes anxiety or worry. Fear gives you negative thoughts and reduces your self-confidence. Fear must be present only while doing unwanted immoral actions and not for darkness or anything else. Fear is the first hindrance towards all your actions. A coward is never appreciated, but only made fun of by others. In contrast, one who is fearless to tread any path wins the appreciation and gains a lot of confidence and courage.

> Fear has the tendency to spread like wild fire and is also contagious. Hence, we should keep fear out. Fear increases the challenge and will not help to come out of the crisis. But when we try to analyze after a while, we see that it was highly silly to have developed fear for such trivial things and we try to scoff at it. "Fear is the lengthened shadow of ignorance "said Arnold Glasgow. The first step towards wisdom is to conquer fear and remove it from our minds. So, be wise.

As can be seen, the passage is rich in metaphors. In the first three sentences, fear is shown to be an active and powerful entity that causes several negative reactions and seems to be stronger than the person who experiences it. The underlying metaphor may be FEAR IS A SUPERIOR, which is identified by

Kövecses (1990). It is interesting to note here that, although the first sentence identifies fear as a thought, both psychologists and lay people think of it as an emotion. Furthermore, it is said to be the cause of anxiety and worry here, which are two other emotions. Ekman et al. (1972) and Ekman (1992) call fear a basic emotion, Lazarus (1991) claims that it is the name of a family of related emotions. Anxiety and worry are members of the fear emotion family just like horror, panic, fright and a few other emotions. In the first paragraph, fear is also shown to hinder one from doing one's actions. The underlying metaphor is FEAR IS AN OBSTACLE. Both metaphors show fear as a destructive or negative force, which is a specific case of the conception of emotion as a disruptive force (Wierzbicka 1999: 17-19, referred to in Goatly 2007: 205).

In the second paragraph, fear is presented as a combination of several negative aspects. First of all, it is "compared" to fire, which is one of the most dangerous elements or one of the most prototypical dangers (Lakoff 1987). It is also seen as contagious, which is another undesirable feature, especially when it is associated with diseases. (N.B.: The phrase *contagious fire* is used as a technical term in contexts related to police or military actions "where an initial officer's shots launch a cascade of gunfire from other officers present" (White, Klinger 2008). Hornby's (1989) example is *Fear spread through the crowd like a contagion.*). Both the image of fire and the image of contagion share the underlying metaphor FEAR IS A DANGEROUS THING.

Several other metaphors can be identified in the second paragraph: FEAR IS A HUMAN (HUMAN-LIKE) BEING. (Rewis-Łetkowska 2015: 384), instantiated by *fear increases the challenge and will not help to come out of the crisis, develop fear* and *scoff at it* (N.B.: one can *scoff at dangers* and many other things that we think of contemptuously), FEAR IS AN ENEMY instantiated by *to conquer fear*, and FEAR IS AN (UNDESIREABLE) OBJECT IN THE MIND CONTAINER instantiated by *(to) remove it* [fear] *from our minds*. It must be noted that the enemy metaphor is identified in Kövecses's analyses, however, the dangerous thing, human (human-like) being and object metaphors are not, and the container image is used in different versions of the metaphor, combined with the concept of fear as fluid, for example.

3.3. Metaphors in the quotations

3.3.1. Fear as *object*

My corpus contains 33 passages instantiating the metaphor FEAR IS AN OBJECT. This relatively large number of instantiations highlights a wide range of features of the concept of object: objects can be measured, compared and modified, possessed and shared, replaced, resisted and eliminated. Expressions that map such features of objects as the source domain onto the concept of fear as the target domain instantiate versions of the object metaphor. Below I give a list of the versions identified in my corpus. (I shall restrict the number of examples to 1-3, due to paper length limits.)

(a) FEAR IS A MEASURABLE OBJECT
1. Let the fear of being average push you to a status above the *average fear*. Refuse to accept mediocrity.
2. The power of our obstacles is directly proportional to *the size of our fears*.

(b) FEAR IS A COMPARABLE OBJECT
3. Let your hopes and dreams be *bigger than your fear* and problems.
4. The Power of Loving your life is far *stronger than fear* of Death.

(c) FEAR IS A MODIFIABLE OBJECT
5. Your smile is all I really need to *ease fear* […].
6. […] The more you engage to your power and capability, *the faster your fear of failure dwindles away* as you take a new perspective.

(d) FEAR IS A POSSESSABLE OBJECT.
7. Everyone *has fear*. But we shouldn't make our fears so large that they stop us from achieving our goals.

(e) FEAR IS A SHAREABLE OBJECT.
8. *Keep your fears to yourself*; *share* your courage with others.

(f) FEAR IS A RESISTABLE OBJECT
9. Achieving your dreams requires that you have enough courage and will power *to resist your fear* and doubts.

(g) FEAR IS A REPLACEABLE OBJECT.
10. *Replace fear* of the unknown with curiosity!

(h) FEAR IS AN ELIMINABLE OBJECT
11. To live with Faith, *eliminate fear*. Only one can exist in our Life at any point of time.
12. *Leave your fear behind*.

Metaphors (a-c) above seem to have the intensity component in common, which can be compared, measured and modified, therefore we think that they highlight the intensity component of fear from different angles. Metaphors (d-e) highlight the idea of possession, that is, objects usually belong to people, who own them, and once people own things, they can share or keep them to themselves. (Example 8 does not say directly that fear can be shared, however, it implies it by way of contrasting fear as a negative entity and courage as a positive one and keeping the former to oneself and sharing the latter.) The common component in metaphors (f-h) is that fear is not supposed to be present in one's life, therefore it should be resisted, replaced or eliminated. In other words "*we should keep fear out*" or "*hide it*" as stated in the second paragraph of the introductory passage (see in section 3.2. above).

3.3.2. Fear as *enemy*

It has been shown above that Kövecses's (1990, 2000) metaphors FEAR IS A VICIOUS ENEMY/HIDDEN ENEMY, FEAR IS A TORMENTOR, FEAR IS AN OPPONENT (IN A STRUGGLE) may be subsumed in FEAR IS AN ENEMY. The key terms of the *enemy* source domain instantiated by 26 passages in our corpus are *overcome, conquer, fight through, enemy, face* as in the examples below:

13. A person who *has conquered the fear of failure* can achieve everything in life.
14. It is courage which makes you *fight through your fears* and help you become more self-confident […].
15. Living a life of victory is *an overcoming of daily fears*.
16. […] just remember everything you have faced, all the battles you have won, and *all the fears you have overcome*.
17. *facing our fears and overcoming them* will make us strong and capable enough to face any challenges in life.
18. *Fear is a man's worst enemy*, but love is a man's most powerful weapon against anything.
19. *To conquer fear* is the best way to gain your self-confidence.

The image of *victory* in sentence 15, the image of *battle* in 16 and the image of *weapon* in 18 prove that the enemy source domain is well-elaborated in relation to fear and can be understood in a larger context, the context of war. Kövecses identifies the correspondences between the opponent source domain and fear target domain as follows: opponent :: fear, struggling with the opponent :: struggling for emotional control, defeating the opponent :: controlling fear and losing to the opponent :: fear controlling the self (Kövecses 1990:77). Although the examples in our corpus may refer to a possible loss to the enemy/fear, they are more likely to encourage people to defeat the enemy, that is, to gain control over their fear, which results in becoming more self-confident and successful. We think that the lack of examples relating the loss of control aspect of fear can be explained by the self-help and take-responsibility-for-yourself character of the page, which is much less pervasive when we describe how afraid we are.

3.3.3. Fear as *power over the self*

As already pointed out, Kövecses identifies the metaphors FEAR IS A SUPERIOR (1990:78) and FEAR IS A SOCIAL SUPERIOR (2000:23), giving the example *His actions were dictated by fear* in both of his works. He explains that such metaphorical expressions capture the phenomenon that intense emotions may "force us to perform certain actions", that is, the SUPERIOR metaphor "suggests that the self is inferior who obeys the commands of the superior" (Kövecses 1990: 78).

In my corpus, one can find a similar metaphor instantiated by 17 examples. The passages show the potential of fear to be/become stronger than the self and take control over the self, overwhelm the self, dictate or define things and so on. The

passages suggest that people should not allow fear to do such things or should avoid situations in which their fear may become stronger than themselves. Therefore, we think that the underlying metaphor is FEAR IS A POWER OVER THE SELF, which is more general than Kövecses's superior metaphor, and addresses the question of control too, for example:

> 20. Never let *fear stay in control over your life*. Be the best control of your unfailing wisdom. Fear isn't the answer to get you through motivation.
> 21. Don't let *fear break your determination*.
> 22. Never *be overwhelmed by fear* […]
> 23. It's not the thing you fear that has power over you, *it's your fear of that thing that has power over you*.
> 24. Commit to not letting *your fears define your boundaries*.
> 25. Most people *are paralyzed by fear*. Overcome it and you take charge of your life and your world.

3.3.4. Fear as *obstacle*

Having control over one's fear is exemplified in *You can learn to feel less fearful and to cope with your fear so it doesn't stop you enjoying life* and it takes us to the following metaphor, FEAR IS AN OBSTACLE (with 10 instantiations in my corpus), by stating that the purpose of gaining control over one's fear is to stop it from preventing us to do the things we want to do:

> 26. Fear *holds* people *back from* reaching their true potential.
> 27. Fear of failure is the biggest *obstacle* between you and your dreams.
> 28. *A fearful mind builds a wall between* you and your dream.

Sentences 26 and 27 express the same idea that we have already found in *Fear is the first hindrance towards all your actions* in the introductory section. Sentence 28 is more complex because fear seen as an obstacle is presented as a wall, which is the product of a fearful mind. So the ontological correspondences are: a physical wall (between you and your destination) is an obstacle: an abstract wall (between you and your dream) is an obstacle, a physical wall is a product of someone's building activity: an abstract wall is a product of the building activity of a fearful mind, a physical wall/obstacle hinders you from reaching your destination: an abstract wall hinders you from realizing your dream. These correspondences provide the mapping for the metaphors A FEARFUL MIND IS A BUILDER OF ABSTRACT WALLS and FEAR IS A SUBSTANCE IN A CONTAINER; THE MIND IS A CONTAINER FOR FEAR; FEAR IS A SUBSTANCE IN THE MIND CONTAINER, which are combined in the metaphor A(N ABSTRACT) WALL IS AN OBSTACLE BUILT BY A MIND CONTAINING FEAR SUBSTANCE. (It must be noted that the obstacle metaphor is not found in Kövecses's lists of fear metaphors.)

3.3.5. Fear as *container*

As we have just seen, the container metaphor is present in the conceptualization of fear. At the generic level, there are two versions of the metaphor EMOTIONS ARE CONTAINERS: one is EMOTIONS ARE FLUIDS/SUBSTANCES IN THE BODY CONTAINER (e.g. *She is full of grief. His eyes are filled with joy.*) and the other is EMOTIONS ARE CONTAINERS FOR THE SELF (e.g. *In his surprise he did not know what to say.*) The specific version of the latter for fear is FEAR IS A CONTAINER FOR THE SELF (instantiated by 8 examples). It is typically used when the emotion is very intense, in fact, so intense that it takes control over the self as in the following examples:

29. There are many who *live life in fear*, without taking risks. They don't take chances. Alas! Not only are they missing chances, they are missing Life itself!
30. If you *live in fear*, success will disappear.
31. I *lost myself in the fear*, I found myself in the grief.
32. Don't *waste life in fear*. When you do something do it with all your might and confidence. Nothing great can be achieved with fear and doubt.
33. To be up lifted, convince yourself that you can achieve anything you put your mind into. *Psyche yourself out of fear* and go for the win.

Example 33 above suggests that the experiencer should actively work himself/herself out of the state of fear. In 33, fear is clearly conceptualized as a container. The ontological correspondence is: getting out of a container: psyching oneself out of fear.

4. Conclusion

It can be stated that there are no metonymies instantiated in my corpus, which may be explained by the fact that the passages do not give descriptions of people's physiological reactions and/or of facial expressions accompanying fear, when they are in dangerous situations.

I have identified the following metaphors on the internet site <www.searchquotes.com/search/Fear>: FEAR IS AN OBJECT (undesireable/ measurable/ comparable/ modifiable/ possessable/ shareable/ resistable/ replaceable/ eliminable object; FEAR IS AN ENEMY; FEAR IS A POWER OVER THE SELF; FEAR IS AN OBSTACLE (and its version A(N ABSTRACT) WALL IS AN OBSTACLE BUILT BY A MIND CONTAINING FEAR SUBSTANCE); FEAR IS A CONTAINER FOR THE SELF. The object metaphor has 10 versions, and thus it is the best elaborated, while the container metaphor has only one version and has the smallest number of instantiations in my corpus.

The cognitive linguistic view on emotion claims that the container metaphor pervades our language of emotion, however, the number of examples in our corpus does not support it. The kinds and range of metaphorical source domains for fear

highlight several aspects of fear, the most frequently recurring one being that of losing or gaining control over one's emotion, which is very much in line with Kövecses's findings. At the same time, the majority of the metaphorical expressions in my corpus give guidance on how to cope with and gain control over one's fear (in order to be more successful and more self-confident). The metaphors identified by Kövecses mostly describe subjective details of the fear experience. Because the quotations display a totally different attitude to talking about fear, it is highly understandable that metaphors such as FEAR IS A SUPERNATURAL BEING, FEAR IS A BURDEN, FEAR IS A NATURAL FORCE are not instantiated, while the metaphors FEAR IS AN OBJECT and FEAR IS AN OBSTACLE, absent from Kövecses's lists, seem to dominate my corpus.

References

Atkinson, Rita L., Richard C. Atkinson, Edward E. Smith and Daryl J. Bem. 1997. *Pszichológia.* Translated by Péter Bodor et al. Budapest: Osiris.

Bányai, Éva. 2013. "Az affektív pszichológia tárgya, szemlélete és alapfogalmai" [The Subject Matter, Approach and Basic Concepts of Affective Psychology] in Bányai, Éva and Katalin Varga (eds.). Affektív pszichológia – az emberi késztetések és érzelmek világa [Affective Psychology - the World of Human Drives and Emotions]. Budapest: Medicina Könyvkiadó Zrt., pp. 27-69

Ekman, Paul. 1992. "Are There Basic Emotions?" in *American Psychologist*, 99, pp. 550-553.

Ekman, Paul, Wallace V. Friesen and Phoebe Ellsworth. 1972. *Emotion in the Human Face: Guidelines for Research and an Integration of Findings*. New York: Pergamon Press.

Fear on Searchquotes. Available: www.searchquotes.com/search/Fear [Accessed 2017, March 7].

Goatly, Andrew. 2007. *Washing the Brain – Metaphor and Hidden Ideology.* Amsterdam Philadelphia: John Benjamin Publishing Company.

Hornby, Albert Sydney. 1989. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kövecses, Zoltán. 1990. *Emotion Concepts.* New York: Springer-Verlag.

Kövecses, Zoltán. 1998. "Are there any Emotion-Specific Metaphors?" in Athanasiadou, Angeliki and Elzbieta Tabaskowska (eds.). *Speaking of Emotions. Conceptualization and Expression*. Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter, pp. 127-151.

Kövecses, Zoltán. 2000. *Metaphor and Emotion. Language, Culture, and Body in Human Feeling,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lakoff, George. 1987. *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things. What Categories Reveal about the Mind.* Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press.

Lazarus, Richard S. 1991. *Emotion and Adaptation.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Rewis-Łetkowska, Anna. 2015. "Multimodal Representations of Fear Metaphors in Television Commercials" in Brzozowska, Dorota and Władisław Cłopicki (eds.). *Culture's Software: Communication Styles.* Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. 381-404.

Stefanowitsch, Anatol. (2006) "Words and their Metaphors: A Corpus-Based Approach" in. Gries, Stefan Th and Anatol Stefanowitsch (eds.). *Corpus-based Approaches to Metaphor and Metonymy* (*Trends in Linguistics 171*). Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter, pp. 61-105.

White, Michael D., David Klinger. 2008. "Contagious Fire" in *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency/ Crime Delinquency Online First*, June 24. [Online]. Available: https://cvpcs.asu.edu/sites/default/files/content/projects/contagious%20 fire.PDF

Wierzbicka, Anna. 1999. *Emotions across Languages and Cultures. Diversity and Universals.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

'BOLI, LUGHA AND LANGUAGE, WE USE ALL THESE WORDS': CODESWITCHING AND CULTURAL IDENTITY IN MULTILINGUAL COMMUNITIES IN TANZANIA

ZEENAT SUMRA

Technical University, Chemnitz

Abstract: *This paper is concerned with the linguistic phenomena of code-switching, hereinafter referred to as codeswitching. It is the focus of an ongoing doctoral research project which examines this phenomenon in a multilingual migrant community in Tanzania. The first section provides an insight into the phenomenon of codeswitching, and includes details on the ongoing project, while the second section details the current project, including the methodological aspects and preliminary results garnered from data analysis conducted thus far.*

Keywords: *bilingualism, codeswitching, multilingualism, sociolinguistics, trilingualism*

1. Introduction

Codeswitching had remained largely ignored by researchers in linguistics, mostly until the last half century. Over the last twenty years however, codeswitching has taken off as a research topic and has been given varying definitions. The definition that most scholars agree on is that codeswitching is the practice of moving back and forth between two more languages. It tends to occur much more in conversations in comparison to written discourse. (Gardner-Chloros 2009). It occurs when a speaker alternates between two or more languages, or language varieties, in the context of a single conversation. Codeswitching is distinct from other language contact phenomena, such as borrowing. Borrowing affects the lexicon, the words that make up a language while code-switching takes place in individual utterances. (Poplack and Sankoff 1984) On the other hand, speakers practice code-switching when they are each fluent in at least two languages. The speakers must be at least true bilinguals. Since the 1980s, most scholars have come to regard codeswitching as a normal, natural product of bilingual and multilingual language use (Brice and Brice 2009).

A noted scholar who has proven to be a pioneer of codeswitching research, particularly in global communities, is Carol Myers-Scotton. She has written

numerous volumes and published many articles on the field, and her works have been an important part in linguistics studies in bilingualism, particularly pertaining to language contact and grammar. This dissertation borrows one of the key theories, that of the 'markedness model', from Myers-Scotton (1993).

Penelope Gardner-Chloros first carried out a study of code-switching between French and the Alsatian dialect (Gardner-Chloros 1985). She also probes the appropriateness of some grammatical approaches in other publications (Gardner-Chloros and Edwards 2004) and argues that codeswitching should be analyzed in a more comparative context (Gardner-Chloros 2007). She then published a book (Gardner-Chloros, 2009) which discusses that code-switching can be explored and fully understood only if is studied from a variety of perspectives, such as social factors and language contact. She also discusses the ties between codeswitching and various linguistic sub-fields, including both psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics, and that it should be seen in a wider context than the purely linguistic, as a more general semiotic device (Gardner-Chloros 2010).

Many of findings have also suggested that codeswitching is tied to concepts of language and group formation, and that to understand this better, it is necessary to consider societal structures in language contact situations (Acosta-Belén 1975). Meeuwis and Blommaert (1994: 416) suggest that an effective approach to conducting research in codeswitching should include the macro framework of the context which is the societal background to explain why people engage in codeswitching. Auer (1998) and Gumperz (1982) are theorists whose work has contributed to the field of sociolinguistics by attempting to use conversation analysis to analyze bilingual interactions.

The codeswitching being researched for this project is focused on three types; these include loanwords, filler words and complete, grammatically correct sentences.

2. Codeswitching used by the Gujarati Indian community in Tanzania, East Africa

Given that globalization has been steadily increasing over the past few decades, there is surprisingly still a considerable lack of linguistic research into lesser studied global social diasporas. Much of the existing literature has been devoted to Europe and the Americas, while English speaking migrant communities in other parts of the world have been largely left unstudied.

This project attempts to fill that gap by recognizing codeswitching not only as part of interpersonal communication, but also as part of a wider historical, sociocultural and educational process. It is focused on codeswitching in an unexplored linguistic demographic: Indian immigrants originating from the state of Gujarat in India and settled in Tanzania, East Africa. The Indian community in Tanzania is very diverse, both culturally and linguistically. Multilingualism is an inevitable consequence of migration and multiple languages tend to be acquired by migrant communities, including the host nation's (national) language, the mother

tongue of the migrant community and usually a third language if such is spoken in the host nation as a second language (Singleton et al. 2013).

The Indian community has been an integral part of Tanzanian culture for the past sixty-plus years. Indian migration to the East African coasts began in the mid-1950s, where Indian blue- collar workers were attracted to the numerous jobs opening because of the East Africa railroads projects under the supervision of the British, under whose colonial rule Tanzania was during that time.

This research focuses on the trilingual Indian community of Gujarati origin living in the urban areas of Dar es Salaam, Arusha and Tanga, and how they alternate between Kutchi (L1), Swahili (L2) and English (L3) in casual conversations, and how this language practice relates to their socio-cultural identities. This varied linguistic context is ideal for delving into the social significance of codeswitching. The aim of the research is to establish whether the occurrences of English codeswitching are dependent on education levels, and how linguistic style contributes to their sociocultural identity. The codeswitching being examined can be categorized into two groups: loanwords and utterances. Utterances can be further grouped into three categories: filler (connection) words which aim at propelling the conversation forward, such as 'anyway' 'also' 'and' and phrases, which comprise of grammatically complete sentences which serve as discourse functions in a speech act. Both intra-sentential and inter-sentential occurrences are examined, which indicates the grammatical competency of the speakers. The research methodology chosen is qualitative. Qualitative research concentrates on meaning making, and how this meaning reflects on their lives and how they view the world (Merriam 2009).

Participants in this study were selected if they fulfilled certain social and linguistic criteria. All participants were of Gujarati Indian origin, all raised in Tanzania, and all acquired English as their third language, after their mother tongues (either Gujarati or Kutchi), and simultaneous second languages (Hindi and Swahili). Second languages in this community tend to be acquired simultaneously; Swahili is formally learned at school and both practiced and acquired through social interactions, while Hindi is informally acquired mostly through media (TV programs, news channels) and cultural ties to India, such as films and music. Swahili and English are the official languages of the country, with Swahili being the national language. English is taught as a second language in Tanzania in some nursery and primary schools and is used as a medium of instruction in all secondary schools in the country (Rubagumya 1990).

The participants had shared the same values and upbringing, and mostly all hailed from the same social strata; i.e. the middle class. There were a few outliers having more lavish lifestyles, while some had more humble lifestyles. The participants belong to a social network within the community spanning three cities.

'Competent bilinguals', a term coined by Alicia Pousada (2000) refers to speakers who are communicatively competent in both languages, and can speedily intersect and easily switch between both, depending on the situation. Linguistic researchers have reached a consensus with the concepts of bilingualism and

trilingualism. Bloomfield (1953: 56) defined it as "the native-like control of two languages".

With reference to this study, participants were selected by taking into account true bilingualism and trilingualism, established with the help of preliminary questions and informal interviews, and shared social networks. It was essential that every participant be a true bilingual/trilingual, as the study needed the participants to possess the ability to not only be fluent in at least two languages, but to also be able to communicate clearly with other bi-and-trilingual members of the community.

All the participants speak English as their third language. The degree of their fluency in English varies, but each participant has learned English during their early childhood education. Many use English in their daily lives, with varying degrees of regularity. Kutchi is the native language of all except P. 17 and 18, who have Urdu and Goan as their mother tongue, respectively. All speak Swahili as their second language. Education was used as the variable, and not socioeconomic status. Socioeconomic status was initially selected as a variable, but data analysis indicated that the degree of codeswitching was not dependent on that variable.

All of them, except three, were born in Tanzania, with the three being born in India and moved to Tanzania during their childhood and teenage years. All of them have lived in Tanzania for an extended period; they either possess full residency or have lived there for most of their lives. The participants did have differing education levels, however, ranging from basic primary schooling to advanced degrees. Since the second variable was education levels, this variation proved valuable.

Age Range	20+		40+		60+	
Generation	1st	2nd	1st	2nd	1st	2nd
Education Levels						
Primary School			1	1	4	
High School		4		3	3	
University		4			1	1
Total per Age Group		8		5		9

Figure 1: Table depicting the informants sorted into categories

The data was collected in August 2016 during field research out in Tanzania, in the cities of Dar es Salaam, Arusha and Tanga. Naturally occurring, casual conversations were the main source of data. For this study, the preferred method was recording as much natural data as possible, in opposition to the more traditional sociolinguistic interview (Labov 1972). The environment for all conversations recorded for this research was where the participants felt the most relaxed and comfortable; most were recorded in their homes and a couple in a restaurant. The

researcher's presence was minimized as much as possible. The project was briefly explained to the participants, the recorder turned on and the researcher mostly remained in the background. Twenty minutes later the recorder would be turned off and turned back on again after a momentary lull or pause in the conversation. This was solely done to organize the conversations due to the length of time previously planned; the conversations were intended to be recorded as fifteen-to-twenty-minute stretches. The aim was to return from field research with twenty conversations; by the end of fieldwork, I returned with over fifty, all with the same length. All 22 participants were interviewed.

The data were transcribed and analyzed by employing two methods of qualitative analysis: conversation analysis and the markedness model (Myers-Scotton 1993). The Myers-Scotton model indicated that the participants switch on the basis of their rights and obligations sets, such as their social role in the interactions.

The preliminary results indicate that codeswitching varies: from the previously mentioned single loanwords, such as 'traffic', 'motorcycle', 'books'; filler words and connector words such as 'well'; 'ok', 'and,' to complete, grammatically correct sentences and paragraphs, which aligned perfectly to the Kutchi sentence uttered before the English. Both intra-sentential and inter-sentential codeswitching are noted, but there is a slightly more frequent occurrence of inter-sentential codeswitching, and it is deferred as the means to maintain the interest of the other participants in the conversation. English words also denote emotions such as excitement (e.g. 'wow!').

3. Conclusion

The preliminary data results support Myers-Scotton's theories of rights and obligations sets. Participants tend to switch from their L1, L2 and L3 based on their rights and obligations in the conversations. These rights include acting as the conversation leader, switching to maintain interest, as a listener, switching to confirm to the trends in the conversation, and as an observer, occasionally interjecting to show interest.

The study recognizes codeswitching not only as part of social interaction, but also of sociocultural identity. The examination above leads to valuable knowledge about the linguistic and cultural identities in lesser studied global multilingual communities. In today's increasingly globalized world, it remains relevant to examine the usage and role of English in international settings, and to examine populations which have not yet been saturated with research.

References

Acosta-Belen, Edna. 1975. "Spanglish: A Case of Languages in Contact" in Burt, Marina and Helen Dulay (eds). *New Directions in Second Language Learning, Teaching and Bilingual Education*. Washington, DC: TESOL, pp. 151-158.

Auer, Peter. 1998. *Code-switching in Conversation: Language, Interaction and Identity*. New York: Routledge.

Bloomfield, Louis. 1953. *Language*. London: Allen and Unwin.

Brice, Roanne and Alejandro Brice. 2009. "Investigation of Phonemic Awareness and Phonic Skills in Spanish-English and English-speaking Kindergarten Students" in *Communication Disorders*. Quarterly, 30 (4), pp. 208-225.

Gardner-Chloros, Penelope. 1985. *Choix et alternance des langues à Strasbourg.* Thesis/dissertation. Strasbourg: Université Louis Pasteur. Strasbourg 1.

Gardner-Chloros, Penelope. 2009. *Code-switching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gardner-Chloros, Penelope and Malcolm Edwards. 2004. "Assumptions behind Grammatical Approaches to Code-switching: When the Blueprint Is a Red Herring." in *Transactions of the Philological Society*, 102, pp. 103–129.

Gardner-Chloros, Penelope. 2007. "The LIDES Corpus". In Beal, Joan C., Karen P. Corrigan and Hermann Moisl (eds.). *Models and Methods in the Handling of Unconventional Digital Corpora. Vol. 1: Synchronic Corpora; vol.2: Diachronic Corpora.* Basingstoke: Palgrave, pp. 91-121.

Gardner-Chloros, Penelope. 2009. "Language Selection and Switching among Strasbourg Shoppers." In *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 1985 (54), pp. 117-136. [Online]. Available: https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl.1985.54.117 [Accessed 2018, January 27].

Gardner-Chloros, Penelope. 2010. "Art and Code-switching" in Gardner-Chloros, Penelope (ed.). *Second Strings & Linguistic Connections: Bilingual and Bilinguistic Explorations. Sociolinguistic Studies*, Special Issue, 4 (3), pp. 635-664.

Gumperz, John. 1982. *Discourse Strategies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Labov, William. 1972. *Sociolinguistic patterns*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Meeuwis, Michael and Jan Blommaert. 1994. "The 'Markedness Model' and the Absence of Society: Remarks on Codeswitching" in *Multilingua: Journal of Cross Cultural and Interlanguage Communication*, 13, pp. 387-423.

Merriam, Sharan. 2009. *Qualitative Research: a Guide to Design and Implementation.* San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass.

Myers-Scotton, Carol. 1993. "Common and Uncommon Ground: Social and Structural Factors in Codeswitching" in *Language in Society,* 22 (4). Cambridge University Press, pp. 475-503.

Poplack, Shana and David Sankoff. 1984. "Borrowing: the Synchrony of Integration" in *Linguistics*, 22 (1), pp. 99-135.

Pousada, Alicia. 1994. "Achieving Linguistic and Communicative Competence in Two Speech Communities: the Puerto Rican Return Migrant Student" in Carrasquillo, Angela and Richard Beacher (eds.). *Bilingual Education in Puerto Rico*. Caguas: Puerto Rican Association for Bilingual Education, pp. 51-59.

Rubagumya, Casmir. 1990. "Language in Tanzania" in Rubagumya, Casmir (ed.). *Language in Education in Africa: A Tanzanian Perspective*. Clevedon, Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters.

Singleton, David, Vera Regan, Ewelina Debaene (eds.). 2013. *Linguistic and Cultural Acquisition in a Migrant Community*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

NOTES ON THE AUTHORS

Rima Bhattacharya is currently working as a PhD Research scholar at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur, India. She has completed her M.A and M. Phil Degrees from the Department of English, Presidency College, Kolkata and University of Calcutta respectively. She has published papers in the field of American poetry, Diasporic Studies and children's literature.
E-mail address: rima.b.mukherjee@gmail.com

Alexandru Budac teaches comparative literature and aesthetics at West University of Timișoara. He is the author of *Byron în rețea sau Cum a rămas liberă canapeaua doctorului Freud* (București: Humanitas, 2009) – a study on Thomas Pynchon's fiction and cognitive science. His main research interests are literary criticism, the philosophy of mind, American Literature, and aesthetics.
E-mail address: alexbudac@gmail.com

Alina Bugheșiu is a Lecturer at the Technical University of Cluj-Napoca, North University Centre of Baia Mare, Romania. The author's main interest is in the field of onomastics (especially commercial names and unconventional anthroponyms) and referential semantics.
E-mail address: alina.bughesiu@gmail.com

Cristina Chevereșan, Associate Professor, PhD, teaches American literature and culture at the West University of Timișoara. She is Assistant Director of the *American Studies* Program, a member of several European and American scientific societies, the recipient of prestigious awards and fellowships, Fulbright Scholar and Ambassador. She has published six books and numerous articles in national and international journals, collected volumes, and the Romanian cultural press. She has translated and edited several other volumes.
E-mail address: cristina.cheveresan@e-uvt.ro

Cristina Chifane, an independent scholar, holds a PhD in Translation Studies. She has taught both in Romania and abroad. In 2015, she completed her postdoctoral research on *Translating British and Romanian Contemporary Prose for Children – A Comparative Analysis with a Recontextualization of Approaches and Strategies*. Her publications include the book *Translating Literature for Children*. Besides translation, she is also interested in English and American literature, cultural studies as well as in theoretical and applied linguistics.
E-mail address: cristinachifane@yahoo.com

Liviu-Augustin Chifane is a PhD student at "Dunărea de Jos" University of Galați and is currently working on his dissertation entitled *A Cultural-Linguistic Approach to*

Postcolonial Literature: Jhumpa Lahiri and Zadie Smith. His research interests tackle the following areas: English and American literature, postcolonial literature, cultural studies, comparative studies and stylistics. He is also a published author, having written poetry and short fiction and having been awarded several prizes at various national competitions. In 2014, he published the novel for children and young adults, *Copilul Deltei* (*Delta's Child*).
E-mail address: liviuaug@gmail.com

Andrea Csillag is an Associate Professor in the Department of Foreign Languages of the Debrecen Reformed Theological University, Hungary. She holds a PhD in linguistics from the University of Debrecen. Her main academic interests include cognitive semantics, the language of emotions, the role of metaphor and metonymy in human cognition.
E-mail address: acsillag15@gmail.com

Olivia Chirobocea is a Lecturer in the Department of Languages for Specific Purposes at the Faculty of Letters of "Ovidius" University, Constanța. Her doctoral thesis explored the relation between history and fiction in American postmodernist novels (Kurt Vonnegut, Joseph Heller). However, her research interests include cultural studies, postmodernist literature, as well as English for specific purposes, given her experience of over fifteen years of teaching specialized English in the fields of biology, ecology and agriculture.
E-mail address: olivia.ch31@gmail.com

Cristina Diamant is a PhD student in English Literature, an assistant editor of *Metacritic Journal of Comparative Studies and Theory*, as well as a member of the *Ekphrasis Centre for Transdisciplinary, Liberal Arts and Creative Technologies Research*. Her research interests are literary and cultural theory, sociolinguistics, and pop culture, especially in the context of investigating various representations of otherness.
E-mail address: cristina.c.diamant@gmail.com

Aline Ferreira is an Associate Professor at the University of Aveiro, Portugal, where she teaches English Literature and Cultural Studies. Her main interests include the intersections between literature and science, literature and the visual arts, feminist utopias and women's studies. Her book *I Am the Other: Literary Negotiations of Human Cloning* was published by Greenwood Press in 2005. She is now working on a book provisionally entitled *The Sexual Politics of the Artificial Womb: Fictional and Visual Representations*.
E-mail address: aline@ua.pt

Péter Gaál-Szabó is a college Professor at the Foreign Languages Department of the Debrecen Reformed Theological University, Hungary. He holds a Ph.D. and a Habilitation degree in Literary and Cultural Studies from the University of Debrecen (UD), Hungary. His research focuses on African American culture, cultural spaces, religio-cultural identity, and intercultural communication. He is author of "Ah done been tuh de horizon and back": Zora Neale Hurston's Cultural Spaces in "Their Eyes Were Watching God" and "Jonah's Gourd Vine" (Peter Lang, 2011).
E-mail address: dszabop@yahoo.com

Marta Gibinska, until 2012 Professor of English Literature at the Jagiellonian University, now teaches at the Jozef Tischner European University in Krakow, Poland. Her special fields of interest are Shakespeare studies and translation studies. Her publications include *Functioning of Language in Shakespeare's Plays. A Pragma-dramatic Approach* (1989) and *Polish Poets Read Shakespeare* (2000). She has published extensively on the theatrical history of Shakespeare in Poland and on the Polish translations of Shakespeare. She is a member of the Polish Shakespeare Society, Deutsche Shakespearegesellschaft, International Shakespeare Association, and European Shakespeare Research Association.
E-mail address: gibinska@wp.pl

Dragoş Ivana is an Associate Professor in the Department of English at the University of Bucharest. He specializes in 18th-English literature, and his research interests include comparative literature, critical theory, intellectual history and city studies. Ivana is treasurer of the Romanian Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies and has published extensively on the reception of Cervantes in the 18th-century English novel, the novel of sensibility and popular culture in 18th-century England.
E-mail address: dragos.ivana@gmail.com

GuntaLočmele, Ph.D., is a Professor in the Department of Contrastive Linguistics, Translation and Interpreting, at the Faculty of Humanities, University of Latvia. Her research interests include the language of advertising, translation and interpreting, the ethics of translation, and language contact. She is a member of several editorial boards and occupies various positions within Latvia's academic community.
E-mail address: gunta.locmele@lu.lv

Elisabetta Marino is an Assistant Professor English literature at the University of Rome "Tor Vergata". She is the author of four monographs and has edited/co-edited eight collections of essays. She has translated poems by Maria Mazziotti Gillan. She has published extensively on Italian American literature, travel literature, Asian American and Asian British literature, and the English Romantic writers.
E-mail address: emarino@hurricane.it

Alexandru Oltean-Cîmpean is a Junior Lecturer at "Babeș-Bolyai" University, Cluj-Napoca, teaching creative writing and English language to Journalism students. He holds a PhD from the same university, with a thesis on humor in Kurt Vonnegut's works. Other articles written by the author include "An Application of the General Theory of Verbal Humor to Kurt Vonnegut's Cat's Cradle", in *Studii de Ştinţă şi Cultură*, nr. 9 2013, and "Truth and Foma in Kurt Vonnegut's Cat's Cradle", in *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai. Series Philologia*, nr. 3, 2015.
E-mail address: al.oltean@gmail.com

Armela Panajoti is an Associate Professor and head of the Department of Foreign Languages, University of Vlora, Albania. She holds a PhD on Conrad from the University of Tirana, Albania. She is currently the Chair of the Albanian Society for the Study of English (ASSE), general editor of its journal, *in esse: English Studies in Albania*, a member of the Board of the European Society for the Study of English (ESSE)

and a Corresponding Fellow of the English Association. Dr Panajoti has published papers in peer-reviewed journals, book chapters, and has spoken at, and organised, many international conferences. Her research interests are mainly concentrated on literary and cultural studies. She has particularly dealt with matters which explore the relation between language and literature, language and culture, intercultural competence and communication.
E-mail address: armelap@assenglish.org

Gabriela Planková is a teacher of English and Slovak language and literature and a Ph.D. student at the Faculty of Arts, Palacký University in Olomouc, the Czech Republic. Her research focuses on literature, adaptations and appropriations, inspired or influenced by the works of Jane Austen. She is also interested in other classical writers and novels influenced by feminism.
E-mail address: plankova.g@gmail.com

Mihaela-Elisabeta Popuţa is a graduate of the West University of Timişoara. She holds a PhD on American literature from the same university. Her main area of interest is the 20th -21st century American literature and culture. For the past eight years she has been teaching English and French language, literature and civilization at the French Institute in Timişoara, the West University of Timişoara and the Politehnica University of Timişoara. She has also been actively engaged in research work that varies from participations in international conferences to Erasmus scholarships. She is the author of numerous articles in national and international journals.
E-mail address: mihap04@yahoo.com

Dana Radler holds a PhD in Literary and Cultural Studies and works at the Bucharest University of Economic Studies. She combines her interests in Irish Studies, cultural memory, gender and identity as constructs or de-constructs of postmodern societies. She was a co-editor of the *Global Issues Special Interest Group Newsletter* of IATEFL (International Association of Teachers as a Foreign Language) between 2010 and 2015.
E-mail address: danaradler14@gmail.com

Roxana Rogobete is currently finishing a PhD thesis on German-language migrant literature. She earned her Master's Degree in Romanian Literature at the West University of Timișoara, after spending a year as an Erasmus student at the University of Freiburg. Her research interests include intercultural literature, migrant literature, the carnivalesque.
E-mail address: rsrogobete@gmail.com

Zeenat Sumra is a doctoral student at TU Chemnitz, Germany, Her dissertation, in the field of sociolinguistics, is a study in trilingual codeswitching in the Indian community in Tanzania. She is a part time teacher of English to adult learners, and has worked as an academic tutor and a graduate teaching assistant. She aims to contribute to a greater understanding of multilingualism and codeswitching among lesser studied populations. She is also interested in applying linguistic theories to social issues such as feminism, racism and social media studies. She is a multicultural and multilingual individual: of

Indian origin, born and brought up in Tanzania, she completed her education in the United States, where she resided for fifteen years prior to moving to Germany.
E-mail address: zeenat.sumra@s2014.tu-chemnitz.de

Thabit Shihab Ahmed is PhD student at the Faculty of Letters, University of Craiova, Romania. His research project is *Myth, Symbolism, History and Philosophy in W.B. Yeats's Select Poetry*. Thabit Shihab Ahmed has an MA in English from 'Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada' University (BAMU), in Aurangabad, India (2014), and BA in English from the College of Languages of the University of Baghdad, Iraq (2002). His interests include Literature in general, and English literature in particular. He worked as a teacher of English in Baghdad and Salah Al Deen in Iraq and as Director of secondary schools department at the Sunni Endowment in Iraq.
E-mail address: ma.thabit67@gmail.com.

Juan de Dios Torralbo Caballero has been an Associate Professor at the University of Córdoba (Spain) since 2012. He holds a BA and PhD in English Studies and a MA in Spanish Literature from the University of Córdoba. His research interests lie in 17th-century English poetry, the advent of the English novel, and the reception of English literature in Spain.
E-mail address: torralbocaballero@uco.es

Ryszard W. Wolny is Professor and Director, School of English and American Studies, University of Opole, Poland. His interests focus largely on British and Australian literature and culture. He is the author of about a hundred scholarly publications, the most recent being *The Masks of Ugliness in Literary Narratives* (Frankfurt 2013), the monograph *Patrick White: Australia's Poet of Mythical Landscapes of the Soul* (Wrocław 2013), *Poisoned Cornucopia*: *Excess, Intemperance and Overabundance across Cultures and Literatures* (Frankfurt 2014), *Outlandish, Uncanny and Bizarre in Contemporary Western Culture* (Wrocław 2016). He is currently working on *Disease, Death and Decay* (with Katarzyna Molek-Kozakowska, Opole 2018) and *Littoral Modernism: Patrick White's Theatre of Australia* (Frankfurt 2018). He is a co-editor of the Peter Lang series *Silesian Studies in Anglophone Cultures and Literature* (with Ewa Kębłowska-Ławniczak). In 2017, he was elected President of Polish Association for the Study on Australia and New Zealand.
E-mail address: rwolny@uni.opole.pl

Abdolali Yazdizadeh is a graduate student of the University of Tehran, Iran. He holds an MA in English Literature from this university. He has authored articles on the Iranian cinema from a feminist perspective. He has previously participated in the *First International Conference on Shakespeare Studies in Iran* and the *International Conference on Literature and Cinema in University of Tehran*. He is currently living in Rasht in the north of Iran.
Email address: yazdizadeh_ali@yahoo.com