

B.A.S.

British and American Studies

2024

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British and American Studies

A Journal of Romanian Society of English and American Studies

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

© British and American Studies, vol. XXX, 2024

BAS. *British and American Studies* indexed in the following data bases:



ISSN 1224-3086

e-ISSN 2457-7715

Publisher MARILENA TUDOR
Cover Design DAN URSACHI
Cover Illustration IOSIF STROIA
Layout DORIN DAVIDEANU

Editura Universității de Vest

Calea Bogdăneștilor, nr. 32A, 300389, Timișoara
E-mail: editura@e-uvt.ro; Tel.: +40 - 256 592 681

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CONJURING THE PAST

**“TO O’ERTHROW LAW” AND “O’ERWHELM CUSTOM”¹:
SHAKESPEARE’S PLAY WITH THE PASTORAL**

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***Abstract:** The paper proposes a novel outlook on the pastoral mode practiced by early modern authors, with which Shakespeare experimented. We argue that the classical (ancient) pastoral which was replicated by other early modern texts was employed differently by Shakespeare. We first read *As You Like It* and *The Winter’s Tale* as examples of this experimentation, which departs from the classical norms of the pastoral, and then we suggest that Shakespeare brings this experimentation to the next level, by working on the evolution of the pattern from the early romantic comedy to the late romance. Thus, following scholarship, we show that, in Shakespeare, the expected idealism of the pastoral is downplayed and nuanced by irony in *As You Like It* and by a baroque construction in *The Winter’s Tale*. Our paper then focuses on the evolution of the Shakespearean pastoral from *As You Like It* (where it focuses on a unique, mythological character, Rosalind-Ganymede, who channels all the energies of the play and orchestrates the entire plot) to *The Winter’s Tale* (where the pastoral works through multiple subjects, who instrumentalise the plot; even if Perdita-Flora is a central, mythical character, other characters/instruments are indispensable, like Hermione, Paulina, Autolycus, etc.). Last but not least, the paper demonstrates that Shakespeare’s departure from the classical pastoral norms is not only a literary-aesthetic choice, but an expression of a new early modern awareness about space, which reflects new social, economic and demographic realities.*

***Keywords:** baroque, early modern realities, experimentation, pastoral, space, topography*

1. Introduction: Pastoralism in early modern literature - A cartography

The pastoral style was frequented by many writers during the early modern period. Going naturally in the spirit of the revival of a genre that had acquired authority since the classical Antiquity, the pastoral contained both a spatial and a temporal dimension. It was the tale of a natural environment (almost) untouched by humans and of a bygone age, of happiness and tranquillity. The emphasis on the escapist nature of the pastoral, which characterizes traditional scholarship of this genre, started to be nuanced, or even questioned, with the hypotheses proposed by critics like Paul Alpers, for example. In *What is Pastoral?*, Alpers advances the

¹ Quotes from Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale* (IV.1.1640, 1641). These and subsequent quotes from *The Winter’s Tale* are from Shakespeare’s *Romances and Poems*, edited by David Bevington.

idea that pastoral, like other, more modern literary genres, is heterogeneous, dynamic, has many versions, and a rewarding reading would exclude the conventional, simplistic approach that focuses only on predictable contrasts (city-country, civilization-nature, etc.). To demonstrate the need for a nuanced interpretation, Alpers (1982: 441) borrows a concept advanced by literary theorist Kenneth Burke, “the representative anecdote”, i.e. pastoral is a phenomenon which is specific, not generic, which relies on a historical example and grows by transforming and adapting the conventional patterns laid out by previous instances. The representative anecdote of the pastoral can be the setting (the bucolic landscape) or the characters populating this setting (the shepherds). Alpers opts for the latter, arguing that the landscape – which is not a particular depiction, but rather the projection of a state of mind – comes second to the shepherds’ lives. He also encourages scholarship not to regard pastoral as a genre, but as a stylised mode, which uses the countryside only as a pretext and is, in fact, more concerned, in its dialectic, with politics (manifestations of culture, the court, human relations, etc.).

This step forward in the theorization of the pastoral is challenged by more recent criticism, which rejects the hypothesis that the pastoral’s long-lasting impact and success could have been achieved if the genre dealt only in mere abstractions. Countering Alpers’ ideas, Jeffrey Theis’ *Writing the Forest in Early Modern England: A Sylvan Pastoral Nation* provides a thought-provoking analysis of the early modern pastoral as an emerging form of ecocriticism. More specifically, Theis analyses examples of the sylvan pastoral (when the pastoral is set in a forest) in the context of the 16th and 17th centuries, when woodland was instrumental in the formation of English individual and national identity. Exploring several early modern plays, among which Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*, Theis relates them to concerns about deforestation, forest law, land ownership and the human relationship to nature. Most significantly, he reads forests as dynamic spaces, in use by both the rich and the poor: whereas the poor migrated to forests in the social context of rising population, the rich used the woodland as their playgrounds where they could practice hunting. Furthermore, Ken Hiltner writes *What Else is Pastoral*, a study in which he goes past the metaphoric worth and figurative mode of the pastoral and invites readers to find the real landscapes behind the symbolic ones, in a more environmentally oriented approach. Hiltner argues that the reality of the early modern pastoral was already one in which ecological concerns started to take a concrete shape, as massive deforestation, air pollution, urban expansion, land enclosures and insensible land use were acknowledged and a need to raise awareness about these issues was palpable. As he (2011: 4) puts it, “Renaissance nature writing [...] works best when it neither mimics nor represents [nature]”. In his view, the pastoral turns away from representation, employing a non-mimetic, “gestural strategy” (idem: 25). In this context, authors of pastorals in the early modern period were gesturing at nature by observing (and possibly warning about) its growing absence. In other words, they were concerned with literal landscapes even if they didn’t deem it necessary to describe them, as the Romantics would do later on. This concern, if not ecological in the sense we mean it today, was epistemological, giving rise to a modern consciousness about nature.

In a less explicitly environmental vein, other recent studies about agrarian landscapes in literature suggest that they reflect the social and economic values of the early modern people. For Charlotte Scott (2014: 12), the imagery related to husbandry, whether understood literally or metaphorically, was meant to respond to moral imperatives, as well as to economic urgencies. She (idem: 6) explains that,

for the early modern man, nature was not only a landscape or a state of mind, because “people have signified themselves and their world through their imagined relation with nature”. Landscape in literature is a channel of communication, used to convey social roles and relationships, which are “rehearsed through economic practices” (idem: 12). Therefore, it can be argued that the early modern literary interest in pastoralism is a reflection of a new geographic-social-economic awareness about the changing spaces of the countryside and the roles played by humans in these spaces.

Both these latter directions, theorized by Hiltner and Scott, are in fact the result of the spatial turn, the growth of interest in space, not only as geography, but as a lived experience. Cultural and, more specifically, literary geography is an interdisciplinary tool employed to discuss space in a continuum, where this physical feature is synonymous with cultural concepts such as representation, mobility, process and performance, as Sheila Hones (2022: 12) explains. Scholarship has often analysed space as a complementary dimension of time, a framework at the intersection between geography and history. This interest favoured the emergence of ecocriticism and geopoetics, but has also validated the mapping of both real and imagined spaces, of public and private spaces, going for a very broad interpretation of what space is and how it works in literature.

It can be argued that the spatial turn has determined the reconsideration of the function of the pastoral, and it is probably not a coincidence that the rise of literary geographies and the interpretive shift in pastoral scholarship occurred at about the same time, in the 1980s. According to Julie Sanders (2011: 9), the instruments of geography can turn cultural phenomena from general to specific and, more importantly, they can offer valuable information about how culture employs and makes sense of space. Literary geography, therefore, brings to the fore the processes that build the cultural phenomena, that “are at work in different spaces and places, and on different levels and scales” (ibid.). It documents complex interactions, not only between people, but, more significantly, between people and spatial concepts and structures, whether they are the well-known country-city binary pair, specific habitats (forests, fields, and seashores) or micro-geographies connected to private spaces or to professional-functional spaces that may well include the playhouse and the stage.

In close connection to Sanders’ micro-geographies is Ina Habermann and Michelle Witen’s (2016: 3-8) hierarchy of space types in Shakespearean drama. The scholars distinguish between seven distinct yet overlapping spaces: “(1) structural/topological space, (2) stage space/setting/locality, (3) linguistic/poetic space, (4) social/gendered space, (5) early modern geographies, (6) cultural spaces/contact zones, and (7) the material world/cultural imaginary.” Of these, most relevant for our discussion is the topological space, defined by boundaries whose crossing push the plot forward, creating structural patterns (or spatial enclaves) which are represented on stage and which allow for less formal, class-ridden social interactions. This aspect of space is also the focus of Karl Bühler’s theory on the relationship between imagination and various forms of *deixis*, i.e. topological space is closely preoccupied with the linguistic means by which “the things to be imagined are drawn *into* the space that the audience shares with the performers” (Habermann and Witen 2016: 4-5). Comparatively, stage space is focused on performance, on what happens on stage, as well as on “how specific places and localities are evoked on stage” (idem: 5). From this perspective, theatre

combines the real with the imagined, creating a “thirdspace”, i.e. a multi-dimensional conception of reality that influences social practices.

Overlapping topological space and stage space, Tim Fitzpatrick looks at a series of early modern plays particularly in terms of stage directions and identifies three separate areas: “here” (i.e. on the stage), “outwards” and “inwards” for characters moving out of the stage and into an inner space (e.g. a study, a bedroom, etc.) respectively. Postulating that “early modern playwrights, actors, and audiences shared a sophisticated sense of space and place in performance” (2011: 247), Fitzpatrick explains the complex ways in which the physical characteristics of the early modern stage reflected the playwrights’ ability to guide the audience’s attention through the changing topology of the play, resulting in an engaging experience.

In what follows, we will take a closer look at *As You Like It* and *The Winter’s Tale* as examples of romantic pastorals and the ways in which Shakespeare experiments with the pastoral conventions by having his characters literally or metaphorically cross various boundaries, from topological borders through social class limitations to stage/theatre demarcations.

2. *As You Like It* – a pastoral experiment

As many critics have already noted, in the pastoral literary conventions, the countryside in general – or the forest in particular – represents a space of freedom, opposite to the sophisticated rules and the harsh politics of the court/ city. Among them, Juliet Dusinberre (2020: 161) writes that forest-life is generally idealized, considered simpler and purer, with people living closely to one another, to nature and to God; at the same time, life in the forest can only be fully appreciated precisely because it coexists with city-life. Yet Shakespeare constantly plays with idealized views of the (sylvan) pastoral, highlighting its artificiality and – as we will explore in what follows – subverting the positive but subjective appreciation of country-life offered by city-dwellers and courtiers.

It is thus not by chance that *As You Like It* opens in an in-between space – the de Boys country estate – neither in the city nor in the forest, where Orlando deplores his being kept “rustically at home”, “stayed at home unkempt”, his “keeping” no better than “the stalling of an ox” (I.1.6-10). Importantly, all quotations from *As You Like It* are from *The Arden Shakespeare. Third Series. Complete Works* (2020). From the very beginning of the play, rusticity is associated with the domestic space of the home (an implied “here”, on the stage), with financial and educational lacks. Moreover, the home/stall parallel points to Orlando’s belittling himself through the implied comparison to an ox, an animal traditionally used for agricultural labour and valuable only through its physical strength. We are thus encouraged to see the countryside through Orlando’s eyes as a negative space that entails the demeaning of its inhabitants.

In the same scene, however, Shakespeare paints the first image of a pastoral setting, and an idealized one at that, challenging the initial negative description of country life by Orlando. When discussing news from the court, Charles informs Oliver that “the old Duke” (I.1.108) has found refuge in the forest and, together with the men who followed him into exile, lives a life that recalls not just the legendary Robin Hood, but also a golden age when time could be easily wasted, work- and worry-free:

“They say he is already in the Forest of Arden / and a many merry men with him, and there they live / like the old Robin Hood of England. They say many / young gentlemen flock to him every day and fleet the / time carelessly as they did in the golden world.” (I.1.108-113)

The forest becomes an allegorical space of freedom, “a holiday space”, “away from the ‘working-day world’ and the harsh realities of the court” (Sanders 2011: 65). At the same time, through the reference to Robin Hood, the Forest of Arden becomes not just a substitute for Sherwood Forest, but also a mythical space, further emphasized later by cross-dressed Rosalind’s adoption of a mythological name (Ganymede). The scene encodes in the forest an evocation of the golden age, which translates into a nostalgia of a simple way of life, as well as of “merry” times long past which, like the carefree age of childhood, cannot be fully recovered but only copied, imitated. By the middle of the play, this melancholy perception of time turns downright depressing, as it is developed in Jaques’ monologues recounting his meeting with Touchstone and the latter’s bawdy time “tale” (II.7.23-33) that puns on the more sexual “tail” (cf. Partridge 2005: 255, 257, 278-79) and ends in either death or venereal disease, and Jaques’ own view on the seven ages of man (II.7.143-167), which relies on a series of lacks (“*Sans* teeth, *sans* eyes, *sans* taste, *sans* everything”, II.7.167, original emphasis).

As for the forest and its new occupants, Theis (2009: 77) reads the play as voicing “a collective anxiety” about the mobility of people in late Elizabethan England, about “forest settlers in particular” and about “people uprooted from their ‘proper’ place” in general. The result is that the characters see and define the Forest of Arden differently but “at their own peril” (idem: 36). For instance, playing with the pastoral mode, Shakespeare further develops the idyllic perception of forest-life with Duke Senior’s subjective description of the woodland experience, where nature becomes an astute teacher for the man who – it must be noted – has lived a pampered life at court, albeit among “painted pomp” (II.1.3) and “public haunt”, and now finds cheerfulness in the chilly weather and wisdom in the elements: “And this our life, exempt from public haunt, / Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, / Sermons in stones, and good in everything.” (II.1.15-17) Above all, what these lines reveal is the fact that nature – and, by extension, a simple life in close community with it, according to the seasons – can only be appreciated in contrast with and in the absence of the sophisticated court and its hypocritical politics. For Duke Senior, Arden becomes a living entity, a space with a ‘voice’ of its own, thus reframing his experience of reality: it is the exile into the woodland that enables him to reconsider his background, his social status and, ultimately, his very life.

However, the way in which the Duke values the forest is through what it can offer him, namely shelter and food. As a result, what preoccupies him most is not the contemplation of nature or life but hunting for venison (“Come, shall we go and kill us venison?”, II.1.21), a pastime traditionally associated with aristocrats, whom he belongs to by birth. What gives him credit is that he means to hunt for food and not for trophies, which may explain his guilt in relation to killing animals in their natural habitat which has only welcomed him and his followers, too. The Duke’s pity for the “poor dappled fools” (II.1.22) turns the hunting into an extremely violent experience, reminiscent of the final attack on Troy: the deer metaphorically become urban dwellers slaughtered by strangers, while their familiar environment turns into a confining trap.

Nevertheless, although the Duke seems to deplore the unfairness of the animals' plight, he and his men do need to survive in the forest. On the other hand, Jaques goes beyond the Duke's somewhat condescending animal empathy and criticizes hunting as a form of usurpation worse than the one experienced by Duke Senior at the hands of his brother Frederick: "The melancholy Jaques grieves at that; / And, in that kind, swears you do more usurp / Than doth your brother that hath banished you." (II.1.26-28) In Jaques' ecocritical view, hunting is a form of sacrificial violence: the courtiers turned foresters are so used to the consumerism at court that they have become murderers of the forest's native animals, of deer in particular (II.1.60-63).

But Shakespeare continuously toys with our expectations. A short scene after Jaques' identification with the chased deer, which has prompted him to become a spokesperson for animal rights, we learn that he has gone missing, possibly having transformed into an animal and thus echoing Orlando's comparison to an ox in the very first scene. The Duke's words when he cannot find Jaques – "I think he be transformed into a beast; / For I can nowhere find him like a man." (II.7.1-2) – suggest that Jaques has 'gone native', having traded the human, shared community life for a life of animalistic solitude, which entails another chase to find him.

Whereas courtiers, used to life in the city, perceive the forest first as a space of exile and then as a hunting ground, the lower social category displays considerably different attitudes. In contrast to the idealized and idyllic version of forest-life presented in the very first scene is Touchstone's rather ambivalent perception of the "shepherd's life" (III.2.11), as it emerges from his conversation with Corin, the wise and traditionally stock pastoral character. Touchstone's description relies on complex sentences, each of which initially uses a positive adjective modifying such a life: "good", "solidary", "private", "in the fields", "spare" (i.e. frugal); however, each following clause counters them, eventually revealing that a shepherd's life is not for everyone and certainly not for him: "it is nought [good]", "a very vile life", "tedious", "it goes much against my stomach."

In an even sharper contrast, Corin paints a much more realistic and work-driven picture of a shepherd's life. Commenting on the difference in manners between court and country, he focuses his short replies on the roughness of handiwork: "we are still handling our ewes, and their fells, you know, are greasy" (III.2.50-51) and the resulting dirty and coarse hands: "Our hands are hard", "often tarred over with the surgery of our sheep" (III.2.56, 59-60). He is the play's most stock pastoral character, a committed shepherd, an honest labourer living off his work and displaying practical wisdom in terms of finances and animal husbandry.

The underlying irony in both Touchstone's and Corin's lines is that, no matter how much the characters try to convince us that courtiers and peasants can cross spatial and social boundaries without needing to adjust to the new environment, their words subvert their actions. Most importantly, another layer of irony is that each of these perceptions of Arden – the Duke's, Jaques', Touchstone's and Corin's – is subjective and different, yet what they all do is show that none is sufficient in itself but only when considered together with the others, providing a 3D-like picture of the forest, which changes depending from the angle one looks at it.

One final perspective on the forest, this time as a magical space, is offered in the end by Jaques de Boys. Oliver and Orlando's brother informs Duke Senior and his group about Duke Frederick's miraculous transformation upon meeting "an old religious man" (V.4.158). Having come "to the skirts of this wild wood" (V.4.157)

in order to have his brother killed, Duke Frederick was miraculously converted and decided to renounce worldly goods and live a secluded life, restoring the throne to the legitimate heir.

In addition to these seemingly conflicting views on country/forest life, perhaps the most significant way in which Shakespeare flouts the conventions of the pastoral in *As You Like It* is through self-reflexivity, which relies on the overlapping of the topological and the stage/theatre spaces. There are three references to “circle” in the play, all of which evoke the more graphic “wooden O” in *Henry V* (Prologue: 14) and the iconic Globe Theatre. The first mention of “circle” appears in Jacques’s tongue-in-cheek explanation of “ducdame”: “’Tis a Greek invocation to call fools into a circle.” (II.5.54-55) While his line can certainly refer to the arrangement of the characters on stage during the scene, it is also a clear hint at the historical, Greek origins of theatre as a form of entertainment taking place in a round amphitheatre. This performance-related circle is echoed in the final scene of the play, in Orlando’s “the circle of this forest” (V.4.34). The deictic adjective “this” urges the audience to interpret the “here” on the stage as an encompassing Arden, in the middle of which characters have found shelter and where he has been nailing poems to trees and carving Rosalind’s name. Here, too, the circle does more than simply gesture to the confines of the forest where the characters are now living; it recalls the shape of the actual Globe Theatre.

The last mention, a more allusive one, appears in Duke Senior’s lines and is more gestural, pointing to the whereabouts of both the actors and the spectators, i.e. to the actual space of the theatre: “This wide and universal theatre / Presents more woeful pageants than the scene / Wherein we play in.” (II.7.137-139) The deictic adjective “this” and the adverbial “wherein” draw attention, on the one hand, to the space where the audience sits or stands while watching the performance, and on the other hand, to the actual performance on stage. Simultaneously, within the space of The Globe, these lines contrast the wider space of the theatre with the inner, more restricted space of the stage or the moment of the play, both of which are suggested by “scene”. Yet within the space of early modern London, it is “the scene” that represents the playhouse, while “the theatre” stands for a larger geopolitical context, which can be the city itself, the country or even the entire world. Furthermore, the Duke’s words can be read as a twofold reminder: for his companions, that they are part of a larger world and that boundaries between court and forest can be crossed, while for the audience, that what they are seeing is the product of a playwright’s imagination and not reality, that there is a boundary between the stage space and the “real” world. As has abundantly been noted in the scholarship, the boundary between the space of the court and the space of the forest mirrors the symbolic boundary between social classes, which is challenged by both the characters on the stage and the audience. While the characters do so by wearing costumes, impersonating aristocratic men and women (who also cross-dress), the members of the audience temporarily break social hierarchies, being equal as spectators watching the same performance. Moreover, Duke Senior’s lines are, in turn, complemented by Jacques’: “All the world’s a stage, / And all the men and women merely players. / They have their exits and their entrances” (II.7.140-42). These lines further expand the space of the stage and of the Globe Theatre to a world scale, casting all the audience as actors of their own lives, and claiming a link between the Globe performance and the world outside of it.

It is also in the magical circle of the Forest of Arden – however temporary a refuge it may be – that the promise of order exists, with Rosalind and Touchstone “jostl[ing] the characters out of their false dreams and illusions” (Cirillo 1971: 21-22); it is still here that Rosalind as a magician, which she herself confesses to (V.2.69), orchestrates the plot towards a happy ending in multiple marriages with her many “if”s (V.2.109-117).

There is a great deal of irony in Rosalind’s character, as Cirillo (1971: 25-26) also notes, most evident in the contrast between her name – always bearing associations with romantic love, even more so here, with its inherent romantic pastoral connotations – and her cynical attitude towards romantic love when training Orlando, starting from the moment when she satirizes him as a traditional lover suffering from love, “sighing every minute and groaning every hour” (III.2.298). That Rosalind’s name is always connected to love is distinctly clear if we consider such other texts as Shakespeare’s source for this very play, Thomas Lodge’s *Rosalynde: Euphuus Golden Legacie*, as well as Edmund Spenser’s Rosalind in *The Shepherde’s Calendar*, or Shakespeare’s own Rosaline, Romeo’s initial love interest in *Romeo and Juliet*. Nonetheless, Rosalind’s own disguise as Ganymede becomes a handy device for self-satire and the subversion of pastoral love conventions when, in act 3, scene 5, Phoebe falls in love with the cross-dressed Rosalind. In a previous scene (III.4), Rosalind’s conversation with Celia about Orlando’s not keeping his promise to return shows her as distressed and giddy, as well as jealous, thus displaying the symptoms of a “by the book” love-sick girl. Later on, in act 4, scene 3, when shown the handkerchief stained with Orlando’s blood, Rosalind acts out of her Ganymede role, fainting like an easily impressionable woman, only to immediately step back in her male persona and pretend she has faked it: “I pray you tell your brother how well I counterfeited” (IV.3.167-168).

Finally, Rosalind’s Epilogue brings irony and self-reflexivity together one last time, concluding the various circles of the play, of the forest and their magic. Stepping out of character(s) and asking the audience for applause, the Rosalind-playing actor brings the audience “into the circle of her magic” (Cirillo 1971: 38), which she does by a perfectly magic invocation – “My way is to *conjure* you” (Epilogue 10, emphasis added) – followed by “charge[s]” to the men and women in the audience. Her final order – “when I make curtsy, bid me farewell” (Epilogue 20-21) – ends not just the play but also the magic she, as a protagonist, has created on stage.

3. *The Winter’s Tale* – the pastoral with baroque overtones

Elizabeth Katherine McIntosh (2021: 8), in her ecological reading of early modern pastorals, starts from the assumption that even the most apparently serene settings contain a seed of darkness, the shadow of death or the threat of an imminent cataclysm. She justifies this hypothesis with the observation that England in the late sixteenth century was already fighting with radical weather changes, disasters such as severe floods and epidemics, with dire economic consequences that went from bad harvests to the massive depopulation of entire regions. Therefore, McIntosh (2021: 9) concludes, “pastoral prefaces disaster, and is the place where it happens, offering a framework within which inscrutable natural events, too sizeable and systemic for easy comprehension, can be interpreted”.

Whether the seed of disaster is topical in the early modern pastoral due to climatic and socio-economic changes or is in fact a more generalizable feature of the genre is a debate yet to be settled. Suffice it to say that such ambivalence can be traced even in the most prototypical visual representation of the pastoral setting, Nicolas Poussin's 1637 *Et in Arcadia ego*. Faithful more to the geographical reality of Arcadia, a barren region in Greece, than to the expectations of bounty to which the pastoral commonly relates, the artist painted a rocky mountainous background in greyish shades. The foreground is similarly ambivalent and paradoxical, as the central piece is a tomb; therefore, the emphasis on the theme of death and transience forces upon viewers the realization that even the most blissful moment or locus contains the warning of loss, dissolution and mortality. Even if there are no explicit depictions of death, such as the skull, *Et in Arcadia ego* has all the necessary ingredients of a baroque composition.

Shakespeare's pastorals can be said to go in the same direction of ambivalence, the most obvious example being the gloomy picture projected by Titania, Queen of the fairies, in the middle of the pastoral revelry and retreat provided by the magic forest of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Youth, love, unspoiled nature and happiness are overshadowed by the disaster which seems to have been looming large in the minds of the characters: "contagious fogs", overflowed rivers, muddy fields, empty pens and barns, disease, frosts in the summer, unhealthy weather, disease in humans and animals (Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, II.1.90-110).

Written about ten years after *As You Like It*, *The Winter's Tale* is less obviously baroque than Poussin's Arcadia and less disquieting than the evocation of floods that put a significant dent in the spirits of those inhabiting or seeking refuge in the forest near Athens. However, as Adrian Papahagi (2020: 185) notices, if the game of shadows was perfected by Shakespeare in the ballet of light and darkness displayed by *Hamlet*, *The Winter's Tale* goes subtly in the same direction when, despite the general revelry at the end of the play, a certain melancholy chord is struck. Time seems to be triumphant after reconciliation and regeneration have been secured, but Mamilus, the innocent boy, is still dead, Hermione, brought back to life, is wrinkled, Antigonus cannot return from the belly of the bear which chased him, and the two kings cannot recuperate the youthful happiness they have been yearning for since Act 1. Death is abstract, contained as it is and not presented on the stage (neither Mamilus nor Antigonus die in the viewers' presence), which brings the play close to the spirit of Poussin's painting, where, again, no overt reference to death was made, as elsewhere in baroque art. But the *memento mori* motif is chilling enough.

The loss of youth and innocence is treated in a similar manner. (It should be briefly observed here that all quotes from Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*, including the ones in the article title (IV.1.1640, 1641) are from *Shakespeare's Romances and Poems*, edited by David Bevington (2006).) In Act 1, Polixenes delivers the most literally pastoral lines when confessing his nostalgia for a time that had two incontestable qualities. On the one hand, it offered him the security and happiness that only childhood could secure:

We were, fair queen, / Two lads that thought there was no more behind / But such a day to-morrow as to-day, / And to be boy eternal. (I.2.126-29)

On the other hand, it had him on good terms with Leontes, in an idyllic décor that could only enhance his sense of well-being:

We were as twinn'd lambs that did frisk i' the sun, / And bleat the one at the other:
what we changed / Was innocence for innocence; we knew not / The doctrine of ill-
doing, nor dream'd / That any did. (I.2.132-35)

It must be noted that this indirect pastoral reference, mediated through Polixenes' speech, appears early in the play, long before the pastoral setting unfolds itself in the second part, after the transfer of the action both to a different space and to a different time. Ironically, the place where the first pastoral promise is conveyed (by Polixenes) but not delivered and materialised, is Sicilia, Leontes' kingdom, the pastoral setting par excellence, inherited from the ancient tradition of Theocritus. Shakespeare plays with the pastoral conventions not only by reversing the quality of the Sicilian setting (and making it anti-pastoral), but also by reversing the setting itself as borrowed from his sources. As we know, Robert Greene's *Pandosto*, which served as the main inspiration for the plot of the late romance, features Bohemia as the first setting, in which jealousy, suffering and gloom prevail, and, faithful to Theocritus, allows Sicilia to be the place where the pastoral cures the wounds and fixes the wrongs.

Shakespeare continues to play with the pastoral convention, alternating a quasi-mimetic rendition of classical pastoral elements with details that counterbalance or undermine the intention and meaning of the pastoral. The contrast that is commonly emphasised in the pastoral, between city and country, or between court and country, is nuanced in *The Winter's Tale*. While the two settings of the play are geographically separate (set apart by a sea and a desert country by the sea, inhabited by a bear), the transition from Sicilia to Bohemia is done smoothly, with the appearance of the shepherds in Act 3, who announce the turning point of the plot. The mature Sicilians' death enables a return to the "twinn'd lambs", frisking in the sun, now embodied by the baby foundling, a balance, rather than a contrast, between two ages, adulthood and childhood, corresponding symbolically to two seasons, autumn and spring. The Old Shepherd summarises this smooth transition thus, when he finds the baby and hears the Clown's tale about mariners drowning and bears dining at gentlemen:

Heavy matters! Heavy matters! but look thee here, / boy. Now bless thyself: thou
mettest with things / dying, I with things newborn. (III.3.1606-8)

But here, in Bohemia turned Arcadia, where the pastoral idealization is expected to work its wonders, the lost innocence of youth, regarded as the Golden Age, is not evoked nostalgically. As soon as the décor changes and the pastoral is installed, the Old Shepherd's musings about the troubles of the young age provide an antithesis with Polixenes' nostalgic memories of blissful boyhood:

I would there were no age between sixteen and / three-and-twenty, or that youth
would sleep out the / rest; for there is nothing in the between but / getting wenches
with child, wronging the ancientry, / stealing, fighting (III.3.1553-7)

By all means, Bohemia is not what it seems. Sicilia was not the pastoral promised by its name; Bohemia, the promised land for the exiles, also comes short of its reputation.

The shepherds in *The Winter's Tale* are also dissimilar to the stock characters in conventional pastorals. According to tradition, herdsmen necessarily embody an

allegory – they stand, through their occupation, for a lost life in harmony with nature, which man had already lost by the time Theocritus and Vergil wrote their poems, *Idylls* and *The Eclogues* respectively. Paraphrasing Paul Alpers and Ken Hiltner, mentioned above, we may argue that shepherds in the generic pastoral are representative of, or gesture at, something abstract, which has little to do with individual characters. In *As You Like It*, this function gains some complexity by the fact that the characters interpret a role – they are courtiers representing themselves as sylvestrian men and women. A culmination is reached in *The Winter's Tale*, where the shepherds are more individualised than anywhere else in the pastoral tradition. They are differentiated by age (there are old and young peasants), but, most importantly, they are not portrayed in the romanticised and artificial manner which is common to the pastoral genre. As rustics, they speak in prose, a stylistic characteristic which Shakespeare reserves to secondary characters, commoners and simpletons. One of the Bohemian shepherds is given the comic role of the play, as the Clown. Even if, by the end, they fraternise with royals, when they travel to Sicilia as significant, even providential, instruments in the happy family reconciliation (and the Clown feels entitled to call Prince Florizel brother), they are a far cry from the unrealistic, graceful and elegant shepherds' figures featured in pastorals. There is certainly a connection between this specificity of the shepherds in *The Winter's Tale* and the fact that Shakespeare chooses to make them inhabitants of Bohemia. Far from being meaningless as some critics tend to believe, the name of this second space of the romance is indelibly connected to the shepherd's lifestyle. Signifying freedom, unconventionalism and adventure, Bohemianism is also synonymous with simple living, frugality and a nomadic existence. The two sets of features match both the conventional characterization of pastoral living and a more realistic portrayal of agrarian rhythms and lifestyles.

The role of the shepherds in *The Winter's Tale* is further complicated by the fact that they become instruments in the unfolding of the romance. Unlike *As You Like It*, where the central and singular mythological character is the magician who brings the story to a(n apparently miraculous) happy ending, or the director who stages and orchestrates the action and instructs all other characters about their function and position, this role is multiplied in Shakespeare's late romance. Both pastoral and providence work through the Bohemian rustics – a group which includes Autolycus, who is and, at the same time, is not a pastoral character – who organise the sheep-shearing feast, designate Perdita as mythical Flora, and contribute to her recognition as princess, thus demonstrating her bridal worth to the sceptical Polixenes and returning her to her grieving father.

If Rosalind-Ganymede is the character who makes a difference in the pastoral setting of the Forest of Arden, Flora-Perdita is doubled by a variety of other characters in the effort to bring the pastoral plan to fruition in Bohemia: to secure bliss and happiness, to make youth, as the Golden Age, victorious, to bring harmony and peace in nature, but also in the human nature. Apart from the shepherds, the balance is achieved with the help of the two other females of the play, Hermione and Paulina. It is obvious that the final happiness cannot be reached before mother and daughter are reunited, as is the fact that the heroines are counterparts of each other. It is also obvious that Paulina is an important instrument, not only in rescuing the heroines, mother and daughter, from Leontes' rage, but also in making sure reconciliation will eventually take place (she constantly fuels the king's guilt and makes sure his mourning does not end until the sixteen years have passed and the truth can be revealed, thus preventing him from

taking a new wife and creating a new family, as he wants to do in Greene's *Pandosto*). At the same time, though, Hermione and Paulina have much in common with the allegorical female figure in Poussin's *Et in Arcadia ego*. The queen and Paulina, who invites everybody in the end to partake in an artistic as well as mystic experience, encourage readers and viewers of the play to meditate about the relationship between nature and art. Nature, in the pastoral, we have seen so far, is not important in itself, but for what it gestures at. In this case, the very nature of nature, not only of art, is being brought under scrutiny, when Paulina urges the visitors of her "gallery" to see with their own eyes that art is more permanent than nature: "But here it is: prepare / To see the life as lively mock'd as ever" (V.3.3307-8) and Leontes agrees, exclaiming in wonder at the sight of the breathing statue: "Her natural posture!" (V.3.3315). While the claim is that art prevails over nature, the truth is revealed to be the opposite, when the statue, apparently brought to life by magic or artistic talent, turns out to be the woman in flesh and blood.

4. If conclusions be

What we have tried to show in this paper is how Shakespeare goes beyond the pastoral tradition, always playing with its conventions, using nature as a "gestural strategy" (Hiltner 2011: 25), adding layers of irony and self-reflexivity. The crossing of topological borders – be they in the same country (from court to the forest of Arden in *As You Like It*), or in a wider geopolitical context (from Sicilia to Bohemia in *The Winter's Tale*) – enables characters to transgress social borders and to connect differently, more freely than in their initial circumstances, while also allowing for criticism of the pastoral romance, idealized love and upper class customs. At the same time, actors occasionally draw attention linguistically to the spaces re-created on stage, including in these magical spaces the socially diverse audience.

In both plays, Shakespeare connects the pastoral setting with a certain nostalgia for a golden age, a historical time long past or the lost innocence of youth, but their positive implications are, in fact, only superficial. On the one hand, in *As You Like It*, the lifestyle of Duke Senior and his followers who, much like Robin Hood, resort to hunting as a way of survival, contrasts sharply with the fact that deer are victims of sacrificial violence in their own familiar habitats. On the other hand, in *The Winter's Tale*, the playful and blissful boyhood memories of the two kings are set off against the Old Shepherd's view of restless, troubled youthfulness. Employing these subtle references or commentaries, Shakespeare complicates the pastoral plot and refurbishes the pastoral setting, offering readers and viewers an embedded experience, which merges nature, the "real" and the not-so-real world and the stage.

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**A QUIXOTIC AVATAR IN POST-FRANCOIST SPAIN:
GRAHAM GREENE'S *MONSIGNOR QUIXOTE* AND THE SENSE
OF BELIEF IN THE SECULAR MODERN WORLD**

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***Abstract:** The article explores the nature of religious and political belief in the secular modern world, as exemplified by Greene's 1982 novel, whose structure and themes are patterned after Cervantes's Don Quixote. Deeply engaged in questioning the Catholic faith, particularly after the Second Vatican Council, and the doctrine of communism in post-Francoist Spain, the novel, I argue, can be read as a satirical contempt for what is indisputably categorized as orthodox dogmatic belief. Both *Monsignor Quixote*, the eponymous protagonist of the novel, and Sancho, the former Communist mayor of El Toboso, are tormented with doubt, and it is precisely their mutual respect towards each other's beliefs that ultimately leads to their friendship and, by extension, to the reconciliation of two conflicting discourses.*

***Keywords:** dialogue, doubt, faith, friendship, Marxism, Roman Catholicism*

1. Introduction

Published in 1982, *Monsignor Quixote* is one of Graham Greene's most benign novels in terms of theme and characters. Although one of the "best and most amusing novels" (O'Prey 1988: 151), Greene's work marks a visible shift in style, which juxtaposes a realistic narrative with a foray into anti-dogmatic Catholic values upheld by the Spanish priest. In *Monsignor Quixote*, Greene's strong support for Christian humanism is "even more decisively central to the artistic, imaginative, intellectual, ethical and psychological world of the fiction than had been the case in most of the earlier 'Catholic' novels" (Holderness 1993: 262), which include *Brighton Rock* (1938), *The Power and the Glory* (1940), *The Heart of the Matter* (1948), *The End of the Affair* (1951) and *A Burnt-Out Case* (1961). By the same token, in his seminal book entitled *Graham Greene*, David Lodge (1966: 6) argues that Catholicism in Greene's fiction represents

a system of concepts, a source of situation, and a reservoir of symbols with which he can order and *dramatize* certain *intuitions* about the nature of human experience—intuitions which were gained prior to and independently of his formal adoption of the Catholic faith. (my emphasis)

Lodge's pithy remark enables me to consider the novel and its main characters as highly indicative of Greene's fictional imagination, on the one hand, and, more importantly, of his Catholic imagination, which often appears to be at loggerheads with the canon law of the Catholic Church. Mark Bosco (2005: 139),

who has written at length about the connection between Catholicism and the novelist's literary imagination, has cogently observed that the Roman Catholic dogma makes room for theological speculations or "intuitions" whereby the characters are seeking to become aware of the relationship between God and humanity, "while struggling to understand the paradoxical claims that are made on them by others". In crude terms, Bosco opposes Lodge's dramatization of subjective faith, which, in the case of Monsignor Quixote, is prone to uncertainty and doubt, to the rigid use of precepts imposed by the Catholic Church. For instance, when asked by the mayor whether he is not questioning the existence of Hell, Father Quixote answers straightforwardly: "I believe from obedience, but not with the heart" (Greene 1982: 75). Consequently, Monsignor Quixote's opinions and actions are the natural outcome of his humanitarian ethics, simplicity, kind-heartedness, tolerance and empathy, for "he dignifies failure by suggesting that those who fail are closer to God; he believes in human love as an expression of divine love; and he contends that hatred is the other side of love" (Hoskins 1999: 259).

Apart from the fictional treatment of Roman Catholicism, which has generally been considered by critics to be the natural extension of Greene's personal religious beliefs, *Monsignor Quixote* is a piece of fiction that owes a great deal to three major literary sources. The first, as evident from the title, is Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, which is immediately recognizable not only in terms of form and structure, but also in terms of character construction and development. Father Quixote confesses that he is descended from Cervantes's Spanish knight, a famed "fictional character" who attests to "his distinguished ancestry" (Greene 1982: 12). The second is the Italian author Giovanni Guareschi's *The Little World of Don Camillo*, a novel which foregrounds the relationship between Don Camillo, the priest of the Italian village of Bassa, and Peppone, the mayor of the town and leader of the Communist party. The third, which actually inspired Greene to write the novel, is Father Leopoldo Duran's book, *Graham Greene: Friend and Brother*, published in 1994. Greene and Father Duran made friends in 1976, when they began to travel across Spain and Portugal. Acting as Greene's "adviser in certain doctrinal matters and occasionally his confessor as well", Father Duran has revealed that "Greene conceived the idea for *Monsignor Quixote* during their visit to the burial site of the Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno in Salamanca in July 1976" (Hoskins 1999: 260), an anecdote incorporated into Greene's picaresque narrative, modelled on the Cervantine one. In this context, Unamuno's *The Tragic Sense of Life in Man and Nations* is equally relevant philosophical text that stirred Greene's Catholic imagination out of which *Monsignor Quixote* came into being.

In line with Lodge's and Bosco's approach, my aim is twofold: to delve into the Roman Catholic way of thinking and acting of a 20th-century Quixotic avatar of Cervantes and to show that, notwithstanding the evident link between the Roman Catholic religious culture and Greene's literary imagination, *Monsignor Quixote* is a novel that cannot easily fall into the category of "Catholic" novels, according to Holderness, nor can it explicitly pass for political fiction, given the former mayor's communist beliefs endorsed by Marxist philosophy. In doing so, I will shed light on Father Quixote's religious views, moulded after Miguel de Unamuno's fideism, according to which true faith is the ultimate expression of uncertainty and despair, rather than reason. I will connect this aspect to Greene's satirical contempt for established dogmatic belief in the secular modern world, on the one hand, and, on the other, to the overarching theme of sympathy and friendship stemming from both characters' doubts and respect towards each other's opinions or beliefs.

2. Don Quixote as priest

Indebted to Cervantes, *Monsignor Quixote* is a novel whose plot lends itself to a simple summary. The Monsignor, an allegedly real descendant of the fictional Don Quixote, sets off on a journey to Madrid together with Zancas, the former Communist mayor of El Toboso, whose name is actually Sancho's surname in the first book of *Don Quixote*. Ludicrously elevated to the rank of monsignor after he fuels the Mercedes of a visiting curial bishop from Rome, who also enjoys the wine and horsemeat steak kind-heartedly offered by the priest, Father Quixote stirs up the anger of his obnoxious bishop who has long considered him insane and who grants him a respite, thus hoping to dismiss him as soon as possible. Replaced by Father Herrera, who, like the bishop, is a member of the rigid Spanish Church which had supported General Franco, Father Quixote and the former mayor leave El Toboso in a worn-out Seat 600, affectionately named Rocinante, after Don Quixote's horse. On their way to Madrid, where they are to buy a bib and purple socks, the sartorial emblems of a monsignor, the two protagonists gradually develop a friendship based on sympathetic conversations, accompanied by plenty of Manchegan wine, cheese, and sausages. In a series of serio-comic situations, Father Quixote sojourns in a brothel which he mistakes for a hotel, watches a pornographic film, hides a robber from the Guardia Civil, visits the Valley of the Fallen, where General Franco was buried, the University of Salamanca, where he admires the statue of Unamuno, and the house of Cervantes in Valladolid. Outraged by such actions, the bishop and Father Herrera manage to bring Quixote back to El Toboso, where he is now deemed as completely mad and imprisoned in his own home. Set free by Sancho, they travel to Galicia, where, scandalised by a procession in which the priests allow the statue of the Virgin to be covered in money, the monsignor interrupts the ceremony and is wounded by a censor thrown at his head. While driving towards the Trappist monastery at Osera in order to escape the furious crowd, the Guardia Civil chase them and shoot Rocinante's tires, leaving Quixote injured. Accommodated and looked after by Father Leopoldo, Monsignor Quixote enters the chapel with Sancho, Father Leopoldo, and Professor Pilbeam, an authority on Ignatius of Loyola, where he dies after administering deliriously the imaginary Eucharist to Sancho.

In *The Sanctification of Don Quixote: From Hidalgo to Priest*, Eric Ziolkowski has minutely analysed the monsignor's identification with Don Quixote from a literary and religious perspective. According to Ziolkowski (1991: 1), Don Quixote has been employed over centuries as a "vehicle for religious expression" in a secular world in which the Quixote's *forma mentis* and *modus operandi* are no longer valid. The same is true for any quixotic character, since it is precisely their anachronistic ethical code that clashes with modern norms and conventions. In other words, quixotic characters are "vehicles" for social, cultural, religious or political reform, however idealistic it may be. In Greene's novel, Father Quixote passes for an old fool because of his simplicity, frugality, modesty, humbleness and, most importantly, because of his feelings of doubt and uncertainty, which fail to be in tune with the precepts of the Catholic Church. In the words of Mark Bosco (2005: 130), *Monsignor Quixote* has recourse to "a Catholic sacramentality uneasily situated within the corrupt and decadent descriptions of modern life". The monsignor has nothing of Don Quixote's fabricated magnificence, admitting that he would have liked to study at Salamanca, but "the standard there was beyond me" (Greene 1982: 23). He questions the existence of Hell and wishes that

everyone, Franco included, should go to Heaven. As a descendant of Don Quixote, the monsignor is, paradoxically, a real character who asserts his own identity. Greene uses this literary game in order to warn the reader about the novel's allusive structure, within which a "real" character like Father Quixote, in fact a mixture of fiction and reality, subverts traditional realism. Sancho, the ex-Mayor, says: "You know, father, you remind me of your ancestor. He believed in all those books of chivalry, quite out of date even in his day..." Quixote strongly objects, answering that "I've never read a book of chivalry in my life." Yet Sancho continues: "But you continue to read those old books of theology. They are your books of chivalry. You believe in them just as much as he did in his books." (idem: 34). Unlike Don Quixote, the monsignor is aware that certain ecclesiastical books contain absurdities, but they never shake his faith in God. When, for instance, Sancho ridicules Father Heribert Jone, a German moral theologian whose work "doesn't play a great part in parish work" (idem: 40), Quixote answers sympathetically: "I know that there are absurdities in some of my books as there were in the books of chivalry my ancestor collected. That didn't mean that all chivalry was absurd. Whatever absurdities you can dig out of my books, I still have faith" (idem: 85). Contrary to Don Quixote, who indulges himself into reading *Amadis of Gaul*, the monsignor comforts his mind with more liberal theological, devotional and ethical writers, such as St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa, St. Francis de Sales and St. Thérèse of Lisieux. What is more, Greene's Quixote makes his own decisions and choices when he decides to defend the statue of the Virgin against the Mexicans by imitating his ancestor or when he radically opposes his adventures to those of Don Quixote: "My adventures are my own adventures, not his. I go my way—my way—not his. I have free will" (idem: 141). Whereas the priest and the barber in *Don Quixote* burn the hero's books, the monsignor becomes "a prisoner, he thought, like Cervantes" (idem: 169) in his own room, where his books are left intact. In the end, Don Quixote comes back to his senses and, before dying, he declines Sancho's request to resume knight-errantry, since it is completely useless. As Murray Roston (2006: 274) suggests, Don Quixote's subtle remark, "There are no birds this year in last year's nests", is repeated by the Bishop of Motopo, who by this line "encourages Father Quixote to undertake a journey of faith". With his faith unaltered, the monsignor only wants to be accepted as a humble priest who never mistakes fiction for reality, but seems to be mad as long as he claims to be the descendant of Cervantes's famous knight, whose adventures, as perceived by the bishop of El Toboso, are recounted on "many disgusting passages which in the days of the Generalissimo would not even have passed the censor" (Greene 1982: 4). They may not have passed the censor because of Don Quixote's idealism, which left a legacy for many quixotic characters, among them being Monsignor Quixote, whose mission is to revivify faith in a "disenchanted" (Weber 2004: 30) world, in which the belief in powers superior to man has been waning. At the same time, the bishop of El Toboso may have been wrong, since, in Francoist Spain, Don Quixote acquired the status of a national hero, assimilated with his author who, serving his nation in the Battle of Lepanto, lost his left arm.

3. Doubt as the liaison between friendship and faith

Patrick Henry (1985: 68) has rightfully observed that "the word 'doubt' occurs with uncommon frequency in *Monsignor Quixote* and, in both parts of the

novel, it is clearly established that doubt is the natural state of the believer". Shortly after Father Quixote and his squire, the ex-Mayor Zancas, leave La Mancha, the former complains that "nothing seems safe any more" (Greene 1982: 44). Asked by Zancas whether his faith is safe, the monsignor "did not bother to answer" (ibid.). Seen as a liminal phase that suggests Quixote's contact with the crude realities of life, their departure is synonymous with each other's self-discovery endorsed by lively – and often humorous – conversations over wine and cheese. The two characters' witty dialogue allows us to view Greene's work as a novel of ideas, in which Greene "is considered to have secured a belated truce between the opposed ideologies of Catholicism and Communism, a creative rapprochement between spiritual loyalty and political commitment, religious faith and social obligation" (Holderness 1993: 265). Quixote, who asks the Mayor to call him "friend" (Greene 1982: 51), affirms that "it's human to doubt" (idem: 58) and, ultimately, in a Christian humanist manner, that "a sense of doubt can bring men together perhaps even more than sharing a faith. The believer will fight another believer over a shade of difference: the doubter fights only with himself" (idem: 59). At the opposite end, Sancho is haunted by Stalin's atrocities committed in death camps, claiming that "he very nearly killed Communism (...) just as the Curia killed the Catholic Church" (idem: 179). Moreover, Sancho's trust in Marxism as a solution to the problem of social injustice recommend him as "rational humanist" (O'Prey 1988: 146), who persuades the monsignor to read Marx's *Communist Manifesto*, just as Father Quixote encourages Sancho to read Father Heribert Jone's *Moral Theology*. This exchange of books is highly indicative of the necessity for a constructive debate, meant to engage both protagonists in interpreting, producing and negotiating meaning. The monsignor stresses Marx's morality and also his quixotic ideology reflected in Sancho – "It's the work of a good man. A man as good as you are – and just as mistaken" (Greene 1982: 126) – whereas Sancho recalls that, as a student at Salamanca, where they stop for a short time in order to admire Unamuno's statue, Unamuno's faith "kept me in the Church for several years with that half-belief of his which for a while I could share" (idem: 111). This is one of the crucial episodes in the novel, because Sancho, puzzled by Quixote's radical statement that echoes Unamuno's existentialist philosophy, – "There's only one thing you will ever lack – the dignity of despair" (Greene 1982: 112) – reminisces even better Unamuno's understanding of religious faith, which now troubles his conscience:

"Have I complete belief?" Sancho asked. "Sometimes I wonder. The ghost of my professor haunts me (...) I hear him saying, 'There is a muffled voice, a voice of uncertainty which whispers in the ears of the believer. Who knows? Without this uncertainty how could we live?'" (Greene 1982: 112)

The monsignor's "dream of a deepening friendship and a profounder understanding, of a reconciliation even between their disparate faiths" (idem: 66) materializes as a result of uncertainty as the foundation of moral qualities such as tolerance, empathy, respect and modesty. Travelling across a country that is subject to political transition in the late 1970s, which both protagonists paradoxically perceive as a timeless land – "How little Spain changes," the Mayor said" (Greene 1982: 108) -, Quixote and his squire embody "the modern believer's inevitable struggle in a rational world against uncertainty and disbelief" (O'Prey 1988: 147), theologically upheld in the novel by Catholic conservative clerics like the bishop of

El Toboso and Father Herrera, whose name ironically points to the Spanish noun *hierro* (“iron”). Despite the authoritarian canon of the Catholic Church, Father Quixote feels at ease with his companion, refuting, for instance, Sancho’s reading of the parable of the Prodigal Son through a Marxist lens. According to the Mayor, the Prodigal Son was “so disgusted by the bourgeois world in which he had been brought up that he got rid of his wealth in the quickest way possible - perhaps he even gave it away and in a Tolstoyan gesture he became a peasant” (Greene 1982: 60). Far from being persuaded by such an interpretation, Quixote – and readers alike – are able to understand that class is not a key issue in the economy of the novel and that “Sancho’s beliefs at the level of personal intention and practical goals constitutes a variant form of the orthopraxis that Greene, like *liberationist* theologians, claims as the true, if only, meeting place between Marxism and Catholicism” (Bosco 2005: 143; my emphasis). Quixote’s liberationist Catholic doctrine is at its best when he asks himself whether God is merciful or when he explains the Holy Trinity to Sancho in an ingenious way, with the help of wine bottles:

“Two bottles equal in size. The wine they contained was of the same substance and it was born at the same time. There you have God the Father and God the Son and there, in the half bottle, God the Holy Ghost. Same substance. Same birth. They’re inseparable. Whoever partakes of one partakes of all three.” (Greene 1982: 52)

By the same token, he lambastes Father Jone’s moral theology, because it makes no reference to love, and prefers the Gospel of John, which never mentions “Hell”, and of St Mark, who mentions the word “twice in thirty-one pages” (Greene 1982: 58). Quixote is keen on St Francis de Sales due to his ample plea for the love of God, totally opposed to Jone’s insistence on mortal sin and punishment, and is surprised to hear about the absurd case-based reasoning practiced by Jone, for whom *coitus interruptus* is “one of the forms of onanism”, which “is not a sin if done on account of some unforeseen necessity, for example (it’s Jone’s own example) the arrival of a third person on the scene” (Greene 1982: 82). The funny remark is made before Sancho tells the story of Marquez, who hires a butler to knock at his bedroom door when, having sex with his wife, he feels unable to contain himself any longer. Hilariously enough, Marquez finds out that he has sinned, since Jone’s rule does not apply to planned interruptions. In a nutshell, the monsignor rejects “the sophisticated hair-splitting of theologians” (Roston 2006: 153), being inspired by liberal minds like St Teresa, St John of the Cross and St Francis de Sales, who promote Christian values like virtuousness and unconditional devotion. From a Marxist point of view, Father Quixote is the epitome of humility and simplicity, choosing a no-frills hotel in a poor area of Madrid, unlike his Communist squire who prefers exquisite restaurants and hotels, claiming that the Party never disapproves of such bourgeois comfort. He even establishes a speculative analogy between Marx and Cervantes, based on the relics of the past that have been replaced by a new socio-economic and spiritual order:

“Listen to this Sancho,” and Father Quixote took *The Communist Manifesto* out of his pocket. “The bourgeoisie has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations... It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religion fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm, in the icy water of egotistical calculation” (Greene 1982: 122)

Apart from this unexpected comparison, Quixote shares Marx's opinion uttered by Sancho, according to which "religion is the opium of the people" (Greene 1982: 50). Metaphorically, religion is a tranquilizer for all those who suffer by being oppressed in an unfeeling world. Notwithstanding their beliefs and opinions on various theological or Marxist issues they discuss, Quixote and Sancho have doubts about the better future of mankind. "It's an awful thing not to have doubts" (idem: 81), exclaims the monsignor, and both come to realise that "there is still a long and painful journey for humankind to travel before their respective messianic dreams will be fulfilled" (Roston 2006: 149).

Doubt, which constantly eats away at both characters, allows Graham Greene to frame the question of faith against the certainty of well-established doctrinal belief by heavily relying on Miguel de Unamuno's fideism. For Unamuno, faith alone stems from the desire to achieve immortality and to acknowledge the existence of God. As long as the human mind cannot comprehend God through reason, Unamuno, influenced by Pascal and Kierkegaard, maintains that there is no epistemic certainty when approaching God and that doubt must be conjoined with faith. As Patrick Henry (1985: 74) has shown, "Unamuno proscribed not only all attempts to buttress faith upon reason but all claims that faith was only supra-rational rather than contra-rational". It is the will to believe that gives birth to hope born out of despair, which in turn gives rise to faith, and faith and hope together generate charity. Faith is a matter of volition, as father Quixote explains: "I want to believe that it is all true – and that want is the only certain thing I feel" (Greene 1982: 205). From Unamuno's perspective, Monsignor Quixote is a spiritual knight-errant, who follows in the footsteps of Cervantes's protagonist, described in *The Tragic Sense of Life in Men and Nations* as "a man of heroic despair, a hero of inner, resigned despair (...) Our Lord Don Quixote is the prototype of the vitalist whose faith is founded on uncertainty, and Sancho is the prototype of the rationalist who doubts his own reason" (Unamuno 1972: 133).

Based on subjectivity and instinctual faith, Unamuno's romantic vision in Greene's novel culminates at the close of the novel, when the injured Quixote is accommodated at Osera. Faith overcomes dogma, in that the monsignor, who is now in a coma, enters the chapel in order to perform, in a dreamlike state, a Tridentine mass in Latin, without paten and chalice, which runs counter to the vernacular Mass enforced by the Second Vatican Council, violating at the same time his bishop's interdiction to ever officiate the Mass because of his outrageous behaviour. The rebellious Quixote's celebration of the old Latin Mass – which is shortened and highly personalised, in accordance with his favourite parts of the religious service – stands not only against the conservatism of the Catholic Church, but also against "the church's attempt at modernization, for Quixote feels the vernacular has been unjustly mandated from Rome" (Bosco 2005: 145). More importantly, Greene subtly critiques the lack of dialogue and ecumenism promised by the Second Vatican Council, both illustrated by Father Herrera, with whom Father Quixote cannot share common views on religion, because he favours the new Mass. Greene's criticism also targets the Opus Dei conservative organization, founded in 1928 to support Franco's dogmatism.

Performing his sacerdotal duties with unstinting dedication, in spite of the new ecclesiastical norms and his bishop's persecution, Father Quixote administers the Eucharist to Sancho, who kneels and feels the priest's fingers "like a Host" (Greene 1982: 250) on his tongue. Sancho, Quixote's "*compañero*" (ibid.), is now infused with faith – the outcome of their genuine friendship cultivated on their

travels: “Anything which will give him peace, he thought, anything at all” (ibid.). This is the moment which shatters the ex-mayor’s ideological certainties, urging him to ponder on his love for the monsignor and particularly on his potential spiritual transformation:

(...) an idea quite strange to him had lodged in his brain. Why is it that the hate of man – even of a man like Franco – dies with his death, and yet love, the love which he had begun to feel for Father Quixote, seemed now to live and grow in spite of the final separation and the final silence – for how long, he wondered with a kind of fear, was it possible for that love of his to continue? And to what end? (Greene 1982: 256)

Indeed, Sancho’s idea seems “quite strange”, because Quixote “took from the invisible paten the invisible Host and his fingers laid the nothing on his tongue” (Greene 1982: 250). It is, therefore, a symbolic ritual, and Sancho agrees with Professor Pilbeam in this respect. The professor, an American specialist in Ignatius of Loyola, is a “nominal Catholic” (Roston 2006: 154) who believes in fact, since his interest in the Spanish priest is purely academic. Their position is at odds with Father Leopoldo, a supporter of Descartes thanks to whom he leaped into faith. Leopoldo echoes Unamuno’s dismissal of Descartes’s methodical doubt – because it is *dubito* that leads to *cogito* without implying emotion – and tells the professor that fact and fiction are “so difficult to distinguish” (Greene 1982: 240). Much like the merging of fiction and reality in the case of the monsignor as a descendant of his ancestor Don Quixote, Father Leopoldo’s conclusion is a sceptical one: the Eucharist administered by Quixote remains a mystery which can only be understood through instinctual faith and unconditional love. Sancho’s rhetorical question, “And to what end?”, draws him closer to Leopoldo’s uncertainty regarding his love for Quixote, despite his preference for Marxist reliability.

4. Conclusion

I have argued that Graham Greene’s novel lies at the intersection of a few major literary sources, of which the most recognisable one – Cervantes’s *Don Quixote* – has been discussed in tight relationship with Greene’s creation of his eponymous hero, whose faith based on doubt and despair relies on Unamuno’s fideism. As a “knight-errant of faith”, to use the syntagm that gives the title of Holderness’s 1993 article, the monsignor’s spiritual discourse is counterpoised by the ex-Mayor’s Marxist certitude, until they discover that their firm agendas are thrown into doubt thanks to the friendly discussions they have on their journey across Spain. Respecting each other’s points of view, the two protagonists are symbolically united in faith and love at the end of the novel, when Quixote administers an invisible Communion to Sancho. For Greene (1982: 46), the Catholic dogma, along with the Marxist doctrine, are “protests against injustice” and the heroes’ exchange of ideas is never meant to ideologize one belief over the other, but to enable them to discover mutual affinities. I have read *Monsignor Quixote* as a journey of faith which challenges Roman Catholic conservative rules and “the technicalities of dogma” (Roston 2006: 155), on the one hand, and the idea of love as purely material. Michael Higgins (1992: 23) has rightfully noticed that “love, remembrance, Eucharist have replaced the ideological fixities and complacencies of the past, and certitude is never quite what it was”, foregrounding uncertainty as the spring of true faith. Far from being Greene’s “valedictory work”

(Hoskins 1999: 259), *Monsignor Quixote* adapts the Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance to a secular context, in which man's humanity to man is shunned by scientific rationalization, abstraction, and unquestioned certainties that trigger ideological disputes and wars of ideas.

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**THE CREATIVE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PAST:
'TREASURE TEXTS' IN TIBETAN-ENGLISH NOVELS**

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Abstract: *Tibetan English fiction emerges with Tibetan exile and, like other postcolonial writings, is deeply concerned with national construction and the retelling of Tibetan recent history. In their historiographic ways, both Tsewang Pemba's *Idols on the Path* (1966) and Jamyang Norbu's *The Mandala of Sherlock Holmes* (1999), engage the Tibetan Buddhist heritage to tell the histories of Tibet in a heterodox, self-reflective and playful manner. More recent works of fiction are no exception and Thubien Samphel's *Falling through the Roof* (2008) and Tsering Namgyal Khortsa's *The Tibetan Suitcase* (2013) also engage their Tibetan Buddhist heritage to mediate the recent, and less often, the remote past. This paper focuses on how the singularly Tibetan Buddhist gter ma (lit. treasure, i.e. a text written in the past that has been 'unearthed' or 'discovered') is re-appropriated and re-engaged in contemporary Tibetan English fiction.*

Keywords: *diaspora, exile, historiographic metafiction, invention of tradition, gter ma, Tibetan-English fiction*

1. Introduction

Tibetan identity in exile has found many pathways of expressing the complexities and ambiguities of the "modern [Tibetan] condition" (Bhum 2008: 114). An example of moving away from the paradigm of preservation and taking the approach that Tibetan culture ought to be not only celebrated, and even maintained as it once was, but also developed is the birth of Tibetan English literature. Sometimes a matter of necessity, as some Tibetans born and educated in exile are not literate in Tibetan, sometimes a matter of choice, Tibetan English literature can be said to be born with Gendün Chopel (1903-1951), whose poems can be found in *In the Forest of Faded Wisdom* (2009). However, Tibetan English recently has certainly become a more significant phenomenon since the inception of the Tibetan exile and diaspora. Moreover, although writers like Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche (1939-1987) (*Timely Rain: Selected Poetry of Chögyam Trungpa* 1998, and *Mudra: Early Poems and Songs* 2001) or Tsewang Pemba (1932-2011) started writing in English as early as the 1960s, the number of Tibetans writing prose or poetry in English seems to have substantially increased in the 21st century. Not a small number of Tibetans who have chosen English as a language of literary expression are poets, such as the abovementioned Chögyam Trungpa, the poet-activist Tenzin Tsundue (born 1975), whose best-known collection is *Kora: Stories and Poems* (2006), or Tsering Wangmo Dhompa, by far the most recognized

Tibetan English poet. Although Tsering Wangmo Dhompa (born 1969) has recently published non-fiction (*Revolute* 2021) and has also authored various volumes on travel prose (*My Rice Tastes Like the Lake* 2011; *A Home in Tibet* 2013; *Coming Home to Tibet* 2016), she is most acclaimed for her poetic production (*Rules of the House* 2002; *In the Absent Everyday* 2005), which reflects her academic training in creative writing and has received significant critical attention (to mention but a few: Galvan-Alvarez 2020; D'Rozario 2022; Goswami 2022). Nonetheless, there is also a slowly growing number of Tibetans writing novels and short stories in English, as well as a sizeable non-fiction production.

Beginning with Tsewang Pemba's *Idols on the Path* (1966) and counting in its fold celebrated writers like Jamyang Norbu (born 1949), author *The Mandala of Sherlock Holmes* (1999), the lineage of Tibetan English novelists seems haunted by common concerns and analogous ways of articulating identity and conflict. The necessity of re-telling the story of Tibet as an act of resistance that counteracts Chinese accounts of Tibetan history is one central theme. Sometimes this re-telling might be focused on a particularly significant period of Tibetan history, e.g. *Idols on the Path* focuses on the period from the Younghusband expedition to the early years of exile in India, or *The Mandala of Sherlock Homes* on the turbulent final decade of the 19th century. However, some Tibetan English novels cover many different and disparate periods of Tibetan history, as it is the case in Thubten Samphel (1956-2022)'s remarkable fiction *Falling through the Roof* (2008). The creative and semi-fictional retelling of history places these novels in the genre of historiographic metafiction, a popular one in post-colonial South Asia and in the English speaking world in general. Nonetheless, as much as these narratives respond to global and transnational trends, they are also deeply preoccupied with expressing something uniquely Tibetan. After all, as counter-accounts of official histories, the Tibetan English novels are telling the story of Tibet from a Tibetan perspective, which, in the context of diaspora, is a peculiarly global and hybrid one. But, how does one craft a narrative that is at once Tibetan and global/hybrid?

The aim of this paper is to elaborate on the notion of post-Buddhism, a term of my invention (Galvan-Alvarez 2014), which aims to explain how contemporary Tibetan English writers use the traditional Buddhist narratives of their heritage in a playful, creative and humorous fashion. The tone of this narrative treatment resembles the way in which myth is dealt with in contemporary metafiction, magical realism and other forms of postmodern and postcolonial writing. On the other hand, the presence of traditional Tibetan Buddhist narratives fulfils the purpose of performing an identity that is ancestrally Tibetan, a mode of telling stories that is well rooted in the history and worldview of old Tibet. As transnational and diasporic subjects, Tibetan writers negotiate two or more identities and the hybrid nature of the Tibetan English novel attests to this contemporary reality. Hybridity is not only limited to the use of (Tibetanized) English, but can be appreciated throughout the structures and themes of these novels. Although other novels, particularly Norbu's *The Mandala of Sherlock Holmes*, have attracted scholarly analysis (Venturino 2008; Guest 2010; Bhoil 2013; Galvan-Alvarez 2014), Samphel's *Falling through the Roof* remains largely undiscussed. For this reason, I will focus on *Falling through the Roof*, which artfully interweaves stories from the protest generation (1980s-1990s) with Tibet's semi-legendary past, by freely using the traditional narratives of *gter ma* discovery and *sprul ku*, or the reincarnation of lamas.

2. Modern iterations of *gter ma* and *sprul ku* narratives

Departing from the more serious and self-critical tone of Tsewang Pemba in *Idols on the Path* and the passionate patriotism of Jamyang Norbu in *The Mandala of Sherlock Holmes*, Thubten Samphel's *Falling through the Roof* offers a playful and at times ironic account of Tibetan history, mediated through traditional narratives. Also far from trying to counteract the solid and official quality of modern Chinese historiography on Tibet with an equally solid narrative, Samphel offers a truly postmodern, decidedly hybrid and humorous account that is not devoid of self-criticism and which often exposes the contradictions, tensions and conflicts of exiled Tibet. Unlike Norbu or Pemba, Samphel presents a wide range of Tibetan characters, from young enthusiastic communists to conservative and devout lamas. Although male characters are more prominent, there are also a number of significant female characters from different generations and regional backgrounds. The differences between more established exiles and new arrivals or Tibetans living in Tibet is not overlooked, and neither are the regional or tribal identities of Amdowas, Khampas, Central Tibetans, Ladakhis, Topas, Monpas or Goloks. *Falling through the Roof*, despite its relatively small size (300 pages) and accessible language, accomplishes a thorough reappraisal of the Tibetan recent and distant past. Moreover, *Falling through the Roof* is written in a conceptual language that openly dialogues with the Tibetan heritage and with a very global and contemporary *Zeitgeist*.

Key to the success of *Falling through the Roof* in fulfilling this hybrid construction of identity is Samphel's strategic redeployment of narratives and narrative modes from Tibet's Buddhist heritage in the language of historiographic metafiction and magical realism. This peculiar re-engagement of the Buddhist lore, common in Tibetan English literature, can be arguably called post-Buddhist. Post-Buddhism aims to describe re-appropriations of Buddhist narratives in literary contexts that are not strictly Buddhist, soteriological or even religious. Therefore, post-Buddhism does not imply a rejection or overcoming of Buddhism, but an often playful and contestive re-deployment of some of its motifs for non-Buddhist purposes. In the context of Tibetan English fiction, post-Buddhist narratives are used for making political and identity statements, since the narratives of Buddhist Tibet offer a way of grounding modern Tibetan identities and adopting a uniquely Tibetan worldview. However, these narratives are rewritten with much critical distance, opening a space of playful ambiguity in which the Buddhist ideological message is neither fully embraced nor discarded. The Buddhist structures remain, but their traditional thrust is emptied out, allowing the voice of the hybrid, conflicted and, why not, post-Buddhist Tibetan exile to speak. The peculiar way in which these traditional narratives are redeployed illustrates how Tibetan-English authors renegotiate and reinvent their religious and cultural heritage in exile. A good example is Jamyang Norbu's *The Mandala of Sherlock Holmes*, which is framed as a discovered text and it skillfully weaves the narratives of reincarnation (*sprul ku*) and treasure texts (*gter ma*) in a post-modern, historically metafictional fashion. Also, the often complex, complicated and multilayered structure of novels like *Falling Through the Roof* or *The Mandala* expresses the diasporic Tibetans' ambivalence towards the culture of their ancestors, as it offers an implicit contestation or reformulation of their ancient values, as I will discuss later in more detail. In fact, not unlike *The Mandala*, Samphel's novel is articulated as a collection of many unearthed, (re)discovered or hidden stories.

The narratives of *gter ma* and *sprul ku* have been revalorized in exiled fiction as a way of talking about two important issues for the Tibetan diaspora: the rediscovery of tradition and the quest for identity. *gTer ma* texts are a peculiarly Tibetan (or not) cultural strategy for a phenomenon that can be identified in many other locations across the world: the construction of innovation as an expression of established tradition. By presenting a text written in a certain age as a mere discovery of an allegedly older text, the new becomes aligned with the old and acquires its authority and cultural value. From this perspective, the endeavor that preoccupies many exiled Tibetan writers is, metaphorically speaking, that of the *gter ston*: to unearth a culture or a story that has been buried and forgotten and to spread its message in the present time. For a community that has suffered displacement and has seen its links to land and history violently disrupted, this is a crucial matter. It is also a way of introducing innovation, new cultural forms and expressions, as part of the older and legitimating cultural matrix the innovators want to depart from, but also belong to. *gTer ma* texts are ambiguous cultural products that embody both continuation and disruption. There could be no better symbol for diasporic writers, who often experience the conflicted desires of both returning to their cultural tradition and reformulating it, so it can respond to the new realities of exile.

The *sprul ku* narrative instantiates very similar dynamics, as they enable the continuation of an established lineage, while leaving some freedom and agency to the current incarnation to reformulate the tradition. The stories of *sprul ku bla ma* (i.e. incarnate lama) often contain elements that repeat themselves in the lives of each individual, but also the unique and personal input that each teacher brings to the tradition. The ambiguity that marks *gter ma* is also present in *sprul ku* stories, as the new incarnation discovers his (less often her) true identity in that of his predecessor, but that “true” identity needs to be expressed in new times and therefore in new ways. The authority of the *sprul ku* rests with his or her predecessor(s), but such authority also contains the license, and the necessity, to innovate and convey the teachings of the lineage in slightly different ways. The inherent deferral and displacement embodied by the *sprul ku* institution also speaks to the Tibetan modern condition. On one hand, the exiles need to legitimate their cultural expressions by linking them to the matrix of established Tibetan culture, to the lineage that connects them with their ancestors and predecessors. On the other hand, by acquiring the authority of the tradition, they can also introduce new and disruptive elements. This is perfectly instantiated in *Falling through the Roof* through the story of Tashi, the rebel youth who wants to turn Tibetan culture upside down, and who is recognized as the *sprul ku* of the Drubtop Rinpoche (a fictional lineage and title). Although Tashi abandons his communist ideals and conforms to Buddhist etiquette somewhat, he also retains a unique outlook and reformulates the Tibetan Buddhist message in such a way that it still expresses his political concerns. By being reencountered with his “true” identity, Tashi at once obtains and loses such identity. The enormous authority of his position, as the incarnation of the inventor of the Tibetan alphabet, earns him the respect of the Tibetan Buddhist establishment and gives him agency to reformulate the tradition.

Although the fundamental intent of the *gter ma* and the *sprul ku* narratives is not inherently Buddhist, or Tibetan for that matter, they can be said to have shaped the history and identity of Tibetan Buddhism in a substantial way. Similar narrative patterns can be found in other Asian or even non-Asian cultures, and their dynamics, the tension and negotiation between the new and the old, can be said to

be universal. However, the peculiar way in which they have been deployed in Tibetan culture, informing the development of Tibetan Buddhist textual and human lineages makes them a significant cultural trademark. Hence, the explicit way in which Tibetan English fiction acknowledges them as Tibetan Buddhist signifiers and also ambiguously plays with the secular implications of their message can be said to be post-Buddhist.

3. *Falling through the Roof*

Thubten Samphel deploys these narratives in his historiographic metafictional novel. *Falling through the Roof* unfolds as the first person narration of Dhondup Kunga, a second generation Tibetan born in India, who has recently obtained a history degree. Like many others from his generation, who grew up in India in the late 70s and 80s, Dhondup is obsessed with digging up and recording the “lost” history of Tibet. One way of reading the novel’s narrative development is as a collection of recovered and rewritten texts that shed light on many different perspectives and periods of Tibetan history. The connection to the *gter ma* pattern seems evident and Dhondup’s words often make this link stronger at various junctions. The novel begins with the sudden appearance of a *snags pa bla ma* (i.e. a non-monastic, ordained Tantric teacher or lama) from Kham in Majnu Ka Tilla, where he meets the recent history graduates Tashi and Dhondup, at a derelict Chang bar. It is in the little shack that, with a mix of enthusiasm and skepticism, Dhondup begins writing down the stories of the Drubchen Rinpoche, who offers a peculiarly semi-historical account of Tibet’s past from the perspective of his lineage. The Drubchen Rinpoche presents his story about the Drubtop lineage as an authoritative treasure that holds the key to the Tibetan past: “The history of Tibet is encapsulated in the life of Drubtop Rinpoche” (10). Dhondup, however, is more ambivalent and at times proclaims that “the whole history of Tibet will be contained in these pages” pointing “with a smug, satisfied smile, [...] to the notebooks which filled [his] cotton bag” (33). But at other times, he acknowledges his personal motivation and willingness to believe, which implicitly question, or at least relativize, the veracity of the Lama’s tale:

Perhaps I thought the certainties of the lama’s Tibet would rub on me and I could get on with my life, without any of the nagging doubts and questions which followed my refugee existence like a pair of nervous shadows scared of being reduced to irrelevance by the gathering darkness of collective forgetfulness. [...] I thought I would be able to discover a piece of myself, my reflection, in the stories the lama told me. (Samphel 2008: 65-66)

At the opposite end of the spectrum, Tashi, the future Drubtop Rinpoche, dismisses the lama’s narration as “the fable of rinpoches, gods and ghosts, all reincarnating with exasperating frequency” (33).

The conflicting claims and attitudes around this first dug up narration from Tibet’s past highlight the unreliable, malleable and subjective quality of history, one of the underlying themes of Samphel’s book. The Lama’s narratives are semi-fictional short stories that begin with the civilizational missions of Songtsen Gampo, who sent Tibetans to India to import an alphabet and the Buddhist teachings, and cover the “Tiblomatic” (i.e. a term of Samphel’s invention that combines the words ‘Tibetan’ and ‘diplomatic’) intrigues at the Khan’s court,

featuring Marco Polo, tales of revenge from the Golok grasslands in Amdo, and accounts of domination and oppression during the Cultural Revolution. All these stories are brought together through the common thread of the Drubtop Rinpoche's many incarnations, who happened to appear at crucial junctures of Tibetan history. In a humorous and playful tone, fiction and history are intermingled, as it is the banal and the profound, combining regional stories of bloody personal feuds and more pan-Tibetan narratives that celebrate a glorious sense of civilization and belonging. This post-Buddhist *gter ma* convey an ambiguous and conflicted message to the ambivalent and paradoxical times of Dhondup and Tashi. The Lama's stories still convey messages from the past, but their texture and reception reflect the complexity and confusion of the time in which they are being revealed. However, the lama's narratorial voice is not devoid of contradictions, Freudian slips or tribal fears that militate against his composed Buddhist demeanor.

There are many other instances of texts being recovered, discovered, uncovered or, literally, unearthed, so I will limit myself to provide a short account of them and leave a more thorough discussion of their texture and features for another space. After telling his stories, the Drubchen Rinpoche, the lama, reveals that he is in the process of searching for the next Drubtop Rinpoche and sets a challenge or ordeal in disguise for Tashi and Dhondup: to travel to Kashmir and find the cave where the first Drubtop Rinpoche met his guru Birupa and where he invented the Tibetan script. The adventurous search for the cave, where the alphabet lies carved in stone, fulfils many of the traits of the genre of *gter ma* discovery, as Gyatso (1996: 147-155) has discussed at length. And by this, I do not mean the genre of *gter ma* itself, but the stories told about their discovery. Furthermore, the question of agency in the process of *gter ma* writing is a complex one, since, as, again, Gyatso (1998: 145-153) has outlined at length, the *gter ston* (i.e. the writer or 'revealer' of *gter ma*) is neither a mere empty channel possessed by the spirit of a past lama, nor is he said to be contriving the whole process through his own efforts. Analogously in *Falling through the Roof*, the two male characters receive inspiration for deciphering symbolic language from a female muse (Tashi's wife, who acts like *dakini*) and the instructions of a wrathful male mentor, Professor Bamzai, a retired Indian archeologist, who is described in ways akin to how Birupa is also described in the novel, thus evoking a second civilizational encounter between the Indian guru and the Tibetan seeker(s). Further, Tashi and Dhondup dream about windhorses and journeys to Shambhala, experience all kinds of mishaps and adverse circumstances in their search, but eventually, seemingly by accident, they stumble upon their coveted treasure. Tashi loses balance and falls off the cliff, landing inside the cave where the first Drubtop R. met Birupa. After regaining consciousness from the fall, he discovers the foundational carvings of Tibetan civilization.

The discovery, like the treasure itself, is interpreted differently by each character involved in the search. Tashi and Dhondup are fascinated by the personal and political implications of having found the origins of their culture. However, the Drubchen Rinpoche dwells on the religious significance of the discovery and Professor Bamzai is largely pleased about having his erudition confirmed after having formally retired from academic life. An ecstatic Drubchen Rinpoche further acknowledges professor Bamzai as a *gter ston*. The event is opened up to multiple readings, highlighting again that significance and interpretation differ from subject to subject. This event leads the lama to enthrone Tashi as the current Drubtop Rinpoche, which paves the way for Tashi's transformation. However, the former

communist enthusiast does not simply shed his political convictions and blindly embraces Tibetan religious conservatism. Again, offering a myriad of perspectives on the event, Samphel presents the lama's attitude towards Tashi/Drubtop Rinpoche as one of unflinching devotion, which leads him to rationalize his communist tendencies in the following manner: "It's the lingering effect of his [the previous Drubtop R.] two years' stay in Beijing. Remember, the last Drubtop Rinpoche had two years of communist education. It's natural" (232). Dhondup, as usual, remains ambivalent about his friend's new status and his feelings oscillate between anger, jealousy and acceptance. On one hand, he wishes he had been recognized as *sprul ku*, and on the other, he questions Tashi's honesty and integrity at accepting a title from an institution he did not believe in. Eventually, he comes to terms with Tashi's new status and presents him a white khata with a sense of relaxed and friendly respect.

However, Tashi's take on his title is very pragmatic and "Tiblomatic". As a political man, he sees the possibilities his role can offer for pursuing the Tibetan cause. Tashi becomes a very peculiar and hybrid *sprul ku*, who does not seem to believe in his new found identity with the same conviction as the lama, but who does not dismiss it either. The story of Tashi's gradual conversion and spiritual quest appears in yet another hidden text, written while travelling in Tibet, and gifted to Dhondup, the master narrator and scribe of the novel. In this last *gter ma*, written and unconcealed in hostile circumstances, Tashi narrates his disillusionment with the Communist establishment and reconnects with a very basic Tibetan sense of belonging: one that is not just spiritual, but material. The account of Tashi's travels throughout Lhasa and Shigatse offers no hints of his new religious identity; he regards these places as underwhelming and unremarkable, and he describes them merely as instances of Chinese oppression. However, in Mount Kailash, he experiences some sort of spiritual awakening, but one that is not mediated through Buddhist terms, but through a semi-anthropological rationalization of Bonpo. Turning away from the narrative of class struggle, Tashi is deeply moved by the landscape and life-giving qualities of "Mother Earth", the "Precious Mountain" and the "Eternal Lake" (275-6). Thus, he writes: "Let me just say I have demoted myself from being a communist to an animist, someone who worships Nature and our homegrown religion called Bon" (276). Furthermore, he recasts the Marxist narrative of class struggle in the light of his new consciousness: "The real issue is not class struggle, the battle between the exploiters and the exploited. The real struggle is species struggle. It is about how long man, the ultimate exploiter, will hold dominion over Earth" (ibid).

Underlying his newly acquired spiritual connection to the Tibetan landscape and to "Mother Earth", there is a strong material component, which will resurface in his teachings to his many Chinese students, who come from all part of the "Mainland". Ironically enough, his Chinese disciples are moved by similar concerns to those of his Tibetan friends in India: the discovery and preservation of their culture, also damaged and maimed after the Cultural Revolution. Thus, the former communist youth turned *sprul ku* addresses a large number of Feng-shui, astrology and calligraphy enthusiasts, giving them "a lesson on the sacred geography of Tibet [through] a celebration of Tibet, the source of the life-blood of Asia" (298). The Drubtop Rinpoche makes the point that "China is nourished by Tibetan waters" (300), in fact, in his own words "the rivers of Tibet and the mountains that feed these rivers sustain much of Asia. Here, I am talking about basic physical sustenance, not cultural, not spiritual" (299). However, physical

dependence also leads to some form of spiritual bond, again in the words of the Drubtop Rinpoche:

The fact that in Tibet these rivers are unspoiled and remain pristine is a testimony to our people's innate reverence for the environment that has sustained us, and our belief in the basic sacredness of Mother Earth. It is our Bon and Buddhist heritage that provided us the spiritual means to look after our land and your water. For this you owe a great debt of gratitude to our land and our culture because you owe your physical existence to Tibet. (Samphel 2008: 300)

In this peculiarly hybrid way, Tashi/Drubtop Rinpoche rereads Tibetan and Chinese cultural narratives from a political angle. Quoting the Chinese poet Li Bai, who wrote that "Torrents from the Yellow River flow/Down from Heaven" (299), Tashi makes the point that "Heaven" is "here in minority territory [...] here in what you used to call barbarian territory" (299). In this way, the civilizational hierarchy that construes China as the elder brother and Tibet as the younger one is reversed and Tibet becomes the superior partner, the one to whom, in Confucian terms, gratitude is due.

On the subject of materiality, Tashi/Drubtop R.'s comments are by no means isolated in *Falling through the Roof*, as the novel contains many other interesting meditations on materiality as an important identity marker for Tibetans. Thus, when Dhondup is in Bodh Gaya at the Kalachakra empowerment, he finds Tibet not in the spiritual teachings of the Dalai Lama, but in the bodies of "Tibetan refugees, freshly arrived Tibetans [...] bringing the smell of Tibet, of yak dung, of butter tea and unwashed bodies" (241). Dhondup also realizes, at the site where the Buddha found his enlightenment, his own private enlightenment through a vision of Tibetan identity and material abundance by means of "a scruffy Tibetan in a dark woolen chuba [who] took out a dried mutton leg from the enormous folds of his chuba and raised it high above the heads of the mantra-murmuring pilgrims and shouted, 'Mutton leg from Tibet. Two hundred rupees'" (242). Dhondup's playful reverence towards the scene conveys his post-Buddhist and material reappraisal of Tibetanness: "I bowed deeply before this vision of freedom from hunger. But then as always, the price was too steep. I comforted myself with the thought that I was fortunate to see every refugee's vision of enough food on the table in flesh" (ibid). Though very vividly present in the teachings of the Drubtop Rinpoche, these celebrations of Tibetan identity through materiality are spread throughout *Falling through the Roof*, and seem to counterbalance the centrality given to the spiritual Buddhist identity of Tibet in some exiled discourses.

Furthermore, and returning to the final and innovative speech of the Drubtop Rinpoche, we find yet another *gter ma* text. The words of the Drubtop Rinpoche appear buried in a narration smuggled out of Tibet, not as a written text in this case, but as the oral story of Tsering Migmar, a Tibetan who escapes disguised as a monk (more layers of concealment). Thus the novel ends by entwining and rewriting the *gter ma* and *sprul ku* narratives in a political and post-Buddhist fashion. Tashi's enthronement and conversion do not render him apolitical, but much in the spirit of the Tibloms of the past, who used religion and religious authority in order to harness and channel the military might of Mongol rulers, he uses his position, and the narratives attached to it, to further the Tibetan cause. He becomes a peculiarly hybrid *sprul ku*, one who combines his Tibetan Buddhist heritage with environmental concerns, Bonpo beliefs, and a very pragmatic and material

rereading of the power dynamics that have historically governed the relations between Tibet and China. Through these renegotiations, Tashi discovers his true identity as the artful Drubtop Rinpoche, the legendary discoverer of the Tibetan alphabet, but this discovery does not fully subsume his modern and resistant identity as a Tibetan exile. One identity flows into the other, producing a new subjectivity that does not limit itself to preserve Tibetan culture, but also reformulates it in accordance with the times.

4. Conclusion

Analogously, and to conclude, the *gter ma* and *sprul ku* narratives offer a way of renegotiating Tibetan identity in a way that speaks to and about the modern Tibetan condition. Dhondup's many unearthed texts do not convey pristine, unmediated messages from the (recent or distant) past, but spark controversy, generate debate and offer multiple, conflicting perspectives on the present. The Buddhist structures remain, but their content is recast in a way that reflects on the hybrid, complicated and conflicted feelings of a community in the process of rethinking its identity through the realities of exile and diaspora. In the final analysis, the certainty of Buddhist enlightenment is replaced by the plural uncertainties and refuted tales of unconventional and divergent characters. Also, the spiritual centrality of Tibetan identity is challenged by emphasizing the materiality of Tibetan culture, both through its relations of power with other cultures and through its symbolic identifiers.

By framing contemporary, exile stories as *gter ma* and *sprul ku* discoveries, Samphel moves away from the preservationist paradigm that regards Tibetan culture and religion as a rare and static object that ought to be kept intact. Instead, he offers a distinctly (post-)modern and hybrid Tibetan cultural product. In this manner, he resists two paradoxically parallel cultural forces: Tibetan exiled conservatism, which considers innovation un-Tibetan, and Chinese/Western/Indian voices, who either expect Tibetans to assimilate to other cultures or to perform their culture in a scripted, stereotypical and pre-modern way.

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MUSIC AND DANCE IN *THE GREAT GATSBY*

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Abstract: *As represented in F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby, music and dance shed light on issues of race and ethnicity in the culture of the 1920s. Although having African-American origins, jazz music can create a racial rift. Fitzgerald's decision to incorporate "white jazz" can be seen as a way for Gatsby to eliminate his ethnic past and belong to the same social group as the Buchanans. This is similar to the way he changes his name from James Gatz to Jay Gatsby in order to dissociate himself from his supposed Jewish roots. This paper will examine how identity, jazz music, dance, and musical instruments not only represent the 1920s American culture, but also exemplify racial otherness and Gatsby's attempt at cancelling this otherness.*

Keywords: *culture, ethnicity, fox-trot, identity, jazz, otherness*

1. Introduction

F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925) is a novel that can be viewed today as paradigmatic for the 1920s America. Gatsby's parties not only represent his rags-to-riches story and the American dream, but they also reveal the main aspect of the society of the time. An important feature of these parties is the presence of music and dance, especially jazz music, in which its history alone correlates to the idea of racial mixing and segregation. Dancing also has its own social history that mixes various cultures to create a unique American dance culture.

By adopting an ethnic and cultural approach, this paper will examine how music and dance, mainly featured at Gatsby's famous parties, inform depictions of race and ethnicity. While seeming to embrace a multicultural standpoint by portraying jazz music, associated with the African American cultural heritage, Fitzgerald, in fact, demonstrates his preference for a particular kind of jazz, called "white jazz", which pulls away from the roots of African Americans and immigrants. This is further complicated by Gatsby's shift away from his past as James Gatz. Therefore, Gatsby's identity relates to the ethnic "other", and one of the ways in which this is done in *The Great Gatsby* is through music and dance.

2. Identity

One of the perplexing things in the novel is Jay Gatsby's identity. Through Nick Carraway's narration, the reader begins to slowly unravel Gatsby's personality, from his mysterious past to his dubious connections. What becomes certain is Gatsby's longing to belong to Daisy Buchanan's social circle. The

Buchanans are not only upper-class citizens, but the epitome of the white Anglo-Saxon Protestants (or WASP). This desperate desire to belong is one of the aspects that reveal not only the ambiguity of Gatsby's identity, but also some of the reasons why he is so intent on making it into the world of the Buchanans. Tom Buchanan, for example, makes a point of telling Gatsby that he does not belong in his social circle:

“Self-control!” repeated Tom incredulously. “I suppose the latest thing is to sit back and let Mr. Nobody from Nowhere make love to your wife. Well, if that's that idea, you can count me out. . . . Nowadays people begin by sneering at family life and family institutions, and next they'll throw everything overboard and have intermarriage between black and white.” (Fitzgerald 1925: 130)

What is interesting about this outburst from Tom is that, instead of focusing on the act of infidelity, he seems to allude to Gatsby's uncertain background. Gatsby is “Mr. Nobody from Nowhere” and it is an outrage that upper-class Daisy should be associated with him. In addition, the correlation of their relationship to racial intermarriage places Gatsby in the category of the ethnic “other”.

Ethnic and cultural studies have always been interested in the “otherness” of the text. In his introduction to *The Cultural Studies Reader*, During (1999: 21) states that “[m]ost relevantly, within a discipline that has globalized itself through affirming otherness, it is important to remember the obvious point that everyday life is not everywhere the same, despite those modernizing effects of uniformity”. We can connect this to Gatsby's attempt at uniformity, in his desire to join the ranks of people like the Buchanans, which ultimately does not work, because Gatsby is not born into privilege: he must create it on his own, since he is the ethnic “other”. In ethnic and cultural studies, the “other” usually belongs to marginalized groups, at times focusing on race (African American, Asian, etc.) as well as on people of various ethnicities, for example the immigrant groups in the United States. It is interesting that, although a white man, Gatsby is nearly correlated to being black by Buchanan, but here, we can see that Buchanan may be mixing race and ethnicity, because it is Gatsby's supposed ethnicity that makes him different from WASPS like the Buchanans.

As stated by Goldsmith (2003: 443), Gatsby does in fact have a certain aura of foreignness about him: “If the scandal of Gatsby's success lies in his ambiguously ethnic, white, working-class origins, the success of his scandalous behavior resides in his imitation of African American and ethnic modes of self-definition”. Therefore, Gatsby takes on identities of various races, as he does not have a common identity himself. It is not until the end, when his father attends his funeral, that we really see who Gatsby was and where he came from. We also find out that his real name was James Gatz. Jay Gatsby's change of name mirrors his attempt to erase his ethnic identity, including his “otherness”.

According to Will (2005), Gatsby's association with Wolfsheim, a gangster, who helped him make his fortune, only mirrors his innate Jewishness due to the ethnic tone of his real last name. This mirroring can act as a clue to the mystery of Gatsby's identity, as well as demonstrates that by his association with Wolfsheim, he cannot flee his supposed Jewish identity. However, Will (2005: 133) also suggests that the name Gatz is rather ambiguous; it can be Jewish, but not necessarily, because it is a surname that is used by both Jewish and non-Jewish people: “Neither identifiably black nor identifiably Jewish, the shifting, obscure,

ever-vanishing figure of James Gatz/Jay Gatsby troubles the category of 'whiteness', problematizing the force of this category at a moment when such force is of crucial significance". Gatsby hence does not have a racial identity. He is white, but there are instances about him that interrogate his "whiteness". What Gatsby is in the end is undefinable: nobody knows anything about him throughout the text. Nick eventually finds more information about Gatsby as the novel goes on, but everything in the beginning is a mystery, including his identity. The change of his name serves as a way for Gatsby to mask his own ethnic identity.

3. Jazz music

A way in which Gatsby attempts to mask his ethnic otherness is the entertainment he chooses, including dance and music. It may seem strange, since jazz music is synonymous with the growth of African American culture in the 1920s, but we shall see how this is the case by the selection of white and symphonic jazz. First, though, it is relevant to explain the origins of jazz music in order to understand its multicultural aspect, but also to see how white jazz began a segregation of entertainment. One reason why music and dance are chosen to explain Gatsby's "otherness" is that, as forms of entertainment, they give us a glimpse into the culture of those times. Dyer (1977: 374) remarks on how different means of representation, both in culture and history, correspond to different means of awareness: "This becomes clear when one examines how entertainment forms come to have the emotional signification they do: that is, by acquiring their signification in relation to the complex of meaning in the social-cultural situation in which they are produced". An overview of the history of jazz music and how it is represented in *The Great Gatsby* reveals the underlying stakes of ethnicity and race.

As claimed by Evans (2000: 10), jazz does not have one single origin, but emerged from several genres and can be seen as a cross between folk art and fine art. A cultural mix, then, is what mainly defines jazz. However, a debate also ensued at some point regarding the existence of and differences between black and white jazz, but the issue is more complex than that. The origins of jazz epitomize the racial mixing that would become synonymous with it: "Crucial to New Orleans jazz, for example, were Creoles of African, French and Spanish extraction" (idem: 11). Hence, we have a sense of jazz not being specifically white or black, but mixed. Nor was it purely American or European, but mixed again. In addition, there is even a Jewish culture that is associated with Jazz: "Many of the first jazz starts were Jewish New Yorkers, already proficient in ragtime, who now turned to another indigenous style to help themselves assimilate in the American Urban scene" (Peretti 1997: 3). Hence, the Jewish New Yorkers, who were at times considered outsiders, found solace in jazz as a means of assimilating into the American society. When Fitzgerald (1925: 49) mentions Vladimir Tostoff's *Jazz History of the World* which is played at the party, this recounts the ethnic aspect of jazz. According to Goldsmith (2003: 455), Fitzgerald planned for the fictional composer to be named Leo Epstien, and the "composer's name change, like Jimmy Gatz's, sublimates ethnicity and class". Both names, however, may have Jewish connections. Epstien is clearly Jewish and, since many immigrants from Russia to the United States were Jewish, and it is possible that Vladimir Tostoff may have been as well. Interestingly, Fitzgerald made the name sound more foreign, which

might suggest how cultural and religious differences are obliterated among the people at the party as they are all entertained by jazz music.

Gatsby's parties feature another foreign entertainer: "A celebrated tenor had sung in Italian, and a notorious contralto had sung in jazz, and between the numbers people were doing stunts all over the garden" (Fitzgerald 1925: 46). The mention of the "tenor" and "contralto" suggests a more operatic tone, and therefore a bond between jazz and other styles of music, which denotes a musical assortment and the ability for jazz to adapt to different styles. This stylistic diversity is in relation to the diversity of people present at Gatsby's party, which ultimately foregrounds the idea of "otherness" mentioned earlier. At this point in the story, neither Nick nor the reader has seen Gatsby, or knows anything about him besides the fact that he is wealthy and throws extravagant parties. We can therefore infer something about Gatsby, judging by the entertainers he employs and by his guests. According to Prigozy (2006: 346), "The guests at Gatsby's party are *nouveau riche*, with names that reflect their immigrant origins, and even Nick, walking alone in New York City, recognizes how insurmountable is the wall that separates wealth from poverty". Through this representation, we can see that Gatsby's wealth is not the type associated with WASP Tom Buchanan, and therefore the ambiguity of Gatsby's identity is seen at first glance by the entertainment and people present at his parties.

One reason for the quick popularity of jazz was that many groups of people were able to identify with it. This feeds back into the stylistic diversity previously mentioned. Among these styles, the "white jazz" has a prominent presence in *The Great Gatsby* and alludes to and complicates the issues of ethnicity. According to Evans (2000: 11), the founders of "white" ethnic jazz were usually of immigrant descent, especially Italian, Irish, German, and Russian Jewish. This represents another angle of the otherness, because, while the Creole music would have relied on the older generation of immigrants, the newer jazz included members of the new immigrants that were flowing into America.

"White jazz" provides a useful ambiguity in the economy of the novel. Those considered "the others" participate in it, but so do WASP-ish characters. Jazz itself is moulded into different directions, creating diverse sounds. With an intermingling of adaptations of different types of jazz, one may think that this helps to break racial barriers. In fact, it onlyacerbates the segregation between whites and blacks: "Twenties racism was a formidable barrier between white and black jazz. Few white listeners or musicians found the "hot" styles of Armstrong or Ellington to their taste" (Peretti 1997: 57). Therefore, jazz became a barrier between races. "White jazz" emerged as a way to bypass this segregation. There were several white musicians who were interested in "hot" styles, but the wider public preferred a white-washed version, their own jazz that they would listen to, and their own clubs that they would visit on the weekends.

Jazz would also become more formal with the emergence of what would become known as "symphonic jazz", which was initiated by musicians such as Paul Whiteman. One of his songs is mentioned in the scene where Nick is leaving, and Daisy is saying goodbye to him, after one of Gatsby's parties. "Her glance left me and sought the lighted top of the steps, where *Three O'Clock in the Morning*, a neat sad little waltz of that year, was drifting out the open door" (Fitzgerald 1925: 108). This song was recorded by Whiteman in 1922, so Fitzgerald's contemporary reader, who read *The Great Gatsby* when it was published in 1925, would have

remembered the song, just as we today would remember popular songs heard on the radio and television three years ago.

Whiteman's mention is important in that it alludes to the important yet ambiguous role of jazz. As Jerving (2004: 657) also points out,

Like many of the broader melting pot and consumertopia narratives through which the story of jazz would be told, Whiteman's oft-told tale for jazz evaded and elided questions of cultural or class difference and conflict within the imagined national community.

Therefore, a music genre such as jazz, which was mostly noted for its ethnic origins, became popular also among white middle-class audiences, albeit in a slightly domesticated version. Whiteman, also crowned "the King of Jazz", seems to be notoriously known for ignoring the African presence in jazz music, and for addressing only the white consumer society that was listening to him. Jerving (2004: 659-660) focuses on Whiteman's unwillingness to accept that jazz came from African Americans:

The grand but empty historical gesture was recognizable enough already by 1925 to serve as the punch line to F. Scott Fitzgerald's portrait in *The Great Gatsby* of an unmistakably Whitemanesque symphonic jazz band at one of Gatsby's parties.

The songs by Whiteman and (the fictional) Tostoff appear in the text as a means of suggesting a version of jazz that is more comfortable to the society in which Gatsby is trying to forge a place for himself. Of course, this can be interpreted as Fitzgerald's ignorance of black jazz, but, more likely, it could also represent the way both upper and middle-class societies picked up on music that was specifically performed for people like them. Fitzgerald could be merely giving a social comment on the leisure of the white society and their unwillingness to include black members, which may be seen in the lack of representation of black characters, who are only mentioned briefly, in passing.

What is significant about this is that the type of jazz that is represented in the novel could be a way for Gatsby to mask his ethnic identity. Just as he changes his name, he selects the type of music that people such as Daisy would have been entertained by. Similarly, this is also done by the way in which dance is represented.

4. Dance

Another interesting aspect of the song *Three O'Clock in the Morning* is that, instead of being an upbeat tune, it is a sad little waltz that is drifting, and therefore it brings up dancing, which has an impact in the novel as well. Although during the scene where the song features nobody is dancing, the mention of the waltz might prove relevant. According to Buckman (1979: 123), the waltz originated in Germany and had roots to folk dancing. Eventually it became quite scandalous and was banned in some areas because of the close way people were dancing and its "lewd grasp" among partners (idem: 124). This closeness, which is both new and old, plays a role in the novel:

There was dancing now on the canvas in the garden; old men pushing young girls backward in eternal graceless circles, superior couples holding each other tortuously,

fashionably, and keeping in the corners- and a great number of girls dancing individually” (Fitzgerald 1925: 46).

While the waltz is used to connote a closeness that might be acceptable due to its traditional elements, the newer dances featured in the text emphasise the defiant elements, and the overall frenzy of the various dance moves suggests the modification of dance freedom from the times when the “lewd grasp” was scandalous. This would be true of the fox-trot, which was very popular in the 1920s, and when Daisy and Gatsby dance, it is the fox-trot that they do. This dance has its origins in America and was initiated by the music hall performer Harry Fox (Buckman 1979: 168). It eventually made its way to England, but still had American ties: “Though many English ballrooms closed upon the outbreak of war, they were soon reopened owing to public demand, and when they become crowded with American soldiers after 1917, the fox-trot enjoyed a spirited revival” (idem: 169). It turns out then, that this dance too acquired a dimension of acceptability, and was something Americans could identify with.

In the novel, and in the society as a whole as well, these dances connote a certain respectable freedom. As fashion and lifestyles were changing, so was music and dance. As Peretti (1997: 40) points out, “White residents there both deplored the passing of the old Victorian and real ways of life and were delighted by the temptations of the cinema and the fox-trot”. The fox-trot changed the cultural life of the Americans and signified a move forward from a more traditional era. As the change of fashion allowed more movement for women in the 1920s, the dance moves had the ability to be freer as well. The social aspect of dancing is significant also because, as Giordano (2007: 39) points out, this was an era when people had more leisure time, as the average workweek decreased and thus they had more of an opportunity to dance on the weekend. It was during this time when dance instruction became popular, and Arthur Murray began his career (idem: 43). Today, the Arthur Murray dance studio is where many people flock to learn the ballroom dancing, and the 1920s was where it all began.

What is important about the dances chosen in Fitzgerald’s text is that they provide a mix of old world European (the waltz) and new world American (the fox-trot) dances. In this way, we see how dancing, like music, utilizes an amalgamation of styles, and Fitzgerald chooses carefully the styles that are represented. The style needs to be modern, to fit the modern world of the 1920s, but there also needs to be something classy and traditional about it. After all, even though Gatsby belongs to the “new money”, he desires to belong to the social circle of people who were born into wealth.

5. Musical instruments

The use of musical instruments in the novel also demonstrates a mix of the old and the new world and has a strong connection to both race and the American culture. The first time that Nick attends Gatsby’s party, there is a mention of banjos, once when they are part of the orchestra and then as a background sound: “The moon had risen higher, and floating in the Sound, was a triangle of silver scales, trembling a little to the stiff, tinny drip of the banjos on the lawn” (Fitzgerald 1925: 47). This inclusion of the banjo is suggestive of black presence. Durman (2008: 797) discusses string bands and their history in the African American culture: “African Americans brought an instrument modern players

would recognize as the gourd banjo, along with their playing techniques, tunes, songs, and a variety of tuning methods”. However, it is interesting that it only serves to produce background music and being accompanied by “silver scales” appears to give the music an upper-class quality that would mask the banjo’s humble roots.

An instrument that is almost synonymous with jazz is the saxophone, which is mentioned when Fitzgerald incorporates the scenes when Daisy and Gatsby reminisce about the past: “All night the saxophones wiled the hopeless comment of the Beale Street Blues while a hundred pairs of golden and silver slippers shuffled the shining dust” (Fitzgerald 1925: 151). The song “Beale Street Blues” refers to the Beale Street in Memphis, Tennessee, which was known for African-American entertainment. The saxophone, however, has its origins in Europe. As Gelly (2000: 5) explains in his useful survey, it was invented by Adolph Sax who was born in 1814 in Belgium. He then moved to Paris where he invented the instrument around 1840 and it spread throughout Europe for the next few decades. The saxophone then made its way to the American vaudeville stage and after World War I it was incorporated into jazz (ibid). Given its relative newness in jazz at the time of *The Great Gatsby*, it is interesting that the novelist chooses this particular instrument to accompany the protagonists’ tribulations.

The sounds of drums are heard in a party scene as well: “There was a boom of the bass drum, and the voice of the orchestra leader rang out suddenly above the echolalia of the garden” (Fitzgerald 1925: 49). Drums have their history from all over the world and according to Nicholls (1997: 8), “percussion historian James Blades has cited evidence of percussion instruments dating back 30,000 years”. The bass drum however would become more prominent as the jazz era went on. The idea of drums alone brings a whole multi-cultural aspect to the book and the particular way in which they are used, not foregrounded, but always somehow there, echoes the way in which Gatsby would like to fashion himself in Daisy’s life.

6. Conclusion

Music and dance not only play a vital role in the representation of 1920s culture in *The Great Gatsby*, but they have a connection to Gatsby’s identity, or rather his desire to mask his past. Jazz seems to be synonymous with the 1920s, which is the reason why that decade is referred to as “the Jazz Age.” Even the instruments have certain connotations that suggest their use in other cultures. Although social dancing had been around long before the 1920s, this era made advancements when it came to defining an American identity as well as drifting away from an old-fashioned society. Dancing and music became social commodities and something to which people of various races and culture were able to relate. Jazz was altered in various ways, which can be viewed positively, since everybody was able to relate to it, but there are also negative implications, since it intensified racism. Furthermore, what seems to be a preference for using “white jazz”, rather than other types of jazz, may relate to Jay Gatsby’s desire to detach himself from his roots as James Gatz and the ethnic “others”. Therefore, we can say that, just like “white jazz” attempts to obliterate the cultural ties of jazz with its African American roots, James Gatz becomes Jay Gatsby in order to obliterate his mysterious ethnic roots. Both Gatsby’s identity and the representation of music and dance serve as masks that conceal his background and enable him to join the WASP upper class society, to which he so desperately wanted to belong.

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HARPER LEE'S *TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD* AS A BILDUNGSROMAN

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Abstract: Starting from Bakhtin's classification (1986) of the Bildungsroman, this paper offers evidence that Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960) belongs to the fifth category of this genre. We argue that the novel deals not only with the emergence of the protagonist, but that it actually focuses on a transitional period both for Scout Finch and for the community of which she is a part. The plot traces not only Scout's development, but also the upheavals and the beginning of radical changes in an apparently stagnant society.

Keywords: Atticus Finch, Bildungsroman, Maycomb, Scout Finch, the American South, *To Kill a Mockingbird*

1. Introduction

This research adopts the position that Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960) is a Bildungsroman. The theoretical framework for the analysis of the novel from this standpoint is provided by Bakhtin (1986), Lukács (1971) and Moretti's (1987) conceptions of this genre. In Bakhtin's (1986: 21) view, the Bildungsroman or "the novel of education" can be "designated in the most general sense as the novel of emergence". According to him, the Bildungsroman depicts the path of the individual towards maturity and seriousness, and this education is achieved through life experience, through contact with the world. Hence, the surroundings and experience are viewed as a sort of a school (idem: 22).

Bakhtin cites five categories of the genre. In the novels included in the first four subgenres, the maturation of the individual takes place in a stable community. Therefore, whereas the individual changes, the environment in which this transformation occurs remains the same. On the other hand, novels belonging to the fifth subgenre are characterised by the parallel transformation of the individual and the fictional world of which s/he is a part. As a consequence, the environment is no longer stable, but changes profoundly, and the period in which this happens is transitional both for the developing individual and his/her social community (idem: 22-24).

The initial hypothesis of this paper is that *To Kill a Mockingbird* belongs to the fifth subgenre of Bakhtin's classification of the Bildungsroman. Although it may seem that the novel emphasises only the development of the protagonist, Jean Louise (Scout) Finch, this article will demonstrate that it also highlights the social conditions that led to radical changes in the course of American history. Therefore, the focus of this Bildungsroman is not, as it is usually contended, on the individual's adaptation, total submission to or rejection of the society. In Lukács'

(1971: 132) words, this genre reflects optimism about “the reconciliation of the problematic individual [...] with concrete social reality”. The beginning of the novel is featured by solitary individuals who over time get a better understanding of their fellows and form a community. This community is, in Lukács’ view, achieved through certain effort and struggle (idem: 133).

The pattern of reconciliation between the problematic individual (Scout) and her surroundings will be the focus of this research. I am going to show that Scout matures from a prejudiced and bigoted child into a better version of herself, into an individual who values all members of her community. Her father, Calpurnia, and Miss Maudie Atkinson function as her ethical models that testify to the fact that it is possible to have integrity and be faithful to one’s principles and, at the same time, be a respected member of society.

In his influential *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture* (1987), Franco Moretti defines the Bildungsroman as a contradictory literary form. He asks a crucial question – how is it possible for the Bildungsroman to simultaneously confirm the individuality and autonomy of the character, on the one hand, and of the social laws, on the other? Does society itself, being a system that naturally strives for homogenization, not contradict the individual’s endeavour to independently find meaning and his/her own moral code? Moretti argues that this contradiction cannot be overcome. In his view, the protagonist of the Bildungsroman should not attempt to “solve the contradiction, but rather learn to live with it, and even transform it into a tool for survival” (Moretti 1987: 10).

My paper asserts that the maturation of Jean Louise Finch should be viewed precisely as a reflection of the contradiction that Moretti defines as a key feature of the Bildungsroman. Although Jean Louise is, at the initial phase of her development, a rebel, her family, surroundings, and turbulent life events transform her into a more rational human being, capable of combining valid social norms with her own principles and values adopted during her upbringing. The path towards a kind of a “fusion between external compulsions and internal impulses” (idem: 16), however, is a thorny one, and the following sections will deal in detail with its stages.

2. Social conditions in Maycomb

The plot of *To Kill a Mockingbird* is set in Maycomb, a fictional town in Alabama, in the 1930s. Maycomb is represented as a typical Southern town based on inequality and boundaries. Inequality is, of course, most visible in the racial segregation of the population of this town. African Americans, although freed from slavery a few decades ago, are still forced to do the hardest jobs and to live apart from the whites. In most countries of the American South, the so-called “Black codes” came into force during the Reconstruction period (1865-1877), and after the end of this era, they were followed by Jim Crow laws, which aimed to ensure the subordinate position of African Americans. In a word, though officially free citizens, in practice they were treated as lower beings, second-class citizens. Unfortunately, tensions in the American South were further exacerbated by historical events, such as World War I and the Great Depression. As stated by Johnson (1994: 4), the war and poverty intensified racial intolerance, and the whites reacted violently to anything they interpreted as a potential threat to order and stability, and most fiercely to the challenge of white privilege.

The social community of Maycomb is conservative and patriarchal. Unwritten, but strictly defined rules, boundaries, and distinctions are of utmost importance here. This community is not only racially intolerant, but represents a society that is age-, class- and gender-conscious. People there are divided into castes, everyone knows his/her place and acts accordingly. Every deviation from the expected pattern of behaviour is viewed as a threat to community stability and is sanctioned with suspicion. As summarised by Tavernier-Courbin (2007: 47), “[i]t is a world where people belong to a group or class or race, and expected to remain within their unit, and are judged by the way they fit into it”.

Such group or crowd behaviour is one of the prevailing characteristics of the citizens of Maycomb. One of the major themes of Lee’s novel is the protagonist’s search for balance between her desire to belong, to be a member of the community, and her striving to act according to her conscience. However, it is not easy to develop in a community which seems suspended in time, which resists change and progress and whose institutions propagate conformity and “support the racist and sexist status quo” (Fine 2007: 64).

The rigidity of social institutions in Maycomb is most visible in the example of the school. Miss Caroline, Scout’s first-grade teacher, is very unpleasantly surprised when she learns that Miss Finch can read. Instead of praising the child who is ahead of her peers and finding a way to encourage her to progress further, the teacher criticises Scout and embarrasses her in front of the whole class. No deviation from the prescribed model is to be tolerated, be it positive or negative. Miss Caroline, as a model citizen of the American South, who was taught to conform to the valid rules, simply does not know what to do with a child who is already writing in the first grade, when the school system prescribes that children should start to write in the third grade. The implication is that the school system does not encourage the pursuit of authentic knowledge, but rather reflects society’s efforts to mould and homogenise its members, to teach them to conform to norms and institutions from a young age. As a consequence, Scout begins to hate school. Unfortunately, though it possesses a great potential, the school as an institution actually “takes her away from real education” (Butler 2007: 122). The novel suggests that real education does not take place in school, but, rather, through reading, guidance by the morally elevated individuals, and through experience.

Critics often interpret Jean Louise Finch as an unconventional character and rebel, due to her reluctance to conform to the existing rules and norms of her community, including the imposed genteel behaviour expected of girls in the American South in the 1930s. Despite the fact that Scout is not a typical girl, but rather an adventurous tomboy, it should be emphasised that she is simultaneously very conventional and Southern in some respects. When the reader first meets her, Scout is a prejudiced and class-conscious girl. Not only is she racially intransigent; she is also haughty towards those who are lower in the social hierarchy than her. This is best exemplified by the scene when Scout mocks little Cunningham for not showing good manners at the table. Moreover, Scout is prone to violence. This paper argues that critics are wrong when they interpret Scout’s habit of resolving disputes with her fists as an expression of her rebellion against society. In fact, her violent and impulsive behaviour is rather a reflection of her assimilation of the Southern code of honour. As Laura Fine explains (2007: 82), “[i]n the code of honour, fighting in people of lower classes is a way of asserting power and delivering justice”.

That Scout embodies many of the faults of the American South is also evident in her initial attitude towards her father. At first, Scout and Jem, her brother, do not think highly of Atticus, because he does not seem to possess qualities that are valued in the American South:

Our father didn't do anything. He just sat in an office, not in a drugstore. Atticus did not drive a dump-truck for the county, he was not the sheriff, he did not farm, work in a farm, or do anything that could possibly arouse the admiration of anyone. [. . .] He did not do the things our schoolmates' fathers did: he never went hunting, he did not play poker or fish or drink and smoke. He sat in the livingroom and read. (Lee 1962: 93-94)

Such an attitude demonstrates that Scout has a long way ahead of her. She adopts the beliefs of her society that smoking, drinking, playing poker and hunting are the best proofs of masculinity. Obviously, her perceptions of the world and what is right are somewhat skewed and it will not be easy for her father and nanny to get her back on the right path, the path of true values, tolerance, understanding and empathy. As Laura Fine (2007: 81) persuasively argues:

The novel is indeed a Bildungsroman in which Scout must grow from innocence to maturity. She must learn empathy and compromise. [. . .] It is Scout who makes the journey [. . .], a journey from prejudice to tolerance, from ignorance to wisdom, from violence to self-control, from bigotry to empathy.

3. The development of Scout Finch

The maturation of Scout Finch can be divided into two phases. The first phase refers to the acquisition of high moral values which occurs under the guidance of her father, her nanny, and Miss Maudie Atkinson. The second phase coincides with the facing of the world outside Scout's home, which is in stark opposition with the elevated moral perspective of the Finch household.

When it comes to the first phase, it can be summarised as a guidance, under the influence of which beliefs based on differences between races, classes and sexes are rejected. Under the influence of her father and two female role models, Scout learns important life lessons. The most important lesson Atticus teaches his children is the difference between man-made, artificial laws that are arbitrary and changeable, and the natural, universal law that comes from the essence of the human being and is based upon reason, empathy and tolerance. According to that law, all people are born good. Natural law does not recognize differences in race, class or caste. Scout quickly learns this lesson from her father, and reacts to Jem's soliloquy about caste in Maycomb with a remark worthy of someone much older and more experienced: there is, indeed, only one type of "folks" – "folks".

Having adopted such an attitude, Scout, unlike most of her fellow citizens, realises that African Americans are not second class human beings and should not be denied the presumption of innocence. Second, she is taught not to look down on anyone just because s/he is lower on the social ladder than she is. In contrast to Aunt Alexandria, who treats people according to their social position, Atticus and Calpurnia teach the children that they should not think highly of themselves and that everyone deserves respect, even those who are labelled as "white trash". Third, Atticus' unconventional attitudes are perhaps best exemplified by the fact that Scout is not expected to grow up to be a typical Southern lady. Quite the contrary,

Aunt Alexandria, a prototypical Southern lady, is overshadowed by what is presented as a possible alternative of femininity, i.e., behaviour of women like Calpurnia and Miss Maudie.

Furthermore, Atticus himself possesses some traits that are generally associated with women, such as tolerance, passivity, and abhorrence of violence. As Shackelford (1996: 111) confirms, Scout is most influenced by her father, with whom she identifies. Atticus's personality is the best evidence that femininity and masculinity are social constructs and that features which are traditionally attributed to either the male or the female gender are actually present in everyone. Unsurprisingly, Atticus brings up his children without taking into consideration their different genders. What is more, his indifference towards Scout's unladylike behaviour, which is exemplified by his tolerance of her boyish style of dress, implies that Atticus encourages Scout to reject the artificiality and boundaries imposed by society.

The fact that Atticus does not expect Scout to wear dresses and gives her a rifle on her birthday does not mean that he does not want his daughter to develop into a lady. Of course, he does not want her to become a lady in Aunt Alexandria's sense, a lady whose focus is on her appearance and behaviour in accordance with established rules. His father wants her to be a lady in a more Stoic sense" (Seidel 2007: 86), a lady who is kind and polite, but not artificial and hypocritical like the ladies who pretend to practise mercy, but are actually prejudiced racists, who look down on people who were born in a less privileged class. These ladies and their society are the main reason Scout dreads growing up and prefers the company of men:

There was no doubt about it, I must soon enter this world, where on its surfaces fragrant ladies rocked slowly, fanned gently, and drank cool water.

But I was more at home in my father's world. [. . .]. Ladies seemed to live in faint horror of men, seemed unwilling to approve wholeheartedly of them. But I liked them. There was something about them, no matter how much they cussed and drank and gambled and chewed, no matter how undelectable they were, there was something about them that I instinctively liked. They weren't – "Hypocrites, Mrs Perkins, born hypocrites," Mrs. Meriweather was saying. (Lee 1962: 236)

However, the truth is that there are in Scout's surroundings other female role models she can look up to. For example, although she cannot completely identify with Calpurnia, since Calpurnia belongs to the under-privileged race of the American South of the 1930s, she can learn from Calpurnia how to adapt to society. Calpurnia, who uses a dialect with her people and standard language with the whites, is aware that any other behaviour would offend those close to her, because it would seem like bragging and showing off. Miss Maudie Atkinson is another role model who "is not afraid to stretch conventions for gender identity" (Fine 2007: 65). Like Scout, she does not like wearing dresses and spends most of her time outside. Still, the Maycomb community respects her because she is, just like Atticus, a person of integrity, an individual who is the same in her house and in the town. She reveals to the children some details from Atticus's life that make Jem and Scout see him in a completely different light.

What is more, Miss Atkinson teaches Scout how a real lady deals with insults. Scout has to learn that "both acceptance and revolt are necessary to make

life more livable” (Tavernier-Courbin 2007: 41). Furthermore, Scout has to learn when it is advisable to react with silence and which situations require speaking out. What Miss Atkinson attempts to teach Scout is that small insults should be dealt with quiet dignity, whereas real evil requires revolt. However, a true lady or a gentleman attempts to assess the situation realistically. If there are allies, people with morally correct principles, in the surroundings, there is a greater chance that the voice of honourable people will be heard, and that they will oppose evil with united forces (Shaffer 1994: 534).

It is important to notice that Scout Finch succeeds in attaining maturity regardless of the fact that she grows up without a mother. In many novels dealing with the American South, female characters brought up by their fathers alone grow up to be Southern belles, destructive, and narcissistic women. Such a character is largely the result of wrong upbringing, where the father focuses on the physical appearance of his daughter. Fortunately, such outcome is avoided in the case of Scout Finch, whose father does not compliment her looks, but insists on the adoption of true moral values. Moreover, Atticus, along with Calpurnia, succeed in creating a healthy family environment, characterised by love and honesty. Atticus builds an open relationship, full of trust, with his children. Jem and Scout believe him because “what Atticus preaches, he also practises” (Johnson 1994: 102). There are no lies, secrets, duplicity or hypocrisy in the Finch household – in Atticus’s view, respect is earned through consistency and honesty. Atticus chooses not to burden his children with form and rigid rules, but is determined to punish them when they do not show respect to people. Therefore, when Jem destroys Mrs. Dubose’s flowers, he is immediately sent to read to this old lady, so as to discipline himself and learn respect. Moreover, Atticus is extremely polite to this grizzled, unpleasant lady. He explains to his children that they should appreciate Mrs. Dubose, if for nothing else, then at least for her decision to overcome her addiction to morphine, even though she is dying. In this way, Atticus demonstrates in practice the truth of the saying that is his life motto: “You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view – ... until you climb into his skin and walk around in it” (Lee 1962: 34).

Atticus teaches his children what true courage is. Both Jem and Scout are taken aback by the news that it was their father, seemingly the most harmless man, who shot a rabid dog that appeared out of nowhere in February. The surprise culminates in the knowledge that Atticus is actually reputed to be the most accurate marksman in the town, whose nickname was Ol’ One-Shot. Miss Maudie explains to the children that their father never mentioned his talent, because he “realised God had given him an unfair advantage over most living things. I think he decided he wouldn’t shoot till he had to, and he had to today” (Lee 1962: 102). From this story Scout comes to a realisation what true courage is. Brave persons do not prove their strength to those weaker than themselves, but resort to the use of force only when it is really necessary. Courage, hence, is not being proven with fists, but with willpower that restrains innate tendencies and impulses.

4. The potential for progress of the Maycomb community

When Scout and Jem have learned the lessons of their instructors – Atticus, Calpurnia, and Miss Maudie – they are ready to face the world in all its ugliness and complexity. As it turns out, the Maycomb society stands in stark opposition to the Finch home in many respects. The final stage of Scout’s maturation is to learn

how to live in a world full of boundaries, injustice, and inequality. As Jacqueline Tavernier-Courbin (2007: 41) asserts, although those facts of life are “ugly, they are reality” and Scout and Jem will have to “learn to live with them and let live with a minimum of suffering”. What Atticus and other moral “instructors” teach the children is that people are inherently good, no matter how cruel or evil they may seem. In order to understand them, one has to see the world from their perspective, to walk in their shoes.

Life in a society which mythologizes its past has far-reaching consequences. The fictional world of Lee’s novel is closed and isolated. The Maycomb community is marked by racial segregation and unthinking conformism. The novel implies that such a state of affairs is unsustainable. It is clear to many whites that, if Southern society is to progress, it must discard its out-dated myths. *To Kill a Mockingbird* penetrates into the two most entrenched myths of the American South – the myth of the African Americans as immoral and the myth of the supposed chastity of white women. Even though Atticus was unable to acquit Tom Robinson, a black man, charged with rape and assault, the very fact that the jury deliberated for hours on what decision to make speaks to the awakening of the consciousness of whites when it comes to racial prejudice. The mere presence of people like Atticus, Miss Atkinson and the judge, means that society has made progress, however small and insignificant it may seem:

“Atticus Finch won’t win, he can’t win, but he’s the only man in these parts who can keep a jury out so long in a case like that. And I thought to myself, well, we’re making a step, – a baby step, but it’s still a step.” (Lee 1962: 218-219)

The Maycomb society, as an archetypal Southern community, is marked not only by racial bigotry and segregation. This society is a thoroughly closed one – there is no social mobility not only between whites and blacks, but also between members of different castes. Some members of the caste, i.e. Aunt Alexandria, are proud of their origins and high position on the social ladder. Alexandria teaches Scout to be aware of her status and not mix with members of lower castes. On the other hand, Atticus realises that a society based on castes does not reflect the real state of affairs in America in the 1930s. As exemplified by his attitude, aristocracy has to “rise above self-protection and exclusivity” in order to “embrace difference” (Johnson 1994: 111). Every individual citizen, but also the Maycomb community as whole, must reject prejudices and stereotypes inherited from the past. The novel implies that it is precisely this clinging to the past and tradition that prevents the American South from embarking on the path of progress and prosperity. Nostalgia for “the old order, gentility, honour and chivalry” (Seidel 2007: 30) should be suppressed by a somewhat more sceptical attitude towards the past.

As Erisman (1973: 128) notices, there are several characters in Lee’s novel that are more concerned with the present than with the past, and their presence testifies to the potential of the American South to open up. An awakening of consciousness among a few Maycomb citizens suggests that progress and growth are possible. Furthermore, the novel endorses a belief in “the redemptive world of children” (Butler 2007: 123). Whereas the majority of the Maycomb community agrees with Tom Robinson’s conviction, it is indicative that the children (Scout, Jem and Dill) instinctively feel that Tom is convicted only because he is black. These children, for whom the death sentence of an innocent man causes nausea and disgust, awaken the hope that all is not lost and that the future will be much brighter than the gloomy present.

5. Conclusion

Starting from the observation that *To Kill a Mockingbird* belongs to the very specific kind of the Bildungsroman – the subgenre that deals with the development of both the protagonist and his/her surrounding environment – we have offered evidence that Harper Lee’s canonical novel depicts the maturation of both Scout Finch and the Maycomb community. At the beginning of the novel, Scout is represented as an adventurous tomboy, unwilling to conform to conventional femininity. At the same time, she also embodies many faults of the American South. Her development may be divided into two phases. The first phase takes place in the Finch household, where she matures from a bigoted and prejudiced brat, prone to violence, into a more tolerant and empathetic little girl. Her father, Atticus Finch, teaches her that true courage is not proven with fists, but with willpower that restrains innate tendencies and a stormy temperament. Additionally, Scout’s behaviour suggests that she does not want to grow up, because she is afraid that she will turn into a hardened hypocrite, like many of the ladies around her. However, she learns that there is more than one kind of lady. Her father, her nanny, and Miss Atkinson teach her that it is possible to be faithful to oneself and be a respected member of society. They deserve the respect of the Maycomb community through honesty and consistency, that is, by practising what they preach. The second phase of Scout’s development takes place in the world outside the Finch home, a world marked by inequality and injustice. Scout has to learn to live in a society marked by injustice, boundaries, and inequality, but she is instructed not to judge others and to attempt to understand everyone and look at the world from another’s perspective.

At first sight, the Maycomb society is stable and coherent. What binds the citizens of Maycomb together is the memory of a “chivalrous and honourable” past. The majority of the characters prefer not to challenge the inherited caste system and stereotypes and prejudices that come along. Nevertheless, there are a few characters who are aware that, if the American South is to grow and progress, it must discard its threadbare myths. The presence of characters such as Miss Maudie Atkinson and Atticus Finch, as well as the children, who instinctively feel that the colour of skin should not deny the presumption of innocence, testifies to the awakening of consciousness of American society. The awakening of consciousness is a small but significant step in gradually turning away from the past and embracing the present.

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**(INDOCTR)NATION: DUTY, DISRUPTION, DISINTEGRATION IN
PHILIP ROTH'S *AMERICAN PASTORAL***

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***Abstract:** While readings of *American Pastoral*, Philip Roth's 1997 masterpiece, primarily revolve around the protagonist, "Swede" Levov, and the tragic fall of his *American Dream*, this paper will examine the community values, expectations, pressures, de-/il-lusions behind that process. In the turbulent 1960s, the romantic tradition of American pastoral utopias is shattered by harsh socio-historical realities and the radicalization of public discourse.*

***Keywords:** America; (Jewish) community, history, individual, nation*

1. Introduction

The non-fictional background against which *American Pastoral* unfolds is dominated by the challenging and polarizing reality of the United States' active involvement in the Vietnam War. The ensuing social unrest largely illustrates the inevitable ethical and ontological dilemmas that envelop individual and communal consciousness alike. In Seymour (nicknamed "the Swede") Levov, Roth creates a most impactful protagonist, caught in and disturbed by the powerful conundrums of a tempestuous historical age. He does so by recording and playing back to the reader fictional, yet plausible versions of the convictions, mannerisms, hopes and failures of an entire generation, as well as of a particular (immigrant/ ethnic/ religious/ cultural) community. Levov's destiny is shocking precisely because he is the enviable boy-next-door of Jewish Newark, the luxury product of an entire mythology of successful Americanness, which crumbles with apparently no palpable reason.

The novel sets out to debunk stereotypes and their perniciousness by crawling underneath polished surfaces, into the anxiety, fear, and rage of a nation in distress. As pointed out by reputed Roth scholar and biographer, Ira Nadel, *American Pastoral* scrutinizes the unsettling ways in which middle-class values fall apart, while an affectionate father witnesses in astonishment how his lifetime hopes and achievements are undermined by his extremist daughter's terrorist actions:

Taking the *American Pastoral* ideal and satirizing it (...), Roth shows how urban decay and poverty forces a rewriting of the romance tradition of American literature. (...) Chaos replaces order, disintegration of the self substituting for the structure of a normal life, however one defines it. (Nadel 2011: 25)

This paper will focus on how the novel exposes the fragmentation of unified truths, the dissolution of cardinal values, the moral obscurity, as they all seem to take over the foreground of American life and imagination.

2. Manufactured happiness: aspiration and assimilation

Seymour Levov's private and public trajectories evolve in parallel: he is perceived as the embodiment of his community's ideals. They are reconstructed while his story is narrated in retrospect, after Nathan Zuckerman, Roth's fictional alter-ego, attends his 45th high-school reunion and reencounters former classmate, Jerry Levov, the Swede's brother. At both individual and collective levels, the nostalgic recollection of the rise and fall of the neighborhood hero begins with romanticizing the impeccably Americanized protagonist:

Through the Swede, the neighborhood entered into a fantasy about itself and about the world, the fantasy of sports fans everywhere: almost like Gentiles (as they imagined Gentiles), our families could forget the way things actually work and make an athletic performance the repository of all their hopes. Primarily, they could forget the war. (Roth 1998: 3-4)

As suggested in the passage above, the Jewish community's capacity for self-delusion via an overarching fantasy of perfection (in sports, in this case) is comparable to and assimilated with the WASP majority's propensity for obliterating uncomfortable truths and manufacturing images of an undisturbed pursuit of happiness instead. Thus, from the beginning of this narrative of American Dreams gone astray, one's attention is drawn to the inherent escapism behind the projection of individual and communal accomplishment. The ethnic minority's desire to fit in is doubled by a psychological mechanism that extends to the Gentile majority as well: denial and separation from anything unpleasant, via good practice examples of camaraderie and determination. In such a context, the young Swede becomes an inspiring, mythological, and highly mythologized figure of his native community.

His initial portrayal is revealing and ominous: "His aloofness, his seeming passivity as the desired object of all this asexual lovemaking, made him appear, if not divine, a distinguished cut above the more primordial humanity of just about everybody else at the school. He was fettered to history, an *instrument* of history." (Roth 1998: 5) On the one hand, the reader witnesses the adulation with which this symbolical member is surrounded by the school, family, neighborhood communities. He stands out as a nationalized, deracialized, desexualized model of social integration. On the other hand, he is simultaneously defined and constrained by the historical moments that shape him as a person and as a citizen: he joined the U.S. marines in 1945 after graduating from high-school, and returned in 1947, went to college and ticked all the right boxes of a conventional, (white) middle-class good life, demonstratively marrying Miss America. Then everything began to fall apart.

The narrator, Zuckerman, who ponders Swede's evolution through the lens of his similar experience and aspirations, understands the man's magnetism to his Jewish peers: he leads the way towards the assimilationist experience many craved, particularly after the horrors of World War II. Identification, as well as critical self-analysis, are to be found in the following presentation:

In our idolizing the Swede and his unconscious oneness with America, I suppose there was a tinge of shame and self-rejection. Conflicting Jewish desires awakened by the sight of him were simultaneously becalmed by him; the contradiction in Jews

who want to fit in and want to stand out, who insist they are different and insist they are no different, resolved itself in the triumphant spectacle of this Swede who was actually only another of our neighborhood Seymours whose forebears had been Solomons and Sauls and who would themselves beget Stephens who would in turn beget Shawns. (Roth 1998: 19-20)

The conundrums of hyphenation and de-hyphenation, the burden of communal oscillation between submission to mainstream expectations and dissent thereto, self-affirmation and self-negation are the pillars that support the hypnotizing, yet fragile edifice of the Swede's greatness. His physical appearance and his behaviour do not irrevocably distinguish him from any white American of his generation and are, therefore, enviable and admirable for the rest of the Newark immigrant offspring.

The inner contradictions of the Jewish nature, which Roth often dwells upon in his writings, are presented as having a greater influence upon the Swede's actions, reactions, and public image than his agency, replaced by a passivity that is likely to condemn him. Jewish-Americanness as a status quo is problematic because, while making the coveted transition to the privileges of white U.S. citizenship and belonging, the protagonist appears to lose his communal legacy.

Where was the Jew in him? You couldn't find it and yet you knew it was there. Where was the irrationality in him? Where was the crybaby in him? Where were the wayward temptations? No guile. No artifice. No mischief. All that he had eliminated to achieve his perfection. No striving, no ambivalence, no doubleness [...] What was the Swede's subjectivity? (Roth 1998: 20)

Identity and authenticity come to the fore of the discourse on Seymour, as Zuckerman questions his affiliation to the group mentality and sentiments that have propelled him as an example of upward mobility and cultural adaptation. It seems that an effacement of Jewishness into Americanness, a form of ethnic transformation rather than preservation ultimately dominates his trajectory, which lacks the depth and charisma expected from somebody as firmly rooted in normativity. While recording what is generically perceived as the flawlessness of the Swede's social performance, Roth's alter-ego narrator is bound to also observe, to his surprise, the banality of conformity, the annulment of (self-)questioning, the undeterred obedience to prefabricated expectations. "Something was on top of him that had called a halt to him. Something had turned him into a human platitude. Something had warned him: You must not run counter to anything." (Roth 1998: 23)

What could, perhaps, be taken for the wisdom and flexibility meant to trigger harmonious personal development and cohabitation is equated by the narrator with Seymour's incapability of original views and emotions. His inability to revolt and, hence, his incapacity to understand other people's indignations are crucial for his tragic fate. While seeing and accepting no nuances results in the type of moral resolution that may ensure a much-needed personal balance, negotiating everyday life between irreconcilable opposites proves impossible.

In *American Pastoral*, Roth resorts to his habit of conflating metatextual and (con)textual character development. The following meditation on writing and the role of observation in that process can prophetically apply to decoding the Swede's personal evolution:

You fight your superficiality, your shallowness, so as to try to come at people without unreal expectations, without an overload of bias or hope or arrogance [...] You get them wrong before you meet them, while you're anticipating meeting them; you get them wrong while you're with them; and then you go home to tell somebody else about the meeting and you get them all wrong again. [...] That's how we know we're alive: we're wrong. Maybe the best thing would be to forget being right or wrong about people and just go along for the ride. (Roth 1998: 35)

This famous passage directly concerns Zuckerman's preoccupation with the accuracy, relevance, and truth-value of collecting, sharing, and understanding life narratives. Storytelling is his trade of choice. Therefore, his ruminations are natural and illuminating in terms of blending and accommodating multiple perspectives. This semi-jocular, nevertheless serious approach to the meanings of art and existence can be seen as anticipating the revelation of the Swede's intimate and repetitive failure to get people - particularly the ones closest to him - right.

3. (Dis)Illusionment: the fall from idyllic grace

As aptly pointed out by Timothy Parrish (2000) in "The End of Identity: Philip Roth's *American Pastoral*", the Swede's idyllic vision is countered by the reality of ethnic struggle. The ensuing tension pervades both the life story itself and the subsequent narrative thereof.

Zuckerman introduces discord into this Garden of Eden through the presence of Joe Orcutt, the image of WASP gentility and, as the Swede painfully learns, his wife's lover. Under Orcutt's supervision, the Swede receives a tour of Morris County-specifically the site that was George Washington's headquarters and a cemetery that dated back to the American Revolution. Orcutt of course is unaware of Swede's Johnny Appleseed fantasy, but the effect of Orcutt's tour is to remind the Swede that his origins in the Revolution are pure fantasy. Put another way, Orcutt takes the Swede out to show him who really owns America and inhabits its mythology (Parrish 2000: 89-90).

Such paragraphs and the described circumstances are meant to shatter the characters' and the readers' illusions of equal chances and common aspirations in the America the Levovs inhabit. By openly placing in opposition ideas and ideologies, the pastoral and the catastrophic views on mid-to-late 20th century United States, the novel showcases two major conflicting narratives: post-World War II confidence, enthusiasm, development and the grim (hi)story of the Vietnam War, accompanied by exasperation and disbelief at the general level of the American population, and at the specific one, that of minority groups.

At first, the reader is offered minute recapitulations of the national zeal and optimism that flooded, by contagion, Newark's Jewish neighborhoods, with renewed hopes of endless possibilities to overcome, if not forget altogether, the traumatic and insecure past. The narrator vividly recollects the beginning of high school "six months after the unconditional surrender of the Japanese, during the greatest moment of collective inebriation in American history" (Roth 1998: 40-41). The key elements of this national emotion are contagious energy, freedom, positivity, which drive Americans towards a new kind of commonly shared and built fate.

By plunging into the specifics of U.S. socio-political change after the Second World War via his narrator's vivid recollections, Roth recreates a panorama of

American moods and mores, which captures the spirit of evolving times. The rise of individualism in the described Newark neighborhood coexists with the feeling of an overarching, unifying trauma. It is this shared sentiment that pushes the first generations of American(ized) Jews who get out of the war to prove themselves and not allow themselves to be defeated, after having escaped horrors to which many European peers had succumbed.

Since Roth's protagonists are of Jewish extraction, their concerns are doubly problematic, as the world and the U.S. undergo and eventually surpass the turmoil of the global conflagration. Their subsequent dedication to hard work, as the safe and correct way to American achievement and integration, is depicted as a strong-willed defiance against anxiety, mistrust of a previously abusive Gentile world, fear of failure and deceit. Thus, "ours was not a neighborhood steeped in darkness. The place was bright with industriousness. There was a big belief in life and we were steered relentlessly in the direction of success: a better existence was going to be ours. The goal was to *have* goals, the aim to *have* aims" (Roth 1998: 41).

Experienced in terms of plot and character construction, Philp Roth senses that, in order for the utopian Swede to be plausible, the novel must outline the socio-historical background of his evolution, alongside the adjacent mentalities. Thus, the Newark community is identified as a unifying "we", meant to emphasize its solidarity and strong beliefs in progression towards commonly shared goals. While trauma breeds resilience, prolonged marginalization and discrimination appear to dissolve into a fresh start after the World War has violently reshuffled (pre)conceptions, allegedly preventing the repetition of fatal historical errors. The palpable outcome is an ineffable sense of unity of goals: "We had new means and new ends, new allegiances and new aims, new innards - a new *ease*, somewhat less agitation in facing down the exclusions the goyim still wished to preserve." (Roth 1998: 44)

4. Detonating lives: the future ahead vs. the point of no return

The patriarchal immigrant dream of settling down and climbing the social ladder provides enough motivation for Seymour's parents and himself to immerse into the rags-to-riches pattern. The inevitable postwar generation gap, however, brings about a tear in the fabric of illusions: it prompts Merry to break with the established tradition and to denounce her forebears' aspirations as vile and pernicious contributions to human exploitation, rather than dedication, perseverance, and diligence.

As pointed out by Nora Roberts (2000), the progression of events is disturbing, but not necessarily surprising. From the beginning of the 20th century Jewish immigration to the Vietnam War, America itself has undergone successive changes. So does the Levov family, turned upon itself by social transformations that trigger revisionist attitudes as the century unfolds. From the European shtetl to the turn-of-the-century American Jewish neighborhood and onto the industry-driven, business-oriented Newark, the Levovs build their glove-making empire in accordance with U.S. commercial practices, contributing, in many activists' views, to the downfall of the equal status utopia and the decline of their adoptive town. While the Swede has little insight into the negative interpretation of his and his family's actions and lifestyle,

Merry, his adored daughter, like so many of her generation, took to the streets to protest. Merry accuses her parents of personal responsibility for what more sophisticated sociologists know was a more or less inexorable economic process. Roth indicates that, here, the idea that the political is personal may be carried too far. [...] Could the Levovs have done differently? Merry doesn't ask this question. She strikes out blindly. (Roberts 2000: 101-102)

Roth's and his narrative alter ego's efforts to make sense of the causes of what seems the outburst of sheer madness shed light upon Seymour Levov's tragic condition as well. Although he is the undoubtable protagonist and fallen angel of *American Pastoral*, it is clear from how his story is construed and delivered that he could not exist without the collective consciousness. The community makes him an exemplary hero, the evolution of the groups he is rooted in determines his own, his agency melts into sociotropy. Earning everybody's approval is an innate desire, as his personal trajectory is inextricable from the national and communal contexts.

As evident in retrospect, '68 marked a kind of revolution that proved baffling for most adults, who witnessed in dismay the dissolution of all public inhibitions and authority. The powerlessness of the unknown seemed paralyzing to the Swede's generation, and his tragedy is as much personal as it is communal and, perhaps, unavoidable. While it seems inevitable for teenagers to be self-absorbed to various degrees, "it's one thing to get fat, it's one thing to let your hair grow long, it's one thing to listen to rock-and-roll music too loud, but it's another to jump the line and throw a bomb. [...] His perfect life was over". (Roth 1998: 69)

Juggling with an entire array of perspectives, Roth draws attention to the severity of the phenomena the novel encapsulates in its case studies. Between Seymour (the Swede), the miserable victim of his own conventional existential choices and Merry, the radical dissenter *par excellence*, the reader can discover other opinions. Secondary characters - like the appalled and unforgiving Jerome, Seymour's brother, in this case - tend to take sides, while Zuckerman attempts to preserve narrative balance, to meditate and put the pieces of the puzzle together in retrospect.

Balance, however, is fatally disrupted in the Swede's story. While Merry's accusations against her family largely concern what she perceives as ruthless upstartism, Roth goes deeper with his investigation of personal and communal tragedy. Various characters repeatedly point out that upward mobility for the Jews often triggered exactly the kind of inequality and exploitation they, as members of an immigrant/ ethnic/ religious/ cultural minority, had faced. However, it also becomes evident from the intertwining narratives that this went far beyond mere financial aspects. Timothy Parrish (2000) places these sensitive issues within the larger debate upon the nature of the nuclear American family.

Its abidance by the norms of acquisitionist aspirations is complicated, in the Levovs' case, by the impersonation of a borrowed dream, instead of the cultivation of an authentic one. Merry's radical revolt against any type of authority erases her ethnic belonging and its inherent cultural limitations and/ or expectations, indicating, as Parrish (2000: 98) points out, that

The transformation of identity promised by the American dream is finally a curse rather than a blessing. [...] Zuckerman's Swede sees Merry as the victim of the sixties. Had there not been a bomb to throw symbolically at her family, then she never would have got into so much trouble. Roth, by contrast, portrays the sixties as a bomb set not so much by American imperialism but by the kinds of cross-ethnic

identity conflicts experienced by the Levovs. Merry's critique of her father's unwitting complicity with imperialist and postcolonial American practices is a critique offered from within the family about the (American) family.

It becomes evident that the conflict and contradiction the novel are predicated upon surpass capital(ist) rhetoric and practices. Seymour, the Swede, is symbolically presented as actively engaged in a reenactment of The Settler Myth. The description of his injudiciously followed life and career paths is as close to cliché as possible, bringing together the idea of building a fulfilled existence from scratch with the courage of integration in a new continent altogether. A determination verging on obstinacy drives the Swede in his pursuit of happiness. In his own, rather conformist way, he defies and deconstructs his predecessors' caution and sensibility.

While the previous generations aspired to settle into the comfortable, middle-class, Jewish-American condition, he steps further into full Americanness. He appropriates the symbols and belongings of the white majority, becoming Americanized and different from his kin. Roth uses the very vocabulary of settlement and colonization to describe the process.

The Swede, rather like some frontiersman of old, would not be turned back. What was impractical and ill-advised to his father was an act of bravery to him. Next to marrying Dawn Dwyer, buying that house and the hundred acres and moving out to Old Rimrock was the most daring thing he had ever done. What was Mars to his father was *America* to him—he was settling Revolutionary New Jersey as if for the first time. Out in Old Rimrock, all of America lay at their door. (Roth 1998: 310)

Depicting the Swede's simultaneous adaptation and alienation, Roth addresses the side-effects of inhabiting a collectivist utopia of individual well-being, particularly for the offspring of immigrants. Stepping into the assimilation story turns out decisive: it either validates or denies its protagonists' successful personhood, appurtenance, wholeness. At least that is the Swede's perception for a considerable amount of time. Once he and his young family get immersed into mainstream America, discussions about and confrontations with bias and discrimination do appear.

The inherent frictions of multiculturalism become apparent, proving that the deep structure of America is still dominated by the WASP prototype, regardless of appearances or attitudes. Swede Levov and Dawn, his wife, are surrounded by prejudices, whether the community expresses them openly or not. In order to fit in, they must face their own suspiciousness and reservations: "The Protestants are just another denomination. Maybe they were rare where she grew up - they were rare where he grew up too - but they happen not to be rare in America. Let's face it, they *are* America. (Roth 1998: 311)

The American society's inherent stratification presents itself as an insurmountable mental construct, wherein open-mindedness, tolerance, and respect for the alterity function within fluid limits: often unpredictable, rarely inexistent.

5. Mutual denunciations: no common denominator

American Pastoral provides a detailed, sometimes intentionally exaggerated case study on the impact of indoctrination upon individuals and communities alike.

Embracing prefabricated ideas about the nation and their predetermined or earned place in it, the protagonists end up bitter and disillusioned: the borrowed dreams never match the encountered realities. Moreover, just as the depicted communities are biased, conflicted, and essentially non-inclusive, so are the individuals they comprise and nurture.

As pointed out by Ira Nadel (2011), quest and loneliness are the novel's red threads: Swede desperately attempts to comprehend his daughter's violent estrangement and somehow undo the wrong and mend the family relations. However, when he finally finds Merry again and is confronted with the circumstances of her present, chosen life, he realizes that she has been indoctrinated to believe that any form of material comfort is an act of destruction against nature. The Swede, torn between fatherly love for his daughter and a desire for her to return, is equally incensed at her blind failure to understand how society functions.

One can easily see in Roth's illustration of the father's and daughter's extreme, conflicting choices, the tragedy of misunderstanding and the extent to which lack of nuances and failure to negotiate values may result in catastrophe. Not only does Merry practically resort to terrorist acts. Roth's focus is primarily on the ways in which radical behaviour impacts everybody on a deep psychological level. It destroys lives from within, leaving essential ontological questions unanswered and offering no solutions towards finding common denominators and means of constructive dialogue.

In the world that the novel presents as increasingly predicated on belligerent rhetoric, any kind of disagreement is exploitable by people with an agenda. Regardless of the political side, the characters' confrontations with ideological manipulators are meant to illustrate the overall perversity and carelessness of indoctrination. Roth succeeds in capturing the swirl of emotions surrounding the Levovs' family drama. When Seymour finally explodes, the intensity of feelings overflows in an accusatory discourse, dominated by the negativity of irreconcilable differences. Frustration, resentment, the shock of betrayed expectations echo in the Swede's unforgiving analysis of the estrangement and radicalization of his daughter, which he throws at her corrupter.

You hate us because we haven't failed. Because we've worked hard and honestly to become the best in the business and because of that we have prospered, so you envy us and you hate us and want to destroy us. And so you used her. A sixteen-year-old kid with a stutter. No, nothing small about you people. Made her into a "revolutionary" full of great thoughts and high-minded ideals. Sons of bitches. You *enjoy* the spectacle of our devastation. (Roth 1998: 214)

Most relevant in this powerful passage are the communal spirit, the unified consciousness and tradition that Seymour cannot seem to tear himself apart from. *You vs. We*: Roth invests each of his major characters with the rage of personal vexation and disappointment. Embodying opposite types of extreme idealism, the Swede and Merry subsume an American nation of immigrants, suffocated, irritated, and scandalized by its own inherent inconsistencies. The Vietnam War tears its long-standing wounds open and intensifies the pain, the despair, the abyss between utopia and everyday struggle. Roth's major achievement lies in capturing each outcry of discord with equal energy, vividness, and unrestrained pathos, to eventually expose and warn against the dangers and damages of immoderation.

According to Remi Astruc (2000), *American Pastoral* mercilessly derides idealism and exposes the magnitude of human pretense.

The daughter's insanity destroys the Levovs' ideal household when she smashes to pieces the local post office in an act of protest against the Vietnam war: *And then the loss of the daughter [...] who transports him out of the longed-for American pastoral and into everything that is its antithesis and its enemy, into the fury, the violence, and the desperation of the counterpastoral - into the indigenous American berserk.* (Astruc 2000: 113-114)

Such critical opinions and the prose they reference place several elements at the heart of *American Pastoral*: delusion, denial, dystopia. On the one hand, the Swede stands out as almost conservatively connected to the idea of upward mobility embraced by his predecessors. On the other hand, to the financial emancipation thereby entailed he adds group emancipation, crossing over from minority to majority status. He projects the myth of equal chances and harmonious cohabitation upon his own life with his *shiksa* wife. His excursion into mythomania, much like the nation's penchant for utopian designs, becomes for a while a comfortable, though self-delusional way of relying on the rather naïve belief in a unidirectional string of cause-and-effect events.

The very notion of truth is deconstructed, in a highly postmodernist manner, throughout the novel. For the Swede, his alleged desiderates of kindness, positivity, achievement are erased and turned into their opposites by discourses of resentment and radical revolution coming from his own daughter. Although he clearly identifies the roots of the transformation in the ideological brainwashing she has been subjected to, he is baffled by the lack of logic and coherence left in his blown-up universe. Having relied on clear-cut actions and objectives all his life, he is deprived of his major motivation and practical support: (self)-control.

He sees himself primarily as innocence betrayed. Yet, he is consumed by doubts and guilt, and he replays events in his head, trying to identify the flaw in the design and his own tragic fault. Having always counted on his calm, organized, kindhearted nature, he is crushed by the thought of a potential responsibility and he resorts to obsessive (self)-examination, in the hope of identifying an accidental and repairable cause for the family drama that envelops everybody. He is, inevitably, disappointed, as he gradually discovers that “there was no fluency anywhere. It was *all* stuttering. [...] He no longer had any conception of order. There was no order. None. He envisioned his life as a stutterer's thought, wildly out of his control.” (Roth 1998: 93)

Disorder and paradox take over, as the author wastes no opportunity to explore the limitations of the characters' personalized versions of the American Dream and their inherent, apparently inevitable failures. The utopian image of America falls apart as each of the extreme, or even moderate aspirations is brought to ruin. Roth formulates an overarching observation and critique of the rhetoric of the American Dream, as an inevitably non-inclusive fantasy, which projects unrealistic expectations, resulting in dissatisfaction and disaster instead of the instant gratification it has long promised.

6. Conclusion

There is more to *American Pastoral* than meets the eye. Meditating upon “Race in Philip Roth's *American Pastoral*”, Hwang references a Roth interview for

Le Figaro. Questioned about the loss of American innocence after 9/11, the writer expressed his disbelief in the very notion, given a national history marked by slavery and segregation. Thus, Hwang (2018: 161-63) points out that Roth is

criticizing Americans for their innocence—their ignorance and lack of historical awareness—and their perpetuation of an idealized vision of the nation [...] What Roth says about America is not limited to the sixties. Setting *American Pastoral* in Newark, he carefully interweaves the city’s history from the 1940s to the 1990s, including the racial and class divisions between the city and suburbs, the 1967 Newark riots, and their continuing, ruinous effects on the city. He contrasts the protagonist’s idealized vision of America as a wealthy WASP suburb with a poor city that functions as “a black colony”.

The major idea that surfaces from a reading focused on the protagonist as a product and exponent of a community, rather than an individual in search of his authentic happiness, is all the more surprising, as Seymour Levov is one of Roth’s strongest protagonists. Under the guise of an immigrant’s (self)-destructive quest for integration, assimilation, and prosperity, doomed to failure by its consequences (symbolized by his own offspring), the true protagonist of *American Pastoral* is the American Nation. Its confusion, downfall, radical changes of values and multiplicity of discourses, driven by socio-historical trends and transformations, parallel, mirror, and determine the protagonist’s.

What endures is the clairvoyant X-ray of the nation of immigrants’ hopes and disillusionments, its radicalizations and hypocrisies, its inherent vices and indubitable virtues. Roth prefigures the new Millennium’s fall into terrorism and violence, the dissolution of dialogue, the polarization of opinions, the irreconcilable differences between competing discourses, the flaws of the major parties, and he does so in his brilliant, poignant, uncompromising style.

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**DAHLIA'S JOURNEY:
MISPLACED AFFECTION AND VISUAL ARTS
IN THOMAS PYNCHON'S *AGAINST THE DAY***

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Abstract: *Among the many characters of the labyrinthine saga Against the Day (2006), this paper focuses on Dahlia Rideout. Her foster father is a photographer, her mother elopes with a magician, her childhood friend is a ball lightning. While in Venice, she becomes the muse of radical artists, and on the London stage Dahlia is quite a sensation. The thing that binds together her iconic status and her misfortunes throughout the books is light – that is, electromagnetic radiation, as scientists describe it, but also limelight, the aura of celebrity she shares with other female characters in Thomas Pynchon's fiction.*

Keywords: *Against the Day, postmodern fiction, Thomas Pynchon, representation of women in art*

1. Introduction: “Fabulists and counterfeiters”

Against the Day, Thomas Pynchon's 2006 saga, lifts up – literally, one might say – when a club of aviator kids, who call themselves the “Chums of Chance”, take off cheerfully in a hydrogen skyship, with the same subjunctive expectations his previous novel left open. *Mason & Dixon* (1997) made the subjunctive, that is the mood “denoting what is imagined or wished or possible” (Tanner 2000: 224), a crucial stance in understanding the origins of the American boundaries and American schisms, but also in assessing the discrepancies between the scientific measurement and artistic dream, between philosophical concepts and poetic metaphors. (idem: 225) In *Against the Day*, the subjunctive encompasses not only America, but almost the whole world, the Western and Eastern hemispheres, the Arctic and the Chihuahua Mountains as well. Pynchon's (1997: 350) belief that History “is too innocent, to be left within the reach of anyone in Power, – who need but touch her, and all her Credit is in the instant vanish'd, as if it had never been” (and as a consequence History “needs rather to be tended lovingly and honorably by fabulists and counterfeiters, Ballad-Mongers and Cranks of ev'ry Radius”) - receives here a more anarchistic touch. *Against the Day* is a conglomerate of intrigues with hundreds of characters, which begins at the Chicago World Fair in 1893 and ends after the Great War, during the early 1920s. It is a colossal genre-bending enterprise, at the same time romantic quest, revenge western, hard-boiled novel, steampunk escapism, time travel romp, shamanistic trip, bildungsroman, mathematical puzzle, and sophisticated parody of the highly-aestheticized nineteenth century social novels, such as Henry James' *The Princess Casamassima*.

Pynchon's comic evasions might not be considered acceptable history by the veracity-obsessed readers, but J.M. Tyree (2021: 6-7) reminds us that any historical fiction has time travel as its premise and that "to write against the day – our era of ascendant oligarchs, extractors, developers, polluters, exploiters, liars, and abusers – is to write in favor of an alternate future".

In *Against the Day*, as in *Mason & Dixon*, the subjunctive has both scientific and religious overtones. Sometimes the meanings converge. Other times they split dramatically, and when the latter is the case, one can discern in the book what the historian of science Stephen Jay Gould (2001: 288) identified as "our worst mental habit" – that is, dichotomy. This, Gould claims, is "our tendency to reduce a truly intricate set of subtle shadings to a choice between two diametrically opposed alternatives (each with moral weight and therefore ripe for bombast and pontification, if not outright warfare)" (ibid). On the one hand, the doubling of the characters' portrayal either through bilocation and their espionage activities as double agents, or by changing their gender roles, and the doubling of historical possibilities are epitomized by the optical effect of the Iceland spar, a mineral calcite having the property of double refraction, and also by imaginary numbers, "a doubling of the Creation", as an Icelandic librarian gnomically suggests (Pynchon 2007: 133). On the other hand, all kinds of persuasions – Catholic, Eastern-Orthodox, Gnostic, Buddhist, Orphic, Siberian shamanism and so on – usher the characters into the beyond. Brooding on the function of doubt in Christianity, Reverend Wicks Cherrycoke, the enchanting storyteller of *Mason & Dixon* notes that "[t]he final pure Christ is pure uncertainty. He is become the central subjunctive fact of a Faith, that risks everything upon one bodily Resurrection" (Pynchon 1997: 511). The aspiring alchemist and photographer Merle Rideout in *Against the Day* recounts the Infancy Gospel of Thomas to his daughter Dahlia (Dally) as if the Gnostic text – the Gnosticism's dualistic ontology relates to the same pervasive motif of the double refraction (Coward 2011: 178) – would be a cautionary tale that every father should tell his daughter: "Jesus was sort of a hell-raiser as a kid [...], the kind of wayward youth I'm always finding you keeping company with, in fact, not that I'm objecting" (Pynchon 2007: 579). In Merle's vernacular, the son of God becomes a sort of Superman before the advent of comic books, a boisterous boy learning to use his superpowers properly, eager to prank everybody around him and playing with matters of life and death. One day, in order to amuse his pals, he takes all the clothes sorted out for colouring in a dyer's shop and throws the whole bundle in the red pot:

The dyer is screaming bloody murder, tearing his beard, thrashing around on the ground, he sees his whole livelihood destroyed, even Jesus's low-life friends think this time he's gone a little too far, but here comes Jesus with his hand up in the air just like in the paintings, calm as anything – 'Settle down, everybody,' and he starts pulling the clothes out of that pot again, and what do you know, each one comes out just the color it's supposed to be, not only that but the exact shade of that color, too, no more housewives hollerin 'hey I wanted lime green not Kelly green, you color-blind or something,' no this time each item is the perfect color it was meant to be. (Pynchon 2007: 580)

Despite the fact that Merle's memory does not serve him as well as his imagination, it is of the greatest importance that the parable is delivered in order to address a child's expectations. Also, the story evokes Christian iconography and colour perception, because colour is actually light, and light is "the closest word we

can find for invoking divine presence” (Hume 2011: 172). Yet the story is told in a funny and irreverent manner by a photographer who likes to toy scientifically with lens, precious metals, the strange properties of the Iceland spar, and chemical substances that in the hands of someone less artistically inclined may turn the search for the Philosopher’s Stone into an anarchist’s search for the deadliest explosive. It is also significant that Dahlia Rideout remembers the parable many years later when, as a young woman in Venice, she poses for the English painter Hunter Penhallow. This happens shortly after she is shown Tintoretto’s painting, *Abduction of the Body of Saint Mark*, which highlights “the crime at the heart of Venice founding myth” (Mogultay 2018: 63-64), the transgression that made Venice a sacred city despite its long history of ruthless commerce, public display of wealth, and bribery. It seems that Penhallow, who is not only a painter, but a time traveller too, someone who escapes from a great European war that has not yet happened, seeks “safety behind the cloaks and masks and thousand-named mists of Venezia” (Pynchon 2007: 576).

It is through these events that involve religious mysteries and light effects, recorded history and alternate universes, childhood jests and mortal sins, magicians and scientists, unreliable boyfriends and double agents that Dahlia reaches maturity. Her coming-of-age story deals with issues that other female characters in Pynchon’s fiction had to face. Thus, Dahlia Rideout’s growing up offers the reader some unexpected clues to how Thomas Pynchon shapes his female protagonist in relation to at least three other heroines before her.

2. Neither angel, nor femme fatale

Dahlia’s mother, Erlys Mills, abandoned her in infancy and eloped with the Italian magician Luca Zombini, known as Zombini the Mysterious. Merle is not Dally’s biological father, but he raises her with deep tenderness and care. One can discern an optical motif on Erlys’ side too. She is invisible during Dally’s childhood, a mere character in the bedtime story Merle tells in bits and pieces, and the wife of a magician who is interested in using the Iceland spar in order to push the old trick of cutting the assistant in half a little bit further, scientifically speaking (Pynchon 2007: 354-355). Thus Dally comes from a family – no matter how broken that family is – where illusion, light, and make-believe blend with a sad love story. Red-haired and green-eyed, having the name of a flower and a surname with musical connotations – “the rideout is the final chorus of a piece; to ride in jazz is to improvise on a melody” (Severs 2011: 225) –, Dahlia is the most enlightening presence in *Against the Day* and one of the most fascinating female characters in Pynchon’s fiction.

Her luminescent charisma is already implicit in the way Merle Rideout and Erlys Mills meet. What drives Merle to Cleveland, Ohio, in the first place is his interest in the theories regarding the “luminiferous Æther” (Pynchon 2007: 58), thought to be a medium through which the electromagnetic waves propagate, and his hope that the letter of recommendation he received from his friend at Yale, Professor Vanderjuice, will ease his access to the Ætherist community, a cult around the experiment done by the physicists Albert Michelson and William Morley. The craze caused by the new scientific fad brings to mind both the gargantuan banana breakfast (Pynchon 2000: 10-11) and the electric revolution envisioned by “The Story of Byron the Bulb” (idem: 660-668) in *Gravity’s Rainbow*:

There were diet faddists who styled themselves Lightarians, living on nothing but light, even setting up labs they sought of as kitchens and concocting meals from light recipes, fright light, fricasseed light, light *à la mode*, calling for different types of light filament and colors of glass envelope, the Edison lamp being brand new in those days but certainly not the only design under study. (Pynchon 2007: 60)

Just when the Æther-drift experiment fails, Merle meets pregnant Erllys. As in the lives of saints and medieval parables, the parents – not necessarily the biological ones – get together for a short time, yet enough for having, adopting or saving a special child. It should come as no surprise that Dally's first friend is a talking ball lightning who introduces himself as Skip, and whom Merle tried initially to catch using an insulated cage and a battery:

She had to admit Skip was an obliging little cuss, got their cookfires going in a snap, lit Merle's cigars for him, climbed inside the railroad lantern hanging off the back of the wagon when they had to travel in the dark. After a while, some nights, when she was up late reading, there'd be Skip up next to her, lighting the page, bobbing gently, as if reading along. (Pynchon 2007: 74)

Dally spends her childhood years and early teens traveling across America in Merle's wagon and dreaming of the Beaux-Art wonders she saw at the White City, the main attraction of World's Columbian Exposition. When she finally understands that the exhibits from the Chicago fairground used by her father as backdrop for shooting the visitors' portraits were dismantled, "her tears only reflected light, but did not flow" (Pynchon 2007: 70).

Pynchon often draws on hard-boiled fiction and film noir in order to create a specific atmosphere, to introduce some of his characters, or to suggest the power of "fatality" (Tyree 2021: 153). The noir voice-over suits Pynchon's designs, especially when he tackles the relationships between men and women. According to Tyree (idem: 154), [t]he *femme fatale mode* has become one of Pynchon's instant recognizable techniques of characterization. Not in Dally's case though. Independent and outspoken, she is granted a kind of sacred purity specific to the teens of the late nineteenth century adventure novels. This aura is kindled by her virginity and also by her androgynous features. In Telluride, Colorado, a mining town, she practices shooting with a revolver and wears the gun "in plain sight mainly on account of she didn't own one dress or skirt to hide it under" (Pynchon 2007: 303). Thus we are teased to infer that she wears trousers, not entirely acceptable female attire at that time. Dally is also good at escaping pursuers, at dodging indecent requests, and at doing magic tricks.

Jeffrey Severs (2011: 217, 220) sees her "as an extension of Prairie" – Zoyd Wheeler's daughter in Thomas Pynchon's *Vineland* (1990) –, a sarcastic teen in search of her estranged mother, Frenesi Gates. At the same time, Dally resembles Frenesi's friend, Darryl Louise (DL) Chastain, a *kunoichi* (female ninja) taken out straight of martial art movies and pop culture lore. She is as distinctively blonde and freckled as Dally is red-haired and freckled, has a boy's upbringing and thinks that her teen years are a very clear-cut part of her life. Darryl Louise's puberty and adolescence "were both turning out to be like vacationing on another planet and losing her traveler's checks" (Pynchon 1991: 123). Both young women may come across too cinematically imagined to feel real. However, everything they say and do bears the mark of verisimilitude.

Dally's looks and her chastity mark her as an asset in the eyes of those eager to trade her charms either as facile entertainment or on the real sexual market. When she arrives in New York searching for her mother, Dally finds a job as an actress on the streets of Chinatown. This show business is designated as "the white-slave simulation industry" (Pynchon 2007: 339). The cheap melodramas she plays in typecast Dally in the ideal role of the white young woman abducted by Chinese gangs. "Red hair! Freckles! Audition enough O.K.!" (ibid.) is what she is told by the impresario Hop Fung when Dally asks how come she is employed without a proper audition. Dally's theatrical success conjures up more immediate dangers, such as the devoted elderly fan with "pomaded gray hair and a gigantic emerald ring on his pinky" who grabs her wrist and tries to handcuff the girl while expressing his sinister appreciation: "You make such an appealing captive" (Pynchon 2007: 350). The fact that women and men are prone to mixing up the scenic persona with the real person pertains to the same motif of the double in *Against the Day*.

On board of the liner *Stupendica*, where she follows the Zombinis to Europe and meets again Kit Travers – her first true love interest and future husband –, Dally's behaviour is put in contrast with the beauty canon established by the illustrations of Charles Dana Gibson:

Unlike the usual Gibson Girl, who liked to avert her eyes, not to mention her nose, as if it were not a fellow's appearance so much as his odor she wished to appear indifferent to, Dally never knew how to stop looking, even at somebody she had zero interest in, though heaven knew that was not the case right now. (Pynchon 2007: 511-512)

For Dally's long stay in Venice, Pynchon uses a Shakespearian device. In pretty much the same fashion that makes the Forest of Arden not a real place in *As You Like It*, but a timeless pastoral evasion, "a healing antidote" to court life (Nuttall 2007: 235), Venice is just a mirage in *Against the Day*. It is conspicuously the artistic city, the Venice of writers and of painters, and a crowded touristic destination, a place where Dally, like Rosalind, feels she had not only to disguise herself but also to switch gender in order to preserve her true self and avoid unpleasant encounters.

Quite soon she had grown to hate tourists and what she saw them doing to Venice, changing it from a real city to a hollow and now and then outright failed impersonation of itself, all the centuries of that irregular seethe of history reduced to a few simple ideas, and a seasonal human inundation just able to grasp them. (Pynchon 2007: 574)

Dally remains feminine with Kit Traverse, but she becomes boyish in the presence of artists. She dons men's clothes, crops her beautiful hair "into a drift of curls short enough to fit under a red knit fisherman's cap" (Pynchon 2007: 575), and models for painters of different schools. Dally proves so iconic that she suits various Venetian aesthetic ambitions. She feels attracted to Andrea Tancredi's project, *Preliminary Studies Toward an Infernal Machine*. Tancredi is a heretical futurist, a radical proponent of Divisionism who fell out with Marinetti's circle. He aims to describe dynamically the nature of time through a dialectic of strong colours (Pynchon 2007: 585-587). His declamatory devotion to progress and other world-improving tenets seems to Dally the same quasi-religious fanaticism that brought

Merle Rideout and his science-obsessed companions to the brink of madness when she was a child. That the Futurists' divination of the machine and their treatment of women as a cruel force of nature resonate with the rise of fascism is an implicit assumption in *Against the Day*. Dally never becomes a Futuristic muse.

Later in the book, when the sculptor Arturo Naunt chooses her as a model for a series of funereal monuments – allegories chiselled in black marble, agonizing soldiers in the laps of lean, hooded death angels with menacing wings – throughout London's cemeteries, Dally's face turns out as too specific for the sculptor's intentions. He wanted repose and stillness, but “what Dally gave him was a dynamic athlete, surrendered to a wind only she could feel, mindlessly orgasmic from its velocity” (Pynchon 2007: 895). Jeffrey Severs (2011: 232-233) counts Arturo Naunt among the many men in *Against the Day* who “try to make Dally profitable” by abstracting her to the few features that the market-driven economy selects as viable. Dally does not fit Naunt's project because she does not identify herself with the model, but with the angel, whose perspective she tries to understand and to learn, as if it were an actress' part in a drama. Besides, she does not see the point of the mandatory hood, meant to obliterate the light, that is, God's grace (Pynchon 2007: 894, 895). Dahlia Rideout cannot play convincingly the Angel of Death because every one of her gestures is a life-affirming performance.

As a performer, she has some conspicuous affinities with the French dancer Mélanie l'Heuremaudit from *V.* (1963), Thomas Pynchon's first novel. Critics have already tried either to tackle Dally as a more mature version of Mélanie, “a corrective” to his early portrayals of female characters (Severs 2011: 234-235), or to connect Dally's stay in Paris in the closing pages of *Against the Day* with the vicissitudes generated by the destruction of Europe during the Great War and the bleak events that are about to happen (Duyfhuizen 2012: 78-79). The hope is kindled by the strange resurrection in *Against the Day* of Mélanie l'Heuremaudit, who died horribly in *V.*

In the fourteenth chapter of *V.*, titled “V. in love”, Mélanie is a Lolita-like fifteen-year-old ballerina from Normandy. During the summer of 1913, she arrives in Paris under a sickening yellow sky in order to play in the much-talked about show *L'Enlèvement des Vierges Chinoises - The Rape of the Chinese Virgins*, choreographed by Satin. The avant-garde score is composed by Vladimir Porcépic (the story is a dark, decadent parody of the actual scandal caused by Igor Stravinsky's first performance of the ballet *Le Sacre du printemps* the same year). Pynchon conceives Mélanie l'Heuremaudit as glittering surfaces only, multiplied alluringly by mirrors. “You are not real”, she is told by the mysterious woman V. (Pynchon 1964: 379), and one wonders indeed if the remark is an entranced compliment aimed at the girl's beauty or a radical ontological statement.

Mélanie's stage name is “Mlle. Jarretière”. She dances, doll-like, among automata built by a German engineer, has an erotic encounter with a headless mannequin, and becomes a wind-up girl herself in a surrealistic dream. Her pet name is “*fétiche*” (fetish), and, when she becomes V.'s lover, she wears schoolboy's clothing. Mélanie's real personality, if she has one, seems lost among costumes, hosiery, colourful kimonos, spangled combs, bracelets, slippers with straps, Oriental make-up, and embroidered dragons. “She was not pretty unless she wore something” (Pynchon 1964: 373). There are so many accessories that during the show the young prime ballerina is accidentally impaled with a spear by two of the male dancers, because, ironically, she forgot to protect herself with the only costume item that might have saved her life: a chastity belt.

John Dugdale, who assesses Pynchon's literary allusions in chapter fourteen – Rimbaud, Joyce, Proust, Jarry, Rilke, Nabokov, T.S. Eliot, and W.B. Yeats among others – and also his visual and musical sources, such as Picasso's and De Chirico's paintings, Stravinsky's *Le sacre du printemps* and Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* (Dugdale 1990: 96-97), is concerned with “the hostility to Modernism in *V.* (for example, its perpetuation of Romanticism, its metaphysical delusions, its decadent sexuality, its idealising-sadistic representation of women)” (idem: 109). By conjuring up the artistic paraphernalia of the last century, spectacular images, masks, novelistic tropes, and poetic metaphors that belong to the inanimate world rather than to nature, Pynchon mocks the Modernist illusion of evading from one's personality through art and underlines the dangers of misplaced affection.

Fictions are demystified in *V.* by reference to that which is the case, the reality of situations, flesh-and-blood and its sufferings. When the text focuses on a particular Modernist artwork in the mock-*Sacré*, the insistence is that the fetish/symbol is an actual female body, that behind the role and costume of the dancer (the Modernist image par excellence) is a vulnerable young girl. (Dugdale 1990: 106)

In *Against the Day* we find out that Mélanie l'Heuremaudit survived the infamous 1913 show and that she befriended Dally after the war. Dally calls this “pretty young woman in trousers” Jarri, and when a group of Americans recognize the ballerina on the street and ask about her violent death, she invokes dismissively Grand Guignol and raspberry syrup:

“They needed a *succès de scandale*, and I didn't mind. A young beauty destroyed before her time, something the eternally-adolescent male mind could tickle itself with. *Mon Dieu!*” she sang, “*que les hommes sont bêtes*” in on the trail end of which Dally joined, singing the harmony. (Pynchon 2007: 1066)

How “real” is Mélanie this time? She appears in the book along Dally thanks to a science fiction projector that Merle Rideout turns on in California in order to see his adoptive daughter, who speaks back to him from Paris through a radio transmitter. Merle and his partner, Roswell Bounce, work near Hollywood, perhaps, as David Cowart (2011: 187) put it, as a nod to the 1980s *Back to the Future* movies. They build a device, the Integroscope, that combines alchemy, cinema, magic, and time-travel (Tyree 2021: 158-160), which in *Against the Day* turn out to be the same thing. All Merle has to do is take an old photograph of Dally since the days they travelled across America together and speed it up with the help of the Integroscope so that he can see her in a certain moment of her adult life. One cannot know exactly if this art of seeing “time within a static photograph” (Duyfhuizen 2012: 77) is the result of a truly innovative technology or mainly nostalgic reverie and longing on Merle's part, just as one cannot say for sure if Mélanie l'Heuremaudit really belongs among the many characters of *Against the Day* or is simply wishful thinking on Pynchon's part, a dreamed possibility, a subjunctive hope, a doubling of his novel *V.*, a travel back in time to his younger self.

3. Conclusion: father and daughter

Dahlia Rideout shares to some extent a family resemblance with other female characters in Thomas Pynchon's fiction. She is sarcastic, albeit vulnerable,

like Prairie in *Vineland*, independent, bold, and boyish, like Prairie's protector, DL Chastain, an adulated performer, like Mélanie l'Heuremaudit. She shows different guises, Catholic and pagan iconography blending with Modernist art, to different spectators. Unlike the French ballerina, though, whose trajectory she follows at one point in London when she becomes a famous actress and singer on Shaftesbury Avenue and the Strand, Dally does not let the audience turn her into a fetish. She is unfazed by the attention and the gifts that men and women alike lavish on her:

Understanding that none of this could last much beyond one season, almost in innocence amazed that she could watch so calmly the ardor of others as if from inside some glacial and lucid space, Dally was invited to weekends at some of the more sizable manor houses of the British countryside, required to do nothing but look the way she looked – as if her appearance possessed a consciousness, and must be allowed to obey its impulses – attended by domestic staff, puzzled by extravagant acts of abasement from young men whose names she did not always hear, let alone remember. (Pynchon 2007: 898-899)

Dally is never dehumanized in *Against the Day* despite the fact that some of her acquaintances try to exploit her charisma and even sell her into slavery. Tanner (1971: 161) states that the characters of *V.* experience life “only as spectacle” and that their voyeurism is a “way of evading true selfhood and denying or avoiding the possibility of love”. Dahlia Rideout's coming of age in *Against the Day* is always entangled with the invention of an optical device, with the mysteries surrounding a real or fictional painting, or with the history of photography and cinema. Yet she never regresses to visual suggestions, to a sum of literary and cinematic clichés. In Pynchon's typical postmodern epic, she is a character one might safely describe as “classic”. Merle's magic projector, which brings Dally and Mélanie together in the same frame, is not so much a piece of advanced technology, and even less a narcissistic artist statement, but a burst of unconditional love.

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**TRANSCENDENT IMAGINATION
IN SALMAN RUSHDIE'S *VICTORY CITY*: A CONFRONTATION
OF MYTH, RELIGION, HISTORY AND TRADITION**

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***Abstract:** The article focuses on Victory City (2023), the latest novel by Salman Rushdie, to discuss how transcendent reality is experienced and conceived in human life. The book explores the epistemological problems of religious tradition fictionalising the history of the Indian Vijayanagara Empire and proposing thus a new mythology. In his novel, framed as a fictional translation of an epic from Sanskrit, Rushdie confronts the real world through transcendent imagination to appeal to harmonious ideals and reconcile them with imperfect humanity. The author's vision of that confrontation is interwoven with a biting critique of our world.*

***Keywords:** (dis)harmony, magic realism, mythologem, sacredness, transcendence*

1. Introduction

The transcendent function is the most significant factor in the psychological process (Angelo 2003: 119). Transcendent imagination drawing on (post-)Kantian transcendentalism appears as a specific phenomenon exhibits the mind's activity on sensibility, as a result of which figurative categories carry out a synthesis of a variety of representations. As a function, an aspect of consciousness and its application to the objects of representation, thus fulfilling a fixed role in its synthetic activity, transcendent imagination, "a higher dimension than [...] faith or spirituality" (Chirico 2001: 526), it acquires at the same time significantly greater independence and the ability to unite other options of cognition. The mind joins that ability and interacts in such a way that the latter helps it reduce the variety of views to a single, generalised representation, combining them with the concept of experience.

Fiction touches all the spheres of life and reflects reality by transforming it into images. The work of Salman Rushdie (b. 1947) appears as a kind of attempt to delve philosophically into the foundations of human life at all its levels, including self-knowledge, understanding of human nature, realist and mythological creation. Rushdie's perceptive knowledge of politics, history, culture, community, race and religion constitutes the thrust of his novels (Swain 2016) and helps him actualise the ways of transcending reality, associated with the belief that there is more to existence than what we can perceive through our senses. In this respect, the analysis of the category of transcendence as an experience that goes beyond normal limits, or the ability to know the essence of being beyond its visible edges is

relevant. In his latest novel *Victory City* (2023), Rushdie verbalises subconscious impulses to explore one's identity on the verge of the interpenetration of the profane and sacred entity. In *Victory City*, Rushdie's first book published since a failed assassination attempt in August 2022, the writer continues to dissect the issues of religious tradition put in the fictionalised historical context, proposing a new mythology. A wide range of myths and mythologies, drawn from Islamic traditions, especially Sufism, but also Buddhism, Hinduism, Greek mythology and Christianity, link Rushdie "to ideas of 'unity in diversity' and a distinctively Indian form of secularism that produces equal respect for the range of religious communities that inhabit this geopolitical entity" (Ratti 2023: 147).

The relationship between history and fiction, text and context in a work of fiction is studied within new historicism, drawn on the Derridean notion of reality as being textualised (Lyngdoh 2017: 111) and the Foucauldian idea of social structures as determined by dominant discursive practices (Phillips 2023: 12). Within this methodological approach, the task of establishing the connections between verbal and social phenomena – the nature of the relationship between the text and the world – becomes particularly important. The link between the text and the historical events is characterised by "the historicity of texts and the textuality of history" (Montrose 1997: 242). This refers to the inherent social content and cultural specificity of all types of writing and the limitation of definitive and unmediated access to past events through texts. By exploring *Victory City* "on the move, across space and time" (Asdal and Jordheim 2018: 74), the article represents alternative history as a source of transcendent imagination.

Rushdie drew inspiration from the history of a once-flourishing medieval Hindu Kingdom, Vijayanagara, in South India with its eponymous capital, whose ruins UNESCO declared a World Heritage Site in Hampi. Representing the epic tale of a demigoddess who breathes into existence fantastical Victory City, or Bisnaga, a city within a city, Rushdie implies that the narratives of some modern postcolonial societies correspond little to historical reality. The writer exposes their overzealousness in fostering their postcolonial identity drawn actually on the idea of the hybridity of identities (Kardum Goleš 2019: 92-93). Rushdie's novel is a chronicle of the fictional Indian empire that arose around that city, narrated by Pampa Kampana, inspired by the historical, fourteenth-century princess-poet Gangadevi. Thus, the genre features of *Victory City* enable us to consider the novel a kind of what Hutcheon (1988: 105) calls 'historiographic metafiction', or even a historical novel which casts doubt on the very production of historical knowledge. Historiographic metafiction "turn[s] to the intertexts of history as well as literature" (Hutcheon 1989: 15) to rewrite history in postmodern fiction. Thus, Rushdie's metafictional historiography is distinctive in its vision of not only the writing of history as a starting point but also the scripts of literature, religion, myth and fairy tale, posed as doubles of or alternatives to history (Mukherjee 2023). A confrontation of those scripts creates a unique space in the novel to be modelled by the author's deliberate manipulation of the represented narratives. The article discusses the ways Rushdie in *Victory City* confronts the real world through transcendent imagination to appeal to harmonious ideals and reconcile them with imperfect humanity.

Victory City celebrates Rushdie's triumphant 'return' to India as he grew up in Mumbai, a geographical and cultural gateway between the north and south of the country. The diversity of cultural codes affected his work based on "the celebration of crossings, hybridity, mixings, decompartmentalization, impurity, [and] grafting"

(Guignery 2009: 311), especially traced in *Victory City* as a kind of ‘cross-pollination’ (Rushdie 1991: 20). Rushdie allegorically explains that the formation of a new global, cosmopolitan identity is impossible without respect for one’s historical past, although “a rigid determinism between class position, cosmopolitan identity, and politics very much describes the ways in which postmodernism’s euphoric embrace of contemporary postcolonial writing has been critiqued” (Jani 2010: 27). It is significant that the writer labels the Indian part of the novel’s literary reality as rational, empirical and logically organised whilst rethinking it in the context of the connections and disruptions between Eastern and Western civilisations. In Rushdie’s postsecular imagination, the secular comes to be ‘internationalised’, “a concept and a politics that is doubly informed by its inflections in South Asia (religion’s importance and massive reach in India) and the west (religion as part of the private sphere)” (Ratti 2013: 25), since, as Rushdie (2005) states in his article “In Bad Faith”, “I never thought of myself as a writer about religion until a religion came after me.” This vision has shaped Rushdie as a fierce critic of religion across the spectrum, including the scourges of religious orthodoxy and sanctimony in *Victory City*, presented as a fictional translation of a Sanskrit epic that tells the aftermath of a battle between two kingdoms in southern India.

2. Through magic realism: on the edge of fact and fiction

Rushdie’s novel is a quintessence of the author’s struggle against sectarian hatred and ignorance within magic realism, where magical elements and the realistic view of the world are woven into the storyline mixed with historical facts. As Ajeesh (2023) asserts, Rushdie in *Victory City* employs magic realism “to explore the nature of truth and the ways in which it can be manipulated and distorted. The novel’s convoluted histories and fantastical elements serve to highlight the subjective nature of truth and the power dynamics at play in society” (4). This idea is both clear and confusing: “[...] the laws of life that govern physics and feeling, thought and thrust, are other-worldly. That to belong to this world does not require you to belong to its shackled, rote-learned, non-negotiable laws – gravity, time, constitution, both of the body and the land” (Parasuraman 2023).

The story of *Victory City* takes place in the vast Vijayanagara Empire, known as Bisnaga that “began in the fourteenth century of the Common Era, in the south of what we now call India, Bharat, Hindustan” (Rushdie 2023: 4). That city was destroyed after the battle of Talikota in 1565. The story of the birth, glory and fall of the fictional empire is narrated by an unnamed translator who raises the curtain on the legendary kingdom, retelling the found manuscripts left by the prophetess Pampa Kampana – the character thanks to whom Rushdie’s readers learn about the depicted events; researchers have labelled the novel “a feminist historical magical realism narrative” (Amirthavarshini and Bhuvanewari 2023: 1). The author outlines his main idea and it is perceived as a signpost to guide the readers from the beginning to the end of the story: “Four and a half centuries later we found that pot and read for the first time the immortal masterpiece named the *Jayaparajaya*, [...] and we learned the secrets of the empire she had concealed from history for more than one hundred and sixty thousand days” (Rushdie 2023: 3).

Rushdie’s writing is driven by philosophical aspirations, an aesthetic concept of life and a desire to create a society that lives according to the laws of justice, as opposed to that where one must “[e]at or be eaten” (125). The writer does not shy away from the hot topics: the creation of myths, the power of language, faith that

undermines freedom, gender equality, the role of women in a patriarchal society, the race for power, the transformation of a secular state into a religious one, the change of society from humanist to puritanical. Rushdie uses a magical narrative as backdrop against which real events and stories stand out: “Fictions could be as powerful as histories, revealing the new people to themselves, allowing them to understand their own natures and the natures of those around them, and making them real” (47).

The narrator directs the readers to understand the events that took place so long ago that in some places even reality is perceived as a phantasmagoria. Bisnaga becomes the central topos, the mythologeme of sacred space, which contributes to perceiving life through the prism of whispering. Pampa Kampana’s life is interwoven with Bisnaga, from its foundation to the tragic destruction of the city by the folly of its rulers. By creating the city from seeds and whispering memories to its inhabitants, Pampa Kampana ‘writes’ the history of the empire. Behind the magic background, Rushdie seems to imply that real history can be created, invented and rewritten if it suits the rulers and is accepted by the inhabitants: “They [people] just needed someone to whisper their dreams into their ears” (25).

The study of the novel suggests that it is based on the edge of fact and fiction since Rushdie “creates a surreal and dreamlike setting that is both alluring and terrifying, capturing the essence of the miraculous and the everyday as two halves of the same whole” (Ajeesh 2023: 1). *Victory City* contains a significant number of similarities to the ancient Hindu epic, Roman mythology, Greek epic writing and the elements of a Latin narrative poem, exemplified below.

The author points out the similarity of the found manuscript to the ancient Hindu epic, whose legends, myths, and stories are devoted to the life of one of the great Hindu deities Rama, his brother Lakshman and his wife Sita: “Lord Ram and his brother Lakshman joined forces with the mighty Lord Hanuman of Kishkindha and went forth to battle many-headed Ravana of Lanka, who had abducted the lady Sita” (12). When Pampa Kampana flees the city after the death of her second husband, she and her daughters hide in the forest, just like the characters in the epic:

In Valmiki’s Ramayana, the lady Sita and the brothers Ram and Lakshman are exiled, mostly in forests, for fourteen years. In Pampa Kampana’s Jayaparajaya, [...] her time in exile, [...] added up to a total of one hundred and thirty-two years. (119)

Both stories reflect the customs and views of Ancient India, both are religious, political and social. Their titles contain an interpretation of the main events: the *Ramayana* means “the journey of Lord Ram”, and the *Jayaparajaya* – “Victory and Defeat”. Similarities can also be identified in the images of the main characters – Pampa Kampana and Rama. They combine realistic features with those of demigods.

Pampa Kampana creates humans by magic which contradicts the religious belief that people are descended from Adam and Eve, as “magic is superior to faith” (Ajeesh 2023: 3): “Then life began, and hundreds – no, thousands – of men and women were born full-grown from the brown earth, shaking the dirt off their garments, and thronging the streets in the evening breeze” (Rushdie 2023: 16). These people are devoid of memories, feelings and emotions resembling zombies who “have no souls, they don’t know who they are, because the truth is they are nothing” (31). Despite a magical context, Rushdie makes it clear that the maturation of society depends on the will of people to develop and develop an

awareness of responsibility to the past, present and future: “After that initial period the time comes when they must learn to stand on their own feet, achieve their own achievements, and win their own battles” (59).

Hindu mythology, which refers to deities and magic events, permeates everyday life, which is set against the backdrop of the history of medieval southern India. The important moment in the actualisation of the transition to the transreal is the initiation of light scattering. We see a kind of apotheosis of light:

[...] when the miraculous crosses the frontier from the world of gods and enters the everyday, revealing to women and men that that frontier is not impenetrable, that the miraculous and the everyday are two halves of a single whole, and that we ourselves are the gods we seek to worship, and capable of mighty deeds. (Rushdie 2023: 238)

The glare of the sun and moon is dominated by their mythological interpretation, which correlates with the concept of the beginning and end of the life cycle. In this aspect, transcendence is correlated with the dynamics of life, which the author creates through the semantic content of the text with the description of the light of the celestial bodies: “The full moon burst out of the sky like a descending angel and bathed the new world in milky light” (23); “A small high window allowed a single ray of sunlight to descend at a steep angle toward the young woman below, like a shaft of angelic grace” (29). One of the significant results of the individual’s desire for transcendence is the focus on sacred time and space: “But she had no sense of the moon as a place. To her it was just a shining god in the sky” (8).

In addition to the Hindu epic, there are references to Roman mythology, namely the brothers Romulus and Remus, the founders of the Roman Kingdom. In *Victory City*, Kampana chooses two shepherd brothers for the same mission: “Their names, they said, were Hukka and Bukka Sangama” (11). It is noteworthy that the pairs of names of the founding brothers were created using phonetic stylistic devices: Romulus and Remus, Hukka and Bukka – a combination of alliteration and epiphora. The depictions of wars, the almost idyllic lives of the heroes in peacetime, the actions of monarchs and conspiracies of assassins, colonial conquests and failed coup d’états are in a style reminiscent of the traditions of Greek epic writing.

The references to Ovid’s *The Metamorphoses* are also evident in the novel. Both works deal with the creation of the world, eternal changes and magic transformations that occur in the surrounding nature, especially in the episodes that depict the reincarnation of humans into representatives of the animal world. In *Victory City*, characters are magically transformed into birds: “It’s sensible for you two to be commonplace birds that nobody will look at twice [...]” (142). Rushdie mentions the title of Ovid’s poem in his novel: “It only succeeds if it’s not whimsical or frivolous, but arises out of your deepest need” (142). Similarities can also be found even in small details – Ovid calls for not eating the flesh of living creatures, and Rushdie depicts the founder of the city refusing to eat meat: “Pampa Kampana never ate meat again [...]. All such dishes exuded the memory of her mother and when other people ate dead animals Pampa Kampana had to avert her gaze” (6). It is the highest level of transcendence that is the perceptual comprehension of the sacredness of all life. Rushdie’s realisation of the ritual of crossing the boundary between the here and the other world is expressed in the image-symbol of the pyre, which has the connotative semantics of the path to the

afterlife that an individual goes through before leaving this world and gaining initial freedom (initiation by death), preceded by falls and rises that symbolise life itself: “In death do triumph and failure humbly meet. We learn far less from victory than from defeat” (329). The glimmer of the funeral fire where her mother immolated herself corresponds to the ancient Hindu practice of suttee and appears to be a clairvoyance in *Faust*: “There was a fire blazing in her eyes, which would not be extinguished for more than two hundred years” (25).

Magic and reality are intricately intertwined in the novel as “the miraculous and the everyday are two halves of a single whole” (238). The image of Pampa Kampana vividly reflects the combination of the real and the magic. Having been given by the goddess an extremely long life, Pampa Kampana is deprived of the gift of true love: “It’s hard for me to love anyone with my whole heart, because I know that they are going to die” (65). Although emotions are associated with a wide range of physiological changes (Levenson 2003), the prophetess also changes her attitude towards loved ones. She sees changes in her lover’s appearance and, knowing about his imminent death, she does not want to stay with him at the last moment: “You will die the day after tomorrow, [...] I don’t want to watch the finale” (Rushdie 2003: 65). Due to her fears and childhood memories of her mother, “[m]otherhood never came easily to Pampa Kampana. [...] Whatever kind of mother she might be, she would still have to watch her children die” (95).

Rushdie’s Bisnaga seems to be a metaphor for many empires in human history: the formation and consolidation of an imperial centre, the conquest of internal territories and the beginning of active expansion, a period of prosperity followed by periods of destabilisation, competition with other empires and its collapse. The kingdom created by Pampa Kampana goes through all these stages, where parts of the empire can remain democratic even if the whole empire remains “undemocratic by definition” (Tilly 2018: 7).

In *Victory City*, a confrontation between fiction and fact is seen in the depiction of the Muslim sultanates: “To give the new sultanate the same name as the empire was a clear announcement of intent. The Ghost Sultan meant to erase Bisnaga and take its place” (101). Thus, the novel explores the complexities of identity, power, and the struggle between tradition and change (Ajeesh 2023: 1). Traditions can shape the creative orientation of an individual but they can also become a burden preventing adequate perception and making one dogmatic: “[...] just for the sake of tradition, of what is conventional, it might be advisable, from time to time, to cut off a few heads [...]. Hangings, tortures, beheadings, heads on sticks... people enjoy the spectacle of victory” (Rushdie 2023: 264). Traditions can be progressive or regressive and therefore have different meanings in social processes. It is clear to Rushdie that transmitting a cultural tradition is not in itself positive.

Being on the edge of fact and fiction, the author gradually outlines the topics that are crucial to him and to a modern human being who cannot remain indifferent to the way events unfold, and who tirelessly searches for answers to the questions that arise at every stage of their growth.

3. Everything and everywhere: the (dis)harmony and (im)perfection of the world

Rushdie’s work tends towards reflection and self-reflection. In the context of finding one’s self, the problem of inner and outer freedom, which is the most

important component of the transcendence of every personality, becomes paramount. It is through freedom that the writer's inner harmony is formed, which manifests itself in creating a perfect society with equal rights for all: "[...] the diversity of cultures, faiths, and races to be found in those streets, not only Hindu, Muslim, and Jain but also the Portuguese and Arab horse-traders, and Romans [...] and the Chinese were there too" (98). But desire is not enough, because it is a complex matter in which one thing involves another, and "each object in the world is not merely itself but involves every other object and in fact *is everything else*" (qtd. in Hanegraaff 1996: 140).

People think of their lives as a constant quest for self-improvement and reduce the main criteria for evaluating their lives to freedom and happiness. By creating an ideal kingdom, the author adds realistic features to the depicted world, where humanity wins and the ideal world undergoes a transformation: "[...] the world is a cynical and suspicious place and, being full of liars, thinks of everything as a lie" (Rushdie 2023: 9). Pampa has created a world where men and women have equal rights, where it is allowed to practise any religion, but this ideal is thwarted by radicalised inhabitants who do not share the same views on gender equality: "When I'm a man, must I stay home and cook? And wear women's clothes, and learn to sew, and have babies? It's...stupid" (96). The prophet's wish to control people's thoughts by whispering no longer works because, having given people complete freedom, she has lost the ability to influence them: "This was 'free will.' She could not change them if they did not want to be changed" (100). As a result of intrigues and a coup d'état in the kingdom, the ideal world collapses leading to the rule of radicals who deny any manifestation of freedom: "[...] Bisnaga will now be ruled by a religious fanatic, who will be advised by another extremist" (129).

The notion of the transcendent as a subject of religious cognition has a wide interpretive paradigm, up to and including a focus on the perceptual non-verbal comprehension of this phenomenon. Transcendent norms, namely the independent will, the immortal soul, and God, who can take on different forms depending on one's beliefs and convictions, dictate one's behaviour and perception of the world and oneself in it, where, according to Heidegger, "the God is not the Being, but the God is at home in the transcendence of Being" (qtd. in Babor 2008: 200). According to metaphysical existentialism, one of the manifestations of the transcendent is God, and thus, the divine becomes for the main character: "To her it [the moon] was just a shining god in the sky" (Rushdie 2023: 8). Rushdie creates an unreal reality in which all gods are acknowledged and religions exist alongside entertainment in a tolerant society: "Gods would be worshipped in the temples and there would be dancing in the streets" (37). However, there are those who believe they have the right to determine someone's religious and other preferences and to consider their thoughts, aspirations and beliefs the only correct ones. Such actions lead to a division in society. *Victory City* describes the activities of "an extremist underground sect known as the Remonstrance" (62), which stirs up people's minds by publishing Five Remonstrances denouncing the 'structural elements' of their religion. The leader of this sect accused the structural elements of their religion of corruption and demanded reforms. He proposed that priests should not hold positions in the city's ruling body, true believers should refrain from all acts of war, and the focus of the people should be redirected from the arts, beauty in architecture, poetry, and music towards the worship of the gods. However, the people of Bisnaga appreciated beauty, and the Remonstrance failed to gain more

followers than a small cult, “initially quite radical and puritanical”, but which ended “by becoming the voice of secularism, liberty and free speech” (Chaudhuri 2023: 9).

Individual freedom is realised in *Victory City* through the concept of universal freedom. Transcendence in the structure of the female characters’ subjectivities is explicated in the process of realising the creative essence of an individual – women have the right to do what they like, which is seen as a means of self-disclosure, reception and emotional comprehension of the fullness of being: “All over the city women were doing what, elsewhere in the country, was thought of as work unsuitable for them” (Rushdie 2023: 37). Creative freedom is not a mirage since women can fulfil themselves: “Many of our ladies are persons of high education and culture. [...] Also, women take part in every action of the state” (94). The writer’s position can rightly be defined as freedom in the context of transcendental discourse aimed at liberation from prejudices, cultural myths and everything that conceptualises the alienation of the individual from themselves.

The energy of creating a possible world in *Victory City* is explicated through certain elements. One of them is language. Rushdie “has built a city of words” (Chaudhuri 2023: 9) in which language determines the caste of the characters: “Some of the words were the everyday words the Sangama brothers could understand, like *food* and *sword* and *river* and *kill*. But there were many other words that were a complete mystery” (Rushdie 2023: 50). The word has its incredible power as Pampa Kampana’s direct speech shows: “Every time you used one of those unkind words, another one burst out of your skin” (55). Although the true value of words cannot be measured, they live on for centuries: “*Words are the only victors*” (331). The belief in the transcendence of the word pervades *Victory City* and is akin to the notion of sacred text.

Rushdie’s concept of freedom is based on the idea that the creative act is sacred. Creativity is seen as a breakthrough into the unconscious, providing access to the plane of transcendental insight. The limited understanding of beauty necessitates the prohibition of art which is justified by the lack of religiosity among the inhabitants of the empire: “[T]hey denounced the arts, stating that too much attention was being paid to beauty in architecture, poetry, and music, and that such attention should immediately and forever be diverted from frivolities toward the worship of the gods” (62). The pursuit of harmony guides people in their material and spiritual activities. This need for self-determination is sharpened by the separation of an individual from a natural connection with the world and the uncertainty of their meaning and value. This need can be satisfied by creating one’s spiritual world, a world of one’s values and significance: “A mighty empire such as ours [...] is precisely the entity that should set out to lead the people toward the future. Let it be the fourteenth century everywhere else. It’s going to be the fifteenth century here” (91). People create a culture of their own – a field of self-disclosure and self-generation – where they can find their place and derive meaning from their presence in the world.

4. Conclusion

Transcending, as an ontological and epistemological dimension of transcendence, is the ultimate human aspiration to the fullness of being. As a ‘project’ of themselves, individuals exist to the extent that they realise and manifest their essence. The transcendent can be seen as the ‘horizon’, the limit and the result

of one's being and cognition. The transcendent is a noumenon, a metaphysical 'demarcating' category with which, in *Victory City*, Rushdie attempts to grasp the ultimate grounds of being and knowing, as well as a special transcendent world that exists simultaneously outside and alongside the immanent world. In a sense, the transcendent can be defined as a sphere of absolute potentiality that is not actualised in human activity and is ineffable in human experience due to the fundamental inadequacy of this sphere to the available means of mastering the world.

Victory City is a kind of epic chronicle of a fictional empire that arose around a single city. In his novel, Rushdie remains true to his style of magic realism, humour and frankness. His narrative, inspired by the great epics, is full of eroticism, power struggles and conspiracies. *Victory City* is a modern epic that tackles some of the great questions of humanity: Who are we? Do we have free will? Why do we have to die? The novel does not provide definite answers to those questions but it does draw the non-evident conclusion that human intelligence and stupidity, the best and the worst of human nature, are constants in a rapidly changing world.

Rushdie confronts the real world through transcendent imagination to appeal to justice, respect and equality. The book represents not only a testament to Rushdie's resilience in the face of life-threatening criticism but also a masterfully plotted epic of historical fiction and magic realism. In his novel, framed as a fictional translation of a Sanskrit epic, the writer proposes a new mythology to explore the epistemological problems of religious tradition and to harmonise human ideals attempting to reconcile them with imperfect humanity. Transcendent reality is experienced and conceived in human life in order to move us into imagining new ways of being.

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WRESTLING WITH THE PRESENT

**DOUGLAS LIVINGSTONE, POET OF A PLANETARY AGE
DECENTRING OURSELVES TO RE-CENTRE OURSELVES**

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***Abstract:** Douglas Livingstone – poet and marine bacteriologist – remarked that he was into the “pollution game before it became fashionable”. Having decentred ourselves in our abuse of the Earth, how do we recentre ourselves? Or, as his poetry pursues the question, how in the era of the Anthropocene do we retain symbiosis between our biological and our cultural selves? With comparative reference to Chakrabarty, Ghosh and Pope Francis, the article considers Livingstone’s collection *A Littoral Zone as poetry of a planetary age*.*

***Keywords:** Livingstone, poet, bacteriologist, planetary age*

1. Introduction

Douglas Livingstone remarked, back in 1986, that he was “into the pollution game before it became fashionable” (qtd. in Chapman 2016: 116). I wish to return to Livingstone’s collection of poetry, *A Littoral Zone* (1991), in the context of more recent manifestations of “green” concerns, as captured in Dipesh Chakrabarty’s article of 2009 and expanded in his book, *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age* (2021). Chakrabarty enters the domain of the earth scientists, a domain perhaps less than familiar to many of us, in literary studies. Before turning to Livingstone, therefore, let me remain briefly with Chakrabarty.

If, as scientific consensus has it, global warming is a real, primarily human-induced condition, then what might this mean for our future? Whereas the COP (climate change) conference struggles to square technocratic and ideological parameters, earth science, as Chakrabarty (2009: 197-222) summarises, has “upscaled” its arguments from that of the “nation-state to a planetary dimension” (ibid.). While it has long been assumed that the physical environment did change, the change was assumed to be so slow as to be almost meaningless. Paul J. Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer (2000) suggest, however, that we recognise a “new geological era”: an era, coined the “Anthropocene” (Crutzen 2002: 23), in which human action has become the key determinant of life on earth. Instead of humans identified simply as biological agents, we humans began to assert a physical force upon the planet. On a scale hitherto technologically impossible, we cut down trees, caused the ice to melt, and the climate change. Our imposition on the natural world began to alter – continues to alter – the chemistry of the atmosphere.

At this point, Walter D. Mignolo’s (2011: 273) “decoloniality project” might interject: “we” is being used too loosely; the identifier “we” must be directed at colonial/capitalist Man, together with his profit-greedy, industrial pursuits.

However, Chakrabarty (2009), a historian, is not talking of which country, or which political system, is the chief polluter: there is no principled difference between the use of fossil fuels in a market economy and a state-centralised economy. Rather, he is invoking an evolutionary timespan. To illustrate, he cites the shift from hunter-gathering to agriculture. It was a shift made possible by a degree of planetary warming, partly the result of an orbital tilt in the relationship between Earth and Sun. The temperature of the planet stabilised within a zone that allowed grasses to grow, including barley and wheat. Such changes heralded not only an agricultural, but a cultural revolution as well. As Crutzen (2002: 23) phrases it, we “stumbled” into the era of the Anthropocene. Even as we became the dominant species on Earth, we set about disturbing the conditions necessary for our own survival.

Is this crackpot science? The human being reduced to a species! Yet, as earth scientists remind us, a species is not a stable entity but, according to Darwin (1860), a species adapts and evolves. As Chakrabarty (2009: 201) puts it, many earth scientists maintain that we must be prepared to distinguish between “recorded history” and “deep history”, the latter measured in the genetic and cultural changes that have led to the development of forms of life. Noting intellectual and imaginative categories that are often in conflict with each other – nature and nurture, say, or biology and culture – Chakrabarty distinguishes between the global (the human being, now) and the planetary (the human species, then and now).

Such conflicting categories of thought and imagination also inform Douglas Livingstone’s poetry. As a scientist, he registered both a heightened anthropocentric and a heightened anthropogenic awareness, the former regarding humankind as the most important element of existence, the latter pointing to pollution as originating chiefly in human activity. As a poet, he said – almost in contradistinction – “Poetry can’t save the planet. It can draw us back into reciprocity with the natural world [...]. Its range, resonance, and sinewy-ness of language can be a major civilising force” (Livingstone 1983: 11). Also, in an earlier comment: “I hope my animal poems are at the same time civilisation poems. But we poets, we have our own calling. We try to entertain” (Livingstone 1977: 21):

After the floods, debris heaped higher than two men.
On one high peak, (a pain for the SPCA
if ever there was one!) A roughed-up bantam stands.

...

This teapot, whose rage is written too large to be cooped
within one pygmy chanticleer, surveyed amazed
by gulls and gannets, trumpets his fractious challenge.
Tempting to dub the din thanksgiving; or more: life
triumphs even on no longer trusted planets.

(“Scourings at Station 19”, in Livingstone 1991: 47)

A bantam, a teapot, a pygmy chanticleer, thanksgiving, and a flood. The juxtaposed, heterogeneous images stamp poetry as a style even as the thought lingers in its implication: “life/triumphs even on no longer trusted planets” (ibid.) Of *A Littoral Zone*, in which “Scourings” appears, a critic asked how it is that a book, “sad about our condition in the world, nonetheless unflinchingly affirms life” (Sacks 1992: n.p.). I shall return to *A Littoral Zone* but, first, who was/is Douglas Livingstone?

2. A poet of planetary awareness?

Attached as a marine bacteriologist to a scientific research unit in Durban, South Africa, Douglas Livingstone (1932-1996) devoted over thirty years to clean water in both the arid hinterland of KwaZulu-Natal province –

... to sample herd-soiled, suck-
hooved, and human drinking water –
("August Zulu", in Livingstone 1978: 14)

and along the Indian Ocean coast. His doctoral thesis in biological sciences was published as *Microbial Studies of Seawater Quality off Durban* (1990), while his 6 collections of poetry attach his scientist's observations and curiosity to the 'art' of the word:

Bwana Coelacanth*, in royal blue,
still trundling about the Camores
in your casque, your jointed cranium.

...
What awes me – fish from long ago –
is not the muddying of your chaps
when waves clawed 200 metres up
or below today's makeshift shores,
nor your changeless chinless lineage,
but your fathers squirting on eggs
to sire everyone I know.

("An Address to a Patrician at Station 8", in Livingstone 1991: 24)

(**Coelacanth*, an ancient lobe-finned fish, long thought to be extinct until, in 1938, a specimen was found in a catch of local fishermen on the Indian Ocean coast of South Africa.)

As Livingstone put it to me over lunch, in the mid-1980s:

Like "August Zulu", my 'coelacanth' poem, at bottom, is a political poem. My kind of political poem. Local, African, yes! But a politics of the planet, on which all of us, whatever our lifeform, have no option but to serve out our time. This 'green' thing! Yes, we're poisoning the atmosphere. We'll see increases in extreme weather conditions, more allergens, decreases in food production, increases in food- and water-related diseases, decreases in coarse-grain crops. This is supra-politics, because all of this will lead to displaced populations, conflicts over scarce resources, and wide-spread social breakdown.

Yet I'm not apocalyptic. We'll still be using coal – at least, in the Third World – well into the 21st century. But we have opportunities for First World/ Third World co-operations. Advances in carbon capture and storage, in converting coal waste to high-value carbon products, are being explored, applied, even now. So, don't always listen to doomsayers. Whatever the role of the scientist, the role of the poet is to open the vistas of our imagination including any metaphysical impulses. Science and poetry, or is it poetry and science! (qtd. in Chapman 2016: 120-121)

The twin influences of science and poetry have encapsulated Livingstone's poetry from 1964, the date of his first significant collection, to *A Littoral Zone*, the last collection that he published before his death from cancer:

The first sputnik blipped above me
 where I worked 12 meters down
 at the jaws of dam construction
 in an outraged Zambezi;
 hearing the broadcast about it
 that evening, recalled a light
 cord tied at my back which strung
 the man groping in mud
 to sometime starmen, knotted
 under my ancient aqualung.
 (“Spinal Column” in Livingstone 1978: 37)

In a paper delivered to the scientific body, the Royal Society of South Africa, Livingstone (1986: 107) concluded his address with the following comment: “Einstein observed that the most beautiful emotion we can explore is mystical. The source of all true art and science”.

A poet of a planetary age?

3. *A Littoral Zone*

In his “Notes” to the collection, Livingstone (1991: 62) defines a littoral zone as “that mysterious border that shifts restlessly between the land and sea. It has, to me, always reflected that blurred and uneasy divide between humanity’s physical and psychic elements”. With an epigraph from Cervantes’s *Don Quixote* – “I have always heard, Sancho, that doing good to base fellows is like throwing water into the sea” (idem: 6) – we, the readers, accompany Livingstone in his quixotic quest for clean water. But if he is Quixote, he, like all of us, is also Sancho, a “clown of creation” (idem: 46). The opening poem, “A Darwinian Preface”, alerts us to the trope of the journey. It is a journey to each water-testing station, which seeks to fuse a language of poetry to a language of science. Or is it the obverse?

The crab, the clot, the muzzle or the knife:
 patiently, the nocturnal terrorisms
 stalk. Even the brave know hardly of rest,
 aware a body’s little but a glove
 stretched from metatarsals to neocortex
 on a stiffening frame...
 (idem: 7)

Like “A Darwinian Preface”, “An Evolutionary Nod to God, Station 4” plays skilfully on the sonnet form. The scientific/ratiocinated voice simultaneously compresses and releases our human capacity for emotional and intellectual contemplation:

Perhaps creationists are nearly right:
 an enigmatic principle formed cells
 - evolving scientific law by night -
 informed with more ahead than heavens or hells.
 Irradiating slime-flecks day by day,
 it watched (with love?) rash chromosomal loops
 unwind, reform, transform their DNA
 to struggle up from primed primeval soups.
 (idem: 18)

In the crisis years of apartheid, in the 1970s and 1980s, Livingstone, like J.M. Coetzee, faced accusations by critics of both liberal and Marxist persuasion that his central concern was not the then national issue of apartheid. The publication of *A Littoral Zone*, nonetheless, coincided with what in the 1990s was called the *greening* of the humanities (see Parini 1995). With the term “eco-criticism” traced to a coinage by William Rueckert (1978), eco-criticism provided fertile ground for a turn to a green Livingstone. The environment is not typified as a framing device or an objective correlative of the human mood, but as an integral presence in which human history is inextricably bound to natural history. As a subset, a key adjustment towards an environmental politics includes Terry Gifford’s (2002) reformulation of the nature/nurture dichotomy. Nature and culture interact upon each other, so that

natural images in poetry only work because nature *is* culture, and poetry, in particular, plays upon the instability and variability of our constructs. But the converse realisation that culture itself is natural provides a vital opportunity for the poetic imagination. (Gifford 2002: 60)

Despite such an imaginative reformulation of poetic possibility, greening in literary discussion led to an overlay of interpretative contestation ranging from the scientific to the aesthetic and including what has come to be dubbed ideology critique: that is, suspicious or diagnostic readings against the grain of authorial intent, whether in the “-isms” of postcolonialism, feminism, or indeed environmentalism itself. Ian Glenn and Ed Rybicki (2006) applied a “scientific” reading to Livingstone’s “Cells at Station 11”:

Past the backline, a blackened corpse
tumbles slowly...
...
My microscope awaits elsewhere.
Will this bottle include a cell
from that out there? Miraculous
cheek at prying probe, like some damned
god’s voyeuristic telescope:
cilia spun from spirochaetes,
chloroplasts from bacteria.

But he and year-old invaders
– the silent mitochondria –
propel our mobile towers, shared cells
sparking, colonised by vandals:
a fifth column of DNA
in interstellar sequences,
bland in their promiscuity.
(Livingstone 1991: 35)

With the help of Rybicki’s disciplinary training in the sciences, we follow the authors’ elaboration:

The microscope reveals almost too much of evolution and sexuality, it seems. The cilia are little hair-like protrusions that can beat along like oars and are derived from spirochaetes, which are also bacteria. The mitochondria are the powerhouses of cells

and the result of an ancient intercellular parasitism that became symbiosis and originated eukaryotic organisms, those which contain their DNA in a chromosome in a nucleus, and thus most 'higher' forms of life. They propel our 'mobile towers' – a repeated Livingstone metaphor for human life. (Glenn, Rybicki 2006: 86)

To summarise Glenn and Rybicki, we are “bound together promiscuously beyond our ego in complex cellular structures” (idem: 85): “We think we choose, but are most true/to interned energies” (Livingstone 1991: 35). Such energies embody the live planet Gaia, the endlessly adaptable organism of James Lovelock’s (1991; 2000) hypothesis, which in our ignorance we are bent on destroying. Our responsibility should be to our kinship with all of creation as we struggle to tilt the windmills of our idealism against our own selfish gene: the drive, interned in our DNA; interned in the deep constants of our cellular being. The paradox, however, is that having evolved the capacity for an ethical nature, having invested value in our “*uncommon humanity*” (Livingstone 1976: 144), we remain tied to our baser instincts. Ours is a stor’ of division, whether in intimate relationships, politics, science, or art.

While Glenn and Rybicki seek to clarify Livingstone’s specialist terminology, a disciplinary-rigorous science reading might be tempered by Livingstone’s (2006: 115) remark – he was referring to T. S. Eliot’s “The Waste Land” – that “great poetry can be appreciated before it is fully understood”. In “Cells at Station 11”, the biological terms, whatever their precise meaning, emphasise in contrast a poetic drive: imaginative truth vies with foundational truth; individual autonomy struggles against determining account, as in the poem itself, where the laws of metrical structure (the 8-syllable line count) cannot always check the burst of expression across the run-on lines (“Miraculous/cheek at prying probe, like some damned/god’s voyeuristic telescope”, idem: 35).

Rather than a “science” reading, Wendy Woodward (2003) applied the by now well-worn postcolonial vocabulary of the Self and the Other. This is distinct, according to Woodward, from a more eco-feminist “we” and “another”: “those beings who are neither Self nor Other in any absolute dichotomy, but are familiar, related, and connected to us” (idem: 50). Woodward’s argument was that Livingstone – a male scientist-poet – invariably invoked a male gaze in his depiction of both human animals and non-human animals. The result was an ongoing tyranny of dualism in which the “you” or the “that” (the human woman or the non-human creature) occupied a secondary, at times a supine, position in relation to the dominance of the male poet-speaker.

Mariss Everitt (2005), for her part, saw in such an approach the imposition of an abstract idea onto the texture of the poems, in which precariousness is embodied as a non-dualistic attitude to both Self and Other. It is a “clown of creation” (Livingstone 1991: 46) – not a domineering male gaze – that “enacts in [the water-sampler’s] own body the whole evolutionary history [even as] his own split personality precludes him from knowing this” (Everitt 2005: 65). In short, we humans, whether men or women (or, to adopt planetary terminology, we human species, whether male or female), struggle to synthesise our reason and emotion; we struggle to attain a non-dualistic and, therefore, an ecologically holistic vision of the world. Even so, our cellular biology compels us to continue to strive towards symbiosis a little above our “ditherings”, our “slime”, our “ebbs and flows” (Livingstone 1991: 46).

This paradox is explored quite profoundly in two papers, one by the South African critic, Tony Morphet (1997), the other by the US-based critic Peter Sacks (1992). To return to an earlier point, both ask in different ways how it is that, while *A Littoral Zone* is much concerned with death, we are invigorated by its capacity to push us up against the tides of life. Morphet grants Livingstone his endnote comment to the collection: “Ideally, the sequence could suggest one long poem, the record of a day-long mythical sampling run” (Livingstone 1991: 62). What language, Morphet (1997: n.p.) asks, might encompass such a single poem that “pushes and pulls within an imagined totality of biology and culture”? If an imagined totality, then not in any easy conception of a unified sensibility. The cultural lattice stretches from the “essence of a parenthesised beauty” (in “Coronach at Cave Rock”) to the “loosely controlled gothic artifice” of “Descent from the Tower”.

A lament for the German composer Anton von Webern, “Coronach” (Livingstone 1991: 29-30), implicitly links the 12-tone score of Von Webern’s compositions to Livingstone’s 12-syllable line, the suggestion being that “culture properly tempered through the practices of art”, to quote Morphet (1997: n.p.), “achieves transcendence”. In Von Webern, silence is sought beyond the very *raison d’être* of music: beyond sound. In Livingstone, meaning unfolds beyond the grammar of language, in the essence of our being:

For me, my bagatelle enfolded essence:
variation and space counterpoint and silence
never developing beauty parenthesised.
(Livingstone 1991: 29-30)

The almost impossible quest for “essence” in “Coronach”, however, is balanced against the world of “Descent”, an adult fable in which we encounter the paraphernalia of lake, island, tower, and magic stone as the props to a sparring match of naked man (the hapless poet) and his Muse goddess (the tigress, tempting him):

Waiting for a traffic break;
through the rear screen of the car ahead,
a toy tiger nods.
From the mangroves on the left
glides a man, a tigress from the right.
The lake glints beyond:
this turquoise mirage sustains
a Gothic tower built on an island
centred in its midst.
The man is naked, erect;
the tigress, on all fours lifts her head,
approaches slowly.
(Livingstone 1991: 50)

A “male” perspective, no doubt! But ideology critique rarely acknowledges the shaping power of convention in poetry. Morphet’s point (1997) is that, in its artifice, in its cultivated hyperbole, “Descent” simultaneously conjoins and separates the ‘animal’ and the ‘spiritual’ in our human nature. The bravura of the presentation seems to contradict both Von Webern’s silence and Livingstone’s own

symbolic response to Von Webern. Yet, if the juxtaposition of “Coronach” and “Descent from the Tower” opens a space for an evaluation of culture, such a space is incomplete without the addition of the biological trace which has its own furrows: the one runs through the biology of evolution; the other through the biology of consciousness. Juxtaposed within the one long poem of *A Littoral Zone*, “Coronach” and “Descent” build a language of biology and culture that seeks to re-unify a dissociated sensibility: a sensibility that T. S. Eliot (1962 [1921]) identified in John Donne’s 17th-century ‘Metaphysical’ imagination. It is an imagination which, in Donne, first experienced the intrusion of science into a classical-romantic matrix of culture.

To return to “A Darwinian Preface” (Livingstone 1991), we may note that this sonnet illustrates the author’s language of re-unification within dissociation. The octet apprehends death, the night fears, the almost instinctive biological reaction: “a body’s little but a glove... on a stiffening frame” (idem: 7). Yet even as death is grasped in the stark naming words of the octet (“The crab, the clot, the muzzle or the knife”), reflection is embodied in the sestet where Livingstone speaks to himself as another being, a being in culture whose armoured defence yields to openness and vulnerability in the tender, conciliatory images of the sestet:

Yet your heart wins armour from confronting life,
yet stays unlatched, anticipating love.
Each dawn claims thanks and welcome, and gets blessed.
Perhaps the sea indeed did suckle you
through all its prisms, its diurnal range.
There is no help for it! Best buckle to.
(1991: 7)

If biology presents a threat to culture, then, at the same time and almost paradoxically, biology can grant culture a concomitant intensity.

Sacks (1992) also finds a purpose of vision in the force and counterforce of biology and culture between the heart’s armour and its openness to love. Like Morphet, he ties form to meaning lest we forget that Livingstone is inseparably scientist and poet. At the level of form alone, the poems of *A Littoral Zone* include sonnets, ballads, syllabic stanzas, free verse, and an array of stanzas from tercets and quatrains to 18-liners. The biologist gathers samples from as many diverse waters of the sea, of the self, and of poetry. The result, Sacks observes, is a full report of a “zone” rather than a fixed point. But then, “how do we confront the apparent opposition of freedom and constraint, whether in poetic forms or forms of life?” (Sacks 1992: n.p.).

Here I return to “Cells at Station 11”. The poem confirms Livingstone’s range and flexibility of literary register from the opening stanzas of almost clotted scientific terminology (“cilia spun from spirochaetes, / chloroplasts from bacteria”) to the rhetorical swell of the closing lines, in which two almost opposing states of mind – thought and emotion – are focused with imaginative force through lines of syntactical enjambement:

Sometimes we claim autonomy,
yet a ruthless fidelity
– to what self? – lies coiled at the heart
of our needy faithlessnesses.
The betrayals affirm our lives

in death: a death unfazed by faith,
life pumping through us anyhow?

We think we choose, but are most true
to interned energies. The rest
is scripture, decreed histories.
Woe will betide, betimes, the man
who kills his brother: burns shared cells
– those bound lovers under the sun –
lolling there in an unchecked sea.
(Livingstone 1991: 35)

Having spotted a “blackened corpse”, washed around by the tide, the water-sampler must undertake his scientific responsibility of collecting and analysing a sample of the water: a sample which, in his petri dish and given our common though complex cellular structures, might contain the traces of the body in the sea. It is an action, however, which the poet, if not the scientist, experiences as a violation of the essence of our shared human substance. It is a reminder, nonetheless, that even as we claim “autonomy”, we are bound – in our culture – to our biological being: “We think we choose, but are most true/ to interned energies” (ibid.). The dilemma is unresolvable.

Yet, as Sacks affirms, “no moral high ground here”,

only a dark admission and warning. Fidelity, yes, but to what self? To the cultural self that remains tied to its biological trace? [...]. Deeper and more multiplex than political orthodoxies allow, more honest than ideologies can employ, Livingstone’s perspectives are both radical and conservative in ways that go beyond the conventional usage of such terms. (Sacks 1992: n.p.)

4. Conclusion

So, can the literary sensibility – a sensibility in which the human being features as an individual consciousness – decentre itself to re-centre itself in a planetary dimension? What might constitute such a manoeuvre? Chakrabarty does not pursue literature, but, as I noted at the outset, he raises the earth scientist’s dilemma. Given the commitment of modernity to technological progress, how to develop and implement a world-wide, acceptable strategy for the sustainability of the eco-system?

In Chakrabarty (2021), such a question remains hypothetical; Amitav Ghosh, in contrast, seeks to attach what he calls “derangement” to the subjective, experiential, indeed the spiritual, world of people. His book *The Great Derangement* (2017), nonetheless, ends in despair: that climate change, refracted through the 2015 Paris Agreement (COP), locates the human being as a mere cipher in the business of nation-states; that the structure of power in our time was captured in a photograph of world leaders and corporate tycoons embracing each other in an almost grotesque show of technocratic utopianism and virtue-signalling. Ghosh slates the Paris Agreement in comparison with Pope Francis’s *Laudato si’* (2015), his encyclical letter that calls for an integral ecology in which the holistic human being is placed at the centre of concern.

In *The Nutmeg’s Curse* (2021), Ghosh revisits the story of colonialism: the subjugation of indigeneity and the unleashing of modernity. A commodity of 17th-

century Dutch, Portuguese, and Spanish trade, the nutmeg travels the world as the vitalism and animism of its original home are changed by the invading Western-colonial power. As Shaan Kashyap (2002) observes, *The Nutmeg's Curse* despite its subtitle – “Parables for a Planet in Crisis” – “embodies its planetary parables within human parables”. It is an observation that invokes the crux of *A Littoral Zone*. To reiterate, Livingstone hoped that his animal poems were at the same time civilisation poems. Accordingly, his bantam trumpets its “fractious challenge” of life “even on no longer trusted planets” (Livingstone 1991: 47). If this is the poet’s affirmation, however, it is an affirmation necessarily qualified by the biologist:

We must show compassion for the fauna and flora. But what of ourselves? Can our awareness or consciousness draw us back into reciprocity with nature? If not, we [“clowns of creation”] deserve to go, allowing the planet to recover from our hubris, and gather its resources to prepare for a more symbiotic and less quarrelsome species. (qtd. in Chapman 2016: 116)

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THE FEARSCAPE OF BELFAST IN ANNA BURNS' *MILKMAN*

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Abstract: *The paper analyses Anna Burns' 2018 novel Milkman from the standpoint of gender and literary spatial theories. It explores the urban spatial constraints of presumed Belfast during "the Troubles", marked by sectarian violence and fear. The focus of the discussion is on the sense of topophilia and gendered spatiality, with particular concern for the narrator-cum-protagonist of the novel, who experiences the "male gaze," liminality, and fractured subjectivity.*

Keywords: *gender, literary spatial theories, Northern Ireland, trauma, violence*

1. Introduction

The charged cityscape of Belfast holds a prominent place in the aesthetics of terror, due to the legacy of violence, fear and trauma associated with the Northern Irish ethnic and national conflicts, especially in the last third of the twentieth century. Despite attempts to change this popular image in public discourse after the Good Friday Agreement, through the project of "rebranding" the city as a place of love and reconciliation rather than antagonism and violence (Heidemann 2016: 1-2), fiction writers remain critically focused on the recent past. In post-Agreement fiction, unlike in post-Agreement public discourse, critics such as Neal Alexander (2009: 281) identify a "retrospective tendency" and "an explicit or implicit preoccupation with the ways in which the unresolved events of the past threaten to disrupt or jeopardise those of the present". In his article "Remembering to Forget", Alexander discusses the post-Agreement novelistic practice of "re-membering – putting together the pieces of a fractured psychological or historical puzzle," which clashes with the dominant political practice of "erasure from memory" (ibid.). In a similar vein, critics such as Caroline Magennis point to certain common preoccupations in the post-Agreement texts which explore intersectionality between political and gender-based violence. While in her works *Northern Irish Writing After the Troubles: Intimacies, Affects, Pleasures* (2021) and "Sex and Violence in Northern Irish Women's Fiction" (2020) Magennis remains mindful of a number of differences in themes and other literary features of these writers, she underlines their increased interest in "the effects of violence on Northern Irish women's psychic, emotional, and sexual lives" (Magennis 2020: 336).

Anna Burns's novel *Milkman*, published to great acclaim in 2018, is a case in point, even though the city of Belfast and Northern Irish conflicts are never specifically mentioned in the text. The author's systematic erasure of both character names and toponyms possibly mirrors the post-Agreement state politics of "remembering to forget," and results in a "palpable sense of heaviness within her work" (Magennis 2021: 136). In another paper, we have discussed this narrative technique as parallel to the gendered strategies of evasiveness, silence and amnesia

as coping mechanisms in the context of an oppressive culture in the seventies Northern Ireland, which is metaphorically represented through the protagonist's memory lapses and *jamais-vu* (Kondali and Vukotić 2022). But Belfast's particular "topography of terror" (Heidemann 2016: 2) is clearly evoked in the distinctive geographical and socio-political setting described by the eighteen-year-old protagonist and narrator who is referred to as "middle sister" and "middle daughter." When she finds herself trapped in a vicious web of sexual harassment by an older, prominent paramilitary stalker, known as "milkman", along with his disturbing and unsolicited attention, gossip, social surveillance, shaming and threats with violence, the middle-sister's experience of the already terrifying urban environment becomes agonizing. As Burns herself explains in her interview with Sheila McWade (2020), "Although the place where Milkman is set is never identified, it is a distorted version of Belfast in the late 1970s." Indeed, Belfast is evoked in the countless references to the profoundly militarized and ethnically divided city zones, as well as in the expressions denoting geographical, residential and social segregation, such as "our community" and "their community", "over the road", "over the water" and "over the border", and in the general atmosphere of scrutiny and control resulting in further tribal divisions between "renouncers-of-the-state" and "defenders-of-the-state". A sense of place is also established through what Sheila McWade and Catherine Toal, among others, identify as the particular "Belfast rhythms and vernacular" and "Burns's mixing of familiar Belfast phraseology ('away you on') in characters' discourse (McWade 2020; Toal 2018).

This paper acknowledges and builds on the importance of the interrelation between space and gender pioneered by feminist geographers such as Gillian Rose (1996: 62), who claims that space is "a fantasy of something all enveloping, something everywhere, unavoidable, unfailingly supportive". Recognizing space as a projection of our longing for an imagined reality that supports our vision of real life, Rose asserts that the enabling and surrounding mode of our understanding this reality is space: "the medium through which the imaginary relation between self and the Other is performed" (idem: 63). The interdependence of space and social relations, and hence also gender roles, is also evinced in Doreen Massey's (2005: 9) definition of space as "the product of interrelations; as constituted through interactions, from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny". Sociocultural structures affect human perceptions and experiences of space, and while to some degree space is "always under construction" (ibid.), the gendered nature of space is established as crucial in the male-female dichotomy of the sociocultural system. The gendered spatiality of the domains of public and private is made evident in respective norms and practices since, according to Massey, the "spatial is political" (ibid.). The patterns of entitled male domination intersect with the complex and violent context of Northern Ireland, raising questions about the body, female subjectivity, and agency.

2. Navigating the city with spatial anxiety

While in an earlier interview Anna Burns explains that "this skewed form of Belfast" transcends the specific temporal and spatial context, so that it can be perceived as "any sort of totalitarian, closed society existing in similarly oppressive conditions", or "an entire society living under extreme pressure, with long term violence seen as the norm" (Allardice 2018), and a number of critics have interpreted Burns' systematic erasure of names primarily as a strategy of

universalisation, Burns maintains that the depicted fictional world “feels like Belfast” even if the descriptions do not closely mirror the real place (McWade 2020). Indeed, in this sense we tend to agree with Catherine Toal (2018), who insists that “*Milkman* needs to be recognized as a book that sounds the soul of the people and the place it portrays”, and that readers should remain keenly attuned to “a reality that is encapsulated by the absurdist-generic names rather than transcended by them”.

The “reality” in *Milkman* which Toal refers to *feels* oppressive and dangerous, as experienced by an extremely sensitive and hypervigilant narrator-protagonist, a young woman who devises a set of strategies for her navigation of what we could safely interpret as a “geography of fear”, to borrow the term from Fran Tonkiss’ (2005) spatial theory. Evidently, middle sister and a number of other characters perceive Belfast city streets and zones as threatening due to a number of intersecting factors, manifested in different forms and varying degrees of sectarian and gender violence. Additionally, the spatialised anxiety has been internalised, just as “milkman’s coercion, like the many rules and restrictions internalised by the community, is assumed rather than defined” (Ni Éigeartaigh 2020: 49). The protagonist is subjected to both political and sexual harassment throughout the novel, by the community and by a paramilitary officer of high rank called Milkman, who stalks and preys upon her so that she remains always “straight on the alert” (Burns 2018: 8). As we have argued elsewhere, her extreme alertness (hypervigilance) can be interpreted as a post-traumatic symptom and a coping strategy used by women who may never have been raped, but still perceive certain places and situations fraught with danger and risk (Kondali and Vukotić 2022: 288; Brown 1995: 107-108).

The threats of Belfast city streets in *Milkman* are both perceived and searingly real. Strangely enough, despite being heavily regulated through a series of most absurd “unspoken rules and regulations” which “everyone – *everyone* understood” (Burns 2018: 22), the streets of Belfast are the site of repeated acts of political and gender-based violence which have become the norm in the characters’ everyday life, from “bombs and guns and death and maiming” (idem: 21) to widely accepted sexual predations and encroachment:

At the time, age eighteen, having been brought up in a hair-trigger society where the ground rules were – if no physically violent touch was being laid upon you, and no outright verbal insults were being levelled at you, and no taunting looks in the vicinity either, then nothing was happening, so how could you be under attack from something that wasn’t there? At eighteen I had no proper understanding of the ways that constituted encroachment. I had a feeling for them, an intuition, a sense of repugnance for some situations and some people, but I did not know intuition and repugnance counted, did not know I had a right not to like, not to have to put up with, anybody and everybody coming near. (Burns 2018: 6)

The quotation illustrates the insidious assumptions signified in the palpable, physical and hence evident sexual aggression understood as a social norm and heavily worked by Milkman. As Natalie Wall (2023:77) points out: “By carefully walking the boundary between visible and invisible violence milkman can get away with casting all community suspicions onto middle sister”. The pattern of the collective vigilance generates a pervasive atmosphere of mistrust, indeed “a homogenizing climate of fear” (Magennis 2021: 147), that weighs heavily on the

protagonist's sense of the urban environment. The pressures of entrenched sectarianism and patriarchy, among others, are underscored by the socio-spatial organisation in the community that reduce Middle Sister to an existence of vulnerability and anxiety.

In Burns' at once poignant and humorous descriptions of the overall "psycho-political atmosphere" (Burns 2018: 24), the Belfast cityscape is in many ways presented as fearscape, and characters constantly display symptoms of *topophobia*, as "fear of the place" as understood by Dylan Trigg (2017). A number of disorders and in general post-traumatic symptoms such as panic attacks, hypervigilance, avoidance, etc. are evident in the characters' language, the phrases they unofficially use to refer to certain landmarks perceived dangerous, and in their uncommon behaviour related to these places. Therefore, it has been argued that the narrative is infused with a heightened sense of the environment and how the characters engage it: "The novel presents an acute awareness of feelings and a sensitivity towards change in individual and collective moods. Women, in particular, seem acutely aware of the landscape of feeling" (Magennis 2021: 140).

Among other things, the protagonist has the habit of reading while walking, which she uses both as a dissociation technique and a conscious strategy for a somewhat safer navigation of the charged city zones. Her attempts at blocking out the multiple threats and divisions which permeate her daily existence and which are imbedded in the dominant spatio-social order are therefore also a method of extracting herself from the vicious network of knowledge in the community that she describes as follows: "Purposely not wanting to know therefore, was exactly what my reading-while-walking was about" (Burns 2018: 65). Her reading-while-walking seems to function as a challenge to spatial constrictions of the gendered practices created by the socio-political order that she strives to block out. This tenacious habit, along with the eschewing of the current century in favour of the more distant past in her reading preferences, appears to create an interstitial space for her in which she can resist the predominant condition of the environment. Interstitiality arises as a potential location that Middle Sister can claim as her own, opposing the domineering social conventions of her community that exerts control over clearly contoured spaces. At the same time, with her unusual walking practice, she challenges the expectations of how public space should be used and how women should conform to specific societal standards. Confronting life on her own terms in this manner, the protagonist seeks to redefine the gendered spatialisation of her town and (re)negotiate her femininity and agency.

There are repeated references to certain (un)conscious mechanisms and strategies which reflect the characters' perception of the sites generally perceived as threatening, such as "the ten-minute area" a "ghostly place" on downtown outskirts which takes ten minutes to walk through, "hurrying, no dawdling, though no one in their right mind would think of dawdling here", or "the usual place", which is an established term for the cemetery, used by "everybody, including the media, the paramilitaries, the state forces – even some postcards", and, finally, "'dot dot dot' places", the locations which the protagonist's mother finds indecent and disapproves of (Burns 2018: 81-82, 47). These placenames and associated practices reflect a series of specific spatial strategies, such as avoidance of places which are feared to be dangerous or inappropriate, or both. The narrator's city becomes a contested terrain, in which diverse and overlapping limitations of social, political and sexual nature are embedded in the physical geography of the unnamed urban landscape.

3. The gendered “geography of fear”

In the vein of an affective geographer, Burns invites us to consider these placenames and the wide range of emotions of fear and terror they invoke, as symptoms of a chronic *condition*, as a sense of prolonged anxiety and discomfort which is closely tied to the sense of place. Hence, as *Milkman* displays such a keen awareness of both time and space, it also reflects what Robert Tally Jr. has defined as “a fundamental spatiotemporality”, in particular a sense of “topophobia” as a condition of persistent “place-mindedness” (Tally 2019). In his study *Topophobia: Space, Narrative and the Spatial Imagination*, he (2019:38) explains topophobia as “a provisional label for that condition of narrative, one that is necessary to any reading or writing of a text, in which the persistence of place and the subject’s relation to it must be constantly taken into account” In this sense, the spatial anxiety the protagonist feels throughout the narrative due to the pervasive political and gender-based violence could, more broadly, be compared to the cartographic anxiety typical for the fictional representations of space in general (see Gregory 1994: 70-73). Understood in this way, Belfast cityscape in Anna Burns’ *Milkman* is charged with symbolic potential as the novel joins the continuing debate on the production and meaning of space in both public and literary discourse. At the same time, the novel testifies to “the thriving state of novel writing in Ireland, especially in the hands of Irish women writers” (Estévez-Saá 2020: 86).

From the outset of the novel, Middle Sister strives to navigate and narrate unspeakable experiences of gendered violence, surveillance, and control, implying the coercive force of patriarchal values and attitudes that instil menace, disorientation, and aversion: “It had been my fault too, it seemed, this affair with the milkman. But I had not been having an affair with the milkman. I did not like the milkman and had been frightened and confused by his pursuing and attempting an affair with me” (Burns 2018: 1). The quotation reveals the dominant patriarchal gender relations that mirror discourses of power in which the behaviour of men is established as normative in relation to the social interactions, gender differences and spatial practice in the city. From the first contact between the narrator and Milkman the pattern in which he pursues and harasses her is set, whereby turning the city into a tangled web of terror, with “those invisible and insidious forms of harm that resist representation and thus communication” (Malone 2021: 9). Milkman approaches the narrator from his car as she is reading-while-walking, and keeps pestering her. “And there he was, again out of nowhere” (Burns 2018: 5), enforcing male domination and predatory practices in the public space that inflicts a traumatizing existence of continuous menace and surveillance.

In *Milkman*, characters clearly “navigate the geographies of fear” as understood by the sociologist Fran Tonkiss, who in her seminal study *Space, the City and Social Theory* contends that from a gender perspective, “women’s fear is spatialised,” and their “perceptions of danger have a specific geography” (Tonkiss 2005: 103). We find this theoretical position particularly pertinent to Burns’ fictional depiction of Belfast during Troubles, where characters’ traumas stem not only from sectarian and ethnically motivated conflicts, but also from gender violence and gender politics in general. In short, for Tonkiss (2005: 1-2) a city can be considered “as a site of social encounter and social division, as a field of politics and power, as a symbolic and material landscape, as an embodied space, as a realm of everyday experience” and she establishes that “urban spaces can be seen as structuring social relations and processes, and in turn as shaped by social action

and meanings". Cities for her (idem: 6) are "modes of consciousness and experience," and she defines city space as "perceptual as well as a physical space". What is of particular interest to us, however, is Tonkiss' examination of what she terms "the gendered use of urban space", that is the constraints in women's "spatial practice" influenced by the "spatial perceptions of violence and fear" (ibid.). While the city can be understood as a site of freedom, a place of opportunity once the private and domestic spheres traditionally connected with women's roles are abandoned in favour of the public zones, it is at the same time "a site of danger" and can be interpreted as a gendered "geography of danger", since "women's fear of male violence is manifested as a fear of space" (idem: 95, 102). Thus it may be inferred that for Tonkiss, "geographies of fear" are also "geographies of violence against women" (idem: 97). Therefore, Burns' protagonist fully fits Tonkiss' (2005: 96) definition of the "highly charged figure of the woman in the city", since in the eyes of the community she displays an aberrant behaviour and disengaged attitude, deduced thus to be "beyond-the-pale" (Burns 2018: 59-60), identified as a stranger to the divided socio-sexual order and its spatially (re)produced relations. Simultaneously, Middle Sister's conduct is perceived as a challenge to male control and supremacy, reducing her subjectivity to "a woman out of place" (Tonkiss 2005: 98).

The stark and affective experience of sexual predation contributes to the gendered experience of fear and is represented in a gradually intensifying manner, as Milkman shows up while Middle Sister goes running, with a forced familiarity, imposing a geography of intimidation and violence against women. The victim is disrupted in her routine movements in urban space and becomes traumatized, evident in her questions that were repressed for a prolonged period of time, as evident in the following description:

Also, why was he acting as if he knew me, as if we knew each other, when we did not know each other? Why was he presuming I didn't mind him beside me when I did mind him beside me? Why could I just not stop this running and tell this man to leave me alone? Apart from 'where did he come from?' I didn't have those other thoughts until later, and I don't mean an hour later. I mean twenty years later. (Burns 2018: 5)

Her sense of feeling trapped and endangered is closely related to multiple determinants, predominantly to threats from masculine authority, fear of sexual violence, and her (unwanted) visibility. As Tonkiss (2005: 95) argues, "This relation between being seen and going unseen is critical not only to women's freedoms in the city, but also to their safety". The novel traces the various spatial and social constraints enforced upon the female characters, especially upon the protagonist, that are rooted in sectarianism and gender. Her daily routine becomes criticised, controlled, and subsequently limited when her stalker implants himself into her run through the local park. Middle Sister finds herself unexpectedly running side by side with him in a section of the park, where another level of surveillance and danger is imposed on her: "An audible 'click' sounded as the milkman and I ran by a bush and this was a bush I'd run by lots of times without clicks coming out of it. I knew it had happened because of the milkman and his involvement" (Burns 2018: 7). The spatial restrictions experienced by the narrator are thus reinforced with an additional layer of exposure and vulnerability on account of her gender as the activity of running in a public space is documented as

a seemingly collusive and consensual act of intimacy, highlighted in the narrator's inference: "So now I was to be on file somewhere, in a photograph somewhere, as once unknown but now certainly known associate" (ibid.).

Her perceptions of danger are circumscribed by heightened awareness of "a mental and a practical geography that influences how women perceive and use space in the city" (Tonkiss 2005: 105) and succumbing to his persistent and pervasive threatening presence, she begins to associate the streets and the city with demeaning danger and hostility. According to Caroline Magennis (2021: 162), "As Middle Sister moves through the city, she is acutely aware of which areas are dangerous and plans her walking and running routes carefully to avoid both unwanted male attention and also straying into 'no go' areas". Furthermore, Middle Sister negotiates the space "around calculations of safety and gendered readings of danger" (Tonkiss 2005: 105) and, as Ní Éigeartaigh (2020: 51) claims, her own sense of self is diminished and she "begins to give up all the activities that once defined who she was in order to hide from him". The correlation between space, constructed by social interactions, and gender differences, moulded by spatial determinants, as exemplified by in this novel, has also been elucidated by cultural geographer Don Mitchell (2000: 219), who contends that "gender is spatially constructed in that it is constructed in and through particular social spaces (however defined)".

Milkman also follows her to her French class, and the following example demonstrates the increased gendered spatial anxiety his unwanted presence induces upon her: "I glanced down to street level. This was when I saw a white van parked up the narrow entryway opposite. I froze, jolted out of the almost peaceful consciousness of just a moment before" (Burns 2018: 78). The streets become inscribed with the limitations and threats on account of Milkman's stalking, overwhelming her with a state of the "numbance" (idem: 178), indicative of the insidious consequences of the "male gaze" and the protagonist's fractured subjectivity in the socio-spatial structuring established by the terrorizing sexual molestation. In the words of Ní Éigeartaigh (2020: 51), "[b]y allowing Milkman's narrow, sexist gaze to define her, the narrator has acceded to her own silencing: "Too late I realized that all the time I'd been an active player, a contributing element, a major component in the downfall of myself" (M, 178)". The assessment indicates the profound ramifications of external and internal alienation generated by female objectification and threats of violence in a world where Middle Sister feels out of place, without agency and spatial rights. The intolerable pressure exercised by the sectarian and patriarchal power structures is also spatially produced, imposing multiple constraints on her in public space. Moreover, the predator threatens to kill her boyfriend, and she becomes alarmed and overcome with thoughts about "maybe-boyfriend's violent death. It wasn't really prediction, of course, because in his own phraseology this milkman had pretty much spelled it out for me: death by car bomb, though car bomb may not have been the actual method intended, but only an example utilised for image and effect" (Burns 2018: 115). The virulent and graphic threats, uttered in an off-hand manner, are another strategy in Milkman's othering of the protagonist, whose experience of the city assumes an internalised guilt and vicarious responsibility for these veritably grave possibilities to her own boyfriend and family.

4. Conclusion

The fearscape of Belfast as portrayed in Anna Burns' *Milkman* is complex and layered, forged in the intersection of predatory stalking of a woman by a man and the violent political and everyday topography of the Troubles. Based on findings of cultural and feminist geographers, including Tonkiss' (2005) conceptualisation of spatial legitimisation, this analysis has shed light on the fate of the female protagonist in the gendered spatiality of her community's patriarchal and sectarian norms and practices. With indirection as a way of communicating (hence few explicit place names or other specific references), this linguistic avoidance signifies a constant fright and an act of survival. Since naming could lead to informing and punishment through kangaroo courts, torture and even execution, the repercussions of knowledge and gossip underwrite the symbolic coding of space as gendered dominance. Furthermore, in mapping the repressive, often horrifying context, Burns' engaged narration showcases the deep-seated social norms and prejudices supported by sectarianism and rigid gender roles, dominated by men, and resulting in mistrust of official institutions and means of communication such as telephones perceived as directly contributing to the cartographic anxiety. Moreover, the misogynist and harsh community scrutiny exerts relentless pressure on the protagonist to conform to their communal perceptions about her status and to become the predator's girl, rendering her without agency over her own body and fate, in keeping with the prevalent women's internalisation of sexist values in the novel and enhancing the sense of dread. In this manner, Burns' novel exemplifies fictional texts that illuminate the affective impact of violence and manage, in the words of Siân White (2021: 353), "to expose realities of gendered power – where victims are feminised and therefore deemed unreliable – which contemporary society has failed to address". In this way, Burns joins other contemporary women novelists whose literary texts challenge the gendered grounds of the socio-spatial order and gendered assumptions of the victims' capacity, as well as the right to act and speak, against all odds, and in spite of fear.

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**IN THE AFTERMATH OF A PANDEMIC:
LAUREN BEUKES'S *AFTERLAND* REVISITED**

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Abstract: *In her recent novel, Afterland (2020), award-winning South African writer, Lauren Beukes, envisages a post-pandemic scenario of a world without men in it. I argue that, whereas most post-apocalyptic fiction is ominously sombre, Beukes's artistic flair combines contemplation with social critique and sharp psychological observation, while also making use of satirical commentaries on prejudiced thinking regarding gender and power in an imaginary matriarchal system of governance. While boldly distancing herself from 'either/or' types of feminism, Beukes is also skeptical about the utopian idealisation of female innocence and virtue. Last, but not least, the novel stands out within its fictional genre for the delicate representation of parent / child bonding in times of catastrophic change. Beukes's exploration of motherly presence, resilience and grit takes centre stage in this haunting novel, memorable not only for its fresh take on today's world projected into an imaginary future, but centrally, because of placing love, 'tough love', at the heart of it.*

Keywords: *Afterland, post-apocalyptic novel, dystopian matriarchy, parent/child bonding, 'tough love'*

1. Introduction

This article aims to analyse the narrative complexities of the plague novel *Afterland* (2020), one of the more recent works by award-winning South African novelist Lauren Beukes. Written in the tradition of *noir* speculative fiction, artfully blended with aspects of the American epic chase novel, *Afterland* is, at a deeper textual level, a novel of ideas and psychological finesse.

“What is particularly striking about this book is just how timeless it is” (Karam 2020: 151). Although it had been several years in the making before its publication in early 2020, it reached the reading public – coincidentally – at the same time that the Covid-19 pandemic struck. The action of the novel was envisioned to take place in 2023, in a post-pandemic United States turned into a truly dystopian American “afterland”.

In this novel, Beukes imagines a world devastated by a plague that has killed almost the entire male population globally. She envisions such a world in a sombre register, with the few surviving men being held captive in so-called Protection of Men facilities. It is against this bleak background that the reader is introduced to Cole and Miles, mother and teenage son, who are forced to hit the road to escape Miles's capture by an all-female military squad meant to enforce male-only quarantine. The escape trip undertaken by the pair offers a narrative frame for a reflection on American society, as well as an exploration of motherly love at a time of global devastation.

2. Brief overview: ‘Post-apocalyptic’ novels, dystopias of the future

Beukes’s *Afterland* echoes several novels that imagine a dystopian future for humanity, in the aftermath of a potential catastrophe. According to Hicks (2017: n.p.), the genre “finds its roots in the New Testament’s *Book of Revelation*, and while contemporary apocalyptic fiction tends to be largely secular in its worldview, important traces of Christianity linger in these texts”. Post-apocalyptic imagery is associated with near-total devastation of human life and people’s desperate fight for survival. The protagonists find themselves in settings that have become barely recognizable, thus echoing the Lacanian dualism of simultaneous recognition and misrecognition of the known, coupled with the anxiety of displacement and uprootedness. Societies in the wake of a catastrophe are imagined as dystopias based on a worst-case scenario: e.g., near-extinction of life, mass starvation, vicious scrambling for resources, ruthless oppression.

A sub-genre of post-apocalyptic/dystopian fiction is linked to issues of aggravated gender exploitation and inversions of power relations. In P. D. James’s novel, *Children of Men* (1992), for example, mass infertility leads to the threat of extinction of both sexes, with depopulation giving rise to tyranny and violence. Naomi Alderman’s *The Power* (2016) projects a vision of bizarre female empowerment manifested as an extraordinary capacity to project electrical shocks, which occasionally degenerates into the mass murder of men. Lauren Beukes’s *Afterland* is in conversation with several dystopian novels that problematise issues of gender, and most notably, with Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1985). Atwood envisions the aftermath of a biological catastrophe which affects the entire female population, reducing women to mere reproductive ‘handmaids’ of men in an America that has become a theocratic dictatorship. It is interesting to point out that, in her own novel, Beukes has boldly turned the tables on Atwood’s vision of gender exploitation: instead of women becoming ‘handmaids’ of men – in *Afterland* – it is men and boys whose bodies are instrumentalised by state control.

Beukes’s novel also enters into an intertextual dialogue with Cormac McCarthy’s famous novel, *The Road* (2006), in which a father and son hit the road in an America devastated by an unspecified catastrophe. The strong bond between parent and child is central to McCormack’s novel of love in a dehumanised world. Beukes, for her part, also highlights the power of love in overcoming the extreme hardships of survival; the road trip undertaken by mother and son in *Afterland* becomes a pretext for the exploration of human bonding across shades of tenderness and tough love, resilience and grit. Unlike *The Road* – which ends in tragedy – *Afterland* offers a redemptive counter-narrative: the family manage to escape chaos and degrading exploitation, with love triumphing against all odds. In this article, I will therefore first address Beukes’s representation of various facets of the post-pandemic “afterland”, to conclude with a closer look at the intricacies of family bonding under extreme circumstances.

3. On the road: fleeing the New World order

Having acknowledged that she had drawn on McCarthy’s novel, *The Road* (2006), as “a reference point” (Moonsamy 2020: n.p.), Beukes’s American chase novel is also centred on a parent / child duo: in her case, a mother and son (disguised as girl). With men having succumbed to the killer virus, Cole and Miles are forced to run for their lives without husband/father protection. The new world

order is an authoritarian matriarchy, inversely similar to the now-defunct patriarchal system, in which the few surviving men are forced into total submission to medical experiments – in the interest of so-called “national security” (Beukes 2020: 112). Apart from being chased by a state security agency, Cole and teenage Miles are also hunted down by Cole’s sister, who – having joined a violent, all-female trafficking ring dealing in “white gold” [sic!] – aims to capture her nephew. The stakes of the chase are high, and the duo’s main objective is to escape capture, with the ultimate goal of fleeing a disintegrating America. The pair find themselves relentlessly on the run, as they encounter and escape various female-only communities and state organisations.

The novel’s tone ranges from melancholic reflection on the current devastation, to dark humour and sarcasm. The tone is melancholic when the duo is shown driving through ghost towns with abandoned churches, “[e]xcept that their cathedral is an abandoned gas station restroom, where the rows of empty stalls gape like broken teeth in the pre-dawn light, toilet seats long since wrenched off by vandals” (idem: 7). They drive through many towns that are haunted by the stark absence of men, the only sign of their previous existence being memorials and “statues of naked cement men [like] Pompeii’s ashen dead, frozen in place” (idem: 146).

While on the run, the mother/son pair come across unusual people and communities, all of which – in different ways – lay claim to their freedom of movement. These encounters are metaphors of present-day American society, presented in a fresh light. As Stephen King (2020: n.p.) said: “This is your basic neo-noir, coast-to-coast chase novel, and Beukes, who is from South Africa, sees America with the fresh eyes of an outsider”. Beukes had also made use of the “outsider” trope in her earlier America-based novels – *Broken Monsters* (2015) and *The Shining Girls* (2014) – both of which present a country seen through the eyes of the poor and socially marginalised. For, as Andrea Spain (2017: 261) has commented, “Lauren Beukes might be said to be writing an ‘ex-centric’ people’s history of American cities”: whether foreigners, or the working poor, these are outsiders who have a sense that the American Dream has failed.

With the majority of the male population now extinct, the protagonists’ road trip across America may prompt an expectation of a more compassionate (female) world order to take shape. What we find, instead, is a reverse mirror image of the old patriarchal power system, now in women’s hands: a system driven by similar political impulses of greed, force, and violence as before. Asked to clarify her own position on gender issues in this novel, the writer confessed in an interview that she has provocatively flipped the story: instead of a woman / girl being the image of victimhood, it is a teenage male figure, Miles, who is victimised, and whose “bodily autonomy and agency are under threat, [for] a world of women is not necessarily going to be a kinder, gentler world” (Moonsamy 2020: n.p.).

4. Disintegration of the social fabric

As mentioned earlier, I will first address Beukes’s dystopian projections of several “Afterland” social spaces, ranging from state-controlled quarantine facilities, to an anarchists’ commune, and finally to depraved religious institutions. Each one of these social spaces presents the reader with yet another angle on the new power relations unfolding in the imaginary post-pandemic future.

4.1. Centralised state power and quarantined life

The two protagonists' effort to flee America is foiled on charges of attempted trafficking of a male, considered to be a so-called "national resource for future security" (Beukes 2020: 112). Upon their heavy-handed arrest by female officers, mother and son are interned in a navy base turned quarantine facility, in which Miles (along a few other surviving males) is to be subjected to numerous debilitating experiments. While the teenager was held in what he referred to as "a boy zoo" (82), his mother feels "guilty and ashamed" of her "new status quo" (114) as a parent who has failed to save her son from capture.

From the siren-howling military base, emblematic of outright suppression of personal freedom, the pair are transferred to another federal facility (113), which gave the impression of being less draconian. The latter facility looks, deceptively, like a luxury wine estate dotted with modern buildings and a well-endowed hospital. The writer's sarcastic tone is unmistakable when she has Cole speculate that this facility must have been built by "the rich douches of Silicon Valley [...] the Zuckerbergs or Brinos or Bezoses [who feared an uprising by] disgruntled Uber drivers, or sex robots" (131). The tongue-in-cheek commentary is a sarcastic reflection on social inequality and AI excesses as driven by the greedy American techno-elites. Wealth, for these elites, also translates into an appetite for "total security", based on digital surveillance (132). A reminder here of Beukes's earlier dystopian novel, *Moxyland* (2008), offered as a grim foreboding of totalitarian corporate surveillance procedures.

Cole and Miles find themselves trapped in the luxury quarantine facility, a form of emotional hell: for even if "wrapped up in suffocating luxury like cotton wool [...], heaven is its own kind of hell, if you're not allowed to leave" (Beukes 2020: 132). The establishment is cynically named 'Ataraxia', in reference to the same-name Stoic virtue of dignified acceptance of hardship as a prerequisite for inner peace. However, as pointed out by Léa Salje (2023: 254), while a state of muted affect can refer to emotional "freedom from mental disturbance", it can also suggest a "harrowing state of emotional vacuity" (idem: 257). The semantic ambiguity of 'ataraxia' is not lost on the reader. The depressed human guinea pigs of Beukes's Ataraxia are counselled by a psychiatrist on how to arrive at inner acceptance of their quarantined imprisonment. Upon Cole directly confronting the psychiatrist, she gets a patronising response: "humanity is counting on us [and] you have to find a way to live with that. You have to make do" (Beukes 2020: 134-135). A bland, soulless comment demanding acquiescence at the cost of mental anguish and deprivation of freedom.

4.2. Escaping the "handmaidens of chaos"

The pair manage to escape from quarantined life (Beukes 2020: 98) and find shelter in a commune run by a group of women who seemed to live outside the law. Although this is offered for reflection as an alternative social space, Beukes continues to be less than flattering in her descriptions of the commune dwellers, whom she depicts as anarchists with vaguely feminist-socialist-utopian visions of Afterland. The pair are taken aback by their ostentatiously unconventional behaviour, verging on the promiscuous and lawless. Mother and son are welcomed here by eccentric, self-declared "liberated women", fully tattoo-ed, their arms "twined with snakes and flowers" (100). Beukes offers us a glimpse into the life-

style of anti-establishment rebels without a cause; a commune where stray dogs and cats answer to names such as Wittgenstein and Nietzsche, or Fanon and Spivak – suggesting their owners’ dabbling in philosophy and postcolonial ideology.

In this section of the novel, Beukes plays lightly with a mixed-bag of anarchist/progressive aspirations. Throughout this section, she also hints at various recent social movements and tendencies that shape contemporary American discourse. One of the dwellers drops a hint at the “*What You Need* Movement [which] encourages people to leave their doors open, and let people help themselves” (102; emphasis added). Here, the implicit reference is to the radical feminist #*MeToo* movement, expanded to mean an ‘anything goes’ attitude that includes redistribution of ill-gotten goods. This section abounds in satirical innuendos expressing Beukes’s own playful way of grappling with eccentric attitudes: holding them lightly, and yet triggering the reader’s own reflective speculation around the social issues hinted at.

Intriguingly, in spite of their insistent attempts at virtue-signalling inner liberation from rigidly conventional thinking, the anarchists are actually attracted by authoritarian structures/ regimes. In the name of feminist liberation, they support the government’s importing female IT programmers from tyrannies such as Qatar and Egypt (ibid.). As for organising protest actions, they proudly announce their association with rogue elements: “We’re not doing a lot of direct protest action anymore. It’s more behind-the-scenes. We have friends in Russia and Iran, ex-troll farms, [helping us] make the world better” (idem: 106). The mere reference to illegal internet activities by trolls and surveillance agents as tacitly employed by controversial state actors (to supposedly make the world a better place) has an unmistakable sarcastic tone about it. The mere suggestion that such tactics can be seen as improving the lot of humanity is even more controversial today, that is, a few years after the novel’s publication in early 2020. Since then, a major war of attrition was started by Russia’s 2022 invasion of a sovereign state; and, in Iran, a young woman – Mahsa Amini, like many others before her – was assassinated, in 2022, for daring to defy the “morality police” by not wearing her hijab.

“Making the world a better place”, as flippantly suggested by the commune anarchists, refers to Robin Hood types of interventions, such as “wiping out debt records, bringing down banking” (ibid.); and the “expunging of immigration records [because] borders are as imaginary as money. So are property rights” (idem: 106-107). In the absence of real-life solutions to world problems, the disruption of the social order through violence and expropriation is desired as the new norm. The radical solutions suggested by these “handmaidens of chaos” (107) point to irresponsible ideologies advocating full-blown anarchy without a credible alternative in place. As can be gauged from her sarcastic tone, Beukes does not support the idea of a total dismantling of the current world order, and so we see Cole and Miles rushing for an exit from this deceptively free-thinking commune.

4.3. Escaping the “neon nuns”

Having taken her protagonists through two radically-opposed post-pandemic experiences – from enforced quarantine, to anarchist group-think – Beukes further explores the impact that encountering an eccentric religious sect has had on the mother / son couple. The Church of All Sorrows is run by itinerant nuns, who make their presence felt in casinos and malls across the country. Echoing “Revelation’s representation of women as the cause of apocalyptic destruction” (Hicks 2017:

n.p.) – as literally understood – they preach a trivialised form of repentance for the near-extinction of the male population. The nuns’ improvised gospel is adjusted to the current disaster in an effort to manipulate the gullible women’s need for absolution and consolation. The nuns know that, although the old, predictable world order has imploded, people’s emotional need for finding ground under their feet has not disappeared. This is, intriguingly, illustrated by the gambling frenzy taking place in the Casino (the site where the nuns operate): women desperately searching for any kind of “ritual that is comforting in the predictability of the result”, which – in the case of gambling – is the ritual of “anti-hope” (Beukes 2020: 179). Intriguingly, even the Casino’s predictability of “nothing, no match, no meaning” can offer some comfort, because, paradoxically, it seems to act as life-affirming: “we play the gambling games because we know the rules” (ibid.).

It is this kind of thirst for grounding oneself in the familiar that is exploited by the itinerant nuns, who promise the all-female Casino patrons easy absolution. The choice of a casino as improvised place of worship verges on the farcical, as does the way these nuns are first presented: “women in colourful robes, so lurid they rival the casino carpeting [and neon lights], their outfits printed with one word in big bubble letters: ‘*sorry-sorry-sorry-sorry*’” (ibid.; my emphasis). This is, of course, a tongue-in-cheek trivialisation of the repentance ritual presented to the gullible as a way to bring the men back to life. The “neon ninjas” accost people everywhere in the city, and many women “succumb to the onslaught of personal interventions” (180). Beukes, here, gives free rein to her dystopian fantasy of power and manipulation in religious organisations. Masses of desperate women are made to feel inadequate by the itinerant “neon nuns” (179-180), whose ultimate aim is to gain control over their minds.

The gradual loss of agency is also powerfully illustrated by the main protagonist’s initial attraction to the nuns’ pseudo-salvic solution. Worn out by the trials and tribulations of being a fugitive, Cole desperately and naively reached out to one of the nuns, confessing that: “I am lost, I am struggling. I have come to be found” (187) – upon which, she was offered temporary admission to the monastic order, on condition that she submit herself to further intensive confessions of her “sinful” ways, whether real or imaginary. Cole was willing to cooperate with what was to become an arduous process of “unspooling her soul” (246) to the nuns, aware that this was the price she had to pay for cover from her chasers, and, equally aware that this process was “sandpapering her nerves” (ibid.). Throughout, Cole was not blind to the seductively comforting nature of submission: “She gets how easy this is, how neat, to give yourself over to someone else’s care, their rules. You don’t have to think, you don’t have to make decisions. Except keep the lies straight” (248).

As it happened, the nuns’ over-zealous pressure for Cole to repent takes a macabre turn when she is forced to undergo a process of ‘Mortification’ [sic] – which was supposed to be “about shedding your dead self, your dead name, and being reborn” (315), but – which was, in effect, an act of extreme violence and physical humiliation. Forced to undress and “wearing only her shame” (316), she is repeatedly hit with a broomstick and dragged across the room to have her face shoved into water to the point of near-drowning (ibid.). Presented by the nuns as ‘spiritual initiation’, this was just a depraved demonstration of symbolic power over somebody in a position of total subordination. During this ordeal, Cole manages to uphold her sense of self while addressing them in her self-talk: “you, bitches, you don’t know what I am, she thinks” (idem: 318). She is someone whose

ultimate goal was to “make sure her son survives” (ibid.) post-apocalyptic America. To this end, she is able to endure humiliation, for, “she knows how to survive. She can endure them. She has to endure them, for just a little while longer. And then, they can find their way home” (idem: 319).

What is perplexing in Beukes’s novel is the total inversion of expectations about gender violence: for, in this dystopian matriarchal society, women are brow-beaten into submission by other women, by those who have now replaced men in positions of authority, whether at the level of state, corporate, or religious organisations. In fact, as Beukes suggests elsewhere in the novel – in a scene depicting the violent interactions between hardened traffickers (all women), chasing after Miles’s ‘white gold’ – it is suggested that, as a woman “‘you have to hit harder, meaner, crueller if you want to step into the Big Men’s shoes [...] You don’t have to be as good as a man. You have to be worse. It’s about escalation, proving your’re the baddest [sic!] bitch in the room’” (idem: 240).

The scenes of woman-on-woman violence echo the writer’s comments elsewhere (in Moonsamy 2020: n.p.): “‘I’m not big on the binary idea of masculine versus feminine [...] A world of women is a world of people, still, with full capacity for good or evil. Because women are just as capable of being power-hungry, violent, abusive and evil as men can be’”. It can be argued that Beukes’s bleak dystopian vision of a future matriarchal society is an indirect attempt at counter-balancing early feminist utopias – e.g. Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *Herland* (1979 (1915)) – which tended to envision all-female societies as sites of flawlessly harmonious co-existence. By contrast, as also pointed out by Maureen Corrigan (2020: n.p.), “Beukes’s women carry machine guns, issue orders and generally belie the fantasy that a matriarchal society would be kinder and gentler”.

5. Tough love: survival, resilience and grit

As a dystopian novel, *Afterland* leaves the reader wondering whether Beukes has any hope for the future. One could ask, rhetorically (in the spirit of Jonathan Swift): we know what she is against, but what is she for? I argue that, in spite of her bleak overall vision of the future, the writer does offer a glimmer of hope. For one thing, the novel is based on the ancient motif of the hero’s journey: the hero ventures out into the chaos of life, where s/he has to overcome obstacles, eventually to return home a wiser person. All along their road trip across America, fugitives Cole and Miles escape several places of entrapment. They finally manage to flee the American continent by ship and return to their homeland, thanks to their capacity to endure, reframe and overcome obstacles and malevolence on the way.

Apart from external obstacles, a further challenge for Cole is her own son’s growing resistance to a life on the run. What Miles does not yet understand, and therefore deeply resents, is the adult’s difficulty of sharing the ‘whole’ bitter truth around morally complex and entangled decisions with a teenager. As fugitives, Cole’s determination to flee the American “afterland” involved a degree of necessarily deceptive tactics (boy disguised as girl, names changed, omissions and half-truths). Aware that life-on-the-run might alienate her son from her, Cole is nevertheless determined to endure the temporary price exacted for her ‘tough love’. For, she knows that, although being torn between various difficult tactical choices in the everyday rounds, her ‘tough love’ is the only expression of love possible under extreme circumstances. In their tellingly titled article, “The Ethics of Complexity and the Complexity of Ethics”, Minka Woermann and Paul Cilliers

(2012) point out that it is not always possible to expect universally agreed-upon value judgments, thus arguing for the need – under extreme circumstances – to accept a “*provisional ethical imperative*” (idem: 447).

Searching for her own definition of motherhood, Cole has a sudden insight into her own parental role: to trust herself enough to make tough decisions when navigating the chaos of life: “Turns out that I’m a full human being and fallible as shit. You need to hold yourself too; [*to be a good mother*], *you have to be a person first*” (Beukes 2020: 349; emphasis added). Confident in her resilience and inner strength as “a person first”, Cole is capable of acting decisively, and soliciting the support of anybody in a position to help them flee America.

Towards the end of the novel, tensions between mother and son reach a boiling point. The son runs away, leaving his mother heartbroken. In the end, the pair are reunited at the docks, the site of their illegal departure from the disintegrating continent. After a highly emotional moment, Cole finds her voice again:

Tough fucking luck, Miles. I’m not your friend. I’m your parent. That’s what I do. I make the decisions [...]. I want you to have choices. You have no idea what a privilege that is [...] right now, you are my responsibility, and I will always, always, have your best interests at heart. And these other people won’t” (Beukes 2020: 377, emphases added).

Her tough love has not hardened Cole. Her capacity to endure hardship does not take away the “primal, deep motherbeast” (idem: 373) of pain she feels when her son is in danger.

Eventually, love is shown to triumph against all odds: the pair manage to escape ‘Afterland’. The novel ends at open sea, with a memorable visual metaphor. Upon sighting killer whales in the distance, Miles points out that this species is organised as a matriarchal society: with “grandmothers and mothers lovingly in charge of the pod” (idem: 389). Associating the protective strength of the maternal killer whales with his mother’s ‘tough love’ is the son’s tribute to Cole’s iron determination to save him out of the choppy waters of enforced exile. A moment of deep reconciliation, a glimpse of hope in the redemptive power of love as counterbalance to the chaos unleashed by calamitous events.

6. Conclusion

According to the genre’s conventions, *Afterland* – a post-apocalyptic novel – is meant to focus on a bleak future vision of humanity as a world without men in it. In her boldly provocative dystopian novel, Beukes also exercises a degree of authorial control over the emotional charge associated with such a scenario. While most apocalyptic fiction is ominously sombre, Beukes skilfully combines contemplative reflection with sharp social critique and insightful psychological observations. To lighten the load, she also makes use of an abundance of satirical, even farcical, commentaries, which encourage the reader to detach from one’s own prejudiced thinking about social roles, and more specifically, about gender and power relations. Beukes cautions that a matriarchal society of the future might not, in effect, be much different from the current patriarchal system; and that it might even exercise reverse sexism and exploitation. While boldly distancing herself from positions that tend to vilify men *en bloc*, Beukes is also skeptical about utopian idealisation of female innocence and virtue: “‘Where are the women bad guys?

Where are the incompetents? Where are the evil bosses?” (Beukes qtd in Mallinson 2020: n.p.). Asked, in an interview, to define her own brand of feminism, Beukes said: “I think it is about *being a decent human being* [...] my women are *interesting for who they are*, as opposed to what they can do, or how much arse they can kick, in high heels or leather” (Stobie 2016: 52, emphasis added).

Last, but not least, the novel stands out within its fictional genre for the delicate portrayal of parent / child bonding in times of catastrophic change. Beukes’s exploration of motherly resilience and grit takes centre stage in this haunting novel, a novel memorable not only for its fresh take on the complexities of today’s world as projected into an imagined future, but centrally, because of placing love, ‘tough love’, at the heart of it.

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**UPDATING A CLASSIC:
PROGRESSIVE HOLLYWOOD'S TAKE ON *WEST SIDE STORY***

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***Abstract:** The paper addresses the paradoxes of Steven Spielberg's and Tony Kushner's *West Side Story* (2021), a film that reframes the story of the classic 1957 stage musical and, inevitably, its point of reference for the new film. After a brief discussion of the most problematic issues at the heart of the 1957 musical, the paper will analyse the 2021 *West Side Story*, challenging the rewriters' claim that their intention was to provide the musical with a deeper significance and a more historically informed, ethnically sensitive, and progressive reimagining of the original.*

***Keywords:** authenticity, Latinx, representation, rewriting, Steven Spielberg, *West Side Story**

1. Introduction

More than 60 years after the stage musical *West Side Story* took the American public by surprise with a kind of musical that flouted many of the conventions of the genre, and offered viewers an American rewriting of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, grounded in the social realities of urban American life, with racial and ethnic conflicts increasingly difficult to contain, director and producer Steven Spielberg and screenwriter Tony Kushner embarked on the daring adventure of "reimagining" (Sloan et al. 2021, passim), rewriting the musical they both loved and cherished as one of the best works in the canon of musical theatre and film.

In what follows, *West Side Story* will be analysed in its original context – with important aspects related to its genesis, conception and inherent problems discussed as genre- and context-dependent – and as a film adaptation released in a post-Trump, identity-politics American context, a work meant to give the original a new life and redeem it, in some sense, from old sins.

2. The context and the problems at the heart of the 1957 *West Side Story* stage musical

As a product of its time, and also a product of four white Jewish creators, more concerned with their artistic vision and their desire to create something unique, unprecedented on the Broadway musical stage – a work proposing a "new theatricalism" (Stempel 1992: 160) – *West Side Story* was

quite conservative in terms of its politics. Still, the “‘otherness’ of composer, lyricist, bookwriter, and director [with] their leftist political leanings, homosexuality, and Jewishness” (Wells 2011: 14) influenced their choice of setting (a part of Manhattan with a long history of poverty, immigrant struggle, population mobility and racial and ethnic conflict), themes (love, hatred, violence, miscommunication, all in the context of ethnically fuelled social conflict), and their decision to tell a story that also addressed the relevance of the American Dream. The manner in which their work reflected the social problems of their time betrays a reluctance to engage further in social comment and an interest in what the social and cultural contexts could offer in strictly dramatic terms, as *West Side Story* was, after all, a radical adaptation, an appropriation of the Shakespearean tragedy of love. If that meant only scratching the surface of a complex social mid-1950s New York reality and reducing it to a few lines in the text or the lyrics, or distilling it in sounds and dance movements in the elaborate, sophisticated music and choreography of the musical, the four creators never considered this was a significant weakness or necessarily offensive to the Puerto Ricans of New York or elsewhere, in spite of some attempts by members of the Puerto Rican community to boycott the musical in 1957 and some intellectuals’ critical views on the production (González-Ramírez 2021).

West Side Story was first performed in 1957 with high hopes and equally strong insecurities about its chances for success, given its experimental nature: a tragic stage musical, based on Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, but set in a part of New York mostly associated with poverty, racial and ethnic conflict, and juvenile delinquency, a stage production breaking the comedy-specific conventions of the genre, with a score hardly typical of a musical in its “unsingability” and sophistication, and a cast of mostly young and inexperienced dancers, with no famous musical performers in the leading roles to draw the audiences. In many respects, the four creators, director-choreographer Jerome Robbins (credited with the idea for the musical adaptation of the Shakespearean play), composer Leonard Bernstein, writer Arthur Laurents, and lyricist Stephen Sondheim, were taking a leap of faith with *West Side Story*, a collaborative work that was intended as a groundbreaking musical, unlike anything ever shown on Broadway until then, “construct[ing] a new way in which American musical theater intersected with popular culture and classical art music”, while also being a difficult, angry, and experimental ‘think piece’ - too arty and serious for general popularity” (Wells 2011: 218, 219). And yet, *West Side Story* continues to be performed on professional or amateur stages to this day, largely owing to the universality of human experience it renders through text, music, and dance, going beyond – like Shakespeare had in his *Romeo and Juliet* – the topical, the context-bound aspects of the story.

It took almost a decade for the musical to become a stage production. The creators struggled to find the angle from which to approach the question of ethnic conflict for years, until one day Bernstein and Laurents happened to read a newspaper article in the *Los Angeles Times* about rioting gangs in the streets of LA (Wells 2011: 32), which made them interested in reading more about juvenile delinquency and racial-ethnic conflicts, setting a new course for their story of American Montagues and Capulets. As Arthur Laurents (Guernsey 1985: 42) recalled in a discussion with Terrence McNally, it was Bernstein who eventually thought of writing the Capulets as Puerto Ricans. For Raymond Knapp (2005: 205)

the new spin on the story made the basis of the conflict “more generic and thus better able to stand for ethnic hatred more generally”, the four creators being “paradoxically not particularly interested in the life circumstances (or music) of actual Puerto Rican immigrants, but only in their current relevance and comparative facelessness, as the ‘other’ to the mainstream Jets, who... occupy the dramatically central position in the story”.

In its essence, the story is not particularly different from the one in the tragedy: two young innocent people, Puerto Rican Maria and Polish American Tony, meet and fall in love, but their future together is made impossible by a conflict between the two communities to which they belong: the white community (represented by the Jets) and the Puerto Rican community (represented by the Sharks), fighting for territory and a misguided sense of communal pride and dignity. In the end, Tony, Bernardo, Maria’s brother, and Riff, the leader of the Jets, die. Maria and Anita, Bernardo’s girlfriend, are left to grieve their lost loves, made stronger by suffering and hatred. They are victims of a conflict they cannot appease or escape, born out of racism, ignorance, fear and machismo. The musical makes all characters victims of their own prejudice and insecurities, for they are more alike than they think in their lack of privilege and agency, stuck in a poor neighbourhood of Manhattan, caught in a cycle of poverty and violence. The Jets see themselves as genuine Americans who need to defend their turf against the immigrant racial and ethnic “other”, ignoring the fact that Puerto Ricans were in fact American citizens, economic victims of US imperialist policies on the island – something that the musical leaves out of the story. Also missing are the wider political context, including the social unrest in Puerto Rico, with the fight for independence from the United States intensifying in the 1950s, and the consequences of the “Puerto Rican problem” campaign of 1947 carried out by several US publications, highlighting the social problems arising from the massive migration of Puerto Ricans and setting a standard for the way in they continued to be described in the media decades later (Meléndez 2022: 12-13). Unsurprisingly then, the creators’ understanding of the community they chose to represent in *West Side Story* was superficial and relying on stereotypical ideas of Puerto Rican culture, behaviour, ethnic and national identity, and their portrayal of the Jets and the Sharks was biased (Sandoval-Sánchez 1999: 68). Described as “an anthology of what is called ‘American’” (Laurents et al. 1965: 137), the Jets are allowed more time on stage, speaking and singing more than the Sharks, and their delinquency is somewhat justified as the effect of traumatic childhood experiences, such as domestic abuse, growing up in broken families, with no role models to follow. The Puerto Rican characters are defined by their exoticism, broken English, passionate nature and impulsiveness, having no other justification for their behaviour than their *difference* (ethnic, cultural, linguistic), pushing them in a marginal social position. It is their *attributed identity* that makes them the enemies of the Jets and of white Americans. The creators – four Jewish Americans understanding only too well the possible consequences of ethnic and religious difference in a post-war world – must have had a deeper understanding of the Sharks and the reasons behind their sense of helplessness and refusal to accept marginalisation, perhaps even their rage, but they chose to deny the resemblance by distancing themselves from an American community they also felt foreign. Like Shakespeare, they also relied on binary oppositions as structural elements: “Jets/Sharks; US/Puerto Rico; center/periphery; empire/colony; native/alien; identity/alterity; sameness/difference” (Sandoval-Sánchez 1999: 68), in which the second term of each of these pairs has

more pronounced negative associations, as dictated and perpetuated by the common practices of representation of the ethno-racial “other” on Broadway and in Hollywood at the time.

If the text of the musical is flawed in its reductive, sketchy, stereotypical portrayal of the characters and the superficial representation of the characters’ social and cultural milieu, its music and choreography are – in spite of their unquestionable artistic value – guilty of a lack of authenticity that still constitutes a sensitive topic for Puerto Rican viewers, confronted with a simulacrum of Puerto Rican culture relying on traditional practices in the performance arts or in cinema. Although Jerome Robbins’ choreography was dynamic, vibrant, exotic, fresh and exciting, organically growing from Bernstein’s music, both were tapestries of various dance and musical styles and variations on popular Hispanic dances and familiar musical pieces, respectively, having a pan-Latino rather than Puerto Rican feel, “setting ethnicity according to what a projected audience will recognize and accept, without much concern for authenticity” (Knapp 2005: 206). Although this strategy worked with a wide audience precisely because both creators had managed to make familiar and conventional sounds and looks fresh, sophisticated, and arty, as they knew how to balance high and popular culture, it made more sophisticated Puerto Rican audiences feel misrepresented, and this was an aspect that the 2021 adaptation could not (or would not) fix.

3. Steven Spielberg’s and Tony Kushner’s idea of a reimagined *West Side Story*

In the context of an increasingly larger discussion of representation of minority groups in the film industry and in major Hollywood productions in particular, as reflected in the UCLA *Hollywood Diversity Report* series since 2014, Spielberg’s project started from the politically correct stance that a film about a Latino community needs to be properly researched, carefully cast, with a clear preference for Latinx (ideally Puerto Rican) artists to play the Sharks, a more nuanced representation of the racial and ethnic tensions of 1950s American society, especially in New York, a greater presence of Spanish in dialogue, and a pruning of the original text, to eliminate the blatantly racist comments of Lieutenant Schrank in particular, in an attempt to focus more on the teen-agers’ background, explaining their rage, their frustration and their racism.

Screenwriter Tony Kushner knew the process was going to have its challenges, especially with the kind of pressure he felt working on a text carrying such a heavy cultural weight, but also because the context of the rewriting was so politically charged in the socially, ethnically and racially divided America of the Trump era. “We kept working on this thing.” In a *Times Magazine* interview, Kushner (qtd. in Chow 2021) explained, “because there was such an enormous feeling that - it wasn’t like, ‘Oh god, we’re going to get canceled if somebody says the wrong word’ - but this deep desire to get it **right and true**” [emphasis added]. As a rewriter, Kushner felt a duty towards both the 1957 musical, with its organic quality, where dialogue, song, music, and dance are beautifully connected in a manner more appropriate for the stage than a film, and to the contemporary audience (especially a Latinx or a non-white one), particularly sensitive to cultural appropriation and traces of racism or white hegemonic discourse. As Negrón-Muntaner (2022) explains, “[t]here is no doubt that Steven Spielberg’s 2021 *[film]* tried to please. ... Spielberg aimed to solve a growing cultural tension around *West Side Story* - that many Latinxs, the nation’s largest ethnic group and

utmost movie consumers, consider the nation's most beloved musical on racial tolerance to be racist".

The adapters knew from the outset that they needed input from historians and the Puerto Rican community to see how and to what extent the thorny aspects of the musical could be addressed, as well as providing Puerto Rican, or at least Latinx performers, a chance to play the parts of the Sharks. All of these aspects were approached with the awareness that authenticity could only be achieved with proper cultural and historical advisers. As Tony Kushner told Andrew R. Chow (2021), Virginia Sánchez Korrol, a Brooklyn College professor and author of various books on Puerto Rican history, was asked to provide the creative team with historical and visual materials about the West Side in the 1950s and to help the adapters understand the atmosphere, the nature of the inter-ethnic relations in the neighbourhood; Julio Monge, a Puerto Rican dancer and choreographer stepped in to work on Robbins' choreography and adapt it for the film, also acting as cultural consultant and as translator of parts of the dialogue into Puerto Rican Spanish; actress Rita Moreno, who had played Anita in the 1961 film and was the first Puerto Rican (and Latina) to win an Oscar for her performance, was not only given a part written especially for her –Valentina, Doc's widow – but was also recruited as executive producer. In "Steven Spielberg's *West Side Story*" (2021: 0:55-1:13), the director explains: "She brought so many interesting stories, and she so motivated the cast. ... [She] help[ed] us frame the messages that *West Side Story* needs to extend to people who see it". She and the other Puerto Rican performers in the cast became, in Kushner's words (Chow 2021), the "Puerto Rican Talmudic study group", a source of cultural information and a first Latinx audience helping the Spielberg/Kushner team keep things authentic, real, recognisably Puerto Rican in look, sound, and feel. And, unlike Arthur Laurents' 2009 revival, which had included Lin Manuel Miranda's translations into Spanish of some lines and of the lyrics of "I feel pretty" and "A boy like that" – a timid attempt at making the show more appealing to Spanish-speaking audiences – the film aimed for greater authenticity in character portrayal and ethnic representation by including even more Spanish in the dialogue, also casting racially diverse Hispanic performers (mostly Puerto Rican, though not for the parts of Maria, played by Columbian American Rachel Zegler, or Bernardo, played by Cuban Canadian David Alvarez), making the film the most inclusive and politically correct version of *West Side Story* to date.

The Spielberg/Kushner team also tried to understand and represent the socio-historical context of the story. For the setting to appear realistic and dramatically exciting, it had to look like a world in collapse: the slums of San Juan Hill are shown gradually making room for the future Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, forcing the residents out of their homes. As historian Edgardo Meléndez (2022: 183) explains, "[t]he city and state planners called it 'urban renewal,' although African American and Puerto Rican activists called it 'Negro removal' or 'Spic removal'". By moving the setting a few years forward to around the time the upper West Side was already undergoing this profound transformation, the adapters created a visually enticing and dramatic setting built around the idea of a community in full crisis, in which law and order can no longer exist, and the fight of the Jets and the Sharks becomes one for living space and survival in a shrinking neighbourhood, where the newly arrived Puerto Ricans are more than a nuisance: they are the enemy. The gangs' fight for turf becomes a fight for survival in a social crisis and a social metaphor for disempowerment.

The film begins with a series of aerial shots (a God's eye view in more than the technical sense of the term) that cover the part of the neighbourhood that is being torn down, the camera floating above this depressing site and then zooming in on huge wrecking balls towering over crumbled walls of residential buildings. and then, as the overture begins, we see some white young men stealing paint cans and getting organised to vandalise the Puerto Rican part of the neighbourhood. On the wall next to the basketball court, the Puerto Ricans have painted their flag and the words of freedom fighter, Pedro Albizu Campos, "La patria es valor y sacrificio" ("The country is courage and sacrifice"), signalling the Sharks' control of the area and the Puerto Rican residents' strong national feelings, making the conflict between the Sharks and the Jets a political as well as a social and ethnic one. As the Jets start vandalising the Puerto Rican flag, the Sharks come running as defenders of their community and protectors of the symbols of Puerto Rico's fight for independence. Of the two gangs, the Sharks are represented more sympathetically, while the Jets become the troublemakers, whose actions are motivated by their own frustration with the imminent changes in their community and a total lack of respect for everything. As their community is disintegrating with each strike of the wrecking ball, their world is falling apart and violence is the only way they know how to react to a reality they cannot control.

Tony Kushner's screenplay (Twentieth Century Fox 2019) makes the characters less unidimensional and portrays them as victims of circumstances better explained by the text and also through film-specific means. The writing in the screenplay is also better than the book of the musical, with more elaborate descriptions of the setting, the characters' interactions, their feelings and states of mind, better lines for characters such as Lieutenant Schranck, whose racism is explained as springing from his own fear of change and lack of control. Kushner's text also offers a more considerate representation of the Puerto Rican community in New York. The Sharks, are less cardboard versions of real people, defined primarily by their ethnic, cultural and linguistic difference; they are more convincing as young people with feelings, hopes, and dreams, and more likeable. The Spielberg/Kushner team chose to foreground the Sharks' anticolonial sentiments and national pride – only suggested in the original – through visual and textual means. Apart from having the Puerto Rican flag and a patriotic message painted on the wall next to the basketball court, the Sharks stand proud when Lieutenant Schrank treats them disrespectfully and even correct his Spanish, and, as they leave, they sing the revolutionary version of "La Borinqueña", the official anthem of Puerto Rico, an act of defiance and of tremendous courage, as Julio Monge, interviewed by Chow (2021), explains: "there was a law in Puerto Rico called the Gag Law, or *La Ley de la Mordaza*, which started in 1948. It prohibited Puerto Ricans on the island to raise a Puerto Rican flag, sing the Puerto Rican anthem, assemble and get together for political reasons criticizing the United States. ... It was politically-charged times". Although the entire historical background to which Monge alludes is left unexplained in the film, there is something in the Sharks' defiant demeanour and their pathos that tells a story of dignity in suffering that Laurents and the rest failed to see in the community they chose to represent. The film makes it clear that the Puerto Ricans feel entitled to claim ownership of the barrio as American citizens by birth, with equal rights as their white neighbours, some of whom have no idea that Puerto Ricans are American nationals. In this context, the Sharks' stubborn use of Spanish (and Spanglish) in the public space in the film becomes an act of defiance of the

structures of colonial oppression, manifest in the generalised racism of the Anglos, be they the Jets – representative of society at large – or the policemen – representing the state.

Also interesting are the scenes set in Bernardo and Anita's apartment, where viewers get to experience the characters' bilingualism and their constant code switching in a realistic Spanglish (even though Anita remains an advocate of acculturation and a believer in the American Dream), while also having access to little details from the characters' lives that make them more relatable and likeable: Bernardo is a professional boxer and a protector of the community, as the leader of the Sharks; Anita works hard and saves money to open her own seamstress business; Chino works in a car repair shop, but he also studies to become an accountant; finally, Maria dreams of getting a college degree. They are all ambitious and hard-working, unwilling to let their poverty and lack of privilege stand in the way of their progress.

The scene including the song "America" is also significantly rewritten in the film and it is one of the most exciting ones in the film. It is prepared by Anita and Bernardo's playful fight in the morning, introducing their different attitudes to inter-ethnic relations and their experience of American life. With Steven Sondheim's approval and assistance (Chow 2021), Kushner tones down both the girls' exaggerated praises of the American Dream, and Anita's passionate rejection of her native island in the song exchanges, phrased in a reductive and insensitive way in the original version. In the stage musical, Anita (Laurents et al. 1965: 167) describes her native country as an "ugly island" or "[i]sland of tropic diseases", with hurricanes always blowing, the population growing, babies crying, people always owing money and bullets constantly flying. The original Anita, Chita Rivera, had no complaints about the insensitive and distorting sketching of Puerto Rico, but the movie Anita, island-born puertorriqueña Rita Moreno (2021: 1:11-2:18), confessed she nearly rejected the part because of the opening lines, being relieved to see later that Sondheim had changed them in the final version of the script, replacing Anita's first lines with "Puerto Rico, my heart's devotion/ Let it sink back in the ocean". Though not much of an improvement, Anita's words reflect only a personal opinion, without the truth distortions (the island as a place of disease and violence) in the original lines. Kushner solved that problem by rewriting Anita's lines as "Puerto Rico,/ You *lovely* island,/ Island of tropical *breezes*" (Kushner 2019; emphasis added), giving some of her lines to other female characters and skipping all references to diseases or flying bullets.

The change may have been prompted by a question specifically about this song, addressed by university professor Isel Rodriguez, during an informal meeting at Universidad de Puerto Rico, on 14 December, 2018. As the footage (Alegre 2018) from that meeting shows, at the time neither Kushner nor Spielberg seemed ready to answer how they planned to approach the offensive lines about Puerto Rico in the song "America" or the musical in general. As Isel Rodriguez (Abramovitch 2019) later explained in an interview, "I don't know if they'll be able to fix the problem with just Latino actors and good accents".

And it is this particular aspect of the production, the use of a Latinx cast (mostly Puerto Rican, covering a wider range of racial features and speaking the right kind of Caribbean Spanish), that Steven Spielberg and the 20th Century Studios almost obsessively promoted before and after the release of the film. In the 20/20 special "Something's Coming" (Sloan et al. 2021) and in other interviews, the two leading actresses, Columbian American Rachel Zegler (Maria) and Afro-

Latina Ariana DeBose (Anita), who is half Puerto Rican, made a point of highlighting the importance of viewers seeing Latinx performers on the screen, especially in key roles in a production. Also in that documentary, Julio Monge, the Puerto Rican choreographer and one of the main cultural consultants for the Spielberg/Kushner team, repeatedly pointed out the adapters' willingness to cast performers that could contribute to the creation of an authentic look and feel of the production through their intimate knowledge of the culture as multiracial Puerto Ricans, creating a diversity of representation and performance of puertoricanness that enriches the production. Close to the end of that *20/20* special, Spielberg (Sloan et al. 32:09-32:14) concludes: "It's important that representation be authentic. To return the piece to the integrity that I think it deserves". In a longer version of the interview for that ABC special, Spielberg also adds, "I really felt – we felt – all of us, together, that we needed this to be a Latinx production" (Robinson 2021).

4. Conclusion

In spite of claims of authenticity and fairness of representation, and certainly in spite of Spielberg describing his adaptation as a Latinx production, the film has failed to convince viewers of its relevance and revolutionary quality, as reflected by its box office (where it did not fare as well as expected). Among the most vocal critics of the film, Puerto Rican reviewers or scholars either challenged the idea behind the project, invoking the work's role in promoting a reductive and xenophobic image of New York Puerto Ricans, haunting generations of people who felt assessed, judged or jokingly referenced through what this musical – especially the 1961 film adaptation – and other media representations have established as the norm (Lee 2021; del Valle Schorske 2020; González-Ramírez 2021), or a waste of resources that could have been better directed at new, original projects belonging to Puerto Rican artists (Lee 2021; Bonilla 2021). According to LA Times writer Ashley Lee (2021), all the cultural and historical details the creative team tried so hard to write into the film and the unprecedented number of Latinx cast members is a cover-up of the "cultural appropriation of the original text, to which this version remains all too faithful". For Carina del Valle Schorske (2020), the film must be seen in a larger conversation about colonialism, describing the musical as an example of "America's colonizing power to determine who Puerto Ricans get to be". Within days of the film's release on the Disney+ streaming platform, Morales Franceschini (2022) looked back at the film's reception on the island and concluded: "At least among the Puerto Rican intelligentsia, then, the consensus is that this is a remake we neither needed nor asked for, a waste of talents and resources".

In all fairness, the new *West Side Story* film will not write history the way the 1961 version did, as flawed as it was. The film is simply not convincing as a necessary reimagining of the 1957 musical, precisely because the adapters started from the premise that they could just update the classic musical and infuse it with a more authentic Latino spirit, relying on the original's artistic qualities and the adapters' mastery in storytelling, as well as the people's willingness to be charmed by familiar songs and vibrant, mesmerizing dancing and charismatic performers to do the rest, pushing the ideological problems of the original musical so deep into the tissue of the new adaptation that they would go unnoticed. The creative team relied too much on the superficial aspects of the production, which were also the

most intensely promoted (the Latinx cast, the carefully researched and recreated setting and historical and social context, the sound of Puerto Rican accents), failing to understand that the only acceptable way to adapt *West Side Story* in the 2020s is by taking a revisionist route, engaging fully with its embedded racism and cultural arrogance, questioning its strategies of representation through text, music, and dance and rewriting it extensively, offering viewers a critical interpretation of the stage musical, which this film is clearly not.

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**ADAPTATION IS SURVIVAL:
CURRENT TRENDS IN AMERICAN FILM CRITICISM**

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***Abstract:** The present article employs theoretical frameworks proposed by Henry Jenkins, Charles Leadbeater, and Marshall McLuhan along with his son, Eric McLuhan, and investigates the phenomenon of deconvergence, which results in the fragmentation of film critique pieces and publishing platforms; its aim is to examine in what ways modern film criticism is being democratized. Furthermore, the article presents and analyses the notions of resilient, subsided, and fluid film criticism. The initial two concepts pertain to the impact of the platform on the prevalence of critique, the third concept, scrutinizes the deconvergent methodology utilized by criticism, which employs a variety of styles disseminated across various online platforms.*

***Keywords:** cinephilia, deconvergence, democratization, film criticism, fluid film criticism*

1. Introduction

Throughout history, cinema functioned as a means of personal articulation, as well as an educational and entertaining medium. Ever since the initial screening of a motion picture to audiences, the evaluation and appraisal of such visual media constituted a crucial component of the public's perception. Film critics, generally speaking, are individuals who publicly engage in critical thinking by analysing various cinematic elements, such as plot, editing, cinematography, music, acting, and direction, with the objective to help others understand and appreciate cinema by discussing films and taking into account their cultural and historical context. Hence, the fundamental duty of movie reviewers is to furnish perceptive and logically sound evaluations of cinematographic creations. However, the inception and interpretation of film reviews have undergone intermittent revisions and adjustments throughout time.

The advent of Web 2.0 (an enhanced version of the former World Wide Web) during the beginning of the 21st century, prompted a major transformation by enabling film critics and enthusiasts to generate content online, thereby initiating a real democratization of the film critique domain. Specifically, the emergence of online film blogs and websites enabled instantaneous dissemination of feedback on films, authored not only by critics, but also by anyone, including laypersons, potentially drawing the focus away from previous sources of criticism. Hence, in this regard, democratization denotes a change in public involvement, where the general public is transformed into a mass of active contributors in the generation, circulation, and utilization of critical feedback on movies (or other

visual creations on the net). Therefore, the traditional demarcation between the perspectives of professionals and non-professionals in the realm of film criticism was challenged, leading to the emergence of a novel social paradigm.

This paper employs the theoretical frameworks proposed by Henry Jenkins, Charles Leadbeater, and Marshall McLuhan, alongside an analysis of deconvergence, a phenomenon that results in the fragmentation of film critique pieces and publishing platforms, with the aim to examine the extent of public involvement in current film criticism. The argument posits that contemporary online publishing platforms exert a significant influence on the popularity of criticism, and that the democratization of this process has both advantageous and disadvantageous implications. Furthermore, the paper presents and examines the concepts of what I coined as resilient, subsided, and fluid film criticism. The first two concepts pertain to how the platform dictates the popularity of criticism; moreover, through fluid film criticism (the third term), the paper will discuss how criticism employs a so-called deconvergent approach, by utilizing diverse, mixed styles, disseminated throughout online realms.

2. The survival of the fittest or the film critic today

Contemporary film criticism encompasses a diverse array of mediums, including, but not limited to, short written remarks, auditory commentaries, verbal assessments, thoughtful examinations, and quick judgments — all on various platforms and by a mass of people. Consequently, the identification of the film critic has become progressively challenging. The involvement of the general public in film criticism is often viewed as a potential challenge by professional film critics, who fear that the opinions expressed by non-experts may diminish the credibility of the established critical discourse and the trust involved in it. While it is true that the points of view—expressed by laypersons may not carry the same weight as those by professional critics, the emergence of non-professional film criticism created a rather competitive environment for established critics, which also encourages them to produce more nuanced and insightful evaluations in order to make them stand out from the mass of voices. As noted by Ronan McDonald (2007: viii), “when there are so many critical voices raised, it is not surprising that few are heard above the din.” Hence, the ultimate significance of a film criticism, whether it is presented in the form of a comprehensive analysis or as an instinctive response, is inconsequential, as long as the latter garners greater attention from the audience. In this particular context, although the viewpoints expressed by non-experts on social networking platforms or personal video blogs may not adhere to the standards of a review published, for example, in the prestigious *The New York Times*, the objective is still achieved, if the text manages to attract sufficient attention and thus gain some sort of recognition.

The proliferation of film criticism in contemporary times has led to a re-evaluation of traditional paradigms in this field, prompting a need to expand the scope of the critic’s role. Whilst the traditional function of the film critic remains unchanged, innovative modes of critique have also emerged over the last 20 years. In addition to the perceived credibility of a film critic, the marketing preferences of film studios can also influence the selection of individuals considered trustworthy film critics. In the academic context, a critic is typically regarded as possessing a high degree of credibility and proper expertise in evaluating films, as well as a certain level of familiarity with film theory and issues related to the film industry

and film history as well. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that the viewpoints of such individuals may be deemed less significant by film studios or certain directors, who nowadays rely heavily on the positive or negative feedback about their work through social media posts in order to attract audiences. Thus, the contemporary definition of a film critic is multifaceted and encompasses various perspectives and dimensions.

3. Dialogic critical cinephilia

Scholars in the field of film and media, including Henry Jenkins, who is credited with coining the term *convergence culture*, have demonstrated a keen interest in exploring the phenomenon of public engagement in the creation of online content. Although the process of convergence as such has been present since the 1980s, pertaining to the integration of various media functions into a single device, Jenkins (2006b: 2) argues that cultural convergence denotes, “the transmission of content across numerous media platforms, the collaboration among diverse media industries, and the migratory behaviour of media audiences.” Moreover, convergence culture posits that the consumption and production of media have undergone a significant shift, leading to the blurring of traditional distinctions between various forms of media, including television, movies, music, and video games. As such, the blurring of boundaries between various forms of film criticism suggests the emergence of new modes of evaluation, as contemporary critics are able to disseminate their opinions through diverse media, including video essays, podcasts, and social media reviews. In this context, convergence culture also suggests the amalgamation of diverse media cultures, implying the emergence of participatory culture as well.

Jenkins initially introduced the concept of participatory culture in his 1992 book, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture*, suggesting that fans had already begun to exert an impact on the public’s perception of films and novels. Nevertheless, fan made content was difficult to circulate, as generating information that could inspire others was a formidable undertaking prior to the advent of the Web 2.0. Since fans lacked an appropriate platform, they recognized

that their relationship to the text remains a tentative one, that their pleasures often exist on the margins of the original text and in the face of the producer’s own efforts to regulate its meanings. While fans display a particularly strong attachment to popular narratives, act upon them in ways which make them their own property in some senses, they are also acutely and painfully aware that those fictions do not belong to them and that someone else has the power to do things to those characters that are in direct contradiction to the fans’ own cultural interests. (Jenkins 1992: 24)

In this context, Jenkins also emphasized the impact of the audience on the reception of cinematic works, despite the constraints imposed by the limited number of venues. The development of Web 2.0 provided contemporary enthusiasts with increased accessibility to content that could not be disregarded by filmmakers and film critics alike. Consequently, due to the emergence of novel technical possibilities, contemporary media culture transformed the functions of media producers and viewers into “participants who are expected to interact with each other according to a new set of rules which none of us fully understands” (Jenkins 2006a).

Furthermore, Jenkins also utilizes the concept of “collective intelligence,” a term originally introduced by Pierre Levy in 1997, in conjunction with that of “participatory culture”, in order to characterize contemporary individuals engaged in the production of online culture. According to Jenkins (2006a), collective intelligence in convergence culture “can be viewed as an alternative source of media power” that “creates buzz and accelerates the circulation of media content”, with the Internet serving as a unifying force that brings together individuals from various social, cultural, economic, and political backgrounds across the world. These individuals leverage their newfound online capabilities to generate and participate in various activities.

The practice of free speech is greatly facilitated by participatory culture, resulting in an active inclination to share narratives, viewpoints, and concepts on digital platforms. These are also fundamental components of contemporary film criticism. On the one hand, the phenomenon of convergence culture assisted the dissemination of film critics’ work to a wider audience than was previously possible through the print media (which usually took quite some time to reach audiences). On the other hand, it additionally promoted the involvement of fans in the production of critical discourse, a development that has been met with vehement disapproval on the part of certain scholars. Jenkins (2006b: 23) asserts that, while participatory culture brought about a positive impact in general on the contemporary popular culture, there exists a “participation gap”, which pertains to the restricted accessibility to specific online sources. The concept of ‘participation gap’ of which Jenkins talks can be applied to the democratization of film criticism, suggesting that here lies a potential for a lack of balance, due to the established critics’ reluctance to engage in collaborative content creation with the public. This reluctance may stem from a fear of losing their authoritative position in light of an ever-increasing prevalence of online criticism today.

Charles Leadbeater’s perspective on the internet content creation entails the involvement of the general public, which is comparable to Jenkins’s views described above. In *We-think: Mass Innovation not Mass Production*, Leadbeater (2008: 106) discusses the concept of mass-collaboration, which refers to the active involvement of the public online, through the use of a set of tools that “has made it easier for people to contribute their views and ideas through blogs, photographs, and videos.” The prevalence of Web 2.0 has facilitated the exercise of the fundamental right to freedom of expression as a routine practice in a democratic way. Leadbeater (2008: 55) argues that the proliferation of free speech “seems to produce little more than a babble of raucous argument that rarely turns into the structured and considered debate essential for democracy to thrive.” As such, the Internet not only emancipates its users from their passive role(s), but also introduces an entirely new social paradigm, which has the potential to transform the way journalism as such is perceived. Leadbeater (2008: 57) states that, on the one hand, “the orgy of user-created content the web has attracted might also rob us of high-quality journalism and literature, film and music [...]”, while, on the other hand, he (2008: 466) asserts that, in the world of the Internet, “sharing is the golden goose, and our challenge is to establish order and safety without compromising our capacity for cooperation”, illustrating a persistent hopefulness regarding the prospects of mass-collaboration. Leadbeater maintains that the internet possesses a greater capacity for favourable consequences, provided that its resources are employed judiciously. Regarding the issue of deteriorating the high-caliber web content, it is noteworthy that the World

Wide Web still offers a wide range of material with varying degrees of quality. However, users are required to invest a considerable amount of time (and energy) in exploring different websites to locate their desired content.

Nevertheless, the concepts of participatory culture and mass-collaboration pertain to the public engagement in content creation, facilitated by Web 2.0. However, the impact of this engagement on film critique culture remains unaddressed by both theorists. Therefore, while the two above-mentioned approaches offer a framework for the democratization of film criticism, it is important to note that the democratization process is a more nuanced one. This is because the democratization of film criticism entails the relinquishing of space by established film critics to make room for new critics. Consequently, the demarcation that previously separated film critics from their readers became increasingly indistinguishable with time, given that contemporary cinema enthusiasts are capable of expressing their viewpoints regarding movies through various channels, such as blogs, podcasts, social media, and other analogous platforms.

The emergence of a novel social group, which I call dialogic critical cinephiles, is observed as a consequence of this phenomenon. The notion of active cinephilia has been previously explored in film-related literature, as evidenced by Jackie Clarke's (2012) work, but this concept has yet to be employed in the realm of film criticism. Although the term "cinephilia" or love of cinema was originally coined in France ('cinéphile'), it eventually evolved to describe a subculture in the United States during the 1960s. This subculture regarded film critics as "priests who passed judgment on movies, directors, and filmmaking styles" (Haberski 2001: 2). Yet, individuals with a strong interest in cinema during the twentieth century were frequently subjected to critical scrutiny and seldom afforded the chance to publicly articulate their personal perspective on films. The concept of dialogic critical cinephilia therefore refers, in this context, to a shift in audience practices from the passive role, traditionally associated with the simpler movie lover, to a more active one. This shift is characterized by the development of new modes of engagement with the abundance of cinematic materials that are now widely available through advanced technology (de Valck and Hagener 2005: 13).

In addition, current film enthusiasts maintain an ongoing discourse via various online channels available to them. This process of an intensive ongoing discourse recalls the phenomenon of dialogism, a term coined by Mikhail Bakhtin, who argues that dialogue is inherent to human nature and writes that "any utterance, whether spoken or written, that people use in communication with each other is internally dialogic" (qtd. in Hall et al., 2005: 72). In "Discourse in the Novel" (1934), Bakhtin (qtd. in Renfrew 2015: 188) expands on his ideas concerning dialogues as such, with a particular emphasis on their function in novels, and puts forward that the dialogic nature of discourse is an inherent characteristic of all forms of communication. Bakhtin's discourse on linguistics encompasses also the language and its usage: his proposition regarding the formation of language through its users can be correlated with the concept of dialogic critical cinephilia, wherein its adherents determine their comprehension of language. According to Bakhtin (1934, qtd. in Renfrew 2015: 188), "language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated – overpopulated - with the intentions of others."

In a manner akin to Bakhtin's perspective on discourse and its correlation with language, dialogic critical cinephiles are persistently involved in a continuous discourse or dialogue that is being shaped in accordance with the objectives of the participants. Furthermore, the concept of dialogism in the filmic context posits that the existence of multiple viewpoints hinders the notion of a singular universal truth. As a result, the prominence of the individual's voice increases. As Bakhtin points out,

[the word] encounters an alien word not only in the object itself; every word is directed towards an answer and cannot escape the profound influence of the answering word that it anticipates. [...] [it] is directly, blatantly oriented towards a future answer-word; it provokes an answer, anticipates it and structures itself in the answer's direction. (1934, qtd. in Renfrew 2015: 190)

In this particular situation, each uttered and transcribed word inherently elicits an unavoidable response and Bakhtin's concept regarding the significance of language can be utilized to counter the authorial position that certain film critics tend to adopt within their field. The prominence of dialogic critical cinephilia and the democratization of film criticism are heightened when considering the notion that all words imply a response. Furthermore, Bakhtin (1934, qtd. in Renfrew 2015: 190) claims that all "rhetorical forms [...] are oriented toward the listener and his answer," which implies that a text lacks significance in the absence of a reader. Dialogic critical cinephilia thus employs discourse not only as a means of addressing an audience, but also as a basis for the ongoing dialogue across multiple mediums, thereby generating a multitude of potential responses. The separation between the roles of the producer and the consumer becomes indistinct, akin to the concept of participatory culture as described by Jenkins.

4. Deconvergence and the democratization of film criticism

While cultural convergence is prominent today, given the fact that the cooperation between multiple media industries argued by Jenkins has become a reality, the abundance of publishing avenues necessitates that audiences consistently exercise awareness in sifting through digital content. Hence, in order to maintain prominence, the digital film critic needs to disseminate texts across multiple platforms and selectively opts for those that elicit the highest level of engagement. Moreover, due to the influence of mass media platforms on the viewership of film reviews, critics have resorted to fragmenting their assessments and disseminating them on several platforms, generally accompanied by a hyperlink leading to the entire article, in a bid to expand their readership. The phenomenon of fragmentation has resulted in a shift in user practices across various devices and platforms, as evidenced by the emergence of deconvergence tendencies (Peil and Sparviero 2017: 11). Deconvergence is a term that denotes the opposite of convergence. Although the term is not as prevalent in academic circles as that of convergence, its concept is highly relevant to the current realm of film criticism. The phenomenon of deconvergence was first introduced by D. Y. Jin and pertains to the fragmentation of media and communications corporations via spin-offs, split-offs, and demergers (Jin 2011, 2013).

The hyperlink issue mentioned above serves as a notable illustration of said phenomenon in relation to film criticism within the online sphere. According to

Lev Manovich (2002: 59), the hyperlink is a distinctive characteristic of digital media, as it enables the user to swiftly navigate from one piece of information to another by simply clicking on it. Hyperlinks therefore establish textual connections that imply a form of convergence, as they create, “a situation where any text can be potentially connected to any other text, in any combination,” (idem: 64) allowing the user “to access the same content through multiple paths” (idem: 78). To clarify, hyperlinks establish associations among disparate textual sources, including certain film critiques, however, authors frequently distribute the aforementioned texts across multiple platforms to expand their readership, resulting in their deconvergence. For instance, many film critics use *Twitter* as a platform that conveys hyperlinks for full texts while they only provide a fragment of the same text on their *Twitter* profile. The term “deconvergence” in this particular context pertains to the occurrence wherein a single film critique article is published on multiple platforms, with or without hyperlinks.

Deconvergence is made evident also in the democratization of criticism through two distinct modalities. One of the instances pertains to the hyperlinks mentioned above. In such instances, the style of evaluation may be modified to conform to the content sharing criteria of the platform or to appeal to diverse audiences. The other type of deconvergence refers to the proliferation of digital platforms that enable individuals to express their opinions regarding motion picture productions. Moreover, one platform has the capability to employ multiple branches to communicate diverse types of information. For instance, *IndieWire*, a website dedicated to the film and television industry, established a blog named *CriticWire*, to provide a platform for critical analysis and to foster a community of critics. This blog was integrated in the main website as a way to facilitate seamless access for users and, despite its closing down in 2016, it remains a great example of the current utilization of the deconvergence concept, still found on many similar websites.

Moreover, the phenomenon of deconvergence can be discerned in the fragmentation that exists among the diverse levels of popularity of the platforms alongside that of the distinct dispositions of the participants involved in the criticism of films. The impact of deconvergence seems to have modified the importance of various publishing platforms, resulting in certain platforms garnering significant attention, while others becoming marginalized. Furthermore, the phenomenon of deconvergence has implications not only for film criticism, but also for public engagement, as not all film critics endorse the democratization of film criticism. This process seems to lead to a fragmentation of critical discourse. As film critics increasingly disassociate themselves from public engagement, the field of film criticism can easily become fragmented into discrete subgroups, characterized by divergent attitudes towards democratization, including proponents, opponents, and those who are ambivalent. The applicability of Jenkins's cultural convergence perspective is consequently limited in the present democratization of film criticism. Moreover, criticism exhibits divergence based on its intended subject matter, namely, series, films exhibited in cinemas or on television, television programs, or short films, leading to a state of deconvergence.

The concept of the platform-centric content is not new, as it was initially introduced by philosopher and media theorist Marshall McLuhan, with illustrator Quentin Fiore, during the 1960s. McLuhan (1967:1) claims that the message is determined by the medium, rather than the reverse. His (idem: 83) assertion is that “the environment that man creates becomes his medium for defining his role in it,”

and this invention is either linear or sequential. McLuhan and his son, Eric McLuhan (1992: 83-88) analysed the societal implications of media through a tetrad of media effects, comprised of four distinct categories: enhancement, reversal, retrieval, and obsolescence, all of which describe the various effects that a medium can have. In contrast to McLuhan's vertical system assertion, the current space of digital film criticism is centred on horizontal platforms. From this standpoint, the concept of deconvergence is framed within McLuhan's framework, however, the horizontal orientation of contemporary cinema criticism impedes its complete reintroduction. The reception of contemporary film criticism is influenced by the medium through which it is presented, as per the tetrad of media impact and, as such, the tetrad theory proposed by the two McLuhans can be applied to contemporary film criticism appearing on various web platforms.

The emergence of Web 2.0 facilitated active engagement in critical writing, thereby supplanting the trend of popular culture's influence on film criticism (in full swing from the 1950s to the present) with the phenomenon of dialogic critical cinephilia. Web 2.0 can thus be regarded as a novel medium that facilitates the involvement of popular culture in influencing the evaluation of films in a new manner. Within this particular context, contemporary film critics are not solely preoccupied with the broad accessibility of films intended for entertainment purposes, but also with the active involvement of cinephiles in the process of critical analysis of these works.

The role of publishing platforms became increasingly intricate in the era of dialogic critical cinephilia, as opposed to traditional film criticism, when cinephiles had a rather passive role as mere consumers of texts. The dichotomy between journalistic and academic film criticism persists even now, with the proliferation of the internet and the coexistence of print mass media platforms potentially leading to a comparatively reduced viewership for academic criticism, compared to journalistic criticism online. The contemporary social dynamics of film criticism are significantly influenced by publishers, thereby rendering McLuhan's concept of the medium as a highly relevant message.

The current paper uses the notion of resilient criticism to denote a form of evaluation that exhibits the ability to generate a substantial degree of involvement from a diverse range of individuals. Resiliency is manifested when a film critique elicits a significant level of engagement from its audience. Furthermore, the name of the author can significantly impact the resilience of criticism, irrespective of the platform of publication. Notably, the names of renowned, canonized American film critics, such as Roger Ebert and Pauline Kael, are illustrative of this phenomenon. Moreover, it is not imperative for a film review to adopt a popular film criticism style or content in order to exhibit resilience; it can be argued that resilience pertains to its ability to captivate the audience (still, a well-crafted critique can increase its resilience). In this specific scenario, it seems that the forums employed by mainstream media exhibit a greater degree of resilient criticism, compared to those employed by academic establishments. The primary focus of the film criticism concerns evaluations that have been disseminated on online platforms that share the peer review mechanism, such as *Springer*, *Routledge*, and *Oxford University Press*, among other similar publishers. The variation in interest can be elucidated by the fact that certain media channels enjoy greater recognition than others. In addition, specific online platforms need recurring payment for access, thereby augmenting the marked discrepancy in the quantity of individuals visiting the said sites. Hence, subsidized criticism may gain resilience if the platform on

which it is disseminated garners further scrutiny. The platforms of *Letterboxd*, *Twitter*, *Rotten Tomatoes*, *Metacritic*, *Buzzfeed*, as well as those of Roger Ebert's website are illustrative of the effective means for disseminating resilient criticism. In January 2023, for example, *Rotten Tomatoes* garnered a total of 96.3 million visitors, which is in a similar range with that of the *BuzzFeed*'s 104.5 million and *Letterboxd*'s 33.9 million visitors. In contrast, *Routledge* received 2.3 million visitors, while *Oxford University Press* only had 44,000 visitors during the same period, according to data put forward by *Similarweb* (2023).

Although *Oxford University Press* does publish valuable, peer-reviewed, academic criticism, the aforementioned publishing outlets illustrate how the readers' attention becomes fragmented. However, the discourse becomes increasingly nuanced when considering the quantity of evaluations furnished by mainstream media platforms, such as *Rotten Tomatoes*, compared to academic publishers, such as *Oxford University Press*, as despite the fact that *Rotten Tomatoes* amasses 96.3 million visitors in a single month, in contrast to *Oxford University Press*'s 44,000 visitors in the same period, it may prove more challenging for an individual to attain recognition on the former than on the latter, as it is difficult to stand out among the multitude of comments and reviews posted there everyday. Hence, while mass media channels typically attract a larger audience, thereby facilitating the recognition and endurance of critical perspectives, it is possible for such appraisals to become subsided on these platforms, in the absence of reader engagement. As a result, as mentioned above, numerous critics employ multiple platforms to disseminate their evaluations to their respective audiences.

The democratization of film criticism has led to a situation where an online platform may serve as an outlet for criticism without any particular stylistic definition. Considering the diverse array of media platforms available in contemporary times, the prospective trajectory of criticism could potentially involve the combination of various modes, culminating in what is commonly referred to as fluidity. The notion of fluidity is a prevalent occurrence in the field of economics, as the extent of economic liberty within a given society is significantly influenced by its level of fluidity (Schramm 2008: 15). Moreover, according to Schramm (2008: 17), fluidity refers to, "the condition of a loose yet stable alignment of institutions, organizations, and individuals that facilitates the exchange and networking of knowledge across boundaries." The term "fluidity," in the context of democratizing film criticism, can refer to the profession's ability to be adaptable and diverse. While resilient and subsided criticism are subject to the regulations of publication platforms, fluid film criticism employs diverse styles disseminated throughout the online sphere, exhibiting a deconvergent approach. Contemporary film critics frequently integrate academic and journalistic approaches in their evaluations, in order to garner sufficient public interest. This versatility is exemplified in the rise in popularity of *YouTube* and *TikTok*, two platforms enhancing further film criticism as a prevalent form of expression, due to their ability to enable critics to deliver their assessments in a captivating and interactive manner. The aforementioned platforms demonstrate the fluidity of film criticism, as critics are able to employ a blend of visual elements, narrative strategies, and widely recognized jargon to articulate their perspectives.

The democratization of film criticism has resulted in the increasing integration of fluid film criticism in the academic publishing platforms through the use of non-academic, popular terminology in the form of citations or references.

Notwithstanding, the field of fluid film criticism is still in an incipient mode, given that the comprehensive integration and fusion of diverse styles has not yet attained widespread prevalence in the realm of academic criticism. Nonetheless, the continuous democratization of film criticism and the growing recognition of flexible methodologies indicate a favourable direction. It is highly probable that the prevalence and impact of fluid film criticism will persist in the future, given the ongoing progression of technology and the evolving expectations and growing participation of audiences. In this context, the incorporation of fluid film criticism into scholarly publishing platforms presents a potential avenue for enhancing its pervasiveness. As the realm of fluid film criticism undergoes further development and attains greater acknowledgement, academic establishments and scholarly periodicals may adopt and integrate it by embracing alternative formats, assimilating colloquial jargon, or establishing novel platforms, exclusively designed for fluid film criticism. The significant growth of fluid film criticism can thus be achieved by establishing a connection between academic and popular discourse.

5. Conclusion

As contemporary popular culture actively participates in criticism, particularly online, the distinction between the public voice and the critic's voice has become less distinct; this is partly the outcome of an ongoing democratization of film criticism, which has grown particularly prominent with the introduction of Web 2.0. This paper has applied ideas based on Henry Jenkins' concept of participatory culture theory and Charles Leadbeater's mass-collaboration theory, in order to examine how democratization affects film criticism today. While neither of the argued theories in this article use film criticism as an example to illustrate their points, both participatory culture and mass-collaboration adequately illustrate how public engagement democratizes film criticism. Owing to these changing cultural dynamics, new film criticism tendencies have arisen in the past two decades.

Despite the increased availability of online scholarly publications and academic film magazines, journalistic criticism is still more commonly disseminated through mass-media platforms. As a result, platforms that generate a significant amount of attention tend to circulate resilient criticism, whereas those that remain less prominent become subsided; however, criticism can still become subsided on mass media platforms, if it lacks adequate attention. The aforementioned classification also provides proof of the deconvergence phenomenon in the domain of democratized film criticism, wherein the proliferation of publication platforms leads to the exclusion of certain outlets, while others garner greater prominence. Although the differentiation between amateur and professional criticism becomes less clear, the differentiation between resilient and subsided criticism endures.

The present paper has analysed the notion of fluid film criticism, which refers to an emerging trend in the realm of criticism. The trend under consideration is distinguished by its dynamic and fast-paced nature, which seeks to challenge the established conventions enforced by diverse publishing platforms. This may suggest a tendency for film criticism to adapt to challenges and avoid becoming subsided. Presently, the field of film criticism is undergoing continuous and profound transformations and is influenced by various emerging technologies that

are not addressed in this article, including artificial intelligence. Therefore, it is very likely that these advancements will further alter the existing landscape of film criticism, perhaps even in the near future.

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**“THIS IS WHAT CHURCH IS SUPPOSED TO LOOK LIKE”:
THE MULTI-ETHNIC CHURCH, MEMORY,
AND THE POST-BLACK²**

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***Abstract:** The paper examines Efrem Smith’s proposition of a post-Black church from a cultural perspective. His vision of a post-racial Christ-centered spiritual-cultural space is based on a concept of culture of thirding that seeks to overcome the culture war in America, raising the question of whether his post-Black argument is a post-racial balm or a reasserted pro-Black stand.*

***Keywords:** African American religion, post-Black theology, racialized society, reconciliation*

1. Introduction

The movement that Efrem Smith, founding pastor of The Sanctuary Covenant Church, identifies in his *The Post-Black and Post-White Church* (2012), embarks on breaking the racial divide that characterizes American churches. Its aim is to establish congregations whose membership is multiethnic, multiracial, and multigenerational by reintroducing the Christian concept of reconciliation as a method and the concept of community as an intercultural and intergenerational entity.

Rooted in triumphalist anticipations stemming from the idea of a post-racial society under the Obama presidency, the post-Black and post-white church movement envisions congregations in this new era, in which the colour divide is completely overridden in a post-racial utopia. The terminology of the “posts”, however, suggests that the movement is not the result of a dream come true, but an attempt to recognize a post-racial community that consciously strives to position itself against the race discourse. Given the fact that Smith’s congregation described in the book has an African American lead pastor and its liturgy is heavily indebted to African American culture, the question arises whether the movement is strategically deployed to valorize African American culture and weaves a multiracial texture with an African American overtone, and the concerted polyphony reiterates post-Black as “new Black”.

The paper will primarily investigate how Smith’s cultural philosophy connects to African American religious memory in this context as well as try to map the layers of the meaning of post-Black in his work.

²This paper was supported by the “János Bolyai” Research Scholarship of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

2. Efrem Smith and the beloved community

Reconciliation theology within the Black Church is postulated by Smith (2011) as Post-Black Theology, which aims at the “redemption, liberation, and reconciliation of both the oppressed and the oppressor”. Much as his coinage of the parties involved indicates that grievances of the past are neither forgotten nor forgiven, making direct connections to Cone’s liberation theology palpable, he seeks to establish a “beloved community” (Smith 2012: 1), much in Martin Luther King Jr.’s footsteps. King (1997a: 459) talks about the advent of a “new age” in a 1956 speech, in which the “struggle for justice” must continue, as “social systems have a great last minute breathing power. And the guardians of a status-quo are always on hand with their oxygen tents to keep the old order alive” (idem: 460). The post-Black phenomenon that Smith detects in the civil rights movement is a stand against segregation, thus a fight for social equality, i.e., “ending legal racial segregation, hate, and inequality” (Smith 2012: 101), and less the manifesto of a multiethnic movement, as Smith contends. King’s concern is primarily social, and his view of society in the new age is defined by social equity and racial equality (see Edwards 2008: 140), but not by cultural juxtaposition, which allows little speculation about King’s stand on the cultural heterogeneity of churches Smith proposes. Nevertheless, King envisions a society without races in another speech, in the same year:

[. . .] We must prepare to go into this new age without bitterness. [. . .] We must conquer the hate of the old age and the love of the new age and go into the new age with the love that is understanding for all men, to have with it a forgiving attitude, it has with it something that will cause you to look deep down within every man and see within him something of Godliness. That something that will cause you to stand up before him and love him.

As we move in this transition from the old age into the new, we will have to rise up in protest. [. . .] It is merely a means to awaken a sense of shame within the oppressor, but the end is reconciliation. The end is the creation of a beloved community.

The end is the creation of a society where men will live together as brothers. An end is not retaliation but redemption. That is the end we are trying to reach. That we would bring these creative forces together we would be able to live in this new age which is destined to come. The old order is dying and the new order is being born. (King 1997b: 344)

Reflecting the philosophy of an integrated society, in which “personal growth cannot take place apart from meaningful relationships with other persons, that the ‘I’ cannot attain fulfillment without the ‘Thou’” (Smith and Zepp 1974: 121), King conceptualizes the beloved community as one, where reconciliation leads to a new order of, primarily, social justice. “Agape” for King (1991: 19), however, also entails the vision of a community through inevitable reconciliation, since “it springs from the need of the other person” as a result of which “Agape is love seeking to preserve and create community, [as] agape means a recognition of the fact that all life is interrelated” (idem: 20). For Smith and Zepp (1974: 120), the transition to a beloved community entails that “Everyone will have to become color-blind”. Whether by “a sense of shame”, i.e., repentance, and forgiveness, King referred to a colour-blind society is not clear, just as it cannot be vouched for that “the liberation of Black people will also lead to the emancipation of White

people” (idem: 122), especially as the coinage suggests the entrenchment of the race binary. As Humphrey Jr. (2022) asserts, King’s beloved community “is not grounded in a color-blind ideology that deemphasizes difference and chooses comfort over tension, preferring rather to live in homogeneity than living and finding comfort and rhythm in diversity, uniqueness, and distinctiveness, and as a result, authenticity”. Ultimately, reconciliation represents “an openness to the uniqueness of the Other” (ibid.).

In this respect, Smith’s openness to difference does not represent colour-blind thirring, but one that denies race, while acknowledging ethnic differences as natural. As he (2010: 101) contends, “The racial construct of black and white is unbiblical. This categorizing and placing value on someone based on skin color is ungodly. The race structure cannot be justified as we move through and wrestle with Scripture. Culture, ethnicity, and nationality are biblical, but not race.” Colour for him represents diversity and multiplicity that is the reiteration of the biblical intention and the image of the whole missiological field demanding a holistic approach. It is not just the wider framework of racialised society that he criticizes, but the church, including the Black Church, which he sees stuck in the race binary: “The whole world outside of the church seemed to be in full color, but the church looked like the black-and-white television of the old days” (idem: 84). The haunting past culminates in a “walled-in experience” (idem: 80) and does not allow opening to a shared Christian experience, which in return reproduces entrenched prejudices - however depleted they may be.

In his *Jump: Into a Life of Further and Higher*, Smith (2010: 71) echoes King’s criticism of the American “race-based society”, refusing it through enlarging on his doctrine of the triad of beloved life, beloved church, and beloved world (idem: 27), but he goes further to emphasize that the struggle to establish the beloved community means more than a social movement. It represents a theological discourse of reconciliation that acknowledges the world “in full color”. Directly connecting to King’s vision, Smith insists on fighting against social ills - an attitude that emanates from the beloved identity. He conceptualizes the latter as a mature Christian identity (idem: 100): “As liberated, beloved beings, we become vehicles of compassion, mercy, justice, truth, and transformation in the world. This work leads to people coming to Christ, which is of utmost importance, but it also leads to Kingdom acts of justice, dealing head-on with poverty, racism, sexism, hunger, and the need for health care” (idem: 46). Smith places emphasis on the identity aspect, whose result is social engagement. The beloved identity, one that is rooted in a Christian identity, leads to colour blindness: “The beloved self is about identity. My entire self should be rooted in my identity in Christ. This was an important jump for me. My identity is not shaped by the majority culture; it’s shaped by God” (idem: 68). “Majority culture” must mean here the white American culture, perceived in the black experience as oppressive and segregationist, against which he seeks to deploy his colour-blind Christian discourse. Colour blindness evolves through Christian transformation, which entails the natural refusal of the idea of race and consequent Kingdom acts. Importantly, Smith does not consider this kind of transformation as an African American religious tradition, but puts it in a theological context, which he supports with the historical fact of the participation of “others with the white church and other faith communities” (idem: 69) in the civil rights movement, thereby verifying and foreseeing the necessity and the advent of multi-ethnic churches.

3. Culture war in the post-black era

Efrem Smith's post-Black, post-White church paradigm is imagined along very similar lines to the conceptualization of reconciliation by reconciliation theology. Based on the complementary binary of repentance and forgiveness, he imagines the beloved community based on the reconciliation between races in a third culture. He bases his argument on Soong-Chan Rah's (2009: 186) idea of the "triple consciousness" of "Third Culture Kids", i.e., second- and third-generation immigrants, and Dave Gibbons's (2009: 40) rather vague idea of a third culture of "adaptation, the both/and, not the either/or, mindset" with the ability "to look beyond categories and see relationships" (idem: 51). Apparently, adaptation does not mean the eradication of cultural differences; much rather, it denotes skills to use cultural particularities to foster a shared Christian understanding: "Third culture affirms one's ethnic identity. One's ethnicity is not ignored but celebrated! Third culture doesn't dull the color of one's culture. Third culture actually enhances a culture's uniqueness while at the same time celebrating the synergy of its fusion with other cultures. Third culture artfully flows in and out of multiple cultures like water" (idem: 39). Gibbons's pragmatic deployment of thirding as an intercultural communication skill leaves it blurred whether the term means a cultural adaptation through subsequent phases of cultural development, a relativizing cultural framework of juxtaposition of cultures, the creolization of cultures, or even the creation of a hybrid Christian, Christ-focused culture, in which ethnic identities are tokens of diversity, but less identity-salient.

Similarly, the way Smith employs the term "culture" does not render a clear concept of it. While he seems to embrace the idea of cultural thirding, he treats "culture" as a means of oppression and segregation. As he (2010: 80) claims, "There are walls that divide us by class, race, and culture", which has led to a "warped view" (idem: 121) of oneself and others. Connecting culture to identity in this way becomes a disturbing plight, as he regards true values as Christ-centered, indicating his self-positioning, but also revealing his unawareness of his own cultural embeddedness:

To see culture as the enemy is not the right approach, but neither is a full embracing of the culture. Some parts of the church have embraced the culture around them to the point that they have lost touch with enduring values, which are essential to advancing the beloved world. We must be careful about an embracing of the culture that causes us to question or totally move away from the authority and centrality of Scripture. The biblical approach to culture is not about painting it as the enemy or fully embracing it. The biblical approach is to engage culture for Kingdom purposes. (Smith 2010: 123)

Smith positions himself in the in-between - critiquing the traditional approach of the Black Church as one professing to identity conservatism and, in this way, as one cause of the segregation of the church, and, at the same time, establishing himself within it. He seeks to evade any possible attack by confessing that "Now please hear me, I have much respect for the black church" (idem: 78), subsequently listing the many accomplishments of the Black Church as a kind of homage to it. While, simultaneously and consequently, he identifies culture as the cause of alienation from scriptural truths and demands, his approach to culture is pragmatically tuned, as he sees culture as a toolkit to advance his Christ-centered

goals and to facilitate reconciliation, “seeking oneness across ethnicity and race” (idem: 124). His understanding reaffirms Gibbons’s in that he seeks to deconstruct the self-face and promote the mutual-face, prioritizing the common and intersecting, while diminishing the diverging and antagonizing cultural elements. As Gibbons (2009: 40) insists, “[third culture] doesn’t eradicate color or lines but embraces and affirms who we are, regardless of differences in ethnicity, culture, or mindset”. Maintaining the basic categories, oneness emphasizes akinness in diversity and not its dissolution. Smith addresses multiethnicity in the church primarily as the cultural encounter of different groups and gives little attention to bi-/multi-racial individuals, despite the fact that he considers himself as one: “not only am I ethnically African American but I’m also Irish and Cherokee Indian. I am a multiethnic human being!” (Smith 2010: 87). While the emphasis on group differences may even verify the entrenched divergence in America, the approach misses the opportunity to exploit his embodied experience to strengthen the idea of oneness/akinness in diversity (see, for example, Melendez 2020).

It is this point that reveals his pro-Black cultural embeddedness and orientation. It seems that in Smith’s texts, the celebration of ethnic identities is overdetermined into the direction of black culture, with reconciliation exclusively imagined in the race binary. “Black” is understood in radical negation of “white”, i.e., a monolith of universal (American) whiteness. With “a picture of an upper-middle-class White male” (Smith 2012: 31) as the sole representative of white in mind, Smith relies on the same tactics of auto-stereotypical mechanism that he criticizes when kept waiting once, along with black friends of his, by white police: “Both are college educated, work in the corporate world, own their own homes, and are married with children” (idem: 73). Echoing Rah’s (2009) understanding of American culture, the enunciation of supposedly white values which are amended by claims equating “Western”, “White”, and individualist unreflectively, even when discussing “the materialistic and consumeristic worldview of American culture” (Smith 2012: 34) shows his continued preoccupation with race, while revealing a similarly uncritical stance toward “Black”, which is conceptualized mainly in terms of opposition to “white”, with little reference to inner stratification of the black community along the lines of gender, class, or geography (much as he is critical of the traditional, class-infused features of the Black Church).

Smith’s objective is not to provide an intersectional analysis of cross-cultural relationships, yet his argument, based on a simple binary, presents limits for his otherwise much-needed project and is tossed into the danger of “essentialist anti-essentialism”. While for Nikolas Kompridis (2006: 320) the term serves to critique the unreflective normativization of the hybridization of cultures, for Smith it reflects an approach that apparently essentializes the black experience while rejecting the perceived white essentialism. As in the case of essentialist anti-essentialism, which is “incapable of understanding and explaining cultural continuity” (ibid.), Smith’s (2012: 2) “kingdom culture”, as a hybrid culture of thirding, threatens to erase cultural differences through pro-black cultural normativity - equivalent with the “homogeneous church” (idem: 17) as he labels white churches. Hybridizing into diversity becomes instead cultural homogeneity falling back on a simple binary: homogeneity of culture is deployed in contrast to its anti-thesis and thus works against diversity, the initial goal of Smith’s theorizing.

One example that shows how Smith imagines using culture as a toolkit in an essentialist anti-essentialist way is his advocacy for a hip-hop theology. In his *The*

Hip-Hop Church (2005) coauthored with Phil Jackson, he connects post-Black theology to the postmodern in that he emphasizes the lived experiences of oppressed and marginalized people, relativizing socially accepted truths. What the authors propose is that urban (youth) communities can be described in opposition to the “socially privileged” groups of whites (2005: 105), as well as that they are detached from their own cultural groups, as they fail to respond to their needs due to classism and identity conservatism. As they (idem: 110) suggest, “Today we could very well be in a postblack church culture, as many in the African American urban community look to other places besides the black church for a sense of spiritual truth”. While chastising the African American church for change in this way, they, at the same time, represent urban youth communities as culturally homogenous groups as a result of the unifying effect of hip-hop cutting through ethnic and racial barriers: “African-American urban music has a universal sound that has brought people of many cultures and ethnicities together in America” (Smith 2012: xvi). In other words, the postmodern, post-Black paradigm is conceived in opposition to what it defines itself against and not in terms of inclusion or interrelation, so ultimately, he reproduces the foci of black liberation theology, quite contrary to the concept of thirding or third culture, as reconciliation. Much in line with the foci of liberation and restoration in black liberation theology, “post-Black” means here the reinstatement of resistance, in the way bell hooks (1989: 26) proposes “new strategies of resistance”, which, as Cornel West (2007: 2016) remarks regarding black culture, represents “radical contingency and even solicits challenge and danger”. Smith thus appears to reiterate Daniel White Hodge’s (2017: 2) argument that hip-hop has proved a narrative of a “postmodern and post-soul resistance for decades to come. Hip Hop was, and still is, a way to construct thought, question authority, and express anger, frustration, hate, revolutionary” - hardly the way to reconciliation on a large scale and outside certain communities.

Smith’s anti-essentialism promotes a cultural understanding that does not break away from its own black embeddedness. Always already conceived from within the African American culture, the framework of his third culture understanding proves a reification of black cultural values, reflecting an inherent pro-Black stand. Much as the envisioned cultural thirding seeks to implement a multicultural/multiethnic space, it is based on Black cultural normativity. Despite the inclusivity of his cultural philosophy, it is still defined by reproducing oppositionality, on the one hand, against (white) mainstream America and, on the other, previously valid conceptualizations of Blackness - both constituents of his identificatory mechanism. Oppositionality can be seen as reinstating the idea of resistance - a postmodern trait itself but, in African American cultural terms, the reconceptualization of black cultural energies, with expanded scope in a new age.

4. Conclusion

If the cultural and spiritual creolization that thirding refers to in Smith’s post-Black post-white movement represents a new coherent cultural framework, then it is yet to be demarcated as a conglomerate, even if “both identical and non-identical with itself” (Kompridis 2006: 390), despite its postmodern refusal of cultural fixities through resistance. As Jane Anna Gordon (2014: 169) defines, the process is the “combination of closure and openness, of sedimentation and fluidity, and of particular forms of identification gaining coherence through their

recontextualization”. The sedimentation delineates a cultural space, which, in Smith’s case, is recontextualized as a post-racial Christ-centered spiritual-cultural space. Seeking to override the ossified social categories of racialized America and the rigidity of the Black Church, his cultural philosophy is overdetermined by “today’s urban-influenced youth culture” (Smith 2004: 89) deployed against “male, suburban and white” ministries (ibid.), which ultimately equals white, class-informed, and racist, and keeps him entrapped in the racial binary. Smith’s ideological position is revealed through his universal definition of white churches as upper-middle class and male in orientation, oblivious of other, though white, but not middle-class or non-urban churches that do not fit his scheme.

The drawbacks do not undercut the important and fruitful mission work Smith has been doing, especially as he has continued his work in a self-reflexive way, regarding the heterogeneity of experiences of individuals in different social groups (see Smith 2017: 12), the acknowledgment of “a need for ethnic-specific or homogeneous congregations” (idem: 106), or the particular needs stemming from local experience and localized knowledge. As he confesses in *Killing Us Softly* (2017: 107), “We need churches to build bridges of reconciliation, ensuring that although we function as individual, local congregations, we do not lose sight of our participation in the larger church of God in the world - and that our individual congregations receive the blessing and empowerment that come from being the beloved children of God”.

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WORDS AND CONTEXTS

CONNECTING IDIOMS AND METAPHORS: WHERE COGNITIVE LINGUISTICS MEETS COGNITIVE STYLISTICS

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***Abstract:** The article discusses important issues in the conceptual analysis of English idioms based on a multilayered online processing view of metaphor and the cognitive stylistic analysis of idioms, in an attempt to reconcile the two lines of research. The study focuses on idioms grouped under the semantic category of argument and conflict. First, the idioms are analysed from the perspective of the multilayered online processing view of metaphor. Second, the relevant cognitive stylistic features of idioms are described. The hypothesis that the multilevel view of metaphor can help establish certain conceptual regularities in semantically related idioms is investigated.*

***Keywords:** cognitive stylistics, conceptual metaphor, extended idiomatic metaphor, idiom, linguistic metaphor, multilevel view of metaphor*

1. Introduction

Compared to other long-standing traditions within linguistics, cognitive linguistics, metaphor research and metaphorical idioms, among other topics, qualify as fairly recent research foci of linguistic inquiry. As regards idioms in particular, the last several decades have seen numerous publications on the topic, the needs to describe their functions (Gibbs and Colston 2012), semantic transparency/opacity and decomposition (Turner and Littlemore 2023), pedagogical (Bui, Boers and Coxhead 2020), and lexicographical applications (Giacomini 2022) being among the most relevant.

However, given some recent developments in the field, such as the introduction of the Cognitive Stylistics Theory (Naciscione 2010) and the Extended Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Kövecses 2020), the time is ripe to zoom in on a context-based cognitive linguistic and cognitive stylistic analysis of English idioms. Naciscione (2010: 68) maintains that the stylistic use of idioms as reproducible language units is driven by the intentional choices made by the language user, a view similar to the characterization of ‘formulaic sequences’ in Psycholinguistics (Wray 2002). On the other hand, the major premise grounded in Kövecses’s theory echoes what could be described as a clash between the ‘primarily relational and primarily non-social’ (Enfield 2017: 13) aspects of ‘more general cognition’ (Langacker 1987: 13) that have been widely utilized in cognitive linguistic explorations and usage-based approaches to language (Bybee 2010). According to a usage-based model, “it is not enough to describe a piece of language structure, a linguistic (sub)system, or a pattern of variance in language.

We must ask why it is that way.” (Enfield 2017: 14) Therefore, the present paper aims to bridge the gap between these two approaches by looking at the conceptual structure of the English idioms based on a multilayered online processing view of metaphor and the cognitive stylistic analysis of idioms. It is hypothesised that, despite being posited as an online processing model, the multilevel view of metaphor can aid in tracing certain conceptual regularities in semantically related idioms, especially when it comes to the levels of image schema, domain, and frame. Besides, it is also argued that with the help of the cognitive stylistic analysis, the intentionality behind the use of a given idiom, and hence the idiom instantiated metaphor, can be determined. The study of the conceptual potential of the idioms also necessitates their (corpus-based) lexical semantic analysis.

2. Material and methodology

The Oxford Dictionary of Idioms, 4th edition, was chosen as the main source of material. Overall, 36 idioms under the category ‘Argument and conflict’ were considered for the analysis. They were selected from the updated thematic index included in the dictionary.

The main approach used in this study rests on Kövecses’s (2020) Extended Conceptual Metaphor Theory. This theory proposes a comprehensive perspective on metaphor that considers various contextual elements, including situational context (mainly consisting of the physical environment, the social situation, and the cultural situation), discourse context (mainly comprising the linguistic context and the common ground), conceptual-cognitive context (based on the conceptual system, ideology, and awareness of past states and events), and bodily context (having to do with a particular state of a body). When it comes to discussing the core principles of metaphor production, Kövecses puts forth a schematic multilevel view of metaphor, which can be realised linguistically, grounded in image schemas (the most schematic level), domains (the less schematic level), frames (the more specific level), and mental spaces (the most specific level).

As regards the cognitive stylistic analysis of the idioms, the term ‘extended idiomatic metaphor’ is adapted from Naciscione’s ‘extended phraseological metaphor’, which the author characterizes as follows:

Extended phraseological metaphor is among the most frequently used patterns of instantial use. The pattern is prototypically present in every case of use when the phraseological image is sustained. Extended metaphor is characterised by a spread of the phraseological image; thus, it is not a single metaphor but a string of sub-images creating associative metaphors tied together, covering an entire area of experience. The pattern stipulates extension of the phraseological image, which is part of the base form, and creation of one sub-image (at least) or several sub-images, based on various associations. Sub-images cluster around the base metaphor of the phraseological unit, creating a cohesive network of various types of associative bonds, immediate or remote, forward or backward, linking things which occur together in space and time. Extension of phraseological image is achieved in the search for a more accurate representation of human thought and experience. (Naciscione 2010: 80)

Apparently, Naciscione coined the term ‘extended phraseological metaphor’ on the basis of extended metaphor, which, in the simplest terms, stands for a sustained use of a single metaphor in discourse. I will be using the term ‘sub-

metaphor' for any metaphors that appear subordinate to the base idiom-instantiated metaphor, instead of Naciscione's 'sub-image', for the sake of terminological consistency.

3. Analysis

3.1. Idioms: a view from the extended conceptual metaphor theory

To further demonstrate the application of the multilevel view of metaphor, let us look at the following example. Despite the common knowledge that certain idiomatic expressions can be based on conceptual metaphors, simplifying the metaphorical idioms solely in this manner would overlook the complexity of the situation. Apparently, metaphorical idioms can be associated with specific metaphorical concepts at one level, but this level is a representation of just one aspect of an intricate hierarchy of schematicity. Additionally, this hierarchy can culminate in various image-schema metaphors that collectively describe the particular idiom. Consider an extract taken from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA):

(1) *I mean, listen, there's something – what's fascinating about China is you got to give Trump and Peter Navarro, who's -- a lot of it's behind – he's behind a lot of the anti-China stuff -- credit for at least enlightening people on what -- how pernicious China is as a global trading partner; how they steal our stuff, how they attack. They're **on the warpath** against us. They have -- they have basically created a cold - a hot war in terms of trade and stealing and theft of intellectual property.* (COCA)

Here the idiomatic expression is *on the warpath*; I shall explore its metaphorical conceptualisation and the sentence within the framework of the multilevel view of metaphor outlined above. Speaking of the most specific level, otherwise known as mental spaces, the country of China is metaphorically represented as a war opponent. The concept of (China's) engaging in illicit economic policies is equated with stepping on the warpath (with the USA). The way the parties engage in this trade, especially China, is likened to military maneuvers. Thus, according to this line of analysis, the idiomatic expression *on the warpath* encompasses specific conceptual metaphors that involve mappings between the source (readiness to a war, in Native American terms) and the target (economic policies) at the level of mental spaces:

CHINA IS A WAR OPPONENT
 CHINA'S INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC POLICIES ARE MILITARY
 MANEUVERS
 CHINA'S ENGAGING IN ILLICIT ECONOMIC POLICIES IS STEPPING ON A
 WARPATH WITH THE USA

At the frame level, the final metaphorical element becomes more generalised. China, which is metaphorically seen as a war opponent, is conceptualised as a military formation, while engaging in an argument is understood as proceeding to a battle. Furthermore, within the typical exchange of goods/commodities/services frame, there are two key participants, i.e., trading partners, one of which is more belligerent than the other. Thus, economic transaction is understood as military hostility, whereas the economic policy is represented as military tactics. Therefore, it can be summarised as follows:

CHINA IS A MILITARY FORMATION
 ECONOMIC POLICY IS MILITARY TACTICS
 ECONOMIC TRANSACTION IS MILITARY HOSTILITY
 ENGAGING IN AN ARGUMENT IS PROCEEDING TO A BATTLE

At the domain level, the typical exchange of goods/commodities/services frame undergoes a transformation and becomes a specific example of the broader concept of international trade. This kind of trade is conceptualised as cold (hot) war. In this metaphorical framework, the political entity that engages in the international trade is metaphorically represented as an army, while engagement is seen as movement. In summary, the metaphors or mappings involved can be described as follows:

ENGAGEMENT IS MOVEMENT
 POLITICAL ENTITY IS AN ARMY
 MANAGEMENT OF AN ECONOMY IS MANAGEMENT OF AN ARMY
 INTERNATIONAL TRADE IS COLD WAR

At the highest level of abstraction, known as image schemas, we arrive at overarching metaphorical conceptualisations that arise from applying various image schemas to the different components of the domain of war. These components include actions, entities, exchanges, and resources. These elements are metaphorically organised through image schemas such as motion, force, forces, and antagonism, resulting in the following metaphors:

ACTION IS MOTION
 ENTITY IS FORCE
 MANAGEMENT OF RESOURCES IS MANAGEMENT OF FORCES
 EXCHANGE IS ANTAGONISM

As evidenced from the above analysis of the idiom *on the warpath*, there is a progressive shift in the level of abstraction of the conceptual metaphor connecting the different layers. The metaphorical concept of China's international economic policies being akin to military maneuvers is more specific than the notion of economic policy as military tactics. The latter is more specific than the idea of management of an economy as management of an army, which, consecutively, is more specific than resources being forces and entity being a force. Similarly, the metaphorical concept of China's engaging in illicit economic policies, perceived as stepping on a warpath with the USA, is less abstract than the idea of engaging in an argument as proceeding to a battle. That being said, the engagement is movement metaphor is more specific than the action is motion metaphor, sitting at the top of the schematicity hierarchy. The final two metaphors in both instances are part of the overarching system, because China's engaging in illicit economic policies is limited not only to an exchange of goods/commodities/services frame, but also to action and entity, which renders the entire hierarchical system immediately meaningful, right down to the metaphor of "stepping on a warpath."

This metaphorical system can be illustrated in the following manner (from most schematic to least schematic). The conceptual metaphors highlighted in bold are interconnected in terms of hierarchical schematicity, and they form the fundamental structure of this metaphor system. The conceptual metaphors in the regular font are, too, related hierarchically, yet they are context-dependent in that

the left-hand side slot is always reliant on a specific context-based frame, other than the exchange of goods/commodities/services frame discussed above.

IMAGE SCHEMA

ACTION IS MOTION

ENTITY IS FORCE

MANAGEMENT OF RESOURCES IS MANAGEMENT OF FORCES

EXCHANGE IS ANTAGONISM

DOMAIN

ENGAGEMENT IS MOVEMENT

POLITICAL ENTITY IS AN ARMY

MANAGEMENT OF AN ECONOMY IS MANAGEMENT OF AN ARMY

INTERNATIONAL TRADE IS COLD WAR

FRAME

CHINA IS A MILITARY FORMATION

ECONOMIC POLICY IS MILITARY TACTICS

ECONOMIC TRANSACTION IS MILITARY HOSTILITY

ENGAGING IN AN ARGUMENT IS PROCEEDING TO A BATTLE

MENTAL SPACE

CHINA IS A WAR OPPONENT

CHINA'S INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC POLICIES ARE MILITARY MANEUVERS

CHINA'S ENGAGING IN ILLICIT ECONOMIC POLICIES IS STEPPING ON A WARPATH WITH THE USA

If the analysis algorithm outlined above is correct, it paves the way for other metaphorical and unilateral idioms denoting argument and conflict to be scrutinised using this method. That being said, 12 additional idioms identified as metaphorical, such as *lock horns*, *cross swords*, *at loggerheads*, *take up the cudgels*, *cut and thrust*, *at daggers drawn*, *add fuel to the fire*, *go to the mat*, *hold the ring*, *running battle*, *be at each other's throats*, and *fight tooth and nail*, were searched for in the COCA and examined by using the multilevel view of metaphor. The idioms will not be discussed individually, but rather the results will be first summarised in Table 1 and then commented on further below.

<i>Lock horns</i>	IS: <i>interaction is counterforce and/or contact; resources are physical substances; resources are enablements (of interaction)</i> DM: <i>conflict is an animal fight and/or intense physical contact, entity / a person is an animal, arguments are animal body parts</i>
<i>Cross swords</i>	IS: <i>interaction is counterforce and/or contact; resources are physical objects; resources are enablements (of interaction)</i> DM: <i>conflict is a knight fight and/or intense physical contact; an entity / person is a knight; arguments are weapons</i>
<i>At loggerheads</i>	IS: <i>interaction is counterforce and/or contact; resources are physical objects; resources are enablements (of interaction)</i> DM: <i>conflict is a fight and/or intense physical contact; an entity/person is a fighter; arguments are weapons</i>
<i>Take up the cudgels</i>	IS: <i>interaction is counterforce and/or contact; resources are physical objects; resources are enablements (of interaction)</i> DM: <i>conflict is a fight and/or intense physical contact; an entity / person is a fighter; arguments are weapons</i>

<i>Cut and thrust</i>	IS: <i>interaction is counterforce and/or contact; resources are physical objects; resources are enablements (of interaction)</i> DM: <i>conflict is a fight and/or intense physical contact; an entity/person is a royal marine; arguments are weapons</i>
<i>At daggers drawn</i>	IS: <i>interaction is counterforce and/or contact; resources are physical objects; resources are enablements (of interaction)</i> DM: <i>conflict is a fight and/or intense physical contact; an entity/person is an armed adversary; arguments are weapons</i>
<i>Add fuel to the fire</i>	IS: <i>interaction (sensation) is a physical process; producing an intense interaction (sensation) is intensifying a physical process</i> DM: <i>conflict (anger) is fire; producing an intense conflict (feeling of anger) is intensifying a physical process of fire</i>
<i>Go to the mat</i>	IS: <i>interaction is counterforce and/or contact; resources are physical forces; resources are enablements (of interaction)</i> DM: <i>conflict is a contact sport and/or intense physical contact; an entity/person is a wrestler; arguments are human bodies</i>
<i>Hold the ring</i>	IS: <i>interaction is counterforce and/or contact; resources are physical forces; resources are enablements (of interaction)</i> DM: <i>conflict is a contact sport and/or intense physical contact; an entity/person is a guard; arguments are human bodies</i>
<i>Running battle</i>	IS: <i>interaction is continual process</i> DM: <i>continual conflict is continual warfare; an entity/person is a fighter</i>
<i>Be at each other's throats</i>	IS: <i>interaction is counterforce and/or contact; resources are physical forces; resources are enablements (of interaction)</i> DM: <i>conflict is a fight and/or intense physical contact; an entity/person is an adversary; arguments are human bodies</i>
<i>Fight tooth and nail</i>	IS: <i>interaction is counterforce and/or contact; resources are physical substances; resources are enablements (of interaction)</i> DM: <i>conflict is an animal fight and/or intense physical contact; an entity/person is an animal; arguments are animal body parts</i>

Table 1: Higher-level conceptual metaphors for the idioms denoting argument and conflict

Table 1 presents the data in the form of idiom listings, paired with the corresponding conceptual metaphors at the highest levels of abstraction (IS – image schemas and DM – domains), which are relatively fixed and hence fundamental for each idiom, irrespective of the context. On the other hand, the conceptual metaphors on the lower levels of frames and mental spaces were understandably not included in the table, because of their variability and dependability on the context. Thus, it was found that when using the majority of the metaphorical idioms under analysis, such as *lock horns*, *cross swords*, *at loggerheads*, *take up the cudgels*, *cut and thrust*, *go to the mat*, *hold the ring*, *be at each other's throats*, and *fight tooth and nail*, at the most schematic level, speakers will most likely think of the argument and conflict interaction in terms of counterforce and/or contact, which is reflected in the image schema metaphor INTERACTION IS COUNTERFORCE AND/OR CONTACT. Moreover, the resources the speakers have at their disposal, when engaged in an argument or conflict, are metaphorically perceived as physical substances, physical objects, and physical forces (abstracted from horns, swords, loggerheads, cudgels, cutlasses, human hands (3 idioms), teeth, and nails, respectively), which the conceptual metaphors at the level of image

schema RESOURCES ARE PHYSICAL SUBSTANCES, RESOURCES ARE PHYSICAL OBJECTS, and RESOURCES ARE PHYSICAL FORCES show. The efforts and/or the intentions that are the driving force behind the speakers' use of the above resources are metaphorically depicted as enablements. This manifests itself in the image schema RESOURCES ARE ENABLEMENTS (OF INTERACTION) conceptual metaphor. What sets these idioms apart conceptually is the source domain, wherein person or entity is likened to an animal (2 idioms), a knight, a fighter (2 idioms), a Royal Marine, an (armed) adversary (2 idioms), a wrestler, and a guard (in a boxing match). This is reflected in the respective conceptual metaphors on the domain level, such as ENTITY/PERSON IS A WRESTLER or ENTITY/PERSON IS AN ANIMAL, for example. Additionally, the dual conceptual metaphor INTERACTION IS COUNTERFORCE AND/OR CONTACT is downgraded to the less schematic domain-level dual metaphor CONFLICT IS A FIGHT AND/OR INTENSE PHYSICAL CONTACT. While the latter metaphor, i.e., CONFLICT IS INTENSE PHYSICAL CONTACT, has been assigned to most of the idioms under analysis, the former metaphor, i.e., CONFLICT IS A FIGHT metaphor is a predominant one (5 idioms), followed by its conceptual varieties, such as CONFLICT IS AN ANIMAL FIGHT (2 idioms), CONFLICT IS A CONTACT SPORT (2 idioms), and CONFLICT IS A KNIGHT FIGHT. Furthermore, with regard to the arguments speakers tend to deploy in conflictual situations, these are predominantly associated with animal body parts (2 idioms), weapons (4 idioms), and human bodies (3 idioms), as can be illustrated through the domain-level metaphor ARGUMENTS ARE HUMAN BODIES, pertaining to the *be at each other's throats* idiom, for example. The situation is slightly different for the idioms *add fuel to the fire* and *running battle*. When it comes to *add fuel to the fire*, it can describe both a sensation, i.e., anger, and a specific type of interaction, for example conflict. Thus, at the highest level of schematicity, we have the conceptual metaphors INTERACTION (SENSATION) IS A PHYSICAL PROCESS and PRODUCING AN INTENSE INTERACTION (SENSATION) IS INTENSIFYING A PHYSICAL PROCESS. At the domain level, these very metaphors become more specific, whereby interaction is conceived of as conflict, sensation is depicted as anger, and the physical process is described as fire, which the relevant metaphors at the level of domain show, as in CONFLICT (ANGER) IS FIRE and PRODUCING AN INTENSE CONFLICT (FEELING OF ANGER) IS INTENSIFYING A PHYSICAL PROCESS OF FIRE. In the case of the idiom *running battle*, argument and conflict are perceived as a continual process at the highest level of schematicity, as the conceptual metaphor INTERACTION IS CONTINUAL PROCESS at the level of image schema demonstrates. Based on this, the domain-level conceptual metaphors CONTINUAL CONFLICT IS CONTINUAL WARFARE and AN ENTITY/PERSON IS A FIGHTER are arrived at.

3.2. Idioms: a view from cognitive linguistics and cognitive stylistics

The time is ripe to now turn to how the extended conceptual metaphor theory can benefit from the application of some cognitive stylistics ideas, namely the concept of extended metaphor. For this purpose, an extract taken from the British National Corpus (BNC) will be considered.

(2) *Although things change in fishing, as in any other industry, I feel that we are travelling familiar waters tonight. We are gathered here a little before Christmas to perform our annual fishing industry pre-ministerial Council season's service--that litany of woe from every corner of the kingdom--telling of sad tidings of discomfort and no joy in the industry. In fact, the position is not as bad as in the recent past, but we are still not there yet, because there is no question but that any extra cuts in quotas must mean hardship.*

I suspect that we all know our lines--we have heard several of them repeated tonight--and, like a pantomime by a well-loved local drama group, we fishing industry Members of Parliament will perform well in this packed House. I am sorry that that old favourite, the very nauseating tie usually worn by the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), is not with us, although the hon. Gentleman has just arrived. The band of bleating chorus from Scotland is present, with its regular melody, played on the strings of our hearts, about how bad things are north of the border. It gives Conservative Members the occasional chance to shout a seasonal "humbug" or two.

All may be well in the Chamber because we are on familiar ground, but outside in the real world of fish markets and the North Sea, all is not fully well. For the past year or so, all hon. Members except my hon. Friends on the Front Bench have sung from the same hymn book about decommissioning. This year, I am delighted that my hon. Friends have at least found the same page of the hymn book. (BNC)

This paragraph features two instances of idiom use. The sentence ‘*For the past year or so, all hon. Members except my hon. Friends on the Front Bench have sung from the same hymn book about decommissioning*’ exemplifies the use of the base form of the idiom. The sentence ‘*This year, I am delighted that my hon. Friends have at least found the same page of the hymn book*’ illustrates a creative variation of the idiom. In the first place, let us examine these examples from the standpoint of the extended conceptual metaphor theory. According to Kövecses (2020), it is essential to avoid any preconceptions about the superiority of the conceptual metaphor theory and the conceptual integration theory – neither should be deemed as better. Instead, their relationship should be seen as grounded in interconnectedness and complementarity. Although Kövecses does not provide any specific practical examples of analysing idiom blends within the extended conceptual metaphor theory, as his focus lies on the theoretical aspects of the matter, we find it necessary to explore such examples in this current paper.

Let us proceed to analyse these instances based on the multilevel view of metaphor. Regarding the most specific level of mental spaces, a number of mappings reside here. Firstly, the UK Parliament is understood as a church. Secondly, a session in the UK Parliament is interpreted as a gathering of a church choir. Thirdly, the members of the UK Parliament are imagined as singers in a church choir. Fourthly, expressing shared opinions by the members of the UK Parliament is perceived as singing (in unison) in a church choir. The reason ‘in unison’ is placed in brackets is that two different scenarios are accounted for, i.e., the first one where it is directly applicable, as can be seen from the use of the base form of the idiom, *sing from the same hymn book*, and the second one where it is not applicable, as evidenced from the idiom modification. This difference is a crucial one, as it illustrates the intentionality behind using the base form of the idiom (to demonstrate the cohesiveness and solidarity in the Chamber) and the modification (to demonstrate lack thereof). Fifthly, the intellectual resources of the

members of the UK Parliament are thought of as the voices of the singers in a church choir. Finally, the shared knowledge of the members of the UK Parliament can be described in terms of a hymn book. That said, these mappings can be illustrated as follows:

THE UK PARLIAMENT IS A CHURCH
 A SESSION IN THE UK PARLIAMENT IS A GATHERING OF A CHURCH
 CHOIR
 THE MEMBERS OF THE UK PARLIAMENT ARE SINGERS IN A CHURCH
 CHOIR
 EXPRESSING SHARED OPINIONS BY THE MEMBERS OF THE UK
 PARLIAMENT IS SINGING (IN UNISON) IN A CHURCH CHOIR
 THE INTELLECTUAL RESOURCES OF THE MEMBERS OF THE UK
 PARLIAMENT ARE THE VOICES OF THE SINGERS IN A CHURCH
 CHOIR
 THE SHARED KNOWLEDGE OF THE MEMBERS OF THE UK PARLIAMENT
 IS A HYMN BOOK

As regards the level of conceptual frames, the metaphorical elements under analysis assume a broader characterisation. The concept of the UK Parliament undergoes a schematisation to a more general frame of parliament and/or parliamentary work, mainly focussing on such attributes as parliament as an institution, a parliamentary session, the members of parliament, the shared opinions, ideas and/or understanding of situation by the members of parliament, the intellectual resources of the members of parliament, and the knowledge of the members of parliament. This process holds for all the mappings discussed above, rendering them more general, as in:

THE PARLIAMENT IS A CHURCH
 A SESSION IN THE PARLIAMENT IS A GATHERING OF A CHURCH CHOIR
 THE MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENT ARE SINGERS IN A CHURCH CHOIR
 EXPRESSING SHARED OPINIONS BY THE MEMBERS OF THE
 PARLIAMENT IS SINGING (IN UNISON) IN A CHURCH CHOIR
 THE INTELLECTUAL RESOURCES OF THE MEMBERS OF THE
 PARLIAMENT ARE THE VOICES OF THE SINGERS IN A CHURCH
 CHOIR
 THE SHARED KNOWLEDGE OF THE MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENT IS A
 HYMN BOOK

At the level of the conceptual domains, the typical parliament/parliamentary work frame is reorganised into a higher-level concept of cooperation, while the members of parliament and the parliament itself emerge as persons and entity, accordingly. By the same token, the concept of the intellectual resources of the members of parliament is elevated to a notion of cooperation resources. The final metaphorical elements, too, are subjected to a process of schematisation, resulting in a domain matrix associated with *signing in a choir*, namely *sound and/or melody creation process*, *singer*, and *human voices*. Consequently, the following conceptual metaphors are obtained:

DM: COOPERATION IS A SOUND AND/OR MELODY CREATION PROCESS
 DM: THE ENTITY/PERSON IS A SINGER
 DM: COOPERATION RESOURCES ARE HUMAN VOICES

The highest level of abstraction is marked by highly schematic pre-conceptual structures that stem from our basic embodied experience. The application of various image schemas, such as process, sound vibrations and/or actions, and enablements, to the conceptual components of the singing in a choir domain, i.e., interaction and resources, yields the following metaphors:

INTERACTION IS A PROCESS
 RESOURCES ARE SOUND VIBRATIONS AND/OR ACTIONS
 RESOURCES ARE ENABLEMENTS (OF INTERACTION)

Returning one last time to the extended context of the idiom use, this study subscribes to the idea that the use of metaphors in communication is largely influenced by a number of contextual meaning-making elements, such as situational context, discourse context, conceptual-cognitive context, and bodily context (Kövecses 2020: 95-100). To get a better understanding of why the idiom *sing from the same hymn book* and its blended variant were used in the above extract, it seems reasonable to imbue the analysis with these ideas.

In relation to the *situational context*, it is apparent that the speaker and the listeners share a great deal of common ground between them, especially communal common ground (Clark 1996: 100). In other words, Clark places a great emphasis on the person's membership in a cultural community, which, in turn, gives rise to shared expertise. In layman terms, communal common ground may consist in the fact that the speaker and the listeners are UK, Ireland or Commonwealth citizens of at least four different nationalities, i.e., English, Welsh, Irish, and Scots. They may also be linked by their places and locations of residence and education. However, given that anyone who is 18 years old can stand as a candidate in a UK Parliamentary General Election, it follows that the representation of people's concerns and interests in the House of Commons is a top priority in the British society, with the candidate's university education and prior work experience being of secondary significance. Furthermore, the speaker and the listeners share the same language, i.e., English, occupation, and employment as they all are members of the UK Parliament, some of them members of the Conservative Party, the House of Commons, and the annual fishing industry pre-ministerial Council. That said, all the members of the annual fishing industry pre-ministerial Council are well-informed of the agenda against the backdrop of the growing disparity between the northern and the southern regions in the UK and the rising accumulation of wealth among the affluent, often concentrated in London, with a focus on financial and educated elites, fishing quotas in fishing industry being no exception.

As for the *discourse context*, the surrounding (linguistic) context and the extension of metaphor are what can be referred to as touching points between cognitive linguistics and cognitive stylistics in this study. The preceding context provides a glimpse into a wide variety of linguistic metaphors employed by the speaker in a lead up to the conceptual metaphors, such as THE UK PARLIAMENT IS A CHURCH, A SESSION IN THE UK PARLIAMENT IS A GATHERING OF A CHURCH CHOIR, THE MEMBERS OF THE UK PARLIAMENT ARE SINGERS IN A CHURCH CHOIR, etc., subsumed under the base form and variation of the idiom. These sub-metaphors are outlined in Table 2.

Tenor	Mapping	Vehicle
<i>Discuss familiar issues</i>	→	<i>Travel familiar waters</i>
<i>Annual fishing industry pre-ministerial Council</i>	→	<i>Annual Christmas carol service</i>
<i>Litany of joy</i>	→	<i>Litany of woe</i>
<i>Good tidings</i>	→	<i>Sad tidings</i>
<i>Rhetoric</i>	→	<i>Lines</i>
<i>Fishing industry Members of Parliament</i>	→	<i>Theatre actors</i>
<i>Parliamentary committee sitting</i>	→	<i>Pantomime by a well-loved local drama group</i>
<i>Packed House (of Commons)</i>	→	<i>Packed theatre</i>
<i>Reach important decisions</i>	→	<i>Perform well (in public)</i>
<i>Scottish representation in the UK Parliament</i>	→	<i>The band of bleating chorus from Scotland</i>
<i>The rhetoric of the Scottish representation</i>	→	<i>Regular melody, played on the strings of our hearts</i>
<i>Familiar circumstances</i>	→	<i>Familiar ground</i>

Table 2: Extended metaphorical mappings for A SESSION IN THE UK PARLIAMENT IS A GATHERING OF A CHURCH CHOIR

Essentially, what Table 2 demonstrates is a set of linguistic metaphors. They take the form of a vehicle and a tenor joined with an arrow. What the speaker masterfully succeeds in is weaving several metaphors that inhere in different domains together, under the umbrella of the A SESSION IN THE UK PARLIAMENT IS A GATHERING OF A CHURCH CHOIR metaphor. The domains in question relate to fishing industry and fisheries, theatre and performing arts, and, as already discussed, singing in a church choir. The speaker attempts to establish the rapport in the Chambers of the annual fishing industry pre-ministerial Council by introducing a fishing metaphor, that of *travelling familiar waters* for *discussing familiar issues*. He then proceeds to draw parallels between the annual fishing industry pre-ministerial Council and the annual Christmas carol service by means of analogy, as in *litany of woe* for *litany of joy* and *sad tidings* for *good tidings*. Next, he speculates about the agenda and the statements to be made by the members of the Council (which are all but pre-rehearsed and had already been made known publicly prior to their declaration) by exploiting theatre and performing arts metaphors, e.g., *lines* for *rhetoric*, *pantomime by a well-loved local drama group* for *Parliamentary committee sitting*, *packed theatre* for *packed House (of Commons)*, *theatre actors* for *fishing industry Members of Parliament*, *performing well (in public)* for *reaching important decisions*, *the band of bleating chorus from Scotland* for *the Scottish representation in the UK Parliament*, and *the regular melody, played on the strings of our hearts* for *the rhetoric of the Scottish representation in the UK Parliament*. Eventually, the speaker juxtaposes the fishing metaphor *familiar ground*, which implies *familiar circumstances* in discourse, with the idioms *have sung from the same hymn book* and *have at least found the same page of the hymn book*, in an effort to reveal the division within the House of Commons on issues such as fishing quotas in the UK, especially when viewed as an opposition of England and Scotland, where the latter finds itself in the minority and thus underprivileged. In all their totality, these metaphors constitute what can be termed as extended idiomatic metaphors, where a string of sub-metaphors precedes the main idiomatic metaphor.

This brings us to the *conceptual-cognitive context*, which rests on the metaphorical conceptual system, ideology, and knowledge about past events, interests, and concerns. Building on the idiom-instantiated conceptual metaphor THE UK PARLIAMENT IS A CHURCH and its corresponding variations, one might hypothesise that they are part of the broader overarching metaphor POLITICS IS RELIGION, which may serve as an explanation of the speaker's use of the idiom *sing from the same hymn book* and the intentionality behind creating the blend *have at least found the same page of the hymn book*. In terms of ideology, noteworthy is the fact that, although the links between the Conservative Party and the Church have often been described as weak, the Conservatives remain the party of Christianity for the foreseeable future (Catterall 1994: 640). That is to say, the speaker's choice of the idiom was presumably governed by the then political ideology of his party. In addition, it is evident that Mr. David Porter in this very case builds on his personal experience and interests as, before going into Parliament, he had served as a co-founder and director of the Vivid Children's Theatre and Head of Drama at Benjamin Britten High School in Lowestoft, which may offer an explanation of his prowess in using such 'flowery' language.

4. Discussion and conclusion

Generally speaking, idioms provide a fertile ground for cognitive linguistic explorations, although certainly to a varying extent. The results of the present study demonstrate that, while there are idioms that are metaphor-based or, put otherwise, metaphorical, there are others that seem inextricably related to metonymy, hyperbole, proverbial wisdom, social interaction, etc. Despite the fact that it is metaphorical and unilateral idioms that are best suited to being tested within the framework of the Extended Conceptual Metaphor Theory, in quantitative terms, however, they are not increasingly prevalent, as evidenced from the study material, accounting only for 36% of the semantic category 'Argument and conflict'. It is likely that this tendency will hold for the other semantic categories, such as 'Bribery, corruption, and extortion', 'Critics and criticism', etc., which are out of the scope of this study and would therefore require further conclusive evidence.

I had a good reason to assume that, conceptually, idioms are multilevel structures, in the sense that they may be attributed to a complex hierarchy of schematic metaphorical ideas, ranging from image schemas as most abstract ones down to domains, frames, and mental spaces. There are, however, several caveats complicating this assumption. Throughout his book, Kövecses (2020: 70, 145, 147) spares no effort to emphasise that image schemas, domains, and frames are decontextualized conceptual patterns that are experiential and inhere in our long-term memory, as opposed to mental spaces that are assembled online and belong in our working-memory. In other words, mental spaces are context-dependent, while image schemas, domains, and frames are context-independent. At the same time, he (2020: 105) theorises that context may undergo dynamic changes each time a new mental space is created. What that essentially means is that the repeated exposure to the contextual factor may render frames contextually-dependent, too. I believe that this is exactly the case with idioms. To demonstrate, consider the following examples from the COCA.

(3) *The Depression brought terrible unemployment to the shipping industry. Labour MPs **took up the cudgels** on the seamen's behalf in parliament by declaring that Black, Lascar and Coolie labour that is not British' was taking work away from the English Jack Tar'. (COCA)*

(4) *President Nicolas Sarkozy, never known for being overly concerned about things cultural, **took up the cudgels** at the last IOF summit. He bitterly criticized French diplomats who "are happy to speak English, " rather than French, which is "under siege."* (COCA)

Evidently, not only do we have differing mental spaces here, we are dealing with different frames recruited as well, such as *shipping industry* and *language policy*. As for the image schemas and domains, in my opinion, they remain entirely consistent with the ones defined in Table 1.

This pilot study focused on establishing conceptual regularities in English idioms denoting argument and conflict and idioms denoting cooperation, resting on the multilevel theory of metaphor. The outcomes suggest, when speaking of the most schematic conceptual level, that image schemas such as INTERACTION IS COUNTERFORCE AND/OR CONTACT, RESOURCES ARE PHYSICAL SUBSTANCES, AND RESOURCES ARE ENABLEMENTS (OF INTERACTION) have been found to underlie the majority of the idioms denoting argument and conflict.

Based on these results, I can refer back to my hypothesis, postulated at the beginning. My hypothesis claimed that the multilevel theory of metaphor can help discover certain conceptual regularities in semantically related idioms, especially on the levels of image schema, domain, and frame. The outcomes of the conceptual semantic analysis do not fully support this; hence I need to partially dismiss this hypothesis.

The cognitive stylistic analysis of the idioms under the auspices of the Extended Conceptual Metaphor Theory is nothing else but yet another attempt to bring conceptual and linguistic metaphor together. In the present case, it was the notion of extension, namely of metaphor and context, that was the common denominator in pursuing this goal successfully. First, by means of the surrounding context, I was able to pin down the extended idiomatic (linguistic) metaphor under analysis and illustrate its progression in discourse. Second, exploiting the notion of *conceptual-cognitive context* (Kövecses 2020), the interrelationship between the metaphorical conceptual system and ideology and the speaker's knowledge about past events, interests, and concerns, i.e., speaker's purported intentionality regarding the use of the idiom and the extended metaphor, was addressed. In addition, it is worth pointing out that the example of the extended metaphor discussed above presents a novel type of extended idiomatic metaphor. Naciscione (2010: 81, 82) mentions the following types of extended idiomatic metaphor: (1) one or several sub-images go back to the same base constituent; (2) a string of sub-images; (3) two or several notional base components extended. Otherwise said, she maintains that the extension of metaphor is a linear process, whereby an idiomatic metaphor is first introduced in discourse and then followed by a cluster of associated metaphors. In our case, however, we first have a cluster of subordinate metaphors culminating in the superordinate idiomatic metaphor.

It might be then reasonable to conclude that forging an alliance between cognitive linguistics, cognitive stylistics, and the study of idioms is a complex undertaking that is still in the making and needs to be addressed in the forthcoming linguistic inquiries. Despite its limitations, I am hopeful that, with this study, I have at least managed to lay the initial groundwork in this direction.

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EQUIVALENT SYNTACTIC PATTERNS IN THE IDIOMATIC EXPRESSION OF EMOTION

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Abstract: *This paper provides a contrastive study of idioms with a verbal base that convey emotional or mental states. My aim is to show that a typology of psych idioms can be outlined along a syntactic criterion, namely the position held by the Experiencer argument in the thematic grid of the idiom. To demonstrate this, I bring evidence from four languages: English, German, Romanian and Italian and highlight instances of equivalence.*

Keywords: *equivalence, experiencer, psych idiom, thematic grid, verbal idiom*

1. Introduction

According to Nunberg, Sag and Wasow (1994), two types of idiomatic expressions can be distinguished: idiomatic phrases (IdPs), which comprise idioms with an idiomatic interpretation not derived from the meaning of their constituent elements (e.g. *kick the bucket* - “to die”) and idiomatically combining expressions (ICEs), which refer to idioms with a derivable idiomatic interpretation (e.g. *pull strings* - “to use connections”). In other words, the global meaning of the idiom, whether unpredictable or predictable, helps us distinguish between pure idioms and partial idioms. In a pure idiom, the meaning of the whole idiom is totally different from the meaning of the components, while in partial idioms certain components preserve their literal meaning.

Focusing on psychological idioms, Dabrowska (2018: 151) argues that both psych-verbs and their idiomatic counterparts are related to the same emotion domains, i.e., HAPPINESS, SADNESS, ANGER, FEAR, and DISGUST, which are assumed to be stable across cultures. She examines the most canonical type of verbal idioms, i.e., idioms consisting of a lexical verb and a direct object, and the syntactic patterns that she identifies are:

Type (A): V + NP (no open position) *paint the town (red)*

Type (B): V + NP + PP *carry a torch for X*

Type (C): V + NP + PP *hold X in contempt*

Type (D): V + possessor + N + PP *lose Y's heart to X*

Type (E): V + NP + NP (Double Object Construction) *give Y the blues*

These idioms almost invariably contain agentive verbs that always have an object-noun phrase (NP), followed or not by a prepositional phrase (PP).

In contrast to Dabrowska’s account, my research aims to highlight the importance of the thematic roles in outlining a typology of psych idioms in four

languages. I apply the three-class typology of psych verbs elaborated in Belletti and Rizzi (1988) to the study of psych idioms, which are idiomatic expressions that have a meaning equivalent to that of psych predicates. Both idiomatic phrases and psych-verbs refer to the presence of a human participant, experiencing a particular emotional or mental state, i.e., an *Experiencer*, and a *Stimulus/ Causer/ Cause/ Target*, which has triggered this specific state or has become a target of it.

For the analysis of psych idioms, I mainly rely on O'Grady (1998: 294-309), who deals with the thematic roles of the NPs in idioms and predicts the thematic grids in verbal idioms in English:

transitive verbs <Agent, Theme> *kick the bucket*
<Agent, Location> *skate on thin ice*
intransitive verbs <Theme, Location/ Goal> *be in hot water*
ditransitive verbs (with a PP) <Agent, Theme, Goal> *feed x to the lion*
<Agent, Theme, Location> *pull the rug out from under x*
ditransitive verbs (in Double-Object constructions)
<Agent, Recipient, Theme> *lend x a hand*

Thus, verbal idioms can be grouped according to the verb on which they are based and the thematic roles assigned to their arguments.

I also intend to check whether there are equivalent idioms in the four languages. Within the framework of contrastive phraseology, Korhonen (2007: 577) discusses interlingual phraseological equivalence, which can be approached quantitatively or qualitatively.

Quantitative equivalence is based on the number of phraseological equivalents found in the languages under consideration. Three types can thus be distinguished: mono-equivalence, poly-equivalence and zero equivalence, when one, several or no phraseological equivalent is available in the languages examined.

Qualitative phraseological equivalence, on the other hand, relies on similarity of denotative meaning, structure (or morpho-syntactic features) and lexical realisation. Three types of qualitative equivalence are explored: full, partial and replacement equivalence. Full equivalence is defined as identity of phraseologisms at all levels of analysis: denotative meaning, structure and lexical realisation. The majority of totally equivalent phraseologisms are internationalisms derived from a common cultural background. Partial equivalence implies similar denotative meaning, but differing morpho-syntactic and/or lexical realisation. Replacement (or zero) equivalence means that there is no phraseological equivalent in one language for a phraseological unit in another language and the meaning of a phraseologism can only be rendered by non-phraseological counterparts, like a free word combination or a lexeme in the other language. I will use the qualitative approach to phraseological equivalence in my examination of psych verbal idioms.

2. A typology of psych idioms

In this paper, I intend to demonstrate that psych idioms, just like psych verbs, always encode an Experiencer in their thematic grid; I shall support this assumption with illustrative data, selected from four languages: English, German, Romanian, and Italian. The paper incorporates the key findings of previous research on this topic, by Bejan, Vărămuț (2021), Bejan (2019), and Bejan (2014),

in which we applied O'Grady's analysis to the group of verbal idioms of emotion, contrastively, in pairs of languages.

I shall summarise the data on idiomatic phrases in section 2.1., and on idiomatically combining expressions that comprise a [+part of the human body] NP in section 2.2.; in addition, I shall identify patterns of equivalence. The examples are selected from monolingual dictionaries of idioms (Cowie et al. 1994; Schemann 2012; Dumistrăcel 2011; Zingarelli 2013). For the sake of clarity, idioms in German, Romanian and Italian are followed by their literal (often simplified) translation into English, and by their semantic equivalent in English in a non-idiomatic or, if available, in an idiomatic form, between simple inverted commas.

2.1. The Experiencer as an argument in idiomatic phrases

The Experiencer argument in psych idioms, like that of psych verbs, can appear in subject position or in object position, thereby dividing psych idioms into Subject Experiencer idioms and Object Experiencer idioms.

2.1.1. Subject Experiencer idioms

In this group, I include psych idioms built on stative verbs with two arguments. The subject position is occupied by the Experiencer and the object position by an argument, with the theta-role of Locative in [1], Goal in [2] or Source in [3]:

<Experiencer, Location> (stative verbs)

[1]

- [E] *be over the moon* ('be very happy')
be in the seventh heaven ('feel extremely happy')
- [G] *im siebten Himmel sein* (lit. 'be in the seventh heaven')
- [R] *a fi în al nouălea cer* (lit. 'be in the ninth heaven')
- [I] *essere/ sentirsi/ stare/ al settimo cielo* (lit. 'be/ feel/ stay in the seventh heaven')

As it can be noticed, the verbal idiom *be in the seventh heaven* has full or total equivalents in several European languages (including French *être au septième ciel* and Spanish *estar en el séptimo cielo*) and may, therefore, be added to the group of Europeanisms, in terms of Piirainen (2005), who proposed a cross-linguistic and cross-cultural study of widespread idioms in Europe and beyond.

On the other hand, with non-stative verbs, the Experiencer argument in subject position can co-occur with a Goal or Path argument in the following partially equivalent idioms:

<Experiencer, Goal/ Path> (non-stative verbs)

[2]

- [E] *hit the roof/ ceiling* ('lose one's temper')
go up the wall ('become very angry')
- [G] *an die Decke gehen* (lit. 'go to the ceiling'; 'lose one's temper')
auf die Palme gehen (lit. 'go up the palm tree'; 'lose one's temper')
an den Wänden hochgehen (lit. 'climb on the walls'; 'lose one's temper')
die Wände hochgehen (lit. 'climb the walls'; 'lose one's temper')
- [R] *a se urca pe pereți / pe tavan* (lit. 'climb on walls/ on ceiling'; 'lose one's temper')
- [I] *andare in orbita* (lit. 'go into orbit'; 'lose one's temper')

Semantically, these idioms with a motion verb (*go, climb, hit*) denote a quick shift in emotional state, namely suddenly becoming angry. The Goal argument is realised by a PP with the noun *ceiling* in English, German and Romanian or *walls* in Romanian. The noun *walls* bears the thematic role Path in the Romanian idiom *a se urca pe pereți*, literally translated as ‘climb on walls’ and in its German equivalent, *an den Wänden hochgehen*, but also the Patient role in the German variant *die Wände hochgehen* (lit. climb the walls) or in the English idiom *go up the wall*.

The following thematic grid covers verbal idioms that take, in addition to the Experiencer argument in subject position, a second argument that bears the thematic role of Source of movement:

<Experiencer, Source> (non-stative verbs)

[3]

[G] *aus dem Häuschen geraten* (lit. ‘come out of the cottage’; ‘become angry’)

[R] *a-ți ieși din balamale/ țâțâni/ din pepeni* (lit. ‘get out of one’s hinges/ melons’; ‘become very angry’)

[I] *uscire dai gangheri* (lit. ‘get out of hinges’; ‘lose one’s temper’)

The Source argument is realised by home-related nouns, such as *Häuschen* ‘cottage’ in German, or *hinges* in Romanian and Italian. Though these idioms are semantically similar, as all denote a shift of emotions – suddenly losing one’s temper, they are not equivalent lexically (the Source argument can have alternative NP realisations in Romanian: *balamale/ țâțâni* ‘hinges’ or *pepeni* ‘melons’). The noun *hinges* also occurs in the English idioms *be/ go off one’s hinges* but they convey loss of control or rationality in a person, rather than an emotional state.

The verbs on which these idioms are based denote motion, *get/ go/ come out of*, and typically occur in intransitive configurations; additionally, in Romanian, the Experiencer argument in subject position co-occurs with a reflexive pronoun (*iși/și*) in the Dative case, with a possessive meaning, which is a language specific feature. Since these psych idioms are slightly divergent morpho-syntactically and lexically, they are partially equivalent.

In broad lines, the selection of Subject Experiencer idioms clearly shows that these thematic grids allow for a certain degree of similarity in the realisations of the NP arguments, which results in psych idioms that are semantically equivalent, most of them expressing emotions such as: happiness, annoyance or anger.

2.1.2. Object Experiencer idioms

With this group of psych idioms, the argument with the thematic role of Experiencer occurs as object, in the Accusative case in [4], [5] or in the Dative case in [6], [7] in Romanian and German:

<Agent, Experiencer, Goal/ Path>

[4]

[E] *drive sb. up the wall* (‘annoy sb. continually’)

drive sb. round the bend (‘annoy sb.’)

[G] *jemanden. auf die Palme bringen* (lit. ‘bring sb. up a palm tree’; ‘make sb. angry’)

jemanden. in Harnisch bringen/ jagen (lit. ‘bring/ hunt sb. to armour’; ‘annoy sb.’)

[R] *a băga pe cineva în draci/ în boală* (lit. ‘put sb. in devils/disease’; ‘annoy sb.’)

These psych idioms have different lexical and syntactic realisations and are, therefore, partially equivalent, but they convey the same idiomatic meaning, expressing annoyance or anger.

<Agent, Experiencer, Source>

[5]

[E] *drive sb. out of one's mind* ('make sb. feel very annoyed')

[G] *jemanden aus dem Häuschen bringen* (lit. 'take sb. out of the small house'; 'make sb. angry')

[R] *a scoate pe cineva din pepeni/ balamale/ țâțâni* (lit. 'to take sb. out of melons/ hinges'; 'enrage sb.')

[I] *fare uscire qualcuno dai gangheri* (lit. 'make sb. get out of hinges'; 'enrage sb.')

mandare fuori qualcuno dai gangheri (lit. 'take sb. out of hinges'; 'make sb. angry')

These idioms, built on causative verbs, have similar meanings, namely 'making sb. angry'. There is lexical equivalence between the Romanian idiom *a scoate pe cineva din balamale/ țâțâni* (lit. to take sb. out of hinges) and the Italian idiom *mandare fuori qualcuno dai gangheri* (lit. take sb. out of hinges), but the English and the German idioms grouped under this thematic grid are lexically and syntactically different. The Romanian and the Italian verbal idioms in [5] can be analysed as Object Experiencer counterparts of the Subject Experiencer idioms illustrated in [3].

Additionally, there are several Object Experiencer idioms with a fixed subject, expressed by a unique NP, and an Experiencer in indirect object position. Such idioms can be grouped under two thematic grids, for which sample idioms are available in German and Romanian, but, apparently, not in English and Italian:

<Theme, Experiencer>

[6]

[G] *jemandem geht der Hut hoch* (lit. 'the hat goes up to sb. '; 'lose one's temper')

jemandem platzt/reißt die Hutschnur (lit. the hat cord bursts/ tears to sb.; 'lose one's temper')

jemandem platzt der Kragen (lit. 'the collar bursts to sb. '; 'lose one's temper')

jemandem gehen die Pferde durch (lit. 'the horses go through to sb. '; 'lose one's temper')

[R] *a i se îneca cuiva corăbiile* (lit. 'the ships sink to sb. '; 'become sad')

a-i sări cuiva muștarul (lit. 'the mustard jumps to sb. '; 'lose one's temper')

<Theme, Experiencer, Location>

[7]

[G] *bei jemandem ist Feuer unterm Dach* (lit. 'fire is at sb. under roof'; 'be nervous')

[R] *a nu-i fi toți boii acasă* (lit. 'all oxen are not at home to sb. '; 'be upset')

The analysis of the psych idioms with a fixed subject reveals that all denote a sudden shift of emotion, mostly anger or sadness, but their lexical and syntactic realisations are different in these two languages. As can be noticed, the translation of the German and Romanian Object Experiencer idioms in [6], [7] into English is rendered by a Subject Experiencer verb or idiom, which points to zero equivalence in English.

2.2. The Experiencer in idiomatically combining expressions with a [+part of the human body] NP

In all languages, there are idiomatically combining expressions, in which one component denotes a part of the human body, very often *heart* or *blood*, that is typically associated with or affected by an emotional state. Since the body part nouns retain their regular, emotion-related meaning, I will refer to such expressions as ‘partial idioms.’ According to Palmer (1976:99), in a partial idiom, one word maintains its usual meaning, while the other word has a meaning that is peculiar to a certain sequence.

In English, the Experiencer has a non-argument status, being realised as a possessive adjunct attached to a [+part of the human body] NP that occurs in subject position, as in [8a], or object position, as in [8b]:

- [8]
 a. *One’s heart is in one’s mouth.* (‘one suddenly feels very afraid’)
 b. *make somebody’s flesh/ skin crawl / creep* (‘scare/frighten and revolt/ disgust sb.’)

In what follows I shall examine another type of idiomatically combining expressions, namely those that take an Experiencer in argument position and include a [+part of the human body] NP that bears the thematic role of Location, Patient or Goal.

2.2.1. Location

With such idiomatically combining expressions, the [+part of the human body] NP is assigned the theta-role of Location or Locative, while the Experiencer occurs in subject position in the thematic grid given in [9], [10] or in object position in [11]:

Subject-Experiencer partial idioms
 <Experiencer, Patient, Location>

- [9]
 [E] *keep/ have sb. in one’s heart*
 [G] *jemanden im Herzen tragen* (lit. ‘carry sb. in the heart’; ‘have sb. in one’s heart’)
 [R] *a avea pe cineva în /la inimă* (lit. ‘have sb. in/at heart’; ‘have sb. in one’s heart’)
 [I] *avere qualcuno nel/ a cuore* (lit. ‘have sb. in the/ at heart’; ‘have sb. in one’s heart’)

These idiomatically combining expressions are fully equivalent in the four languages, with a minor difference in English, where a possessive form obligatorily precedes the body part noun.

The following thematic grid includes an argument with the thematic role of Instrument, realised by nouns like *nail/ thorn* that are suggestive of the cause of the state of anxiety.

- <Experiencer, Instrument, Location>
 [10]
 [R] *a avea un cui în/ la inimă/ în coastă* (lit. ‘have a nail in/at heart/ in rib’; ‘worry about sth.’)
 a avea/ a simți un ghimpe la inimă (lit. ‘have/ feel a thorn at heart’; ‘be upset’)
 [I] *avere una spina nel cuore/ fianco* (lit. ‘have a thorn in the heart/ side’; ‘be upset’)

The Italian partial idiom *avere una spina nel cuore/ fianco* (lit. have a thorn in the heart/ side) has a different lexical realisation in Romanian. However, English also makes available a partial idiom with the noun *thorn*, *be a thorn in sb's side/ flesh*, but the Experiencer occurs in an adjunct phrase, not as an argument in subject position. In German, the corresponding partial idiom with the equivalent of the English noun *thorn* is *jemandem ein Dorn im Auge sein* 'lit. be a thorn in the eye to sb.' and it belongs to the class of Object Experiencer partial idioms. Thus, while the Italian and the Romanian partial idioms evince a certain degree of structural and lexical similarity, the English and German counterparts are syntactically different and cannot be subsumed under the same thematic grid.

Object-Experiencer partial idioms

<Cause, Experiencer, Location>

[11]

[G] *jemandem an der Leber nagen / fressen* (lit. gnaw/ eat at the liver to sb.; 'gnaw at sb.')

[R] *a-l roade (pe cineva) la ficați* (lit. 'to gnaw sb. at liver'; 'cause sb. anger/ regret')

a-l seca (pe cineva) la ficați/ la inimă (lit. 'to dry sb. at liver/ heart'; 'worry sb.')

a-l ustura (pe cineva) la ficați (lit. 'to smart/ itch sb. at liver'; 'cause sb. anger/ regret')

This thematic grid includes a Cause in subject position and an Experiencer argument as an object, in the Dative case in German or in the Accusative case in Romanian. There is variation in the choice of the verb, which belongs to the *chew* class of ingestion verbs (Levin 1993: 42), but the meaning of these idioms is identical.

2.2.2. Patient

Idiomatically combining expressions included in this group take a Patient argument, expressed by a NP with the semantic feature [+part of the human body]. The Experiencer argument occurs in subject position in two-place predicate constructions [12], [13] or in object position in three-place predicate configurations [14], [15].

Subject-Experiencer partial idioms

<Experiencer, Patient>

[12]

[E] *tear one's hair out* ('be extremely worried about sth.')

[G] *sich (Dat.) die Haare raufen* (lit. 'pull the hair'; 'tear one's hair out')

[R] *a-și smulge părul din cap* (lit. 'pull the hair out of head'; 'tear one's hair out')

[I] *strappare i capelli* (lit. 'pull the hair'; 'tear one's hair out')

[13]

[E] *eat one's heart out* ('be very sad')

[R] *a-și face inimă rea* (lit. 'make one's heart bitter')

[I] *farsi sangue cattivo/ amaro/ marcio* (lit. 'make one's blood bad/ bitter/ rotten')

The idiomatically combining expressions in [12], based on the verbs *tear/ pull* that belong to the *hurt* class in Levin's (1993: 225) classification, are equivalent in all languages examined. However, there is a difference related to the thematic grid of

the Romanian idiom, which, in addition to an Experiencer and a Patient, also includes a Source argument, expressed by the noun *cap* ‘head’. The partial verbal idioms in [13] have identical meanings, but they are structurally and lexically divergent.

The following two thematic grids take an Experiencer argument in object position in the Dative case and a [+part of the human body] NP with the thematic role of Patient.

Object-Experiencer partial idioms

<Agent, Experiencer, Patient>

[14]

[G] *jemandem das Herz brechen/ zerreißen* (lit. ‘break/ smash the heart to sb.’)

[R] *a-i răni/ frânge/ rupe/ zdrobi cuiva inima* (lit. ‘hurt/ break/ smash/ crush the heart to sb.’)

[I] *spezzare/ spaccare/ schiantare il cuore a qualcuno* (lit. ‘hurt/ break/ crush the heart to sb.’)

These idiomatically combining expressions allow the same variation in the lexical verb and are, therefore, total equivalents in German, Romanian and Italian. A semantically similar partial idiom is also available in English *break sb.’s heart*, but there are no other lexical options for the verb and the Experiencer occurs in adjunct position, in a two-place, not in a three-place predicate configuration.

<Cause, Experiencer, Patient>

[15]

[R] *a roade cuiva ficatul* (lit. ‘gnaw the liver to sb.’; ‘gnaw at sb., be a source of worry or concern’)

[I] *rodere il fegato a qualcuno* (lit. ‘gnaw the liver to sb.’; ‘cause sb. feel continual anxiety, concern’)

These Object Experiencer partial idioms are lexically and structurally identical in the two languages. Their idiomatic meaning conveys negative emotions, such as anxiety, envy, worrying, etc.

2.2.3. Goal

In the following idiomatically combining expressions, the noun with the semantic feature [+part of the human body] is assigned the thematic role of Goal, whereas the Experiencer argument functions either as subject, in [16], or as indirect object in [17], [18]. The verbal basis is always a three-place predicate.

Subject-Experiencer partial idioms

<Experiencer, Theme, Goal>

[16]

[E] *take sth. to heart* (‘be deeply affected’)

[G] *sich (Dat) etwas zum Herzen nehmen* (lit. ‘take sth. to heart’; ‘be deeply affected’)

[R] *a pune ceva la inimă* (lit. ‘put sth. to heart’; ‘be deeply affected’)

[I] *mettere qualcosa nel cuore* (lit. ‘put sth. to the heart’; ‘be deeply affected’)

These Subject Experiencer idiomatically combining expressions are another instance of partial idiomatic equivalence, with an identical verb, *take*, in English and German, but a different verb, *put*, in Romanian and Italian. There is also a

minor syntactic difference concerning the predicate configuration in German, where the lexical verb occurs as a reflexive verb with an obligatory Dative pronoun (*sich*).

Object-Experiencer partial idioms

The [+part of the human body] NP with a Goal theta-role can also be found in the thematic grid of the Object Experiencer idioms shown below:

< Theme, Experiencer, Goal >

[17]

[G] *etwas fährt/ steigt jemandem in die Nase* (lit. 'sth. gets/climbs to sb. in the nose'; 'to get a noseful of sth.')

etwas geht jemandem an die Nieren (lit. 'sth. gets to sb. at the kidneys'; 'sth. bothers sb.')

[R] *a-i merge cuiva ceva drept la inimă* (lit. 'sth. goes to sb. straight to heart'; 'sth. goes straight to sb.'s heart')

<Agent, Experiencer, Theme, Goal >

[18]

[R] *a-i pune cuiva venin la inimă* (lit. 'put to sb. poison to heart'; 'upset sb.')

a da cuiva cu piper pe la nas (lit. 'give sb. with pepper about nose'; 'annoy sb.')

The idiomatically combining expressions illustrated in the thematic grid in [17] are available in Romanian and in German. They are built on motion verbs, but they have different meanings and are lexically and structurally divergent. The Romanian psych partial idioms in [18] do not have equivalents in the other three languages.

Idiomatically combining expressions with a fixed subject also deserve attention. The [+part of the human body] NP, functioning as unique subject, bears the theta-role of Theme in [19] or Goal in [20]. In both patterns the Experiencer occurs in dative object position:

<Theme, Experiencer >

[19]

[G] *jemandem kommt die Galle hoch*, (lit. 'the bile goes up to sb. '; 'become angry or bitter')

jemandem sträuben sich die Haare (lit. 'the hair bristles to sb. '; 'sb's hair bristles')

[R] *a-i îngheța cuiva ficatii* (lit. 'the liver freezes to sb. '; 'get frightened')

a i se înmuia cuiva picioarele (lit. 'the legs weaken to sb. '; 'get scared')

a i se rupe cuiva băierile inimii (lit. 'the heart straps break to sb. '; 'get upset')

These Object Experiencer partial idioms, available in German and Romanian, are syntactically and lexically divergent and are, therefore, an illustration of zero equivalence. Moreover, their translation into English is rendered by a Subject Experiencer predicate.

< Theme, Experiencer, Goal >

[20]

[G] *jemandem schiesst/ steigt das Blut ins Gesicht/ in den / zu Kopf* (lit. 'the blood shoots/ rises to sb. in the face/ the head'; 'one's blood rushes to one's head')

[R] *a i se urca cuiva sângele la cap* (lit. 'the blood rises to sb. to head'; 'one's blood rushes to one's head')

The German and the Romanian partial idioms in [20] evince identity in meaning, but differences in the predicate configuration (reflexive in Romanian) and in the lexical realisation (in the German idiom there is a choice between two verbs and two body part nouns).

Within the thematic grid configuration in [21], the fixed subject can also be expressed by nouns like *mustard*, *pepper*, *fly*, that connote annoyance, anger or anxiety:

[21]

[R] *a-i veni cuiva muștarul/musca la nas* (lit. ‘the mustard/ fly comes to nose to sb.’;

‘become angry’)

a i se sui /a-i veni cuiva) piperul la nas (lit. ‘the pepper goes/ comes to nose to sb.’; ‘become angry’)

[I] *venire la senape/ mostarda/mosca al naso a qualcuno* (lit. ‘mustard/ fly comes to nose to sb.’; ‘become angry’)

[22]

[R] *a-i intra cuiva un cui la inimă* (lit. ‘a nail enters/ goes into heart to sb.’; ‘worry sb.’)

a i se pune cuiva un ghimpe la inimă (lit. ‘a thorn sticks/ goes into heart to sb.’; ‘worry sb.’)

All idiomatically combining expressions with a fixed subject in [21] are built on motion verbs like *come*, *enter*, *climb*, *rise*; the idiomatic meaning is identical, but there are minor differences in the lexical realisation and in the syntactic configuration of such idioms in the two languages.

The Romanian idioms in [22] have a unique subject realised by nouns like *cui* ‘nail’, *ghimpe* ‘thorn’ that suggest tormenting anxiety; syntactically, these idioms behave like Object Experiencer counterparts of the Subject Experiencer pure idioms illustrated in [10].

2.3. Equivalence patterns in the idiomatic expression of emotion

My research results show that the theory of thematic grids allows us to establish subclasses of idioms and to deal with similarities and differences between or among groups of idioms in the languages under investigation. The table below gives a clear synopsis of the conclusions I have reached regarding idiomatic phrases:

Psych idiom type	Thematic grid	E	G	R	I
SubjExp	<Experiencer, Location>	v	v	v	V
	<Experiencer, Goal/Path>	v	v	v	V
	<Experiencer, Source>		v	v	V
ObjExp	<Agent, Experiencer, Goal/ Path>	v	v	v	
	<Agent, Experiencer, Source>	v	v	v	V
	with fixed subject <Theme, Experiencer>		v	v	
	with fixed subject <Theme, Experiencer, Location>		v	v	

Table 1. Thematic grids shared by IdP (idiomatic phrases)

These thematic grids have made it possible for us to notice that there is equivalence in the group of Subject Experiencer idioms and Object Experiencer idioms in all four languages, but idioms with a fixed subject are richly represented only in German and Romanian.

The parallel examination of the thematic grids of psych idioms also points to the unavailability of Object Experiencer idioms with simple transitive verbs in all four languages, i.e., the lack of thematic grids with only two theta-roles. This gap can be accounted for by the fact that idioms need an internal argument with a figurative meaning and the Experiencer argument cannot qualify for such an interpretation.

[+ body part] NP	ICE	Thematic grid	E	G	R	I
Location	SE	<Experiencer, Patient, Location>	v	v	v	v
	OE	<Experiencer, Instrument, Location>			v	v
Patient	OE	<Cause, Experiencer, Location>		v	v	
	SE	<Experiencer, Patient>	v	v	v	v
	OE	<Agent, Experiencer, Patient>		v	v	v
Goal		<Cause, Experiencer, Patient>			v	v
	SE	<Experiencer, Theme, Goal>	v	v	v	v
	OE	<Theme, Experiencer, Goal>		v	v	
		<Agent, Experiencer, Theme, Goal>			v	
		with fixed subject <Theme, Experiencer>		v	v	
		with fixed subject <Agent, Experiencer, Goal>		v	v	v

Table 2. Thematic grids shared by ICE (idiomatically combining expressions)

Table 2 provides a tentative inventory of the thematic grids associated with the idiomatically combining expressions with a [+part of the human body] NP. The thematic grids are organised on two criteria: the position of the Experiencer argument and the thematic role assigned to the [+ part of the human body] NP, which can be viewed as Location, Patient or Goal.

The research results, schematically shown in the two tables above, provide the following:

- a typology of psych pure idioms (IdP) based on the position of the Experiencer argument;
- a typology of psych partial idioms (ICE) with a [+part of the human body] NP argument (except for English ICE, where the Experiencer appears in argument or adjunct position);
- a set of semantic, syntactic and/or lexical idiomatic equivalents;
- a range of verbal idioms with a unique subject (and with an empty slot for the Experiencer).

3. Conclusion

Taking the existence of the Experiencer thematic role in the thematic grid of an idiom as a guiding principle, I argued in favour of a typology of psych verbal idioms in four languages. The results of the research have been given in clearly organized tables that demonstrate that there are some patterns in the idiomatic expression of emotions, available in several languages, while others are language specific.

The schematic representation of the thematic grids of psych verbal idioms across the four languages is relevant for further research on idioms. It can be expanded to include other thematic grids in the same languages or data from other languages. It is also useful in creating an inventory of widespread psych verbal idioms that can be labelled as Europeanisms or internationalisms.

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COLOUR IDIOMS AND BUSINESS ENGLISH TERMS

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Abstract: *The article focuses on idioms containing an element of colour that have become economic and business terms. The analysis of these naming units is based on a corpus of 140 idioms comprising eleven different colours, extracted from business English dictionaries. It concentrates on the semantics of these expressions, considering their figurativeness as well as the symbolic nature of colours. Based on the findings that this naming process is productive, methods for incorporating colour idioms into the teaching of English for specific academic purposes are suggested.*

Keywords: *business English, colour, English for specific academic purposes, idioms, terms*

1. Introduction

Idioms are a prominent feature of language use in many contexts, including professional business communication. In business English, idiomatic expressions that contain colour words are widely used to convey complex meanings, ideas, and notions related to finance, economics, and other business domains in a concise and efficient manner. At the same time, colour idioms that have also become business English terms pose significant challenges for non-native speakers, due to their figurative meanings and cultural specificity.

The article explores the connection between business English idioms containing colour words and business English terms related to common economic concepts and situations, e.g. *blue chip*, *green economy*, *grey pound*, *red clause letter of credit*, *yellow sheets*, etc. The reason for this is that economic terms constitute a substantial part of English for specific academic purposes (ESAP), and refer to particular concepts or ideas within the domain of economics and business.

The purpose of this article is to provide a comprehensive analysis of colour idioms functioning as business English terms, exploring their semantic, pragmatic, and cultural dimensions. To achieve this aim, I first review the existing literature on idioms and terms in general and colour idioms in business English in particular, focusing on studies that have examined the functions and meanings of these expressions in different contexts. I then present a corpus-based analysis of a range of colour idioms that are business English terms, analysing their meaning and symbolism in this genre. Finally, I discuss the pedagogical implications of my findings and suggest strategies for teaching and learning these lexical units to ESAP learners.

2. Idioms and terms

Idiomatic expressions and terminology are usually the focus of different areas of linguistics. However, there are similarities between idioms and terms that are not obvious from the definitions below, but become clearer when analysing their characteristics.

The definition of *idiom* given by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2023) is that it is “an expression in the usage of a language that is peculiar to itself either in having a meaning that cannot be derived from the conjoined meanings of its elements ... or in its grammatically atypical use of words.” *Term* is defined as “a word or expression that has a precise meaning in some uses or is peculiar to a science, art, profession, or subject” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2023).

Lexical complexity is common to both idioms and terms. Idioms usually contain two or more lexemes, e.g. *green economy*, *three black crows*, *red clause letter of credit*, but compounds such as *blackmail*, *brownout*, *redlining*, etc. can also be classified as idioms. On the other hand, terms can consist of a string of words for the sake of precision, which is their main characteristic, e.g. *stock exchange*, *gross domestic product*, *asset turnover ratio*, but one-word business English terms (e.g. *austerity*, *barter*, *budget*, *marketing*, *inflation*, *securities*) are more common than single-word idioms. The same can be said about the semantic transparency of idioms and terms, since both can be semantically opaque to a greater or lesser extent, especially to non-experts in the field. Semantic transparency/opaqueness is often linked to figurativeness, which is apparent in idioms such as *blue-collar (jobs)*, *get the tills ringing*, *hush money*, *horse-trading*, *white elephant*, and also in terms from different areas: *black hole*, *Milky Way*, *red dwarf* (astronomy), *mouse*, *Trojan horse*, *worm* (information technology), *bear market*, *bull market*, *offshoring* (economics), etc. These two categories of lexemes are also institutionalised and contained in specialised lexicographical works and dictionaries. Moreover, terms are subject to detailed scrutiny and a process of standardisation. The most striking difference between idioms and terms is in their level of formality. Idioms are considered more informal than terms and are, therefore, used mostly in journalistic texts, advertising, and other informal registers of language, while terms occur in scientific literature – research papers, patents, and coursebooks (Resche 1999).

3. Review of literature dealing with colour idioms

Idioms as a peculiar phenomenon of language have attracted the attention of linguists for a relatively long time. In this section, I shall focus on colour idioms in English in general and their use in economic and business discourse in particular.

Numerous studies have undertaken the contrastive analysis of colour idioms in English and other languages, examining them from various perspectives. Shabasheva and Ignatovich (2020) compared a value component in English and Russian colour idioms and concluded that this component is predominantly negative. The authors also state that the “value attitude to a particular colour by Russian and English speakers indicates differences in the language picture of the world of the two languages” (Shabasheva, Ignatovich 2020: 18).

Similarly, culture as a basis for idioms is highlighted in a study conducted by Fityan and Azcutia (2017), in which they analyse idioms of colour in English,

Arabic, and Spanish, and the way they are translated, literally or with the help of non-literal equivalents; attention is also paid to the translation of idioms with no equivalent in other languages.

Economic discourse is a valuable source of idioms featuring colour, as noted by Vukićević Đorđević. The author asserts that “the majority of idioms are conceptual and not linguistic” (Vukićević Đorđević 2009: 113). Therefore, comprehending the overall meanings of colours can be of aid in understanding certain idiomatic expressions. However, this is not always the case, and knowing the origin of an idiom and reading or hearing it in an appropriate context serves to facilitate its comprehension.

Mykhaylenko (2018: 101) adds that “the symbolic meaning of the colour is not a constant value” and suggests translating English metaphorical economic terms into the target language (in this particular case into Ukrainian) by using modulation, literal translation, and explicatory translation.

Colour idioms used in economic discourse are the focus of two studies by Rotaru. In one research, she investigates the fixity of idioms as a typical characteristic and concludes that they “manifest a relative degree of variability and prove that they can be exploited creatively, giving birth to new concepts and idioms” (Rotaru 2019a: 311). The author also studies idiomatic manifestations of colours in economic discourse, using the perspective of conceptual metaphor, and further compares them with their Romanian translations. Rotaru’s research indicates that cross-cultural communication has been facilitated by the assimilation of English colour idioms in other languages, as a result of English being the *lingua franca* in the business world these days (Rotaru 2019b).

Ivanyan (2022) refers to colour terms in economic discourse as *transterms*, due to their origin in the science of colours and their subsequent transfer to another scientific field, specifically economics, where they have been adopted. He (2022: 1729) then analyses colour terms represented through the conceptual metaphors of COLOUR IS ECONOMICS, COLOURS ARE PEOPLE, and COLOUR IS STRATEGY.

Research on colour idioms in the economic discourse indicates that they can be a productive tool for enriching specialised economic terminology. The comprehension of idioms is closely linked to cultural concepts, and therefore can be facilitated by etymology and conceptual metaphors.

4. Analysis of colour idioms as business English terms

The analysis presented in this paper draws on idioms extracted from Cambridge Business English Dictionary (CBED 2011) and Oxford Business English Dictionary (OBED 2005), supplemented by terms from Investopedia.

Idiomatic expressions that include an element of colour, but are not exclusively related to economics or business, e.g. *out of the blue*, *to see red*, *green with envy*, *all cats are grey by night*, were omitted from the corpus, as they are not terms of business English. On the other hand, proper nouns that are used as common concepts are included in the corpus, e.g. *Yellow Pages*, *Bluetooth*, *Blu-ray*.

The corpus comprises 140 colour idioms that are also terms of business English. In total, there are ten colours included, with numbers in brackets, indicating the number of occurrences in the corpus: green (32), black (22), white (14), red (14), blue (13), golden (12), pink (10), grey (10), yellow (6), brown (4),

and silver (3). They are listed according to the number of idioms in which the colour appears, from the most to the least frequent.

Syntactically, most of the 140 idioms are noun phrases or compounds, which is typical for technical terminology, including economic-related terms in English. Only one verb phrase was attested (*to go green*) and four lexemes can function as both a noun and a verb (*blackmail, greenmail, greenwash, pink-slip*). The three prepositional phrases identified in the corpus relate to the financial situation of a company (*in the black, in the red, in the pink*). Finally, the terms referring to the type of work people do (*blue-collar, green-collar, pink-collar*) are categorised as adjectives.

In the case of differences between the British and the American orthography, such as *grey* vs. *gray*, only the British spelling was taken into consideration, because it is taught in Slovak schools, where British textbooks are predominantly used.

In the corpus, I have not singled out idioms that are labelled as Americanisms (*gray dollar, greenback*) or considered as such because they originated in the US (*Black Friday, blue-sky laws, green card, white coat rule*), as they are widely used around the world, thanks to globalisation and the use of English as the lingua franca of business.

Finally, it is rare for the colour idioms in my corpus to be classified as informal (*red-eye flight, greenback, red-hot*), which is due to the fact that they have become economic English terms, whose level of formality is higher.

4.1. Green

Green is the colour that represents nature, growth, vitality, positivity, and consequently also the environment. Ecology being one of the main concerns in the present-day society, economy included, it is unsurprising that the overwhelming majority of idioms involving the colour *green* pertain to the ecological and environmental realm: *go green, green architecture, green audit, green building, green business, green certification, green-collar, green consumerism, green credentials, green dwelling, green electricity, green energy, green investment, green job, green marketing, green power, green procurement, green waste, and greenwash*. All of the aforementioned terms have positive connotations, except for *greenwash*, which is related to environmentalism, but denotes a company falsely claiming to be environmentally friendly. The phrase *green revolution* is associated with both a heightened interest in environmental matters and an increase in crop yields during the latter half of the 20th century.

The reference to nature is reflected in expressions such as *green belt* (an area surrounding a city where construction is prohibited), *green shoots* (the initial signs of economic recovery following a decline, evoking the image of new plant growth after a winter period), and *greenfield* (a location without any existing buildings or structures). Neutral or even positive connotations are attached to the word *greenhouse* as a structure for cultivating plants. However, in terms *greenhouse effect, greenhouse gas, greenhouse gas emissions*, it acquires a negative undertone.

The remaining terms pertain to the colour *green*, utilised in various documents, such as the *green clause (letter of credit)* that was printed in green ink, *green paper* (a document issued by a government to initiate discussion about a new law) printed on green paper, *green card* (a permanent resident card, originally called “Alien Card”), nicknamed after its bright green colour, and *greenback* (US

banknotes). The term *greenmail* is a lexical blend of *greenback* and *blackmail*, referring to the practice of buying enough shares in a company to gain control, with the intention of selling them at a high price. This is the only term containing the word “green” that has a negative connotation.

The last term, *greenshoe option*, originates from the proper name of the Green Shoe Manufacturing Company, which first employed an overallotment option.

4.2. Black

Black is the darkest colour, resulting from the absence of light, and it represents night, evil, misfortune, and even death. Business English terms containing the element *black* are often associated with illegal activities, such as *black economy*, *black market*, *black market premium*, *black marketeering*, *black money*, *blacklist*, and *blackmail*.

The designations *Black Monday*, *Black Tuesday*, and *Black Thursday* indicate plummeting prices on stock markets in 1929, leading to the Great Depression. *Black Wednesday* is linked to September 16, 1992, when the UK withdrew from the European Exchange Rate Mechanism, resulting in significant devaluation of the pound. *Black Friday* has a historical origin, dating back to 24th September 1869, when a group of people attempted to control the gold market in the United States, which caused serious economic problems (CBED 2011). Presently, *Black Friday* is associated with the commencement of Christmas shopping in the United States. However, originally it was nicknamed “black” by the police in Philadelphia in the 1960s, due to traffic congestions (Hotchen 2016).

The downward trends in finances are mirrored in the expressions *black hole* and *three black crows*. Negative connotations are also associated with the terms *black knight* (a company that makes a hostile takeover bid) and *blackout* (a period of time when product or service is unavailable).

Different figurative meanings underpin the terms *blackleg* (strikebreaker, originally referring to miners who emerged from mines covered in dust during a strike), *blackbox* (a system or process that uses information to produce a particular set of results, but works in a way that is secret or difficult to understand), *black swan* (an event as rare as a black swan, with potentially severe consequences), *black tax* (originating in South Africa; the financial burden borne by people of colour who have achieved a level of success and who provide support to less financially secure family members), and *black water* (wastewater containing pathogens).

The expression *(to be) in the black* stands out among phrases that incorporate the word “black”, because it has a positive meaning: it refers to recording favourable financial results using black ink.

4.3. White

The colour white in business English (and elsewhere) is generally associated with purity, innocence, goodness, and truth. This symbolism is reflected in terms such as *white knight* and *white squire* – both referring to friendly investors or companies that purchase a stake in a target company to prevent a hostile takeover (Kenton 2021b). Similarly, the expressions *white-hat hacker* and *white-shoe firm* carry positive connotations of ethical behaviour and prestige respectively. In

phrases like *three white soldiers* and *white candlestick*, the colour white signifies a favourable, upward trend in prices.

Its sole negative meaning is linked to *white elephant* – “burdensome charge, inconvenient thing that one does not know how to get rid of”, which supposedly goes back to the King of Siam who presented one of the sacred albino elephants to a courtier that had fallen from favour; the gift was a great honour, but its proper upkeep was ruinously expensive (Harper 2001-2023).

The remaining terms that feature “white” pertain to the colour itself, such as *white goods* (washing machines, dryers, dishwashers, etc.) having white cases, *white-label product* – a product manufactured by one company and sold by another company that fills the white label with their brand name, *white paper*, derived from the colour of the document’s cover (a shorter version of a *blue book*), *the White Pages* – a list providing contact information for people or companies, printed on white paper (as opposed to the *Yellow Pages*), and *white sale*, originally referring to the sale of household linens, which were mostly white.

Metonymy underlies concepts such as *white coat rule*, which legally prohibits doctors or actors dressed in white coats to advertise medical products on television, and *white-collar* which refers to white collared shirts worn by office workers.

4.4. Red

Red, as the colour of blood, bears diverse cultural connotations, ranging from strength, passion, life, and love, to war, revolution, anger, and danger.

In the English business discourse, there is a common association between decreasing prices and operating at a loss, which can be traced back to the historical use of red ink in financial reports that indicate negative trends, such as *in(to) the red*, *red candlestick*, *red clause letter of credit*, and *red ink*.

Red tape is believed to have originated in the practice of binding legal and government documents with a red tape (Harper 2001-2023). The term *red herring* refers to a document issued by a company that plans to sell shares for the first time. This document discloses details of the company but omits information about the price of the shares, which is perceived as a misleading clue. The term is derived from the practice of using red herrings to throw hunting dogs off the scent. The use of red marks as a warning is evident in the terms *red-circling* (the practice of freezing salaries that are higher than the maximum salary for a position) and *redlining* (the denial of lending, mortgages, or selling home insurance to individuals residing in impoverished areas). According to experts who coined the term *red ocean*, the fierce competition in current markets can be aptly named ‘bloody’ (Kim, Mauborgne 2005).

On the contrary, the term *red-hot (market, economy)* has a highly positive connotation, signifying success, strength, and activity. Similarly, a *red top* newspaper has extensive readership, with “red” referring to the colour of the letters on the front page.

A physiological response to sleep deprivation underlies the term *red-eye flight*. The term *red-chip company* does not relate to the colour of poker chips, as in the case of *blue chips*; rather, it describes Chinese companies that are listed on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange, with red symbolising the communist regime in Mainland China. The rationale behind *red goods* is unclear. Red may signify fire, as such goods are readily consumed and replaced, but it could also refer to danger or loss, given the low profitability of their production.

4.5. Blue

As the colour of the sky and the ocean, blue is often associated with open spaces, intuition, freedom, as well as trust, loyalty, and wisdom. A direct reference to the ocean is found in the term *blue ocean* – a market that is yet to be exploited and contested (Kim, Mauborgne 2005), while *blue bonds* got their name from the fact that a significant proportion of the proceeds is earmarked for the protection of marine ecosystems. The word “sky” features in *blue-sky thinking* and *blue-sky laws*, albeit with different meanings. *Blue-sky thinking* denotes unbiased and unrestricted thinking akin to the vastness of the sky, or alternatively, detached from reality. On the other hand, *blue-sky laws* govern securities trading and are aimed at curbing speculative investments which are worthless, much like the sky devoid of value.

In contrast, *blue laws*, which in some US states prevent shops from opening on Sundays, derive their name from the paper on which the laws were originally printed. Other examples of items printed on blue paper include *the Blue Book* (the accounts of the UK economy, published every year), *blue list* (a daily listing of mostly tax-exempt municipal bonds), and *blueprint* (a technical drawing that has also been used in the figurative sense of a plan for the future). The term *blue-collar* was inspired by the colour of shirts worn by manual workers. *Big Blue*, a nickname for IBM, is based on the colour of the company’s logo.

The concept of *blue chips* derives from the game of poker, where blue chips represent the highest value. Therefore, *blue-chip stocks* are deemed as sound investments. The trademark *Blu-ray™* has its origin in the blue laser used to read the disc. Another trademark, *Bluetooth™*, goes back to King Harald Bluetooth, who united Denmark and Norway, in much the same way that Bluetooth unites communication protocols.

4.6. Golden

The colour of gold is naturally associated with wealth, prosperity, and money. Over half of the terms containing the lexeme “golden” are related to financial rewards for employees in the form of starting bonuses – *golden hello*; retention incentives – *golden handcuffs*, *golden leash*; end-of-employment benefits – *golden coffin*, *golden farewell*, *golden goodbye*, *golden handshake*, and *golden parachute*.

Rather than being inspired by the colour itself, terms such as *golden formula*, *golden goose*, *golden hammer*, and *golden share* are motivated by the precious metal, which is considered special and advantageous to its holder. For instance, a holder of a golden share has veto power. The term *golden goose* has its origins in antiquity, as it appears in one of Aesop’s fables about a goose that laid golden eggs.

4.7. Pink

Pink is commonly linked with health, as those in good health will often have rosy cheeks. Within economic discourse, *in the pink* indicates the financial health of a company or economy that is quickly moving into a state of recovery.

In Western cultures, *pink* is also paired with femininity, as seen in the phrases *pink-collar (jobs)* and *pink tax*. The figurative meaning of *pink* as a

reference to gay people is found in the terms *pink dollar/pound/money*, *pink economy*, and *Pink PagesTM*.

Two terms, *Pink SheetsTM* (a list of stocks traded over the counter, rather than on major stock exchange) and *pink slip* (a notice of dismissal from employment), were originally motivated by the colour of the paper on which they used to be printed.

4.8. Grey

The colour grey is a mixture of black and white, with black symbolising negative, illegal, or evil aspects, and white symbolising positive, legal, or innocent aspects. A *grey knight* stands somewhere between a *white knight* (an entity that rescues a target company from a hostile takeover) and a *black knight* (an entity that makes a hostile takeover bid), because the term *grey knight* refers to a potential acquirer who outbids a white knight but is considered friendlier than a black knight. Similarly, a *grey hat hacker* is a type of hacker who falls between the categories of *white* and *black hat hackers*. Unlike black hat hackers, grey hat hackers do not have malicious intent when breaking into computer systems, although they may still violate laws. White hat hackers, on the other hand, break into computer systems with the owners' permission to identify security flaws and protect databases and software. *Grey market* activities are not illegal like *black market* activities, but are still considered at least immoral, similarly to the notion of *grey goods* (products bought abroad and sold more cheaply than in the manufacturer's usual distribution system). The difference between *black* and *grey swans* lies in the level of predictability. While a *black swan* event is totally unpredictable, a *grey swan* event is predictable but not likely to happen. Finally, *grey water* contains lower levels of contamination than *black water*.

In the term *grey collar*, the colour grey is not the result of the combination of white and black as expected, but white- and blue-collar. Another association with the colour grey is *grey hair*, metonymically referring to older age, as seen in the terms *grey dollar/pound* (the money that older people have available to spend as a group), *grey market* (a group of people over fifty years of age, to which specific products or services can be sold), and *grey wave* (a long-term investment that becomes profitable when an investor becomes old). Finally, computer equipment is called *grey goods*, because of the grey colour of the desktops.

4.9. Yellow

The colour yellow is a complex and multifaceted symbol with conflicting meanings. It is generally considered to be the colour of vitality, optimism, and positivity, due to its connection to sunlight and gold. However, negative traits such as cowardice, jealousy, and deceit are also linked to yellow, as these negative connotations are rooted in the colour of bile. In practical scenarios, caution signs are typically made in yellow to guarantee optimal visibility, especially when combined with black, as a result of its physical properties.

The term *yellow knight* is thought to be linked to the negative connotations of cowardice and deceit. Similarly, the term *yellow-dog contract/clause* derives from the dysphemism "yellow dog", which refers to a contemptible or cowardly person. Concerning the proper name *the Yellow Book* and the trademarks *Yellow PagesTM* and *Yellow SheetsTM*, the colour component refers to the cover and/or the

paper on which they are printed. Furthermore, the use of yellow in these contexts may evoke associations with *gold* or *golden*, in the sense of something precious, benchmarking or guiding principles.

4.10. Brown

The colour brown is the colour of the ground (Wierzbicka 1990: 137), associated with the notion of earthiness, which is reflected in the idiom *brownfield (site)*.

In the other three occurrences, brown is used figuratively to refer to the colour itself, rather than to the earth. In the idiomatic expression *brown bag meeting*, the reference is to informal gatherings, where participants bring food packed in brown bags (Kenton 2021a). *Brown goods* denote cases in which merchandise like televisions, radios and stereo sets were originally manufactured. *Brownout* refers to the reduction in voltage that leads to the dimming of lights.

4.11. Silver

The lexeme *silver* is part of only three economic terms, all of which are motivated by the metonymic association of the word “silver” with the grey hair of elderly people: – *silver economy*, *silver market*, and *silver surfer*. According to OBED (2005), a synonym for *silver market* is *grey market*. However, these two terms can be confusing, as *silver market* also refers to the trade of the precious metal, while *grey market* is an unofficial but not illegal system of selling goods.

5. Pedagogical implications

From this presentation of economic terms containing a colour component, it is evident that incorporating them in the business English syllabi of the tertiary education institutions is a useful means of developing students’ business English vocabulary. This approach is particularly relevant for ESAP courses at universities and faculties of economics.

Learning and comprehending idioms necessitates understanding their figurativeness. In the case of colour expressions and concepts, it is useful to consider the symbolic nature of colours, which is also important in marketing, an integral part of higher education in the field of business.

Besides other techniques used in teaching idioms, such as appropriate context, finding equivalents in students’ mother tongue, and elucidating their etymology, our analysis of idioms/terms relating to colours suggests that employing tasks on social networking sites, such as Instagram or Facebook, to post visual representations of such expressions could prove to be effective. This can also trigger creativity in the students, and as these sites are powerful marketing tools, they can result in content and language integrated learning.

My findings also show that the productivity of economic colour idioms leads to the formations of oppositions and strings, whose meaning can be guessed on the basis of a familiar idiom and/or meaning of the colour used in them, e.g. *in the red* – *in the black*, *brownfield* – *greenfield*, *three white soldiers* – *three black crows*, *white* – *grey* – *black* – *yellow knight*, *white-collar* – *blue-collar* – *grey-collar* – *pink-collar* – *green-collar (workers)*.

6. Conclusion

Idioms “are not mere linguistic ornaments, intended to dress up a person’s speech style, but are an integral part of the language” (Gibbs, 2010: 697). Despite their figurative, opaque, and informal nature, they cannot be overlooked in ESAP, as they facilitate the comprehension of specific economic discourse and help students communicate more effectively in the global context.

The analysis of colour idioms describing economic concepts has shown that it is a productive way of enriching the English language with new terms and, at the same time, of contributing to the economy of language. Understanding these economic terms requires an awareness of the symbolic nature of colours, which can sometimes be ambiguous or even contradictory. For example, the colour black has mostly negative connotations, but the expression *to be in the black* is highly positive, as it refers to profit making. On the contrary, *to be in the red* means operating at a loss, while *red-hot economy* is a very successful economy.

Due to the productivity of these expressions, chains of names are formed, e.g. *white – yellow – grey – black knight*, which are helpful for understanding the individual terms.

Further research could be aimed at the frequency and collocations of colour business and economic terms in larger corpora of the English language, so that the more numerous should be selected for teaching in ESAP courses, thus providing the basis for their correct use in communication.

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**BUSINESS-SPEAK:
JARGON AND SLANG CORPORATE EXPRESSIONS
HAULING AROUND THE BUSINESS ARENA**

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***Abstract:** The paper is focused on jargon and slang, whose use may affect the way businesspeople think and develop professional relations. To clear up possible misinterpretations, I have analyzed a corpus of slang expressions, colloquialisms, clichéd words and phrases in the business lexicon. My research is a linguistic approach to jargon/slang terms, which takes into account their positive or negative connotations.*

***Keywords:** business, boosting effect, jargon, negative connotations, slang*

1. Introduction

When a language is the person’s second language, jargon, slang, colloquialisms, or clichés could be misinterpreted and become an additional problem in culture interactions. The people with whom we associate and share experiences develop a common transmission channel, speak the same language, and use the same *restricted codes*. When using the host language, a good rule to follow is to be especially careful about how we *elaborate these codes*, so that they ensure that we understand the linguistic environment (verbal messages) in which communication is taking place.

Making an effort to learn our business counterpart’s language widely helps us begin to think from their perspective and grasp the meaning of certain words. Research shows that language misunderstandings due to inappropriate vocabulary usage are numerous in intercultural business situations (Dodd 1997; Weaver 1998; Samovar and Porter 2004). To operate effectively, mastering the specialized terminology used in a particular field, on the one hand, and the idioms, the informal words and phrases associated with certain community groups, on the other hand, are of considerable importance. Phrasing and word usage shape people’s profile and determine who is a member of an ‘in-group’ and who is not.

Commonly acknowledged as the language (specialized vocabulary) peculiar to a trade, profession, or a group of people (Andersson and Trudgill 1990; Nash 1993; Burke and Porter 1995; Allan and Burridge 2006; Mattiello 2008), jargon is the technical terminology (phraseology) used by specialized groups in the fields of science, law, bureaucracy, business, and so on. People sharing habits of word usage, such as “bureaucratese” or “legalese”, have a common work-related interest and use jargon as an “in group” language or as a sign of solidarity among in-groupers. Jargon cannot be tabooed, nor can it be translated into “ordinary English”. If we tried, we would simply distort the message.

2. Characteristics of nonstandard forms of language

Allan and Burridge (2006: 58) highlight two main functions of *jargon* that would keep “out-groupers” out, stating that jargon is used:

1. to serve as a technical or specialist language for precise and economical communication;
2. to promote in-group solidarity, and to exclude as out-groupers those people who do not use the jargon.

Jargon users erect communication barriers to out-groupers who might feel culturally uncomfortable when removed from their usual linguistic environment. Possessing a good knowledge of the vocabulary, grammar, and syntax of the host language sets the tone for doing business overseas, but it still isn't a guarantee of gaining cultural awareness. Nonstandard forms of language, such as jargon or slang, can further complicate things and cause potential miscommunication. The linguistic “outsider” should try to adjust to the culture shock (Ferraro 2006: 73) and get “inside” the other language and culture, coping with frustrations and playing down the possibility of communication failure.

Unlike the conservative nature of jargon, *slang* is regarded as more unconventional, nonconformist, open to dispute, a clear rule-breaker. It is restricted to the colloquial style (sometimes offensive), the language of a “highly colloquial and contemporary type, considered stylistically inferior to standard formal, and even polite informal, speech” (Allan and Burridge 2006: 69). It is often seen as a composite of dissimulation devices and a secret sublanguage, being synthetically defined as “very informal usage in vocabulary and idiom that is characteristically more metaphorical, playful, elliptical, vivid, and ephemeral than ordinary language”. (Stein 1979: 1235)

In agreement with Anderson and Trudgill's (1990) *Bad Language*, Mattiello (2008) detects dissimilarities between jargon and slang, pointing out the familiar and spontaneous nature of slang terminology in comparison to technical jargon, and emphasizing the slang's lack of prestige and pretentiousness. This makes her aptly conclude that

Today slang covers both the specific and the general sense. It typically consists of new words and novel or extended meanings, and develops from the attempt to find fresh, vigorous, colourful, pungent or humorous expressions. (Mattiello 2008: 35)

There are various sources of business imagery, such as sports (football, baseball, basketball, etc.), aviation, military activity or religion. Imagistic metaphors step powerfully in almost everything we do: setting up a business, selling products, negotiating contracts, making decisions, running projects, generating success/profit, implementing changes, taking new opportunities, or applying methods and techniques.

The spoken business language abounds in overused, sometimes outrageous phrases, which businesspeople tend to develop a preference for. Thus, exploring business English slang and jargon has to be considered from both linguistic and psychological perspectives. Such phrases usually express states and emotions, character and personality.

3. Classifications of jargon corporate expressions

The purpose of my research has been to present a linguistic approach to the jargon/slang terms, according to the types of business activities they represent. There are some interesting common structures occurring in the language of corporations and bureaucracies, with both positive and negative connotations.

In my research, I have found of particular importance Irwin's (2005) *The Ridiculous Business Jargon Dictionary*, the largest collection of business jargon terms online, which served as the main resource for my analysis. Irwin includes an enumeration of words and phrases (nouns, adjectives, verbs, idiomatic expressions) in one large class of business jargon/slang terms. From the business buzzwords classification point of view, he is right. However, from the linguistic point of view, all these words and idioms used in business could be further arranged according to the parts of speech or structures they belong to, as I suggest below. I have searched for some of the most relevant words and phrases and have analysed, explained, and illustrated them, grouping them in two large classes: those used in positive contexts, and those that have a negative meaning.

3.1. Positive phrases with a boosting effect

The positive words and phrases that are specific to this specialized language have a boosting effect and are of utmost importance for business English. I have taken into consideration a few contexts in some specific situations, characteristic of business deals, workplace relations, contract agreements, product selling, negotiations between parties, and so on. A distinction was made among situations specifically related to: giving one's job/project/ideas greater interest, safeguarding a company's reputation, taking the right/the best decisions, grouping energy boost, searching for new challenges.

I have suggested a classification of the words and phrases that takes into account their structure, grammatical status and meaning:

a) When one needs to give one's job/study/discussions a spark of interest, curiosity and excitement:

- nominal collocations (Adj. + N)

deep dive – an in-depth study or exploration, a minute analysis of a situation or topic: e.g., *deep dive workshop, take a deep dive on a report*;

blue ocean – (slang, a sea metaphor) high potential profits or markets with endless opportunities: e.g. *This wine company will be more successful and profitable on a blue ocean market.*

- verbs

bucketize – to organize information/data in terms of complexity, accuracy and priorities: e.g. *Bucketizing often helps portfolio managers group their investment assets into stocks and bonds.*

unpack – (transitive) look into/examine the details of a problem in order to clear it up: e.g., *unpack a concept/statement* – reveal

- idiomatic phrases

ride herd on – (AmE, a metaphor alluding to a cowboy riding on his horse to keep a herd of cattle in order); closely watch/control someone's activity: e.g. *The manager is always riding herd on his employees, making sure they follow the rule. / He always works late riding herd on the day-to-day business.*

bat a thousand – (AmE baseball phrase) a 100% success rate/a great sense of achievement; to reach perfection, to have a perfect record: e.g. *He's got a \$10,000 commission after reaching the summer sales target. He's really batting a thousand!*

b) When one wants to safeguard the reputation of one's company, and one should get everyone in agreement and make sure the right decisions are taken:

- Adj.+ N

due diligence – working hard and being careful and thorough to make good business decisions, checking the quality of products/investments before selling them in order to protect investors, taking reasonable action to keep people and their property safe: e.g. *We had to carry out/perform/conduct due diligence on the software packages and we think \$1,700 is a fair offer; The group's latest acquisition was subject to a due diligence review/assessment by the consulting agency and approval from the European Corporate finance organization.*

- N + N

decision sniper – (military metaphor) influencer; a person with an essential role in winning a business/sales process, who influences the decision maker: e.g. *He raised a question just when the CEO's decision was about to be put to vote; a real decision sniper!*

- idiomatic phrases (frequent in management/politics)

sing from the same hymn sheet/book – agree about a subject: e.g. *Union officials need to be singing from the same hymn before trying to impose the oil embargo against Venezuela.*

c) When one wants to keep an eye open for bursting ideas, group energy boost, feel in charge of the results and aim for precaution in choosing the best decision:

- nouns

lens(es) – a point of view; differing opinions in the workplace: e.g. *If a manager peers through the employee lens, he gets a better understanding of what is important to the success of a company.*

- verbs

interface – (about companies) to work together on a particular problem, making the best of their specialized knowledge (syn. *communicate, interact*): e.g. *We attempt to employ a team of experienced consultants who can interface between accountancy and the law;*

- phrasal verbs

hammer out – to reach a consensus on an agreement/contract after long discussions or serious arguments: e.g. *Bank managers are trying to hammer out some good deals on mortgages at the moment.*

- idiomatic expressions

foot on the ball time – (a football metaphor) time when one is on the alert and prepares to take control of a situation: e.g. *If you give me a little more foot on the ball time, I'll get the documents signed and sealed.*

keep one's powder dry – (colloquial, military phrase) bide one's time / not to be in a rush, remain calm: e.g. *Until trade talks look promising, you'd better keep your powder dry. | There are rumours that the CEO's going to resign. Don't sell your shares immediately. Keep your powder dry and see if they're right.*

d) When one tries to achieve the results that one has hoped for through hard work, perseverance and positive thinking:

- nouns

blow-out – a thriving period for sales or profits: e.g. *Real estate transactions are a real blow-out in spring.*

hook – something that is appealing and arouses customers' interest/attention: e.g. *Hotel compensation vouchers are one of the hooks granted to overseas travellers.*

- nominal collocations (N + prep + N)

meat on the bone – (a food/animal expression) profits/growing capital; adding specific details to an issue/idea to make it more complete, clear and interesting: e.g. *Opening a clothes shop will put more meat on the bone and the business will flourish.*

- Adj + N

full-court press – (a basketball phrase) exerting considerable pressure/influence: e.g. *If we want to regain influence on the capital market, we'll need a full-court press from our investment managers.*

gold mine – a business activity leading to large profits: e.g. *The advertising campaign turned out to be a gold mine.*

white smoking meeting – (a religious metaphor alluding to the white smoke coming from a chimney on the Vatican roof and announcing the election of a new Pope) a meeting where an agreement on a big contract has been reached: e.g. *After seven hours of fruitful negotiations, we finally see white smoke in protocol closure.*

- (phrasal) verbs

hook – to succeed in making someone interested in something or attracted to something: e.g. *Apple's new iPhone model succeeds in hooking young people. | Low rents help hook many students in the area.*

hook up with – to agree to work and invest together with another company for a common goal: e.g. *Germany hooks up with Austria and Norway to build 400 hydrogen power stations in Europe next year.*

- prepositional phrases (prep +N)

in the black – earning a profit; not indebted: e.g. *The insurance company is in the black after turning itself into an allfinanz group.*

on the make – (disapproval) power-hungry; money-grabber, intent on gain (in a dishonest way): e.g. *He is a young ambitious businessman on the make who furthers his own career.*

- idiomatic phrases

jockey/manoeuvre/jostle for position – (Am. E. a horse-racing metaphor) to compete strongly in order to outdistance one's rivals, usually by dishonest methods: e.g. *After his resignation, old rivals began to jockey for power to run the department.*

get a bigger/better/enough bang for the buck – (slang) getting something valuable in return for the money paid; a favourable cost-to-benefit ratio: e.g. *The hotel is great and the prices are small, I think the company will get a lot of bang for the buck.*

3.2. Business negative phrases

Apart from its positive, cheerful features, business jargon can also connote weakness, pain, discomfort, betrayal, cruelty, hypocrisy, which may amplify obstacles in communication and may lay the grounds for discontent, potential conflicts, and so on. I have distinguished among terms related to particular situations describing persons' profiles, their influence within a group, their unprofitable business activity, or uncomfortable financial or commercial business activity. Business jargon or business speak may sometimes portray negative information in a more favourable manner:

a) When describing persons' profiles, reactions, their influence over a larger group, etc.:

- nominal collocations (Adj + N; N + N)

dead wood – an ineffective/unproductive worker: e.g. *He got rid of / cleared out the dead wood once he stepped into the role of project manager.*

marzipan layer – “people in a company or organization who have important jobs but who are just below the highest position” (Longman Business English Dictionary 2007: 296); middle management: e.g. *Eliminating the marzipan layer will ease the flow of ideas and the link between senior managers and customers.*

- verbal collocations

make waves – (Am. E. slang) to pick a quarrel in an inappropriate moment, cause trouble: e.g. *You're making the biggest waves. You shouldn't wonder why you're the first on the layoff list.*

- acronyms

HiPPO – (acronym of *Highest Paid Person's Opinion*; a homonym of the animal abbreviation) a high-rank official/senior executive who is a key-decision maker in a corporation: e.g. *What happens when a HiPPO controls large corporate communications?*

b) When one loses control over things, experiences a meltdown, because things are going bad:

- nominal collocations (Adj + N)

dead stick – (an aviation metaphor, alluding to an emergency landing) a stalled project: e.g. *Getting this dead stick back on schedule might take some time.*

- idiomatic phrases

sunset a project/product/service – (an imagistic metaphor) to cancel a project: e.g. *Sunsetting this partnership now will have a strong impact on the bottom line.*

be snowed under (with sth) – (a winter phrase; be buried under an avalanche) to be overwhelmed with work; to have a backlog of work: e.g. *The director keeps snowing me under with many time-consuming tasks.*

c) When one describes a product/business activity which is dragging one down or back, with difficulties jarring on one's nerves:

- nouns

knock – the action of badly/hard hitting a product and making its price fall: e.g. *Lee Cooper store group will take a series of knocks due to frequent clearance sales of clothing items.*

knock-off – (slang) a fake/counterfeit product: e.g. *Beware of artificial silk knock-offs of pure / natural silk garments.*

- verbs

knock – to seriously affect someone/something: e.g. *The faulty articles have severely knocked buyers' confidence.*

d) When one describes an uncomfortable business situation, either financial, commercial or related to the workplace, or the state of being stuck in a bad patch:

- nominal collocations (N + prep +N; adj. + N)

bag of snakes – (slang, animal metaphor) persons whose behaviour or intention is bad, sly, rude; a poisonous office atmosphere (a nest of vipers);

a business with difficult and often unforeseen problems: e.g. *Having the courage to participate in an open tendering with the richest investors for the construction of the motorway is like mingling with a bag of snakes in the hope of winning the auction.*

feeding frenzy – (esp. AmE., a marine animal metaphor referring to an aggressive group attack of sharks or piranhas on a prey) a wild attack on someone/something; a situation in which buyers/investors become overexcited about something and voraciously try to get an advantage of it; frantic competition or rivalry for something: e.g. *It wasn't a quiet meeting, it was a feeding frenzy from the major shareholder.* | *The chief of the supermarket faced a feeding frenzy of the crowd which rushed to the sector of household appliances.*

- nouns

hot-desking – “when people working in an office do not each have their own desk, but work where there is one available” (Longman Business English Dictionary 2007: 254): e.g. *Salespeople are often on the road so that they are forced to hot-desk and share offices.*

- idiomatic phrases

lose the bubble – (a nautical metaphor) to lose contact with somebody or something; be confused: e.g. *Ok, I admit it, I've lost the bubble of customer reviews lately.*

be on the rocks – (a nautical metaphor) a business activity experiencing difficulties, such as financial hardship; a company going bust: e.g. *Heavy losses from selling frozen meat will put the firm on the rocks.* | *This broker is on the rocks. As an accountant, I advise you to withdraw your money from it.*

burn your fingers/get your fingers burnt/ be or get burned – to face financial ruin after the failure of a high risk business deal: e.g. *The company got badly burned in shady dealings and lost a lot of money. I am afraid the investor burned his fingers badly.*

4. Conclusion

Businesspeople's informal conversations are loosely structured, with a plentiful supply of idiomatic expressions, colloquialisms, clichés which shape a group's sense of identity and cohesiveness (Allen 1998: 878-883).

The unconventionality of the jargon/slang lexicon is evident in the expressions analyzed, allowing business people to communicate more easily. Although they clearly break the established communication rules, it is this insubordination that supports the speakers' desire to make the seriousness of the dominant tone less unpleasant or severe.

Through topic-based idioms, animal, biology, sport, cowboy, military, food, religion, medical, aviation, or water metaphors, the slang/jargon user makes certain business situations more challenging and more relaxed.

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ANTHROPONYMIC IMPLICATIONS OF COVID-19 AND THE UNDERLYING CORONAVIRUS

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***Abstract:** The article highlights linguistic and anthroponymic implications entailed by the spread of SARS-CoV-2 as a result of mediatization. On the one hand, the authors analyse the coinage of personal names which are lexically and semantically related to the Covid-19 pandemic. On the other, the association of certain pre-existing onymic units with this health crisis is explained as well. The approach is interdisciplinary, merging the perspectives of onomastics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, and linguistic anthropology. The examples are selected from online sources and consist mainly of first names in English and Romanian.*

***Keywords:** anthroponym, Covid-19, first name, meaning, mediatization*

1. Introduction: theoretical outline

In an age in which globalisation has permeated every field, the spread of the coronavirus has also had linguistic and onomastic implications, as this article will show. The mass media has overwhelmed individuals every day with information about the coronavirus, and people's lives have suffered dramatic changes due to the pandemic. Repercussions can be seen even in the way people relate to personal names and their bearers implicitly. Without aiming to achieve a comprehensive analysis, this article will point out some of the consequences of the impact of Covid-19 and the corresponding coronavirus on anthroponymy from the viewpoint of onomastics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, and linguistic anthropology. The examples discussed here were collected from online mass media outlets. While the names investigated are mainly English and Romanian, onymic units from other languages have also been used to illustrate certain social, psychological, and linguistic aspects.

The existence of names derived from the reality of the 2020-2022 pandemic and the association of certain personal and place names with this health crisis can be linked to the theory of unconventional names. Within the general framework of proper names, unconventional names have been enjoying increased attention in the past years, and have been the subject of theoretical and practical studies in diverse publications and languages. Among these, one can mention Bergien (2013), D. Felecan (2012, 2014a, 2014b, 2019), O. Felecan (2014a, 2014b), Gafton and Chirilă (2019), Harvalík (2012) and Oltean (2013, 2014).

Until recently, appellatives that became names with negative connotations pertained to the class of unconventional names, functioning as nicknames, for instance. Nowadays, such occurrences are onymised officially and are recorded in civil registries. The theory advanced here distinguishes between two types of

name-giving: official, conventional naming – recorded in civil documents – and (Christian) church registries. It corresponds to an individual’s “initial baptism” – or “baptismal event” (Agha 2007: 66) – and endows the named entity with a socially appropriate name (one that would not cause embarrassment to the name bearer once s/he grows older, i.e., a name that cannot be used as an insult by other members of the community). Therefore, the “convention” is tacit and refers to the common sense of the name giver, who chooses an anthroponym that would agree with the bearer, once s/he becomes aware of the name.

From this perspective, one could invoke the claim of the lack of lexical meaning of proper names, and the discussion up to this point would become nonsensical. The statement would hold if there did not exist old or recent examples of *antonomasia* by means of which former appellatives with negative connotations in a community were turned into proper names. According to the theory of name-giving to which the authors of this article adhere, the aforementioned instances are included in the category of unconventional, unofficial names, resulting from the second type of name-giving. This onomastic category includes nicknames, bynames, user names and other names likely to convey a “cluster of definite descriptions” (Kripke 2001: 57, 61). The new onymic reality undermines traditional name-giving habits, as it includes within the framework of individual names former designations of phenomena in the immediate reality. From the viewpoint of conventional naming, feminine first names such as *Pandemia* (Romanian feminine noun, literally ‘the pandemic’) or *Carantina* (Romanian feminine noun, literally ‘the quarantine’) could be viewed with ambivalence by the name bearers. The third level of language, the discursive level (of sense) in Eugen Coșeriu’s taxonomy, moves towards and intersects with the first, general level (of designation, of referring to “reality”, “things”, “states of things”) (see Coșeriu 1994: 135-136). Meaning interferes with designation. In other words, unconventional names (which do not result from their registration in marital documents or religious records) migrate towards the status of nonspecifying names. The opposite instance may also occur: nonspecifying names become unconventional in use due to their reinterpretation in the specific context of the pandemic, and develop new associative meanings. At the same time, situations of onomastic homonymy can be identified: *Covid* is both the name of the virus and the name of a human denotatum.

2. Coronavirus: a medical-linguistic perspective

At the end of the year 2019, there was some confusion in the mass media and implicitly among the wide audience as regards the name of the virus and corresponding disease (see De Stefani 2021: 68-72; Felecan, O. 2021: 42-44; Prieto-Ramos et al. 2020: 643). Thus, the World Health Organisation (WHO) felt it needed to clarify the situation: “Official names have been announced for the virus responsible for COVID-19 (previously known as ‘2019 novel coronavirus’) and the disease it causes. The official names are: Disease – coronavirus disease (COVID-19); Virus – severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2)” (WHO 2020). The explanation is grounded in the fact that

(...) there are different processes, and purposes, for naming viruses and diseases. Viruses are named based on their genetic structure to facilitate the development of diagnostic tests, vaccines and medicines. Virologists and the wider scientific

community do this work, so viruses are named by the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses (ICTV). Diseases are named to enable discussion on disease prevention, spread, transmissibility, severity and treatment. Human disease preparedness and response is WHO's role, so diseases are officially named by WHO in the International Classification of Diseases (ICD). (WHO 2020)

Lexically, both names are abbreviations created by means of acronymy. The figures attached to the acronyms are significant as well: 19, in *COVID-19*, refers to the year in which the disease appeared (2019), whereas 2, in *SARS-CoV-2*, identifies the second generation of one and the same virus (SARS) (see Shereen et al. 2020).

The clarification made by ICTV and WHO was necessary not only medically, for specialists in the field, but also socio- and psycholinguistically. This was because there existed the danger for the potentially stigmatising names *China/Chinese flu* and *China/Chinese virus*, *New China virus*, *China coronavirus* and *Wuhan virus/flu* to become instilled in connection with the place of origin of the new disease (the city of Wuhan, China) or the Chinese people (see Craig 2020; De Stefani 2021: 72-73; Rogers et al. 2021; Vasquez 2020). In this context, the names would have followed the model applied for the designation of the Russian flu (1889-1890), Spanish flu (1918-1919, whose first outbreak was actually recorded in the USA; see Porrás-Gallo and Davis 2014: 6), Asian flu (H2N2, 1956-1958), Hong Kong flu (H3N2, 1968-1969) or Mexican flu (A(H1N1), 2009) (De Stefani 2021: 72).

Nosonyms and pathogonyms with eponymic bases may develop derogatory connotations – see, for instance, names of diseases containing “tainted eponyms” (Abel 2014: 81), e.g., the diseases called *Reiter's syndrome* and *Wegener's granulomatosis*, named after doctors Hans Reiter and Friedrich Wegener respectively, both known for having “willingly participated in Nazi eugenics and euthanasia programs” (ibid.). Similarly, the use of ethnonyms or toponyms in names of diseases can cause severe economic, financial and image damage, with major effects on transport and tourism. This determined the WHO to issue, in 2015, the “best practices for naming new human infectious diseases” (WHO 2015). It tallied with the fact that many organisations denounced such onomastic tendencies and demanded the ban of corresponding misnomers in public space. To avoid the employment of an ethnonym or the name of the place of origin of a new virus (e.g., the coxsackievirus, discovered in 1948, linked to Coxsackie, New York; the Marburg virus, Germany, 1967, named after the German town), an operation which could lead to the stigmatisation of the respective people or community, a hydronym was sometimes used instead, as in the case of Ebola, the closest river to Yambuku, the village where the virus had surfaced. “One obvious option would have been the Congo River, which is the deepest river in the world and flows through the country and its rainforest. But there was a problem – another virus with a similar name already existed. That virus was the Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever virus. (...) And so Ebola joined the list of viruses named after rivers. Other members include the mosquito-borne Ross river virus, which causes a debilitating infection and is named after a river in northern Queensland in Australia, and the Machupo virus, which causes Bolivian hemorrhagic fever, or ‘black typhus’, and is named after a Bolivian river” (Gholipour 2014).

However, as nosonyms and pathogonyms with ethnonymic or toponymic elements are still used officially, despite the recommendations made by the WHO

in 2015 (De Stefani 2021: 83), one can assume that the “(in)appropriateness of a name lies in the eye of the beholder. Stigma is not a property of names per se, but rather is established interactionally” (idem: 72), i.e., discursively. In other words, the structure and lexical configuration of names of diseases and viruses do not make the names “‘stigmatising’ and therefore morally debatable” (idem: 70) or “‘tainted’ and consequently discardable (Abel 2014: 81) *a priori*. They are gauged as pejorative due to the connotations they develop as a result of “the way in which individuals and communities use and/or perceive specific names” (De Stefani 2021: 70). Such an example is the employment of the metaphorical framework of WAR to refer to the Covid-19 pandemic, which may promote antisocial, aggressive (Doquin de Saint Preux and Masid Blanco 2021: 38-39), and even antiethnic or racist behaviours. The stigma is often extended upon anthroponyms either derived from the name of the virus or the lexicon pertaining to the pandemic (on this topic see Klekot 2021 and Protopopescu 2022), or circumstantially associated with the above-mentioned.

3. *Corona* in anthroponymy: a diachronic overview

As a proper name, the noun *Corona* has been recorded since the Antiquity in anthroponymy. Latin literature mentions *Coroneus* (Greek *Kopώνευς*), a king in Phocis, father of *Corone*, who was changed into a crow (Ovid 1958: 49), and *Coronis*, *-idis* (< *Kopωνίς*), daughter of the Thessalian Philegyas, mother of *Aesculapius* (i.e., Latin *Coronides*/Greek *Kopωνείδης*) by Apollo (idem: 48, 445; Lewis and Short 1879: s.v.). In *Metamorphoses* (1958: 375), the Latin poet Ovid also mentions the anthroponym *Corona* (pl. *Coronae*) for the first time, as borne by the two daughters of the Theban *Orion* (Lewis and Short 1879: s.v.).

In the Latin onomasticon, the noun *Corona* “is also a cognomen (of Etruscan origin?)”. As an appellative it became widespread in Romance languages (Romanian *coroană*, *cunună*; Italian, Provençal, Catalan, Spanish *corona*; French *couronne*; Portuguese *coróia*, cf. Meyer-Lübke 1935: s.v.). It was even borrowed in German (*Krone*), Albanian (*kunors*) and Celtic (Irish *corann*, *coroin*; Gaelic *coryn*) (cf. Ernout and Meillet 1959: 144). According to *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine. Histoire des mots*, the same lexical family includes the verb *corono*, *-are* and the noun *corollarium* “little crown (given to actors as additional gratification), extended to the language of mathematicians, ‘corollaire’ [‘corollary’], additional consequence of a demonstration” (ibid., originally in French).

4. Coronavirus: an anthroponymic perspective in synchrony

A positive aspect of the coronavirus pandemic and home isolation has been the proliferation of humour under its most diverse shapes. Despite the social distancing imposed by the authorities in numerous countries, individuals remained connected by means of e-mail and various social networking apps, which have been the vehicle for the dissemination of thousands of (dark humour) jokes (see Felecan and Felecan 2020, 2021) aimed at making people’s lives easier.

Sometimes, humorous discourse referring to the Covid-19 pandemic may become the grounds for the reinforcement of various stereotypes, and therefore they may be perceived as offensive. From the viewpoint of anthroponymy, a certain ethnic joke stands out (see Figure 1) for two reasons: 1) it mirrors one of the

stereotypes about the Roma ethnic minority in Romania, i.e., that of Roma families having many children; 2) it is illustrative of a name-giving tendency characteristic of this ethnic group, i.e., the use of *antonomasia* (see Felecan, O. 2014a: 510).



Figure 1. Anthroponymic ethnic joke related to the coronavirus pandemic.
Source: Bădăluță (2020: 5).

The central character of the cartoon is a Roma woman, who is asked by a reporter: “How have you spent your time during isolation?”. Her answer does not need further comments, as it is accompanied by the images of three children: “Well, I’ve had Covid, Isolation Stretcher, and Pandemic!” In this context, *antonomasia* can be connected with what Nuessel (2008: 29) calls “ethnophaulisms”: “Ethnophaulisms are pejorative names or designations for people who belong to an ethnic group and they are usually based on several observable phenomena including skin colour, clothing customs, culturally-determined eating and drinking practices, and other aspects commonly associated with a particular group” (idem: 29-30; see also Koopman 2016: 260-261; Nuessel 2019: 185-186). The derogatory use of the names is not explicit, as the humorous setting is intended to tone down this employment. In Romanian, the three appellatives have been converted into proper names by means of analogy with first names which exist in the national onomasticon and to which they are formally similar: *Covid* – *Ovid* (an onymic variant obtained by means of back-formation from the Latin-origin name *Ovidiu*), *Izoleta* (‘isolation stretcher’) – *Nicoleta* (a modern western borrowing, the feminine form of the first name *Nicolae*) and *Pandemia* (‘pandemic’) – *Maria* (the most important Christian feminine first name, formed with the suffix *-ia* from radical **mar*).

First names like *Ambulanța* (‘ambulance’), *Ambasador* (‘ambassador’), *Bogatu* (‘the rich man’), *Dolar* (‘dollar’), *Facultatea* (‘faculty’), *Inspector* (‘inspector’), *Judecător* (‘judge’), *Ministru* (‘minister’), *Paracetamol*, *Poliția* (‘police’), *Prefectura* (‘prefecture’) are frequently found among the Roma. These onyms reflect the Roma’s ‘taste for extravagance’ in matters of name choice, with *antonomasia* being a specific means of name-giving (see Felecan, O. 2014a: 510). In relation to standard first names, the anthroponymised appellatives can be considered uncommon names, deviations from established norms that are motivated sociologically and affectively. Thus, from the Roma’s viewpoint, some of the reasons underlying the giving of such first names have to do with traditional

beliefs and superstitions: the use of appellatives as first names is thought to protect bearers against the supernatural. On the other hand, “From a psycholinguistic perspective, the subjective factor (parents’ onomastic options) intertwines with objective reasons, which refer to day-to-day life or to the sociocultural peculiarities (...). Choosing forenames that are uncanny, uncommon for the majority, reveals multiple kinds of interconditioning: the obsessions of the Roma, unforgettable incidents in their lives or their position within the society, (...) various nuances of thoughts, experiences, feelings, occurring in particular circumstances of life” (Felecan, O. 2014a: 510).

Another example suggestive of the influence that the pandemic has had on anthroponymy consists of an article headline from India, which captured the attention of the public opinion worldwide in early April 2020: “Corona and Covid: Raipur Couple Names Newborn Twins Born during Lockdown” (Press Trust of India 2020). According to the above-mentioned source, “the pandemic caused by a new virus may have brought the world to its knees, but that has not deterred a couple in Chhattisgarh to name their newborn twins as ‘Corona’ and ‘Covid’. The two words may evoke fear and devastation in the minds of others, but for the Raipur-based couple, they symbolise triumph over hardships. The twins – a boy and a girl – were born during the ongoing novel coronavirus-enforced nationwide lockdown”. The explanation for the choice of these first names reveals the parents’ reasoning, which is completely different from what most people on the planet, affected by the pandemic, might think: “The names, they said, would remind them about all the hardships they conquered amid the lockdown, ahead of a successful delivery on the intervening night of March 26-27 at a government hospital in Raipur. (...) ‘Indeed the virus is dangerous and life-threatening but its outbreak made people focus on sanitation, hygiene and inculcate other good habits. Thus, we thought about these names’”. Nevertheless, upon leaving the hospital, the parents reconsidered their onomastic choices, as they did not “want their kids to be named after a disease” (Press Trust of India 2020).

The fact that the pandemic has affected people’s psyche as regards the means of naming newborns is underpinned by another report from southeast Asia (the Philippines and India), where several children received the names *Corona*, *Covid*, *Lockdown* (AFP 2020) and *Sanitiser* (Fry 2020), or *Covid Rose* and *Coviduvidapdap* (NZ Herald 2020). In the online environment, parents have proposed other first names inspired by the virus: e.g., *Demi* < *pandemic*, *Rhona* < *coronavirus* (slang), *Tina* < *quarantine* (Fry 2020). The parents’ explanations – “I wanted her name to remind us that COVID did not only bring us suffering. Despite all of this, a blessing came to us”; “We named him Lockdown remembering all the problems we had to face during this tough time” – reveal a specific psycholinguistic mechanism, as a result of the people “sharing a cultural framework” (Bramwell 2016: 265); “A society which defines its segments in terms of high and low, sky and land, day and night, can incorporate social or moral attitudes, such as conciliation and aggression, peace and war, justice and policing, good and bad, order and disorder, etc., into the same structure opposition” (Lévi-Strauss 1966: 170).

With many peoples analysed by the French anthropologist and ethnologist, proper names are related to clan names and names of totems (plants, animals). Such designations refer “to a partial aspect of the animal or plant entity” (idem: 175), “to technical or economic activities, to peace and war, to natural phenomena and celestial bodies” (idem: 178), “to the behaviour or character of one or other of the

parents” (idem: 179), being indicative of the name givers’ personality traits: “through naming, people say something about who they are, who they are not, and what their aspirations for their children are” (Bailey and Lie 2013: 22). Thus, names can also be evocative of negative aspects such as death, disease, pain or poverty. The giving of such names is connected with the sociocultural context. On the one hand, names with negative connotations are either a way of “avoiding the evil eye and envy by not naming a baby positively” (Akinnaso 1981: 51) or a sample of the fact that, in certain cultures, “All negatively valued home contexts are raised to positively valued status for the purpose of personal name construction” (ibid.; see also Obeng 1998: 168-170). On the other, one cannot overlook the increased permissiveness of the legal-onomastic system in certain geographical areas with respect to playful and aesthetic phenomena involved in the coinage of anthroponyms. The proliferation of such first names in the Asian space investigated, as opposed to Western states, can be accounted for by the absence/existence of onomastic prohibitions (be they legal or societal).

The potentially negative connotations that first names like *Covid* or *Corona* could trigger have led language users to exploit them in memes or humorous Tweets (see Fry 2020, NZ Herald 2020). The same semantic associations determined some parents-to-be to change their anthroponymic choices. Thus, first names seen as closely linked to the pandemic vocabulary orthographically and/or phonetically were considered undesirable, according to surveys conducted by ChannelMum and Nameberry in the spring of 2020. These were first names reminiscent of the words *corona* and *virus*: *Corina*, *Coren*, *Ronan*, *Viola*, *Violet*, *Lochlan*, a first name which reminded respondents of the word *lockdown* (Harvey-Jenner 2021).

At the same time, there are first names considered “positive odes to such a historical period” (Fry 2020), which is why they are preferred by the parents. These names are not novel coinages and are bound to trigger positive associations even beyond the pandemic setting. Thus, their contextualisation is visible only to the name giver and to the potential name bearer with whom the former might share the narrative underlying the onomastic choice (Aldrin 2014: 394). Such names can be grouped according to their main positive semantic association (Harvey-Jenner 2021):

- [+heroism]: *Avery*, *Bravery*, *Florence* (“a nod to the temporary NHS Nightingale hospital in London, which is named after the famous nurse Florence Nightingale”, according to Fry 2020), *Maverick*, *Hero*, *Wix/Wicks* (after Joe Wicks, a British fitness coach, whose series *PE with Joe* aired during the UK lockdown);
- [+virtue]: *Hope*, *Faith*, *Charity*, *True*, *Constance*, *Patience*, *Promise*;
- [+happiness]: *Bliss*, *Blythe* (‘carefree’), *Felicity*, *Joy*, *Solomon/Sol* (‘peace, peaceful’), *Pax* (Latin ‘peace’);
- [+safety]: *Harbour*, *Haven*;
- [+positivity]: *Iris*, *Indigo*, *Blue*, *Red* (so-called *rainbow names*, related to children’s rainbow paintings which were often displayed in the windows).

First names like *Corona*, *Covid*, and *Lockdown* have appeared in an exceptional context. Therefore, they have acquired an unconventional status from their very first uses. The proof lies in the publicity they received throughout the world, if we consider that ordinary events/names do not normally attract the

media's attention. Nevertheless, the first name *Corona* did not convey negative connotations, until the spread of the virus in 2019-2020. The conventional character of this proper name has been lost. Due to its association with the disease, *Corona* shifted to the class of unconventional names, as testified once again by the mass media. Eight-year-old Corona De Vries, from the Gold Coast in Queensland, Australia, wrote a letter to Tom Hanks, when the actor and his wife were in self-isolation in Australia. The boy complained that while he loved his name, he was being bullied at school because of it, as he was being called "the coronavirus" (Locker 2020). The Hollywood star replied: "You are the only person I've ever known to have the name Corona – like the ring around the sun, a crown" (ibid.). He also sent the boy a Corona-brand typewriter, which he had used during his quarantine.

The mediatisation of this correspondence between a great actor and a child draws one's attention to the loss of the conventional character of a rare first name, with (potentially) mythological origin (see section 3 above). Although its connotation is positive (cf. English *Basil*, French *Basile* < Greek *Βασιλεύς*, *Βασιλειος* 'king'), it was "contaminated" by the new coronavirus and became a potential "pariah" among current first names. In English, the etymology may be opaque to common language users, as opposed to the situation in certain Romance languages, in which the etymology is clear: Italian, Spanish *corona* (cf. Meyer-Lübke 1935: s.v.) or Romanian *coroană*. The choice of atypical, rare first names can be seen as a means of liberation from the rigidity of classical, secular or religious first names or of avoiding the commonality of excessively used first names. This kind of names mirrors the "parents' choice and denotes their subjectivity and personality. A first name is characteristic of the name giver, rather than of the named individual, who can, however, be affected by the parents' (un)inspired option" (Felecan, O. 2014b: 134). At the same time, rare first names can become a burden for their bearers, especially when they draw negative reactions from those with whom they interact (see Guéguen 2008: 91).

Nowadays, *Corona* is found as a first and family name in several states in the world (almost 27,900 occurrences), the top seven countries being the USA (21,900), Italy (3,300), Mexico (1,130), Spain (340), Argentina (300), France (230) and Brazil (180) (Locate My Name, 2020). Starting from the Latin phrase *Nomen est omen*, illustrating the ancient belief according to which names influence destiny (see also Felecan 2019: 45), as an irony of fate or as fuel to speculation, three of the above-mentioned states were at the top of the list of countries that were heavily affected by the pandemic as regards the number of cases and deaths caused by Covid-19 during the first year of the pandemic. Maps that prove the spread of the family name *Corona* in Italy (Italy Surname Map) and Spain (Spain Surname Map) can reinforce the faith of those who seek to find connections between the name a person bears, the place where they live and the fate they have, as Lombardy (Italy) and the regions of Madrid and Barcelona (Spain) had the highest number of name occurrences and the biggest rate of deaths caused by the coronavirus in 2020.

5. Conclusion

The Covid-19 pandemic "has highlighted key themes such as the geographies of disease and differential death rates between and within countries; the relationship between disease, death and existing inequalities, including intersectional poverty, poor housing, and co-morbidities in relation to ethnicity and

race, as well as age and health risk. It has also brought attention to the classed and gendered politics of labour, including essential services, paid work, domestic work, and childcare/home schooling; uneven access to healthcare, locally and internationally; xenophobia and nationalism; and mutual aid and volunteering” (Ho and Maddrell 2021: 3). The spread of the new coronavirus has compelled people to reassess what they uphold as values in the above-mentioned fields and beyond. It has even led to the establishment of new frameworks for the perception and use of language, in general, and names, in particular.

As regards anthroponyms, it is easy to notice a shift towards a fluid, unconventional employment of names, due to the negative or positive connotations with which they have been associated in the context of the pandemic. Either way, this illustrates that “Choosing a certain name then, or choosing to act in a certain way during the process of naming, implies choosing which social attributes, values, groups and positions one wishes to be associated with and which ones one wishes to be dissociated from” (Aldrin 2014: 395). Some of these names are new coinages (see the example of first names like *Covid* and *Lockdown*), others are established onyms which have run the risk of becoming taboo because of their inaccurate, unjust association with the new coronavirus (e.g., the first name *Corona*). Nonetheless, all these names have received significant attention from the mass media, as the connotations with which they are laden essentially reveal the individuals’ social and psychological mechanisms of coping with exceptional circumstances, i.e., the Covid-19 pandemic.

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AUTHORITARIAN RHETORIC: THE THEORIES OF PRIMING AND FRAMING APPLIED IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE

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***Abstract.** The article provides insights into the theories of priming and framing as strategic tools of authoritarian rhetoric. It looks fundamentally at how Donald Trump's speeches significantly shifted the "uncritical" American public's political and ideological directions, turning their democratic values upside down towards an explicitly authoritarian approach to social existence. We have analysed how the processes of priming (increasing the importance of certain issues in the recipients' cognitive network) and framing (highlighting these issues under certain angles to impose particular attitudes towards them) facilitated the effects of sadopopulism in the uncritical public promoting Trump's political success.*

***Key words:** authoritarian rhetoric, declassification, framing, priming, sadopopulism*

1. Introduction

Authoritarian leaders dedicate plenty of resources to controlling domestic opinion through rhetoric and propaganda. To illuminate their influence on individuals' cognitions, attitudes, and behaviours, this article investigates the theories of priming and framing, which have profoundly shaped collective understanding of how people perceive their political and social worlds. Comprehending these theories necessitates keeping in mind how they are connected with the notion of "uncritical public". Therefore, we provide a brief review of priming and framing effects in authoritarian rhetoric in political discourse, aimed at the uncritical public, analyzing the former American president Donald Trump's speeches.

Since his election in 2016, Trump managed to make a significant shift in the American citizens' political and ideological directions, turning the democratic values of liberty and equality upside down, towards entirely different axes. Numerous commentators characterized Trump as a strong man, menacing democracy, a xenophobic and racist demagogue skilled at whipping up crowds, and an opportunistic salesperson lacking any core principles. American scholars, in turn, viewed him as a leader who used populist rhetoric to legitimize his style of governance, while promoting authoritarian values that threatened the liberal norms underpinning American democracy (Pippa, Inglehart 2019: 3).

Despite all that, in 2016, Trump managed to win around 63 million votes from the American citizens (Election 2016: Exit Polls 2016), and in 2020 – even more – 74 million votes (US election results 2020: Joe Biden's defeat of Donald Trump 2020). Therefore, Trump's speeches influenced the political attitudes of his voters and urged them to support an explicitly authoritarian approach. A timely,

detailed analysis of this phenomenon is given by Mohan (2019). She uses fantasy-theme analysis and cluster criticisms to analyse Trump's political rally speeches, providing a critical lens which can help his audience to interpret his rhetorical strategy. Kelly (2020) elaborates on the concept of "ressentiment", explaining how Trump can appeal to malice, revenge, and rage by creating the rhetorical dimensions of an underlying emotional and moral framework, in which resentment, revenge, and victimization are inverted civic virtues. Rowland (2021) analyses the populist and nationalist themes that dominate Trump's rhetoric, illustrating how Trump's speeches present a divisive message designed to create intense negative emotions, especially hate and fear.

Therefore, different approaches have been proposed to analyse this issue. Nonetheless, no studies elaborate on the triangle of priming, framing, and uncritical public theories with the aim of rationalizing how and with what effect Trump managed to raise the salience of the incentives that could turn the public into uncritical and made them support an authoritarian leader. To answer this question, we will analyse the concepts mentioned above, from communication, psychology, sociology, and linguistic perspectives, intending to get a multidisciplinary overview of the phenomenon.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Mind setting through priming

Media-priming theory originates from the models of psychological network memory (Schemer 2013). Following these models, human cognition stores information in the form of nodes, where each node represents a specific concept. These nodes are interconnected through associative pathways, and the proximity between nodes reflects the degree of correlation between them. Therefore, the human information processing apparatus is a cognitive network architecture that consists of more or less strongly interconnected nodes (ideas, beliefs, persistent emotions, affective predispositions, etc.). When media messages succeed at activating a particular concept, it automatically leads to the activation of other nodes connected to that concept and, simultaneously, the suppression of the non-connected ones. The latter may still be present in a person's information-processing apparatus, but if not activated, it plays a minor role (or none at all) in the decision-making process (Schemer 2013: 154-155). For example, suppose a media message activates the stereotype of foreigners being a threat to cultural identity. In that case, its recipients are likely to support policies unfriendly to immigration, even if they know the fact that foreigners work for and pay taxes to their country. The reason for it lies in the fact that this awareness is suppressed in their cognitive network.

The process of media-priming involves two key stages. In the initial stage, information received from a media source, referred to as the "media prime", triggers the activation of preexisting associated knowledge in the recipient's mind, represented by "available" cognitive units. This activation enhances the accessibility of these cognitive units, increasing the likelihood that the recipient will employ them in interpreting and evaluating a subsequently encountered target stimulus, such as an attitude object. The occurrence of a media-priming effect is observed in the second stage when the recipient applies the primed and now more accessible concept to a target stimulus, a behaviour they might not have been

engaged in otherwise. Thus, the first stage involves the priming process, while the second stage pertains to the resulting consequences (Moy and Tewksbury 2016: 5).

Drawing on this knowledge, one can define the phenomenon of priming as a media-induced process of increasing the salience of some cognitions, motivations, or emotions in individuals' cognitive networks (Roskos-Ewoldsen and Klinger 2007: 75) to influence their judgments concerning particular topics, issues, politicians, and public figures.

The greater visibility an issue attains in the news, the more significant is its influence on how voters form opinions about the government. Ordinary individuals, who typically have a limited view of political affairs, focus on events and subjects that receive media attention, essentially considering those not covered in the media as if they don't exist. Consequently, what becomes prominent ("primed"), serves as the primary foundation for the public's beliefs regarding the country's current state. Therefore, the level of prominence issues achieve in the news is the key factor determining public perceptions of the challenges confronting the nation and the country (Iyengar 2008)

Following these considerations, the media can define the level of importance of a particular issue for the overall state of the country. Furthermore, they can guarantee the existence or even erase certain phenomena by activating and suppressing related concepts in their recipients' cognitive networks. The recipients, in their turn, will tend to make their own judgments about particular policies and politicians, by drawing on the media-constructed understandings of what is the most important for them and their country at the time being. For instance, if the immigration issue is primed in the media, its recipients will accept it as important and be interested in the policies that have this issue on their agenda. Moreover, the recipients will evaluate the policies based on how the latter promise to deal with this issue.

In general, people with a heightened interest in politics tend to experience less pronounced priming effects. They could be more adept at discerning between different sources, filtering out biased information, and maintaining a more balanced perspective. On the other hand, these effects can become stronger and more complex, depending on the way political involvement interacts with other features: a high level of confidence in the media enhances the potency of priming effects because individuals are more inclined to integrate the primed concept with their preexisting beliefs and attitudes (Miller and Krosnick 2000). Besides, the impact of priming is contingent on the political context and overarching political attitudes within a given situation. Priming theory also assumes that media influence depends on the recipients' personality traits, their ability to reflect, their social and private interests.

2.2. Mind setting through framing

Media aim not only at priming the phenomena they are referring to, but also at framing them within particular contexts and under certain angles. The notion of framing is, though akin, a more complex process than priming. Framing involves choosing specific elements from a perceived reality and emphasizing them in a manner that encourages a particular definition of a problem, interpretation of its causes, moral assessment, and recommended course of action for the subject in question (Entman 1993: 52). For example, if the immigration issue is framed against the backdrop of the costs for the welfare state, immigration will primarily

be understood as a financial problem. On the other hand, if immigration is discussed in the context of internal security and terrorism, it will no longer be a financial but rather a safety issue (Schemer 2013: 157).

There has been a great deal of research devoted to framing theory. The concept of frame was introduced in communication studies by Tuchman (1978), Gans (1979), and Gitlin (1980), who understood it as an interpretative and organizing tool for making news. Gamson (1989) defines frame as an idea of a general organization that governs specific events, indicating what is newsworthy and what is not. Entman (1993) describes framing as follows:

To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described (Entman 1993: 52).

Therefore, framing pertains to the elements in news content that encapsulate a concept – whether it be an image, a phrase, a keyword, a depiction, an analogy, or a metaphor – employed by an author to communicate the core of an event or issue. Frames facilitate the clarity of the storytelling process and assist audiences in comprehending the news. Additionally, consideration is given to the placement of informative elements such as headings, leads, front pages, photographs, etc.

Lakoff (2004) played a significant role in promoting framing theory as a tool for political communication, generating increased professional interest in this practice. Recently, there has been a growing interest in the connection between political power and framing power, examining both how politicians construct frames and the subsequent impact of these frames on the media. Political communication researchers have established two primary stages in the process of framing: frame-building and frame-setting (Scheufele 1999: 103-122). Frame-building specifies frame development and frame inclusion in speeches and news stories. Frame-setting refers to news consumption and people's frame adoption as means of understanding challenges and concerns.

The central source of the framing process is the cultural and social norms within which speakers and audiences live (idem: 104-105). People interested in public opinion (government actors, interested groups, corporations) have a direct stake in journalists' frames, competing for public attention and acceptance. Thus, the framing process can be influenced by interested people and journalists who usually have their beliefs and perceptions about problem causes and consequences.

Researchers claim that the majority of journalists covering political topics typically adopt either a thematic or an episodic frame (Iyengar 1991). Narratives employing the thematic frame delve into the systemic aspects of issues, emphasizing the political and social contexts in which events and matters unfold (Iyengar 2008). With the episodic frame, stories are focused on people with problems connected with the issue. They tend to specify people and events without delving into larger contexts. In the mainstream media, there is a tendency for employing episodic frames.

When individuals perceive a specific public issue, such as poverty, as linked to a certain concept, for example, unemployment, they view unemployment as a cause of poverty. An article can provide this relationship by clearly stating it or suggesting it in its portrayals of poor people. Generally, the framing process happens without the audience's awareness, but it can also occur through

systematically considering information. In other words, embracing the depiction of a problem in the news is not entirely unreasonable. Consequently, the greater the attention individuals give to the information and the more time they dedicate to contemplating a frame, the greater is its impact (Moy and Tewksbury 2016: 9).

On the whole, framing is a dynamic psychological, communicative, and organizational process, which can be considered both a tool and a product of political strategy. It significantly affects how people form an opinion about any issue in their social and political surroundings. This effect is especially evident if people who undergo the framing process belong to the uncritical public.

2.3. The uncritical public

Fraser (1990) and Toepfl (2020) posit that society's public life occurs within a certain number of partial publics that include participants who perform certain discursive practices according to their beliefs and understandings within the framework of particular environments. Based on the scope of political criticism reflected in the discursive practices, Toepfl (2020: 7-10) divides partial publics into three types: leadership-critical (where criticism can target even the country's highest political leadership), policy-critical (where criticism aims at low-level officials, policies, and institutions), and uncritical (where negative statements can only appear if the political leadership of a country supports them).

The overbalance of uncritical public compared to leadership- and policy-critical ones is a common feature characteristic of authoritarian societies and an essential condition for the success of authoritarian rhetoric. We want to turn to Freud's *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921) to understand some of the psychological prerequisites that can make a particular individual become a part of the uncritical public.

Freud (1921) builds his study on Group psychology around Le Bon's (1895) Group mind theory, with a mere difference that Le Bon's study is focused on investigating features characteristic to psychological groups and their members, and Freud's study – on investigating personal motives of individuals to become a part of such a group. One of the most fundamental characteristics attributed to this kind of group by Le Bon (1895: 29) is that, while being a part of a psychological group, people become incapable of forming precise judgments, and thus, they have to accept the decisions imposed by those in power. In this way, the participants of such a group tend to lose their ability to critical thinking, and this is why we consider the notion of “psychological groups” described and investigated by Le Bon and Freud to be the predecessor of the notion “uncritical public” introduced by Toepfl (2020). We also adhere to the thought that both notions describe the same phenomena but from different perspectives of the authors' scientific interests.

Unlike Le Bon, Freud (1921: 95) goes beyond merely characterizing the group's particular features and investigates the motives holding a group together. Eventually, he concludes that all the participants of a psychological group are bound by libidinal ties to the leader, on the one hand, and to other group members, on the other. To prove this statement, he offers the example of church and army:

In a Church [...] as well as in an army, however different the two may be in other respects, the same illusion holds good of there being a head – in the Catholic Church Christ, in an army its Commander-in-Chief – who loves all the individuals in the group with an equal love [...]. All the demands that are made upon the individual

are derived from this love of Christ's [...]. It is not without a deep reason that the similarity between the Christian community and a family is invoked, and that believers call themselves brothers in Christ, that is, brothers through the love, which Christ has for them [...]. The like holds good of an army. The Commander-in-Chief is a father who loves all soldiers equally, and for that reason, they are comrades among themselves (Freud 1921: 93-94).

Hence, Freud claims that the skeleton of a psychological group that holds it together, makes it incapable of forming precise judgments, and urges its members to support their leaders in any circumstances, is the affectional feelings towards the leader and other members of the group, comparable to those characteristic to family bonds.

Having analysed the phenomenon of Trump becoming the USA president in 2016 and getting around 74 million votes during the elections in 2020 (US election results 2020: Joe Biden's defeat of Donald Trump 2020), we can conclude that the above-highlighted knowledge on group psychology can be applied only partially to this particular case. On the one hand, Trump's supporters indeed resemble the described psychological groups/uncritical publics. On the other hand, Trump and the way he positions himself towards modern society does not meet the requirements that a leader capable of evoking affectional feelings would have to meet. Kenneth Roth (2017) described his behavioural patterns as follows:

Donald Trump's successful campaign for the US presidency was a vivid illustration of this politics of intolerance [...]. He stereotyped migrants, vilified refugees, attacked a judge for his Mexican ancestry, mocked a journalist with disabilities, dismissed multiple allegations of sexual assault, and pledged to roll back women's ability to control their fertility.

In Roth's perspective, Trump is not presenting himself as a "loving father" who will take good care of the United States citizens, but rather as a powerful abuser, with low moral standards. Moreover, he is not trying to conceal his aggressive authoritarian approach, but on the contrary, remains open about it and even sets it out. The experts on the analysis of right-wing authoritarianism argued that the most remarkable thing about Donald Trump as an authoritarian leader was the fact that he was so obvious about it (Fuchs 2018: 197). Consequently, we can conclude that his voters supported his approach consciously and not while being unaware of its nature.

Having investigated the uncritical public supporting right-wing authoritarianism, Fuchs (2018: 84) made the following statement:

[...] groups that are threatened with decline or doom tend to be more likely to support right-wing authoritarianism. Experience and fear of declassification seems to play a role in the support of right-wing authoritarianism. Declassification is understood in this context as the loss of one's class status, where class in a Bourdieusian sense means the combination of economic class, social status, and cultural status as defined by the level of control of economic power, political power and cultural power of a particular individual or group.

Hence, in Fuchs' perspective, one possible stimulus that can hold the uncritical public together and urge them to follow an authoritarian leader is the fear of declassification, which equals the loss of either economic, political, or cultural power or all of the above. This approach was successfully exploited by German

National Socialists, Italian Fascists, and American Confederates (Neumann 2017: 626) within the policies of which the representatives of other classes were turned into enemies.

According to the 2016 Exit Polls Results released by The New York Times (2016) after Trump's election, to his supporters mostly belonged: 64% of those who thought that the most important political issue was immigration, 79% – who believed that the USA economy was in poor condition, 90% – who were angry about the federal government, 78% – whose financial situation had become worse since 2012 (Fuchs 2018: 83). We can conclude that Trump voters' main concerns were the fear of losing cultural, economic, and political power, which equals the fear of declassification.

In December 2017, a Yale University professor, Snyder (2017), introduced a new concept, that of sadopopulism, which relied on the political situation in the USA during Trump's presidency and further developed the ideas of authoritarianism being supported by those who feared declassification. The concept was later highlighted in more detail in his book *The Road to Unfreedom. Russia, Europe, America*:

Trump was something else: a sadopopulist, whose policies were designed to hurt the most vulnerable part of his own electorate. Encouraged by presidential racism, such people could understand their own pain as a sign of still greater pain inflicted upon others [...]. On one level, a poor person, unemployed worker, or opioid addict who votes away health care is just giving money to the rich [...]. On another level, such a voter is changing the currency of politics from achievement to suffering, from gain to pain, helping a leader of choice establish a regime of sadopopulism. Such a voter can believe that he or she has chosen who administers their pain, and can fantasize that this leader will hurt enemies still more. (Snyder 2018: 272-273)

Thus, sadopopulism describes a phenomenon of the public supporting the policies that are not giving them better opportunities and not making them personally better off for the simple reason that they think these policies can make the representatives of other classes (the "enemies") worse off. Such policies help their supporters overcome the fear of declassification by guaranteeing that, if they choose these policies, they will belong to a certain class within the framework of which, no matter how bad they may be suffering, they are still in a better position than the representatives of other classes (Snyder 2017). This is also the reason why such voters are not criticizing these policies, even if the latter act against them.

Summarizing what has been mentioned before, one of the possible explanations for the phenomenon of Trump being so strongly supported by many USA citizens is their fear of declassification, which, to a certain extent, can be explained within the framework of Snyder's concept of sadopopulism. In this context, we want to take a closer look at Trump's public speeches and analyse his ways of influencing people's agenda or putting the fear of declassification on it by using the theories of priming and framing.

3. Methodology

Our research follows the methodology of Objective Hermeneutics (Lueger and Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik 1994: 299), which can be sufficient with small pieces of text as far as the structure reproduction can be demonstrated. Objective

Hermeneutics prefers material that is not produced for the purpose of being analysed, but appears in the context of everyday experience. The analysis includes an explication of Trump's objective motives and objective consequences (i.e. based on real facts and not influenced by personal beliefs and feelings) of his interaction with the audience. Therefore, contextual knowledge is included here, and verbalizations are considered to carry potential structures of meaning that constitute reality.

This study is also based on qualitative content analysis, which is used in both an inductive and a deductive way, with the aim of interpreting data and discovering meaningful patterns, descriptive of the phenomena of priming and framing in Trump's speeches. As we have already discussed, priming describes the process of increasing the importance of certain issues in the recipients' cognitive network, and framing – highlighting these issues from certain angles to impose particular attitudes towards them. Drawing on this knowledge, we have investigated how these processes were exploited in Trump's speeches and whether and how the issue of declassification threat was facilitated within their framework. This technique allowed us to outline the authoritarian potential of Trump's rhetoric and to rationalize his political success.

In our research, the sample size was not determined in advance. Instead, theoretical implications were generated as the sampling proceeded, and the sampling ended when we realized that we had reached theoretical saturation (no new information emerged from the speeches). For this reason, we decided to narrow down our research to the first two years of Trump's presidency. We have chosen to analyse three speeches from each year, with the same interval in approximately four months, which let us see and describe consistent patterns rather than mere coincidences. We decided to focus on Trump's speeches directly and not on the way he or the USA situation was highlighted in the mass media, since he claimed that mass media were mostly fake and that his supporters should either follow his social media accounts or listen to him directly (Trump's 2017 Phoenix, Arizona Rally Full Speech Transcript 2017b).

4. Results

4.1. The declassification threat

In 2016, one of the central themes of Trump's rhetoric was devoted to the problem of the USA citizens suffering from unemployment for the reason that their jobs were stolen because the USA companies were going abroad. For this, Trump blames the government policies in general and the Democrats in particular. For example, he says:

We have a lot to overcome in our country, especially the fact that our jobs are being taken away from us and going to other lands [...]. Look at what the democratic party has done to the city as an example, and there are many others; of Detroit, 40% of Detroit's residents, 40% live in poverty. Half of all Detroit residents do not work, cannot work and can't get a job. Detroit tops the list of most dangerous cities in terms of violent crime. Number one. This is the legacy of the democratic politicians who have run this city. This results from the policy agenda embraced by crooked Hillary Clinton (Donald Trump 2016a. Michigan Speech Transcript: Asks Black Voters "What Do You Have to Lose?").

As a solution to this issue, Trump suggests voting for him and the Republicans, who can change the “destructive” USA policies and are capable of “building a wall” around the border and thereby bringing jobs back to Americans and “protecting” them from foreigners. If he wins, he promises:

Families trapped in welfare will be provided with jobs and opportunity [...]. The government will become lean, effective, responsible, and honest. Our border will be protected, and our children will be safe, very, very safe (Donald Trump 2016a. Michigan Speech Transcript: Asks Black Voters “What Do You Have to Lose?”).

Another attractive characteristic of this speech is that, within its framework, Trump used the word “job” 43 times, 22 framed in a context similar to the one highlighted in the first quotation, and 21 as highlighted in the second. He also rather often used the words “Hillary”, “Clinton”, or “Democrats” (35 times) in the context of incompetent policies. In this way, the term “job” without “Trump” and around “Hillary”, “Clinton”, or “Democrats” always has negative connotations, and vice versa, the word “job” next to “Trump” always suggests positive ones.

Consequently, the issues of the USA’s current economic and political status were primed here. Furthermore, they were placed in the negative frames of money and jobs going abroad and causing poverty due to the incompetent politicians and their “destructive” policies. Framing the issues of economic and political status in such a light facilitates the recipients’ fear of declassification, which can result in the phenomenon of public support of this authoritarian leader. We explain this phenomenon through the theories of priming and framing: if a leader succeeds at activating the concept of declassification threat, it automatically leads to the activation of other ideas connected to it and, at the same time, to the suppression of the non-connected ones. So, in such a constellation, the need to solve the issue of declassification becomes more urgent than the need to sustain democratic values.

At the same time, within the framework of his speech, Trump defines the enemies of the Americans: foreigners stealing their jobs and Democrats incapable of stopping this process or even facilitating it. This speech results in a phenomenon when the recipients’ need to pursue their benefits becomes suppressed and less urgent than their need for a strong leader capable of protecting them from or even hurting the enemies (due to the priming and framing effects). This is a bright example of sadpopulism theory.

On August 15, 2016, Trump held a speech devoted to terrorism in the States (Donald Trump’s speech on fighting terrorism, 2016b). Its main issue was the USA not being safe anymore because of foreigners, who brought terrorism into it. He gave examples of European countries suffering from terrorism and suggested that the same could happen to the States if they did not take immediate action. Moreover, by implying that Hillary Clinton’s refugee plan would cost America around 400 billion dollars, he managed to not only classify immigration as a safety threat, but also as an economic one. For this, he blamed the Democratic Party and their “naïve” policies that stuck to the idea that the Muslim world could change. As a first step to solving this issue, he defined the ability to recognize and name the enemy – the refugees and immigrants (the words he uses rather loosely as equivalents to Radical Islamists).

In this speech, he used the words “Islam”, “Refugee”, and “Immigrant” 34 times in the context of terrorism or potential economic difficulties in the USA.

He also used the names “Obama” and “Clinton” (as Democrats’ representatives) 29 times in the context of incompetent policies responsible for the above-listed issues of terrorism and economic difficulties. Moreover, he used the word “enemies” 3 times with reference to Radical Islamists/refugees/immigrants.

Thus, in this speech, Trump primes the safety and economic issues in the USA. He frames them in the context of terrorism, incompetent policies, and loss of money and activates the threat of losing economic and political power by the recipients. Moreover, he again defines the USA enemies as foreigners and repeats that democratic policies let these foreigners (who brought terrorism to the USA) thrive. At the same time, Trump defines himself as a strong leader capable of recognizing and defeating the enemy.

The same pattern can be seen in the third speech we picked from 2016, which took place on December 30. Its main issue was America losing a lot of money (economic power) and political influence (political power) when it “should be number one” (Donald Trump’s December 30 speech in Hilton Head, S.C., 2016). For this, Trump again blamed Democrats and foreigners, the latter because they stole their money, the former because they let it happen and spent too much on their campaigns (contrary to Trump).

In this speech, he used the words “dollar(s)”, “pay”, “spend(t)” 55 times in the context of America losing their money; “Mexico” – 14 times in the context of stealing from the USA; “Hillary” and “Obama” – 29 times in the context of incompetent policies; “build a wall” – 15 times in the context of what should be immediately done to “rescue” the United States. Another interesting aspect we observed while analyzing this speech was that Trump used the word “love” 11 times to refer to his supporters, as if he was trying to build a bond similar to the one described by Freud. Therefore, we consider that Trump also uses a “Freudian lens”, but it is done through a “sadopopulism” lens. He promises to be a “loving father” who will save those with declassification fear.

Thus, we can conclude that this particular speech was built around the pattern of priming the issues of the economic and political status of the USA and framing them in the context of “threat” or “danger”. This strategy facilitates the fear of declassification and makes the uncritical public support the authoritarian leader. Moreover, Trump tries to delineate the USA’s enemies by blaming the Democratic Party (enemy no. 1) for letting the foreigners (enemy no. 2) take advantage of the USA citizens. In such a constellation, the idea of an urgent need for a strong leader capable of fixing the Democrats’ mistakes and building a wall around the border to protect the USA citizens is primed in the recipients’ cognitive network and facilitates sadopopulism. Furthermore, at some point, Trump even turns to the Freudian methods of winning the uncritical public by trying to establish affectional ties with his audience.

4.2. The new American “hero”

The first speech we picked from 2017 took place on April 29 (Donald Trump Holds a Political Rally in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 2017a). Among its main issues, there were: the USA losing a lot of money in the international agreements (the Democrats’ fault), Trump taking steps to renegotiate or cancel all the agreements that didn’t protect American interests, creating jobs, and protecting the borders by forming an immigration system that would put the interests of the Americans first.

He also tried to introduce another issue that was not present in the speeches of 2016, which we picked for our analysis – the fake media coverage in the USA. For example, he says:

If the media’s job is to be honest and tell the truth, then I think we would all agree the media deserves a very, very big, fat, failing grade [...]. Those are the facts, whether we like them or not. The dishonest media won’t print them, won’t report them because the Washington media is part of the problem. Their priorities are not my priorities, and they are not your priorities, believe me. Their agenda is not your agenda (Donald Trump Holds a Political Rally in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 2017a).

He uses the word “media” 13 times in the context of their being fake, “jobs” 13 times in the context of Trump protecting them from being stolen, “borders” 13 times in the context of Trump doing a great job protecting them, “love” – 10 times with reference to the States or its citizens.

Hence, in 2017, Trump kept following the same lead as he did in 2016, adding the “enemy 3” of fake media to it, and priming the idea that they were a source of lies. Under such circumstances, the urgent need for Americans to be protected from lies got activated in the uncritical public’s minds and became their main priority in comparison with the need for the pluralism of opinions. This strategy helped Trump to disseminate his propaganda. Furthermore, he started positioning himself not as someone who *would* rescue the political and economic situation in the United States, but as someone who *had already started* doing that. In such a way, he reduced the recipients’ fear of declassification. Moreover, he primed the idea that they were being protected and put in a better position than the representatives of other classes.

The second chosen speech took place on August 23, and its main issue was fake media that distorted Trump’s words and deeds (Trump’s 2017 Phoenix, Arizona Rally Full Speech Transcript 2017b). He claimed that without the social media, where he could communicate with his supporters directly, he would never be able to become a president. Another issue was, as usual, Trump creating new jobs and securing the border from immigrants. In our perspective, this could be explained by the “Freudian” approach. For example, he used such phrases as: “Our movement is a movement built on love. It’s love for fellow citizens”, or “We have to come together as Americans with love for the nation and true affection”, or “I love all of the people of our country”.

Within this speech, he used the word “media” 16 times in the context of them being fake, “job(s)” – 15 times, 10 in the context of him bringing the new ones, and 5 in the context that before Trump there were no jobs, “border(s)” – 17 times in the context that he started protecting them and, at long last, “love” – 23 times concerning either his supporters or the USA.

So, among the primed issues, there were: the media, framed in the context of being fake and of being a less reliable source of information than Trump’s words; the economic situation, in the context that it was being improved by Trump and had been bad before him; the political situation, framed in the context that American immigration policies were being improved in favour of Trump’s supporters. From this, we conclude that in this speech, he used almost the same strategies, with the mere difference that the “Freudian” approach was more assertive.

The third speech took place on December 8, 2017 (Donald Trump Holds a Political Rally in Pensacola 2017c). Its main topics were: Trump creating new jobs, facilitating economic growth, making restrictions on immigration policies, and making the USA border safer and stronger. At the same time, he insisted that the USA was still paying for mistakes that the Democrats had made. Within its framework, he used the word “job(s)” 29 times in the context that he kept creating well-paid jobs, “borders” 21 times in the context that they were being better protected, “Democrats” 9 times in the context of weak and dangerous policies, “love” – 15 times with the reference to America or its citizens.

Overall, in this speech, Trump used similar patterns as in both previous ones, with the slight difference that this time he omitted the media issue and put an emphasis on the idea that, although the political and economic situations were becoming better, there was still a lot to work on. In such a way, the declassification threat could be reduced, but only partially resolved, so that the striving for a strong leadership capable of protecting its supporters remained essential. Thus, summarizing everything mentioned above, by priming certain issues (such as the political or economic situation in the country), framing them in the negative context of “threat” or “danger”, and defining a couple of “enemies”, Trump managed to urge the USA democratic society to support an explicitly authoritarian leader and turn a vast amount of its public uncritical. Moreover, he even used the “Freudian” method of putting the public in his favour by trying to evoke their affectional feelings. It should be mentioned that Trump’s speeches often lean towards an episodic frame rather than a thematic one. Using both thematic and episodic framing elements, he tends to highlight specific incidents, cases, or individuals, rather than delving deeply into broader systemic or contextual issues. His communication style often involves vivid storytelling, emphasizing the personal aspects of problems or situations.

5. Conclusion

Our study shows that authoritarian rhetoric uses the strategies of priming and framing to control public opinion and influence individuals’ behaviours. This phenomenon is vividly visible in the speeches of former American president Donald Trump.

The selected analysed 2016 Trump’s speeches were built around the pattern of priming the issues of the economic and political safety of the USA and framing them in the context of “threat” or “danger”. Such an approach facilitated the fear of declassification, which turned into the phenomenon of authoritarian ideology being virally spread in a democratic society. Moreover, Trump defined the USA citizens’ enemies and, by doing so, primed the idea that there was an urgent need to be protected from them. In such a constellation, he activated the need for a quasi-powerful leader, capable to protect his supporters’ agenda, and the need for sustaining democratic values was suppressed. Furthermore, at some point, Trump even managed to establish affectional ties with his audience (Freudian approach) in order to win them over.

In 2017, Trump’s speeches followed the same strategies, with the mere difference that this time, he primed the idea that, although the political and economic situation was becoming better (because of Trump’s actions), there was still a lot to work on. In such a way, the declassification threat could be reduced but

not entirely resolved, so that the striving for a more decisive leadership, capable of protecting its supporters, remained important. In 2017, he also introduced another enemy (the fake media), from which the USA citizens had to be potentially protected and made what we have labelled “his Freudian approach” stronger.

We would also like to point out that, as an authoritarian leader, Trump often frames issues in a way that emphasizes crisis and fear. Trump has used this strategy by portraying certain situations or groups as threats to national security, emphasizing the need for strong and decisive action. He tends to criticize and undermine the credibility of the Democrats and fake media using simple, repetitive messaging to convey his points. Trump’s communication style is characterized by repetitive slogans and catchphrases, simplifying complex issues into easily digestible soundbites. By framing the Democrats and the media as his adversaries, he attempts to undermine their credibility and position himself as the sole source of truth. This strategy is often associated with authoritarian leaders who seek to control information and manipulate public perception.

Although this is a small-scale study, the results suggest that the theories of priming and framing can provide valuable insights into the strategies of authoritarian rhetoric aimed at the uncritical public. Future larger-scale studies could further analyse the audience’s direct response to Trump’s speeches, as well as explore the discursive practices occurring within different groups of his supporters, their attitudes and main issues.

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UNTRANSLATABILITY IN REGENCY ROMANCES: EXPLICITATION OR IMPLICITATION?

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***Abstract:** The present paper focuses on strategies of translating love scenes in historical romances from English into Romanian. Taking as point of reference Klaudy's (2003) and Mossop's (2017) translational models, I analyse excerpts from the first book in the Bridgerton series, Julia Quinn's *The Duke* and I. Two opposing forces are at work in the translation of romances: explicitation, seen as a universal tendency in translation, and implicitation, dictated by restrictions on translating this particular genre. My analysis indicates that the preferred strategy in the published translation is implicitation.*

***Keywords:** agent, dysphemism, euphemism, instrument, orthophemism*

1. Introduction: Scenes of endearment and the “unacceptable”

The translation of English (historical) romances is a rarely discussed topic. While a lot has been said about romances as a genre (Radway 1984, Fuchs 2004, Ficke 2021, etc.), very little has been said about what makes them such successful candidates for translation and, paradoxically, such bad candidates for imitation in other languages (as pointed out by Paizis 1998: 3). Probably because romances are seen as an inferior genre, placed on “the lower shelf of the literary polysystem”, not much thought has been given to strategies employed in the translation of romantic fiction, in spite of the fact that it sells better than most other genres (Bianchi, d’Arcangelo 2015: 248).

The present paper attempts to remedy this situation, by casting a glance at the translation of what Paizis (1998: 1) refers to as “scenes of endearment” in Regency romances and the strategies that a translator deems appropriate in dealing with such scenes. I have chosen this particular type of text because of the problem it poses to a translator, due to the fact that the language of love scenes is rife with genre-specific figurative language, as well as phrases built on semantic opposition (such as “unbearable pleasure”). As pointed out by Barlow, Krentz (1992: 22), “the language of romance is more lushly symbolic and metaphorical than ordinary discourse”. In order to understand and successfully translate the romance, one needs to understand its coded language and be able to reproduce it in the target language. This is because the readers of romances expect to read coded language, which is associated with a range of various emotions:

In our genre, [...] stock phrases and literary figures are regularly used to evoke emotion. This is not well understood by critics of these genres. Romance readers have a keyed-in response to certain words and phrases (the sardonic lift of the

eyebrows, the thundering of the heart, the penetrating glance, the low murmur of a sigh). Because of their past reading experiences, readers associate certain emotions – anger, fear, passion, sorrow – with such language and expect to feel the same responses each time they come upon such phrases. (Barlow, Krentz 1992: 21)

But what happens when the target culture lacks such coded language? Not only is the translator faced with translating what Davies (2007: 63) has aptly dubbed “the unacceptable”, namely scenes built on what counts in many cultures as tabooistic imagery, but also with creating a new style in their target language. It is, for instance, the case of Polish (Paizis 1998: 10), where “sexual” language had to be coined by Harlequin translators (who adopted a “softened” variety), as there was no such ready-made model in Polish literature. I imagine that such must have been the case of Romanian after 1989, when, after the demise of communist censorship, there was a flourishing market for translated popular fiction romances and new publishing houses (such as “Miron”, which started its publishing activity in 1991) were set up to cater to the tastes of a starving new readership. The collections proposed by these publishers were different from the previous collection (*Romanul de dragoste* - “The Love Novel”) that had been popular during the communist period and which specialized in publishing classic novels, built around love stories (such as Iris Murdoch’s *The Sandcastle*, or Somerset Maugham’s *The Painted Veil*). These new collections specialized in translating “category romances” that were, without exception, built on a pretty similar scaffolding: a conflict between a dark, Byronic, forbidding hero and an inexperienced, beautiful, kind heroine, often resulting in steamy love scenes, an exotic setting (whether contemporary or placed in the past) and a happy ending. This genre was quite new to the Romanian readership.

In discussing the translation of French erotic literature into English, Mossop (2017) reaches the conclusion that the “neutral” style exhibited by French erotic prose could not be copied in English. By neutral style, he meant the use of lexis that could be employed in any kind of situation (e.g. *lips*, *thighs*, *kiss*, etc.). It turns out that English could mostly use dysphemism (Allan, Burrbridge’s 2006: 32; an equivalent for coarse language) and euphemism (coded figurative language), but not much in between, such as orthophemism (ibid.; an equivalent for “neutral” lexis). Consider the following table that sums up these stylistic distinctions:

orthophemism	euphemism	dysphemism
neutral lexis	euphemistic lexis	coarse lexis
e.g. toilet, Jesus, erection	e.g. loo, Lord, pulse of his desire	e.g. sh*thouse, Christ!, c*ck

Table 1. Allan Burrbridge’s (2006: 32) taxonomy of contrasting x-phemisms merged with Mossop’s (2017) taxonomy of lexis

Faced with translation loss, a translator attempts to find the right approach and opts for either “defaulting” (resorting to their own personal style in translation), “ventriloquizing” (creating a style that they believe the readership expects), “deferring” (choosing a style dictated by the commissioner of the translation) or “reflecting” (copying the style of the source text). To these procedures, I would add that of “repertoiring”, which covers the situation of an already existing model in the target culture, such as the case of French, which had a

strong inherited genre model to fall back on, when imported romances started being translated in the 70's (Paizis 1998: 5). Below, I sum up an integrated version of Mossop's translational model:

TEXT-CENTERED	TRANSLATOR-CENTERED	PUBLISHER-CENTERED	TARGET CULTURE-CENTERED	READER-CENTERED
REFLECTING	DEFAULTING	DEFERRING	REPERTOIRING	VENTRILOQUIZING

Table 2. An integrated version of Mossop's (2017: 343) typology of styles in translation

The typology proposed by Mossop can be applied to translating love scenes in romances, where the style is a mixture of euphemism and neutral lexis. I intend to check whether the multiple versions I am investigating (three Romanian target texts, one of which is the published version) fit into this model.

2. Explicitation and implicitation in translating love scenes

In order to investigate whether the target texts in my corpus can be identified according to Mossop's (2017) typology, I will make use of two important translational categories: explication and implicitation.

When equivalence seems unattainable to the translator, which is to be expected with love scenes, the translator resorts to omission. Indeed, in this case, omission seems to be justified, as Davies (2007: 63) explains: the translator will probably strive for acceptability and prioritize it over faithfulness to the source text. This observation confirms Paizis' 1998 study, which shows that romances translated into French, Greek, and German are the result of both adaptation and omission.

Omission, however, is one of the transfer operations that make up a larger translational category, i.e. implicitation, according to Klaudy (2003: 153). In her view, implicitation is an encompassing category, which can be instantiated either by underspecification (a specific lexical item in the source text is translated by a more general one), by contraction (a phrase in the source text is translated by a shorter phrase), or by omission (the word/phrase in the source text is omitted). Implicitation is the opposite of explication, seen as a translational category comprising specification (a lexical item with a general meaning is translated by an item with a more specific meaning), division (one item in the source text is rendered by paraphrase in the target text), addition (words/phrases are added in the target text). While implicitation is sporadic in translation (Klaudy 2003), explication is a universal tendency in any translated text, for obvious pragmatic communicative reasons: more often than not, the translator means to make sure that the message of the target text has been fully delivered to the reader, so s/he explicates.

It thus appears that, on the one hand, translating love scenes is an endeavour which often relies on implicitation, while, on the other hand, translating a text in general entails a lot of explication. However, English romances translated into French prove shorter, not longer than their source texts (Paizis 1998: 5), which means that the preferred strategy is, at least for French, implicitation.

In order to check what happens with Romanian translated romances, I have selected a few excerpts from Chapter 10 of Julia Quinn's *The Duke and I*. I have

chosen this particular novel because of its tremendous popularity and because of the special style that the author employs in love scenes. As the Bridgerton novels were adapted into a hugely successful Netflix series in 2020, the novels, initially published by “Miron” in 2013, were republished by “Litera” in 2021. The new publisher chose to reprint an unrevised version of the same target text that was printed in 2013 (produced by Gabriela Anca Marin, a regular translator of romances). Chapter 10 is a pivotal moment in the novel, because that’s when the hero (Simon) succumbs to his passionate urges and kisses the heroine (Daphne), against his better judgment.

The selection of the excerpts in Chapter 10 was made according to a criterion that I have borrowed from Klaudy’s 2003 study on explicitation and implicitation: obligatoriness. As pointed out by her (2003: 160), both explicitation and implicitation occur in translation (a) either because the translator cannot help resorting to the respective transfer operations, (b) or because the translator strategically chooses to employ them. When transfer operations are obligatory, it means that there is parametric variation between the source and the target language. For instance, in the translation of English definite noun phrases, a Romanian translator will have to employ implicitation (by contraction) and translate the noun phrase (definite article + noun) as one item (noun+enclitic article). Conversely, an English translator will have to perform explicitation (by division) when translating a Romanian definite article. When transfer operations are, however, used strategically, it means that the translator has a (stylistic) choice: for instance, the report verb *say*, which is frequently used in English narratives, can be translated into Romanian either as a general verb of saying (*a spune, a zice* - “to say”), or as a specific verb of saying (*a răspunde* - “to answer”, *a se răzoi* - “to sneer”, etc.). Thus, the translator can opt either for equivalence, or for explicitation (by specification). It turns out that the tendency is for translators to choose explicitation over equivalence in such cases (Vişan 2022).

Considering the criterion of obligatoriness, the first two examples I analyse here are of phrases which can be translated strategically, while the next example contains linguistic material where transfer operations can be seen as [+obligatory]. Let us consider the first set of examples:

2.1. Strategic transfer operations

Source Text	Target Text 1	Target Text 2	Target Text 3
"Oh, my God, Daphne," he moaned, his hands biting into <i>the soft curve of her buttocks</i> , pulling her closer, needing her to feel <i>the pulse of desire</i> that had pooled in <i>his groin</i> .	-Dumnezeule, Daphne, a gemut el, Ø trăgând-o și mai aproape, dorind ca ea să-i simtă <i>pulsul dorinței</i> Ø. (translated by Gabriela Anca Marin, published in 2013 by “Miron”)	-O, Doamne Dumnezeule, Daphne, gemu el, în timp ce mâinile îi frământau <i>rotunjimile îmbietoare</i> , trăgând-o mai aproape, dorind s-o facă să simtă <i>pulsația dorinței</i> care îi cuprinsese <i>vintrele</i> . (unpublished translation by Nadina Vişan, 2022)	- Doamne, Daphne, a murmurat el, în timp ce mâinile, încleștându-se în <i>carnea molatică a feselor ei</i> , o trăgeau mai aproape, mânate de nevoia ca ea să simtă <i>iureșul dorinței</i> care se adunase în <i>membrul lui</i> . (unpublished translation by professional romance writer, 2023)

Source Text	Back Translation	Back Translation	Back Translation
"Oh, my God, Daphne," he moaned, his hands biting into the soft curve of her buttocks, pulling her closer, needing her to feel the pulse of desire that had pooled in his groin.	"God, Daphne," moaned he, pulling her closer, wanting her to feel the pulse of his desire.	"Oh, God, Daphne," moaned he, while his hands were molding her appealing curves, pulling her closer, wanting to make her feel the pulsing of the desire that had overwhelmed his groin.	"God, Daphne," he murmured, while his hands, clenching on the soft flesh of her buttocks, were pulling her closer, driven by the need that she should feel the rush of desire that had gathered in his member.

Table 3. Coded figurative language – euphemism (*pulse of desire*), neutral language – orthophemism (*buttocks, groin*)

The example in Table 3 contains an instance of euphemism, rendered by all three target texts through a similar strategy: they all opt for figurative language. The lexeme *desire* is translated by an equivalent noun in Romanian (*dorință*). Lexical variation is resorted to for the head noun *the pulse*, which is rendered as *puls* “pulse”, *pulsație* “pulsation” or *iureș* “rush”. TT3 changes the image of intermittent pulsation in *pulse of desire* with an image of rapid fluidness (*rush of desire*), which creates semantic cohesion with the verb “to pool”, used in the last part of the excerpt. This strategy might count as a form of compensation, without, however, diminishing the euphemistic force of the phrase.

Strangely enough, it is not the euphemistic material that the published translator has trouble with, but the orthophemistic one (the “neutral” lexemes *buttocks* and *groin*.) This is probably because a literal translation into Romanian can easily produce comic effects. In the case of *buttocks*, the translator may choose from a list of available lexemes such as: (a) *buci*, which is the equivalent of “(bottom) cheeks,” but which sounds coarse and would qualify more as a dysphemism than as an orthophemism; (b) *fese*, the more neutral equivalent for “buttocks;” (c) *posterior*, *șezut*, *dos*, which would be an instance of metonymy, translated as “(one’s) behind”. It appears that TT1 considers the mentioning of body parts “unacceptable” and strategically opts for omission. TT2 hesitates between *posterior apetisant* (“appealing posterior”) and *rotunjimi îmbietoare* (“appealing roundness/curves”) as possible versions and ultimately opts for the latter version in order to avoid creating comic effects. Thus, TT2 compensates by translating an orthophemism through a euphemism, which may be seen as a form of explicitation, if one considers an orthophemism as the unmarked variant and the euphemism or the dysphemism as the marked variants in a lexical paradigm. As for TT3, which is the target text produced by a Romanian native-speaker, who is also a published author of English romances, the phrase is translated as *carnea molatică a feselor* (“the soft flesh of her buttocks”), which counts as an instance of equivalence, with the exception of *curve* translated as *carne* (“flesh”), which is a generalization and counts as an instance of explicitation.

The translation of *groin* seems to be posing problems of its own. TT1 again chooses to omit translating a neutral body part term, while TT2 chooses the only possible version that wouldn’t sound coldly technical: the rarely used pluralia tantum noun *vintre* (“groin”). This, again, makes this target text sound more poetic than the original. As for TT3, the term employed is an orthophemism, but may also

count as an instance of metonymy: *membrul lui* (“his member”). Considering the fact that the translator manages to preserve the “neutral” quality of the lexeme, this instance may count as a form of equivalence.

It would be interesting to have a look at the French version for this excerpt. Consider Table 4:

Source Text	Target Text 4	Back translation
"Oh, my God, Daphne," he moaned, his hands biting into <i>the soft curve of her buttocks</i> , pulling her closer, needing her to feel <i>the pulse of desire</i> that had pooled in <i>his groin</i> .	Daphné ! gémit-il. Ø Il la plaqua contre lui avec ivresse, conscient qu'elle ne pouvait plus, désormais, ignorer <i>son désir</i> qui se pressait contre <i>son ventre</i> . (translated by Cécile Desthuilliers, published by “J'ai Lu”, 2008)	“Daphne!” he moaned. He pinned her against him with intoxication, aware that she could no longer ignore his desire, which was pressing against her belly.

Table 4. The French Target Text – an instance of adaptation

A comparison with the French version reveals that the French translator resorts both to implicitation by omission (the phrase *the soft curve of her buttocks* is eliminated) and to modulation: the point of view in the excerpt is changed, it is not the hero's hands that take action, but the hero himself, and the heroine seems helpless against the hero's *désir* (a shortened euphemism for *the pulse of his desire*, also an instance of implicitation by contraction). Moreover, there's no mention of the hero's *groin*, rendered through modulation as the heroine's *ventre* (“belly”). These subtle changes in the French target text paint a slightly different picture: the hero is in control, while the heroine is pictured as helpless.

Table 5 contains another excerpt that poses similar translation problems:

Source Text	Target Text 1	Target Text 2	Target Text 3
He moved with <i>agonizing slowness</i> , stopping before he <i>bared her</i> to give her one last chance to say no.	S-a mișcat cu o <i>încetineală</i> <i>agonizantă</i> , s-a oprit o clipă Ø ca să-i dea posibilitatea să spună nu... (translated by Gabriela Anca Marin, published in 2013 by “Miron”)	Se mișcă <i>încet</i> , <i>cât de încet putea</i> , oprindu-se o clipă înainte să îi <i>dezgolească pieptul</i> pentru a-i mai oferi încă o dată ocazia să spună nu. (unpublished translation by Nadina Vișan, 2022)	S-a mișcat <i>chinuitor de încet</i> , oprindu-se înainte să îi <i>dezgolească sânii</i> pentru a-i da o ultimă șansă de-a spune nu. (unpublished translation by professional romance writer, 2023)
Source Text	Back Translation	Back Translation	Back Translation
He moved with <i>agonizing slowness</i> , stopping before he <i>bared her</i> to give her one last chance to say no.	He moved with an <i>agonizing slowness</i> , stopped for a moment to give her the possibility to say no...	He moved slowly, as slowly as he could, stopping for a second before he <i>bared her chest</i> so as to offer her one more time the opportunity to say no.	He moved <i>agonizingly slowly</i> , stopping before he <i>bared her breasts</i> so as to give her one last chance to say no.

Table 5. Coded language – euphemism (*her*), semantic mismatch (*agonizing slowness*)

In Table 5, the phrase *agonizing slowness* is translated literally by TT1, while both TT2 and TT3 feel the need to reformulate: TT2 resorts to explicitation by repeating the manner adverb *încet* (“slowly”), while TT3 preserves the length of the phrase, but converts the noun phrase into an adverb modified by an intensifier: *chinuitor de încet* (“agonizingly slowly”). In choosing a manner adverb over a noun phrase, both TT2 and TT3 opt for a more fluid language, but also for a degree of translation loss, as the unlikely combination between the adjective *agonizing* (usually collocating with the noun *pain*) and the noun *slowness* is lost in translation.

The euphemistic effect of the verb phrase *bared her*, where the pronominal direct object *her* may be seen as a truncation for *her breasts* (or as an instance of totum pro parte metonymy), is also lost in translation: TT1 chooses to omit the verb phrase, and resorts to implicitation by omission, while TT2 and TT3 choose to explicitate, by restoring the missing noun (*piept* (“chest”), *sâni* (“breasts”)).

2.2. Non-strategic transfer operations

The example I have selected below may count as an illustration of contexts where the Romanian translator may be tempted to stray from the natural flow of their target language: I am referring to the many instances of text in Chapter 10, where the hero is the agent of the action expressed by dynamic verbs, but the author chooses to use an instrument subject instead. The choice made by Julia Quinn, namely, to replace agent subjects with instrument subjects in this love scene, is deliberate. The agency of the hero is shifted upon his body parts: it is not the hero that kisses the heroine, but his lips; it is not the hero that touches the heroine, but his hands, and so on. This is a scene where the hero acts against his will, driven by his passion for the heroine. I have counted here 7 agent subjects and as many as 18 instrument subjects. By contrast, the marital love scene in Chapter 18, where the heroine takes action and “forces” herself on her unsuspecting husband, abounds in agent subjects (as many as 30 agent subjects and only 6 instrument subjects). This stylistic strategy would, however, be awkward in Romanian, which, just like French, differs from English with respect to subject realization. Consider the example in Table 6:

Source Text	Target Text 1	Target Text 2	Target Text 3
<i>His hands</i> cupped her cheeks, holding her steady so that he might drink in the sight of her.	I-a cuprins obrajii în palme, Ø îmbătându-se cu imaginea ei. (translated by Gabriela Anca Marin, published in 2013 by “Miron”)	Îi cuprinse fața în palme, încercând s-o domolească pentru a-și umple sufletul de imaginea ei. (unpublished translation by Nadina Vișan, 2022)	Simon i-a cuprins fața cu mâinile, ca să o țină strâns și să o soarbă din priviri. (unpublished translation by professional romance writer, 2023)
Source Text	Back Translation	Back Translation	Back Translation

Table 6. Instrument Subjects translated as Agent Subjects

As expected, due to parametric variation between English and Romanian, all three target texts replace the instrument subject with agent subjects. This may count as an instance of obligatory explicitation, where a more specific subject is replaced by a general subject. The semantic role of agent is usually associated with the syntactic function of subject, thus the item fulfilling this role is assigned the Nominative case in canonical sentences, counting as the unmarked variant. As one can see, other instances of strategic explicitation can be identified, as is the case of the lexically realized subject (Simon) in TT3. By the same token, TT1 strategically opts for implicitation by omission, and eliminates chunks of the source text.

3. Conclusion

My investigation has traced instances of non-obligatory, strategic instances of explicitation and implicitation in the translation of love scenes in a popular Regency romance. Of the three Romanian target texts analysed here, the only target text that exhibited a large amount of implicitation was TT1 (80.76%), compared to TT2 (38.46%) and TT3 (26.08%). Conversely, TT1 resorted to 19.23% instances of explicitation, compared to TT2 (61.53%), and TT3 (73.91%).

As for obligatory, non-strategic explicitation (such as subject realization by an agent/instrument in the target language), both TT1 and TT2 were pretty close (27.77% and 22.22%, respectively). TT3 proved to be the odd one out, formally copying the style of the original to a much larger extent: out of the 18 instrument subjects identified in the source text, TT3 translated 15 tokens by equivalent instrument subjects, which amounts to 83.33%. Interestingly enough, but not unexpectedly, the French translation turned all 18 instrument subjects into agent subjects.

If one rethinks these percentages in terms of Mossop's (2017) typology in Table 2, one may conclude that TT3 is the most style-sensitive of the target texts discussed here, identifying it as "reflecting" in style, while TT2 appears as "ventriloquizing." It seems that TT1 is either "defaulting," or "deferring," but deciding which type fits it best would require a quantitative analysis of a much larger number of excerpts translated by the same translator. Finally, the French translation counts as "repertoiring", as it seems to resort to an already familiar pattern based on modulation.

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THE (IM)POSSIBILITY OF LITERARY TRANSLATION

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***Abstract:** The problematics of literary translation have generated inconclusive discussions among relevant scholars. The crucial problem posed is the equivocal nature of literature, which complicates the process. Hence, discussing the question of literary translation, Umberto Eco asserts that it never says the same thing as the original. This essay will address the complex issue of literary translation on two levels, theoretical and practical. It deals with aspects like the role of translation in inter-cultural communication between peoples, the role of the translator as an agent enabling this communication, fidelity to the source text, and will finally examine some illustrative examples bound up with the core issue of literary translation.*

***Keywords:** destination language, literary translation, multi-lingualism, source language, Umberto Eco*

1. Introduction

Literary translation is understood as the process enabling the transfer of a text from a source language to a destination language. Usually, the explanation given to the verb 'translate' is: "To turn in writing or speech something from one language into another language, wholly preserving the meaning of the words and phrases". The first question this prompts concerns the extent to which it is possible to 'wholly' preserve a word's meaning when it passes in translation from one language to another, especially when one translates literature. The adverb 'wholly' would imply a perfect translation. But "every sensible and rigorous theory of language shows that a perfect translation is an impossible dream" (Eco 2001: ix). Despite this, Eco emphasizes, people translate. Translation builds a bridge of communication, at the broadest level, between different world cultures, and, at the narrowest, between individuals. Translation, to put it concisely, is a door by which we enter another's cultural conglomerate – we know them, we understand them and we empathize with them. Human thought would be immeasurably impoverished if translation did not exist, because it is impossible to be able to read all of the languages that are spoken. Cultures would pull down their individual shutters, and the kind of vivid communication between them, which translation facilitates and consolidates, would become impossible.

From the translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek, in the third century BC, to the present day, translation has intensified: people have managed to connect themselves culturally and to exchange personal and collective experiences through translation. It is the translator who enjoys the status of protagonist in this activity – a role Cicero (1949: 365) seems to see as comparable to the writer's, due to the fact that, in his opinion, while translating, it is not necessary "to render word for word" (idem: 365), but instead to preserve "the general style and force of the language"

(ibidem), thus leading to the idea of a re-creation through translation – the agent who makes translation something concrete, who facilitates contact with universal literatures. When we translate, in truth we match ourselves against a universe of signs, while being part of an entirely different universe of signs. Translation is thus a kind of tussle between two systems of signs, and it is the translator who stands in the middle of the arena, making possible the ‘transition’ from one system to the other. Hence, “the translator must, as a communicator, possess the knowledge and skills that are common to all communicators (this much by definition) but ... in two languages (at least)” (Bell 1991: 36).

This is not to diminish literary translation. It has been concluded that “in major cultures too, every new poetic wave has been stimulated by translations” (Krasniqi 2018: 28). In the end, an author is the totality of what s/he reads, and what s/he reads is never limited to texts written only in his/her native language. Furthermore, Lefevere (1984: 97) declares that translation “play[s] a vital part in the evolution of literatures”.

It should be emphasized from the very beginning that the challenge of literary translation offers endlessly fertile ground for new research and analysis. In this essay, I shall strive to examine concisely the philosophy of literary translation, swimming in waters both theoretical and practical, depending chiefly on the writers who have themselves written literature and have been preoccupied with the question of literary translation. Particular attention will be devoted to Umberto Eco’s *Experiences in Translation*, which attempts to respond to the problematics of literary translation, building on the author’s own experience in order to create a new system of thought on the subject.

In this paper, all the quotations taken from the books in Albanian are translated into English by Robert Wilton. Robert Wilton is a British-Kosovan novelist, screenwriter and literary translator. His translations from Albanian into English include the first great Albanian novel, Sterjo Spasse’s “Why?”, works by Ridvan Dibra, and diverse poetry, including the well-known Albanian poet Millosh Gjergj Nikolla – commonly known as Migjeni.

2. Premises of literary translation: “translating means saying almost the same thing”

According to Alexander Fraser Tytler (2007: 9), translation should preserve the ideas of the source text, its style and techniques should correspond to the original, and thus the composition of the original work should be upheld. He accordingly lists three essential laws of translation:

1. Translation should give a complete transcript of the ideas of the original work.
2. The style and manner of the translation should be of the same character as that of the original.
3. Translation should have the ease of the original composition.

Jakobson comes to the conclusion that translation should certainly follow the grammar of the destination language. He sees the meaning of each word as a linguistic phenomenon and concludes that it is the signifier, and not the signified, that carries the meaning. For him there are three kinds of translation: intralingual, interlingual and intersemiotic – and the essence of them all is that “translation

involves two equivalent messages in two different codes” (Jakobson 1959: 233). C. S. Peirce (1994), on the other hand, sees translation as a kind of interpretation, which leads him to the belief that “the conception of a ‘meaning’, which is, in its primary acceptation, the translation of a sign into another system of signs, and which, in the acceptation here applicable, is a second assertion from which all that follows from the first assertion equally follows, and vice versa” (Peirce 1994: 1226). Similarly, Gadamer (2004: 386) comes to the conclusion that “every translation is at the same time an interpretation” – an idea discussed by Umberto Eco (2006: 253), who also thinks that “every translation, even the translation of *piove* into *it rains*, is an interpretation” (trans. Robert Wilton). Borges, who declares himself convinced of the beauty of literal translation, gives an interesting definition of translation, seeing it as the generator and illustrator of aesthetic discussion: “Translation ... should be intended to illuminate aesthetic discussion” (Borges 1974, Vol. 1: 239,– trans. Robert Wilton) (for more, regarding the literal translation, see also the essay “Word-Music and Translation”, Borges 2000: 57-76).

For Eco, writing something theoretical about traductology demands experience in translating. Thus his theoretical saga about traductology is prefaced by his own experience as a translator and as a translated author. Ideally, the legitimacy of the hypotheses proposed by a theorist of traductology is more credible when the theorist has themselves been confronted directly with translation, because, in the end, translation is a practical matter. Eco (2006: 296) summarizes his reflections on literary translation in the expression: “translating means saying almost the same thing”. The accent is surely on the adverb ‘almost’; the translated work is never equal to the original work. The mission Eco sets out on, before gathering together a set of texts which are the products of a series of conferences, and which he publishes under the title *Experiences in Translation*, is to show that there is no such thing as a perfect translation. Even when a translation is without errors, it is still just *almost* perfect. His own experiences with translation infuse the whole book, and are the basis for his theoretical questions about translation, and, for this reason, Eco sees experience in translation – whether active or passive – as necessary for the establishment of a system of thought on traductology.

In this book, among other things, Eco discusses issues like the cultural differences between languages, the equivalences of meaning in the case of synonyms, the contexts and their correct meaning, the reference, and the profound understanding of text, interpretation and negotiation, intertextual reference, interpretation as it relates to translation, and so on. At the very beginning of his introduction, he asks: *What does translation mean?* (idem: 9). The answer Eco aims to elaborate is that “translation is to say the same thing in another language” (ibidem), but in fact, as he teaches us, it is not, because his experience tells him that translation never says “the same thing” as the original. Eco (2006: 47) comes to the conclusion that translation has to do with “a possible world”. Thus we understand that there are two worlds which communicate, but which are nevertheless different to a certain degree, because the second tends to resemble the first, but is not identical to it: “To translate always means to polish and to discard some of the implications of which the original wording is composed. This means that in translation the same thing is never said” (idem: 99 – trans. Robert Wilton). Translation represents a process through which the translated text loses much of the original; translation means the transfer of a text not simply from one language to another, but from one culture to another. He thus instructs the translator not to be afraid of the linguistic rules and cultural elements embodied in the work. In that

case the translator is obliged to know the cultural context of the era in which the author being translated was writing. S/he should capture references carefully, and take special care when translating texts that produce intertextual echoes. In this context, Eco (2006: 239 – trans. Robert Wilton) writes: “Not to understand an erudite or ironic reference is to impoverish the source text. To add an extra reference is to enrich it more than is appropriate. The ideal solution for a translation would be to give, in another language, nothing less and likewise nothing more than what is alluded to in the original”.

The translator is – or, in the final reckoning, should be – an excellent reader of the literary work, and as such, should also know the cultural identity of the author s/he is translating, should understand the allusions in the texts, its pitfalls, so as to avoid any misunderstandings and consequently translate incorrectly. Eco demands that the translator preserve the text’s context, because words always take on a semantic weight according to the context in which they are used; he sees this as the principal obligation in the translation process. Eco perceives linguistic systems as comparable and concludes that “incidental misunderstandings can be resolved when texts are translated in the light of context and with reference to the world about which the text in question is speaking” (idem: 51). It is therefore the duty of the translator “to negotiate with the fantasies of an author now long-lost and yet powerfully present in the source text, and with the as-yet undefined figure of the reader for whom they are translating” (idem: 370).

In conclusion, Tytler (2007) insists that the source text should be respected, its composition and authenticity of style maintained; Jakobson (1959) asserts that the intended linguistic structure be protected; Eco (2006) sets out his theory of translation along more or less the same lines, insisting that the duty of the translator is – as much as the restrictions of the target language allow – to remain true to the original, guarding fanatically the context of the source text, which should remain powerfully ever-present throughout the translation process. In essence, Eco’s theory of translation matches that of C. S. Peirce (1994), who sees translation as interpretation – a similarly approach to that of Gadamer’s (2004), for whom translation is an interpretation, a kind of hermeneutic dialogue. In general, for Eco (2006), a translation can never manage to say the same thing as the original; accordingly, the principal notion that emerges from Eco’s attempt at a definition of translation – and that forms the title of his book, indeed – is that to translate means to say almost the same thing. Here undoubtedly the emphasis is on the ‘almost’: it is never exactly the same. Eco’s attitude to translation appears reasonable and justifiable, bearing in mind the particularly complex nature of the translation process, comprising as it does communication between two languages – and, beyond that, between two different cultures, with the translator in the position of literary intermediary making the communication possible. In truth, when we translate, we never say the same thing; the translated text, passing through the finest sieve of adjustments and transformations, does not maintain – and cannot maintain – all the finesse of the source.

3. The (im)possibility of literary translation

One of the notes with which Milan Kundera accompanies his masterpiece *The Joke*, referring to the book’s publication in Paris, is the mention of a comment made by Alain Finkielkraut, who interviewed the author in 1979 for *Corriere Della Sera* and, among other things, observed that, in contrast to his other works,

a baroque and ornamental style is apparent in *The Joke*. The question he puts to the author is simple: why did this happen? Faced with this question, Kundera becomes alarmed and begins immediately to read the novel in French. He says: “Up to that point it hadn’t occurred to me to check the translations that were done for me; today, unfortunately, I devote almost more time to this Sisyphean task than to writing itself” (Kundera 2014: 364 – trans. Robert Wilton). Kundera notes how, in the second quarter of the novel and thereafter, his translator had allowed himself to re-write it, radically changing words and sentences and putting in innumerable metaphors which he had devised himself. The translator had even changed the people’s characters, deviating entirely from those created by Kundera. This prompted Kundera to undertake a translation together with Claude Courtot, but this version didn’t satisfy him either, because he didn’t know French satisfactorily and Courtot didn’t know Czech and had only adapted the text where he was told to. This caused many inaccuracies. Eco firmly believes that the translator should not dare allow himself to ‘improve’ the author’s vocabulary. Kundera is a typical case where the translator has in some way taken the author’s place, “improving” his vocabulary. Translating, to Eco, means respecting what the author said, staying true to his/her words and not giving oneself the license to ‘beautify’ or alter the text.

The impossibility of literary translation is also a topic for the Argentinian writer Ernesto Sabato, who forcefully denies the possibility of doing literary translation. He sees the translation of a literary text from one language into another as a “melancholy and ineffectual” undertaking (Sabato 2011: 61). Sabato believes that the translation of even a single word, its transfer from one language into another implies a process of transformation, as the word thus takes on other distinctive characteristics. For him, the over-arching harmonics of each word, springing originally from the history of the people who coined it, from its etymology, from the books and psychology of those people, cannot be transferred into another language; these things form a unity, and are untranslatable. He more or less asserts that the suggestions imparted by a particular word can never be understood in the same way by two people who speak two different languages and, moreover, belong to two different cultures (idem: 61-62). This is because each word in a language is “essentially a cultural memory in which the historical experience of the society is embedded” (Talgeri and Verma 1988: 3).

Convinced of the impossibility of literary translation, Sabato writes:

The only possible translations are those in science, because their expressions are logical and their words univocal. The theorem that “heat causes bodies to expand” can be translated into any language without losing its meaning. In contrast to this, literary translations are a fumbling effort to interpret a message of equivocal signs by means of a group of equivocal signs. Just as the same musical note sounds different on different instruments, the same word produces different resonances in moving from one language to another” (Sabato 2011: 62 – trans. Robert Wilton).

In a dialogue between Sabato and J. L. Borges, one of the prominent themes is the issue of translation. At one point Sabato mentions the translation of Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando* – about which Borges says, apparently in jest, that his mother had translated it and he himself had only helped; Sabato notes that he had found a Borgesian element in the translation, a certain “something” that was uniquely characteristic of Borges. The point Sabato is trying to make is that an author should be translated by an impersonal translator, who should not be seen within the translated text, as Borges could be seen (for more, see: *Diálogos Borges Sabato*,

Compaginados por Orlando Barone, 1996). For this reason, he concludes that “the only version faithful to Virginia Woolf would be one produced by Virginia Woolf. From English into English” (Sabato 2011: 63 – trans. Robert Wilton).

“Poetry is what gets lost in translation”, declared poet Robert Frost (1964: 18). When it comes to poetry, Jakobson (1959: 238) is of the same mind – he sees poetry as untranslatable. Nor does Eco exclude the impossibility of translating poetry. He sees it as the most difficult genre to translate, because it “manifests as a series of restrictions in linear form that define the content, rather than the reverse as is the case with texts of referential intent. Thus poetic translations frequently attempt a fundamental re-writing, as a kind of challenge to the original text to recreate it in another form and with different substance (while attempting to remain faithful not word-by-word but according to an inspirational principle, the definition of which varies, it seems to me, with the translator’s critical interpretation)” (Eco 2006: 314 – trans. Robert Wilton). The pages of his book on theoretical premises incorporate examples of the insuperable difficulty of translating poets like T. S. Eliot, E. A. Poe, Dante and Montale.

This leads towards the idea that an optimal interchangeability is impossible in the translation of literary texts. For Eco, it is only valid for simple texts such as “a weather bulletin or a stock market report” (idem: 72 – trans. Robert Wilton). When it comes to fidelity to the original and the liberty which a translator may take when dealing with the difficulties of the source text, Eco suggests that this challenging process could be seen as a negotiation between parties, in which the translator and the work have the crucial roles (among the other parties to the process, Eco sees the figure of the empirical author, the culture in which the text was created and, later on, the translated text, and sometimes even the publishing industry). This process, firmly grounded in what Eco defines as *negotiation*, is a painful compromise, in which the biggest loser is the original work:

... negotiation is a process on the basis of which, precisely in order to gain something, something is given up and in the end the parties should leave the business with a justified and mutual sense of satisfaction in the golden rule which says we can’t have everything (Eco 2006: 19 – trans. Robert Wilton).

So in translation, something is always “lost” – a loss that takes the form of a tacit agreement between the negotiating parties in the translation process – but if the loss has a limited weight within the totality of the book, then Eco considers it pardonable. Being a translated author who collaborates with his translators, Eco recounts how he has given them permission to set aside the word-for-word meaning of the original text in a manner that preserves its deeper meaning. And setting aside the word-for-word meaning of the original text in order to preserve the deepest meaning of the text is unavoidable in any translation. To demonstrate that something must always be sacrificed in the translation process, Eco gives many examples from the translations of his works: he gives the Italian version, and then translations in English, German and French. When it comes to fidelity to the original text, Eco writes:

This so-called ‘fidelity’ in translation should not become the only criterion of acceptable translation... Fidelity is more an inclination to believe that translation is always possible, if the source text is interpreted by means of an enthusiastic collaboration; it is a commitment to identify what for us is the deeper meaning of the text, and the ability in every case to negotiate what seems to us the truest solution (Eco 2006: 290 – trans. Robert Wilton).

The question of fidelity to the original in other cases – for example in film – does not provoke the same discussion as fidelity in the translation of a literary work. This is perhaps because there is a transition from one material (literature) to another (film) and the departure from the original does not have the same weight. Although the transfer from page to screen is a kind of translation, in most cases it takes the book in a different direction. The film *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*, for example, based on a story of the same name by F. S. Fitzgerald (2007), drops many of the mutations and what is really left of the story is the principal motif, which supports the structure of the film.

4. Examples of literary translation: the attempt to match the source text and the failure to do so

“The key problem that emerges during translation is undoubtedly the translated text having to conjure the same effect that the original conjures” (Eco 2006: 85). According to Eco, the translator should manage to revive the effect of the original, to preserve its rhythm, and this is the most fundamental thing when it comes to translation. He thus concludes that “translation is a strategy that aims to produce, in a different language, the same effect as the source text” (idem: 313). Achieving the full effect which the author desired to arouse in each reader (including readers from other cultures) is sometimes wholly impossible in translation. In this section I will list some examples related to the attempt of matching the source text and the failure to do so.

(1) When I was translating the best-selling poetry collection by Rupi Kaur, *The Sun and Her Flowers*, I was confronted with a problem, which in the end obliged me to leave the title in its original language, English, because it was a necessary means of ensuring that it put across the message intended by the author, without impairing its meaning. The author had chosen the pronominal adjective *her* to refer to the sun, which the English language allows, because ‘sun’ is gender-neutral, so either *her* and *his* is permissible. The author, undoubtedly a feminist voice, had made her choice precisely on this basis – and such was the conclusion that came from a reading of the book. In the Albanian language, however, the sun is a noun of the masculine gender and so it can never be referred to with the help of a feminine pronominal adjective. Thus, to preserve the title’s meaning, I chose not to translate it at all and leave it in the original.

(2) One English translation of Ernesto Sabato’s novel *The Tunnel* changes its title to *The Outsider* (Sabato 1950) – the same as the famous novel by A. Camus (Camus 1961). Such a direct interference with something as essential as the title should not be permissible. This rendition of the title is of course based on the characteristics and personality of the protagonist, who feels alienated from society and revolted by it. But Sabato’s title binds the novel to the essence of the idea that the text impresses on the reader – the idea of a person who lives isolated in his tunnel, in his own world, far from the outside world – and is perfectly easy to translate into any language. In the same work, to represent the terror that has engulfed the world, the author uses a telling example. He relates that in a concentration camp, a former pianist, who had complained of hunger, is forced to eat a sewer rat. In a 2004 translation of *The Tunnel* into Albanian (Sabato 2004), we read that he is forced to eat a mouse. Sabato was surely able to make a distinction between a mouse (*ratón*) and a rat (*rata*) of the sewer, and chose the

latter deliberately in order to make his point with greater dramatic effect. In this case, the effect of the original is lost, as the translation is no longer faithful to the author's words. Likewise, the author's epigraph on the novel is "...*en todo caso, había un solo túnel, oscuro y solitario: el mío*" – (Sabato 2006) – which the same Albanian translation renders as "...*sidoqoftë, ekzistonte një tunel, në s'kishte tjetër, i errët dhe vetmitar, tuneli im*" ["...*in any case, there was a tunnel, nothing else, dark and lonely, my tunnel*" – trans. Robert Wilton]. It is obvious that the harmony of the epigraph has been marred by the addition of words which the author did not write – the phrase "në s'kishte tjetër" ["nothing else"], while Sabato simply says: "...*sidoqoftë, ekzistonte vetëm një tunel, i errët dhe i vetmuar: i imi*" [at any rate, there was only a single tunnel, dark and lonely: my own – trans. Robert Wilton] (Sabato 2018). The same 2006 translation makes the protagonist, Juan Pablo Castel, be 32 years old, when in fact he is 38 (and it is noteworthy that the novel was first published in 1948, when Sabato was nearly 38).

(3) There is a moment in the film *Midnight in Paris*, when the main character is talking to his lover and mentions that James Joyce enjoyed eating hotdogs. In the (anonymous) translation into Albanian, this became "James Joyce enjoyed eating cooked dogs". The English version is talking about a regular snack, while the Albanian is talking about animals and how Joyce liked to eat them. It is just one extreme case in which translation fails to put across the message and moreover makes the sentence hilarious.

(4) In the Albanian translation of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven" by Fan Stilian Noli – one of the most prominent translators of his day – distinct shortcomings are apparent, which testify to a certain constraint in the process of literary translation. They include: fundamental changes to the poem's structure; a complete change of metre (the original metre is not maintained at all); a lack of faithfulness to the source text; and changes – paraphrasing – of words or phrases that could easily have been carried over into the Albanian, but were often adjusted to maintain the rhyme scheme. For example, in the English original, we have the line:

"Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December" (Poe 2013: 639)

which comes into the Albanian as:

"Ah, e mbaj në mend fort mirë,
Ishte dimër i ftohtë i ngrirë" (Noli 2000: 103).

(A literal re-translation of the Albanian would be "Ah, I very well recall/It was a cold frosty winter" – trans. Robert Wilton) Besides the splitting of the sixteen-syllable line into two lines of eight syllables each, thus breaking the poem's metre, we can see here that the translator drops the December for winter, and renders its bleakness as cold and frosty. In translating "The Raven" entirely in octameter, Noli gives it a rhythm – a musicality that the original does not possess. The rapid rhythm dictated by reading the eight-syllable line loses the effect Poe created, which puts the reader in a kind of mysterious atmosphere, a certain slowness that strives to represent the confusion and surprise appropriate to the situation described. In its Albanian version, "The Raven" is read quickly because of its metre, and takes on a rather rousing tone – which might be related to the fact that in his own poetry Noli usually wrote with distinct musicality and a rousing tone. The somewhat gothic atmosphere created in the original fails to be rendered in the

Albanian version. The line “And the silken sad uncertain rustling of each purple curtain” (Poe 2013: 639), which in a roundabout manner hints at a gothic aspect, is translated into Albanian entirely stripped of this complexion: “Era frynte që përjashta / Rrihte perdet e mëndafshta” (Noli 2000: 104) – literally “The wind blew from outside/Rattling the silken curtains” – trans. Robert Wilton). A line built on repetition, to further emphasize the text’s poetic idea, loses this feature in Albanian: the stylistic figure of repetition is gone, replaced by two new adjectives (black, lost) modifying the noun Raven, which do not occur in the original at all:

“And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting” (Poe 2013: 641)

“Edhe Korbi i zi i humbur
Qëndron edhe i patundur” (Noli 2000: 110: “And the Raven black and lost/Yet remains unmoving” – trans. Robert Wilton).

These are just some examples reflecting the translator’s unfaithfulness to the source text, which has the consequence of rendering the original fundamentally different in the translation.

Such unfaithfulness is also seen in other translations by the same hand. There is, for example, the case of Shakespeare’s “Hamlet”, where the English lines are:

“Doubt thou the stars are fire;
Doubt that the sun doth move;
Doubt truth to be a liar;
But never doubt I love.” (Shakespeare 1999: II, 2, 116-119);

while in the Albanian translation one comes across unfaithfulness to the original again, and as a result, the authentic spirit of the verse is lost:

“Thuaj yjet s’janë zjarr,
Thuaj dielli u shua,
Thuaj jeta është varr,
Po mos thuaj që s’të dua.” (Noli 2000: 87)

(Literally “Say the stars are not fire,/ Say the sun is extinguished,/ Say life is a grave / But never say I do not love you” – trans. Robert Wilton). Besides shifting positive assertions to negative ones, there are fundamental alterations of the lines “Doubt that the sun doth move” and “Doubt truth to be a liar”, which go beyond paraphrase, and become a recreation of the verse, something not permissible for a translator to do.

(5) The distinguished historian, critic, and Albanian-English translator Robert Elsie has translated into English, among other things, some poems by Migjeni – a remarkable Albanian poet from the 1930s. In one of his versions of the poem “Vjeshtë në parakalim”, (“Autumn on parade”), a detail seems to have escaped him – perhaps because English and not Albanian is his native language and so dialect forms might seem unfamiliar. In this particular case, he changed somehow the meaning of the verse. The Albanian original is:

“Dhe në atë vaj bashkohet horizonti i mbytur
në mjegull përpise. Pemët degët e lagura
me vaj i mbështjellin në lutje – por kot! E dinë, të fikura,
se nesër do të vdesin... Vallë! A ka shpëtim ndokund?” (Migjeni 1980: 62)

Translated by Elsie, the lines emerge as:

“The horizon, drowned in fog, joins in
The lamentation. In prayer dejected fruit trees
Fold imploring branches - but in vain, they know.
Tomorrow they will die... Is there nowhere hope?” (Migjeni 2001: 71)

What is apparent first of all is the use by the poet of the word “përpise” (devouring) (a dialect form of “përpisë”). The translator avoids it and puts the accent to the word “lamentation”, somehow losing the poem's spirit. “Përpisë” in Albanian suggests that someone or something is wholly swallowed by something else – here in figurative terms, the horizon is overwhelmed by an all-absorbing fog, which has swallowed everything, leaving no sign of life or hope anywhere. The other point that becomes apparent is the rendering of the word “shpëtim” (literally “salvation, rescue, escape”) as “hope”: two very different nuances in a general poetic context. The poet, exhausted by a condition in which he has long lost hope, prays for salvation: “shpëtim” (salvation, rescue) and “shpresë” (hope) in Albanian are words that bear different meanings.

In translating an author, we enter their cultural identity, and, precisely for this reason, we should take great care when it comes to what the author represents. In the end, as Eco teaches us, a good translation helps the reader to understand the translated work, but it is very possible that a translator may cloud the reader's view of a work and what its author wishes it to impart.

5. Conclusion

The origin of multi-lingualism has been under discussion ever since the attempt, facilitated by divine messages, to address the challenges of human existence. The Bible tells of the myth of Babel – the story of the Babylonians who began to build a grandiose city with a tower that would touch the heavens. God could not allow this and obstructed the work by muddling the languages of the workers so that they could no longer cooperate: “Therefore was the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth” (Genesis 11:9). Trapped in this confusion, human beings started communicating with the help of translation. However great a culture, it always needs translation, and it was pointed out that “literary translations were expected to fill the gap and to meet important social and cultural needs” (Baker and Saldanha 2011: 520).

The problematics inherent to literary translation prompt a persistent search for answers. My essay has attempted to show how translation plays a key role in establishing inter-cultural communication between peoples belonging to different cultures, with a nuanced reading of Eco's ideas regarding translating and the translator. Some examples of problem-creating literary translations were given.

What we call literary translation requires the sacrifice of the source text in order to reach the reader of the translated text. On this point, Eco asserts more than once that translation never says exactly the same thing (it says *almost* the same thing) as the original. In the end, every literary translation is just a tepid attempt at transferring one hundred percent of the meaning of a word (not to mention the challenge of phrases and idioms) – because, as Sabato (2011: 61) puts it, “the

living language of a people is wholly bound up with their history, their mountains, their trees, earth and sky. And words have the colour and scent of the land in which they were carved.”

Agreeing that the ideal translation does not exist, Eco emphasizes that humans continue to translate regardless. Because, he concludes, it “is like the paradox of Achilles and the turtle. Theoretically speaking, Achilles should never reach the turtle. But in reality, he does. No rigorous philosophical approach to that paradox can underestimate the fact that, not just Achilles, but any one of us, could beat a turtle at the Olympic Games” (Eco 2001: ix).

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CONSIDERATIONS ON SEVERAL ASPECTS OF LITERARY TRANSLATIONS INTO ROMANIAN BETWEEN 1944-1989

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***Abstract:** This paper describes, from a historiographical post-totalitarian position, the social and political circumstances in 1940-1989 Romania and their impact on translation practices, on translators, and on the way in which it was decided which writers were “worth” translating into Romanian. I shall examine the (d)ef(f)ects of totalitarian censorship on translators and translations during the communist period and shall also refer to instances of (self-)censorship – considered from the perspective of suppression and of how it may have distorted and prevented translated works from going to press. The article studies totalitarian censorship (political, of literary works,–education) as an active strategy of avoiding radical censorship (including commercial, economic, and religious censorship).*

***Keywords:** back-censorship, blacklist of writers, (self-)censorship, literary translation, post-totalitarian historiography*

1. Introduction

Written from a historiographical post-totalitarian position that takes into account the Romanian context, this study will hopefully add some new information in the research area of translation and censorship. There are studies on censorship in other countries of the former Eastern bloc, in which the periodical division of those 45 post-war years (of censorship) is different (Petcu 1999). This is interesting, as it proves that, although the political situation was similar in all the countries of the Eastern bloc, there were individual differences. At the time, many Romanian writers, were not allowed to publish their own work and they chose translation into Romanian as a form of self-censorship and a way of making a living. It is in this sense that I use the term self-censorship here.

In July 1971, the theses approved by the Ceaușescu regime marked the end of a relative cultural liberty. After that, censorship and self-censorship prevented very important Romanian writers from publishing, and this is how the dictatorship of mediocrity came into being. Back (or retroactive)-censorship is also worth noting as a form of censorship applied to writers fallen into disgrace: works whose translation had been allowed before 1971 were then either forbidden altogether or allowed only in a revised and truncated form.

The Fascist totalitarian regime of 1940-1944 ended when the Soviet troops entered the Romanian territory and set up the communist regime, which ended in December 1989. As everywhere else in the Soviet bloc, totalitarianism spread and contaminated profoundly the Romanian society, mentality, and culture. Consequently, Romania’s traditional opening towards Western literature, some of

which was read in the original, but mostly in translation, was nearly annihilated. As a result of various dictatorial directives, decades-long isolationism from the West ensued that turned Romania into an enclave. However, between periods of intense isolation and sharp worsening of censorship and of the control exerted over intellectuals at the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s, there were intervals of relative permissiveness, particularly the period 1974-1977. This even made the US government grant Romania the status of most favoured nation, a clause withdrawn in 1988.

In the period under scrutiny here, Romanian culture was dominated by Socialist Realism. Its theses, though, are contradicted by the effects of their antitheses. The communist regime and the Proletkult (*proletarskaya kul'tura*, proletarian culture) movement promised to guarantee the freedom of expression and fundamental individual, social, and civil rights. However, the social, cultural, and individual reality abounded in facts that contradicted these theses and constituted the antitheses of the regime. In Romania, the totalitarian regime disregarded the fundamental individual rights and liberties, and went as far as denying human dignity, the principle of equality, and the right of free movement. The freedom of expression was among those fundamental rights that were abused.

The censorship of the titles to be translated and of the writers accepted by the USSR had an inevitable effect on the receiving audience. It widened the gap between Western realities and the reality *allowed* to readers in the Soviet bloc. Since the West was perceived as potentially contagious, authorities tolerated only (re)translations and reprints of translations sanctioned by the USSR and by the Romanian Communist Party (RCP) and considered formative for *Homo Sovieticus*, the new type of citizen. Censorship also affected pop culture (films, theatre, music), all the main genres, and, in general, what the media of those times could broadcast (Marino 2000, Volceanov 2013). This traumatised generations of Romanian artists, actors, musicians, and composers.

The entire 1944-1989 period was dominated by political stakes, problems, and tensions that impacted the choice of works and authors to be translated and changed the very act of translation (Lungu-Badea 2017). The ideological, cultural and/or linguistic censorship was justified in a rudimentary way by an allegedly moral purpose: translation was going to contribute to the education of a society made up of new citizens. The economic censorship of the 1980s, prompted by the regime's desire to pay off all external debt, put an end to translations of foreign authors. The economic censorship policy favoured socialist and Soviet markets and prohibited capitalist markets; the Romanian economy was based on state ownership of the means of production, collective farming, and industrial manufacturing. Ideological censorship came into use as an all-encompassing term, relative to those other types of censorship which marked the dogmatic regulatory policy of public discourse.

2. The brave new world promised by the communist regime; censorship and translation

2.1. The brave new world promised by the communist regime

In the first decade after the Second World War, the dwindling relations with the rest of the world, on the one hand, and the Soviet influence, on the other, had terrible repercussions on the Romanian culture and literature, and therefore, on translation as well (Frunză 1990, Selejan 1994, F. Manolescu 2003, Cătănuș 2006,

2011, N. Manolescu 2008, Boia 2013). This situation is explained by the alliances that Romania made from 1940 onwards.

In the 1940s, the most significant historical and cultural moments were the coup that led to Romania joining the allied forces (August 23, 1944); the armistice agreement between Romania and the United Nations, as a result of which Romania came to be under the tutelage of the USSR and had to accept the armistice terms (September 12, 1944); the implementation of Stalinism in Romania and Eastern Europe (1945). Although theoretically the leftist strategy of the USSR was renewed after 1953, the same methods of organisation and control of the Soviet Bloc states continued to be used. The “Stalinisation” of Romania began during the Groza government (1945-1947) and continued under Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, Romania’s communist leader from 1947 until his death in 1965. One of the consequences produced by Stalinization in the Romanian cultural and intellectual life was the dissolution of the Romanian Academy on June 10, 1948, and its replacement by the Academy of the Romanian People’s Republic (RPR hereafter) – an institution which politicised all activities. This is how the process of ideological harassment began and class considerations became criteria for reforming the Academy of RPR. This was the case of the *Journal of Ophthalmology*, sharply criticised by the party: the journal was accused of “cosmopolitanism” and “anti-patriotism”, because, on the one hand, it chose English and French as publication languages instead of Romanian or Russian, and, on the other hand, because it did not disseminate appropriately the Russian contributions in the field (Boia 2013: 325). The political witch-hunt was becoming pervasive in society and the political persecution of the writers led to many devastating consequences on the individual, the literary community, and on the society at large. The political witch-hunt produced the *Index* and collaborationism.

In 1948, the Romanian Workers’ Party started putting together an *Index* of banned authors, periodicals, and titles, which remained in force even after 1965 (more than 8,000 titles according to Papacostea (1998: 246); see also Boia 2013). The *Index* was a blacklist of writers and intellectuals considered hostile or dangerous to the Romanian regime for ideological reasons, whose careers were ruined by their honesty. Institutionalised communism and politicised culture led to the marginalisation of writers and artists who rejected the Proletkult principles. There were also translators who fell out of favour and whose translations were not reprinted. The banned writers took refuge in doing translations. If the translators were on the blacklist, their translations were no longer re-edited. Inclusion on this blacklist had serious consequences for these writers: censorship, persecution, harassment, publication bans, or even arrests. The existence of the *Index*/the Blacklist of writers proves how freedom of opinion, expression and creation was suppressed in Romania and how the totalitarian regime attempted to control and manipulate culture and the intelligentsia in order to maintain its power. When free speech was under attack, the writers found various ways to escape censorship. To avoid the effects of persecution, some of them resigned themselves to not being published and preferred to turn to translation, while others, in order to face the vicissitudes of everyday life, agreed to collaborate with the communist regime.

Regarding the Collaborationism with the Romanian government and the Soviet Union, many intellectuals, writers, translators, and others gave in to pressure. The “old” and therefore “bourgeois” elite was purged or forced to step back and was *gradually replaced* by intellectuals of the Soviet type. Since a pogrom of the intellectual elite would have destabilised the system, the regime

persecuted and abused intellectuals into collaboration. All kinds of dictatorial tactics were used to make intellectuals give in: deprivation of freedom, incarceration, and institutional cleansing. The dictatorial regime spared no effort in discrediting and terrifying writers, translators, scientists, and academics.

The 1950s were marked by a variety of developments. After 1953, during the years of the still undigested Stalinist “legacy”, the government ideological surveillance tightened the vise less drastically. Consequently, a “breeze of liberalism” started blowing after 1956, bringing with it the hope that shedding the Stalinist skin would lead to a change in the sombre political, social, and behavioural perspectives. The mutation was fragile though, and the ideological curtain held fast (Cătănuş 2006: 45-47). In Romania, the extent of the thaw was dictated by the relations that the Romanian communist leaders had with their Soviet counterparts (Anton 2006: 37). Therefore, whatever changes there were, they were visible only at the level of the political class, while the intellectual elite either felt culpable for giving up in hopelessness (Tismăneanu 2008:114), or went for acquiescence. Moreover, in 1956 the Romanian Writers’ Congress was the only one in the Soviet Bloc that fully reaffirmed the Stalinist Socialism Realism. Two years later, in 1958, the resumption of cultural relations with France was labelled as counter revolutionary. If the Romanian regime opposed the geographic and administrative interference of the Soviets (Cătănuş 2011: 265-292, 293-310), the de-Stalinisation process started by Khrushchev did not gain any traction among the Romanian authorities, who feared that the amplitude of potential protests would lead to a destabilisation of the regime. What was emphasised was the damage that Stalin’s personality cult did in the USSR, but the symptoms of the phenomenon among the Romanian nomenklatura were ignored or minimised. The most critical moment in the crisis of the relations between Romania and the USSR, which coincided with the crisis in the Sino-Soviet relations, was in 1958, when Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej, the head of the Romanian state, requested the withdrawal of the Soviet army from Romania. Consequently, it was decided that the “re-education” of the intellectuals was imperative. Mihai Beniuc, one of the opportunists and re-educated Romanian writers, a favoured translator and reviewer, stated in 1956 that whoever refused to write about Stalin could be accused of being an enemy of the people. Beniuc told young writers off for their alleged artistic liberalism and snobbery, and for writing “escapist” literature. (Simion 2000: 12) Censorship paralysed the creativity of some people, banned the publication of others and thus made them turn to translation for shelter; it also stimulated the subversive creativity of others, who either tricked the vigilance of the censors or suffered dire consequences:

As in the case of Communist translations of Shakespeare, self-censorship, the result of psychological terror, was worse, more destructive than censorship itself. (Volceanov 2013: 754)

The political, ideological, and cultural thaw begun at the end of the Stalinist era continued into the 1960s, though this liberalisation manifested itself differently in the various satellite-states of the USSR. The 1970s in Romania were opened by Ceauşescu’s *July Theses* (1971), an ideological speech meant to put an equal sign between *propaganda* and *national culture*. The hijacking of national culture for the benefit of the communist regime led to terrible censorship: any text, no matter how long, which was to be made public, had to be validated by the General Directorate

for Press and Print. The principles of censorship were non-negotiable: only those artistic creations that met the Party expectations were going to be published and subsidised. Still, the translation from Western authors resumed at the *Univers* and the *Editura Politică* Publishing Houses. Contacts with foreigners continued to be forbidden and, when they couldn't be helped, they were closely monitored.

The austerity measures forced upon Romanians in order to pay off the country's external debt, and the growth of the security and control services in the 1980s came to an end in December 1989, when the Romanian Revolution took place. This event is part of the Fall (or Autumn) of Nations, which marks the fall of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe. Officially, it also marks the end of censorship. However, all over the world today, new, subtle forms of (self-)censorship have insinuated themselves into the fabric of daily life, prompted by the phenomena of political correctness, cancel culture, cultural appropriation, etc.

In order to illustrate censorship in the translation of novels into Romanian, I have used a fundamental tool, namely *Dicţionarul cronologic al romanului tradus în România de la origini până în 1989* ('Chronological Dictionary of the Novels Translated in Romania, from the Beginnings until 1989'), which, as the title suggests, takes stock of the novels translated before the fall of totalitarianism. These works are part of the world literary canon, but they are also contemporary novels, many of which meet the Proletkult criteria. The information offered by this reference tool has been checked on the ROLINEST platform. This has enabled me, on the one hand, to add information regarding the original title and the name of the translator (translators), and, on the other hand, to establish the number of retranslations and reprints done before 1960 and after 1989. The inventoried translations were published officially, at publishing houses endorsed by the totalitarian regime. The politicising of Romanian literature in historical and ideological circumstances that characterise not only Romanian culture, but that of other cultures as well in the former Soviet Bloc, have been analysed, fully or partially enumerated, etc. in several books, doctoral theses or studies (e.g., Popa 2002, Constantin 2009, Măriucuța 2012 et passim)

2.2. Translation through the totalitarian looking glass: 1944-1989

Starting with 1944 and until 1958-1960, the circumstances were almost exclusively favourable to translating works from the USSR, by Russian writers. There were, however, translations of works from other spaces as well. A politicised selection process and distribution of works explains the "preference" for promoting the French classics, translated, retranslated or reprinted. Certain emblematic Socialist Realist writers also rejoiced a favourable reception, endorsed indirectly by the Soviet literary criticism and directly by the French one, for upholding the Proletkult literary ideology and principles. The translator's standing, their skill and methods were secondary aspects; the censors' attention focused exclusively on the status of the translated writer and on the ideological content of the translated work, and these were the elements according to which the translation's itinerary was predicted (Constantin 2009).

Censorship and self-censorship, well-known phenomena in the history of humanity – in ancient Rome, during the Inquisition, during the Enlightenment, during the Nazi period, etc. (see Domenech 2005) – manifested themselves as forms of direct and indirect persecution during the totalitarian regime. The first duty of a Romanian translator was to meet the expectations of the ideological apparatus and only then those of the potential reader in the target language. This

hierarchy of the translator's obligations – censorship first, then readers, and then the auctorial instance – reveals objective causes and subjective (d)ef(f)ects and is responsible for the repercussions on the aesthetics of reception. Censorship constraints are rarely appreciated by translators, even if some of the latter were lucky to be allowed to translate the great names of classical literature. Overall, censorship devalued the author, rendered the translator invisible, misrepresented the source text, and deceived the reader. There were “invisible” translators and translators with a partial, intermediate status, an option of writer-translators, who translated from Russian and who sometimes signed using a pseudonym, because a “stylist”, in fact a censor-editor endorsed by the regime, had been given the task to revise the translated text stylistically.

We can identify another contradiction in the expectations of Socialist Realism. Theoretically speaking, Socialist Realism requires both the author and the translator to represent reality faithfully. Practically, however, the Proletkult ideology expects them to adjust this representation in order to make the revolutionary progress believable, and thus their identity construct is distorted (Por 2010). Under such circumstances, translation of other literatures – Soviet, French, German or any other – into Romanian needed to prove submissiveness to Party ideology. The translation process became overdetermined by the co-presence of a diversity of literary forms and formulae. From an ideological perspective, the primordial selection criterion was the canonical status of the authors, but other criteria had to be met as well, such as the frequency with which they published articles that responded to the Proletkult rhetoric. As a result, translation became an echo of this rhetoric. The *filter of the ideological cleansing* worked hand in hand with *linguistic censorship*: language perceived as obscene (e.g., Rabelais translated by Hodoş), erotic language, as well as various other taboos became targets of the ideological, cultural, and linguistic censorship.

The monopoly of all publication was held by Editura Cartea Rusă (‘the Russian Book Publishing House’), founded in December 1944. Its translation plan, published in the journal *Veac nou*, issue no. 2, December 17, 1944, informed those interested of the works that were to be translated, since they met the aesthetic requirements of Socialist Realism (Constantin 2009). These authorised authors and books were meant, on the one hand, to contribute to the development of Socialism, and, on the other, to create a Romanian socialist literature. Consequently, the editorial priorities were as follows:

1. translations from *Russian literature* (the only truly revolutionary, heroic, and exalting literature), first *Soviet authors* and then *classic Russian authors*;
2. translations from *democratic Western writers* and then from *democratic Romanian writers*, who had learned the important lesson that socialist literature is class literature (a single class, therefore a kind of early globalisation). The Romanian writers' works were predominantly ideological;
3. children and youth books, as well as books about the Soviet life and culture, all meant to enable Romanians to learn communist values and to distinguish them from the capitalist degeneration and dehumanisation that had marred non-socialist literature.

Towards the end of the 1950s, Socialist Realism tried to do away with the monopoly of translations from Russian and to increase the number of languages

from which translations were published. After Russian, French became the language with the highest number of translations.

2.3. A present devoid of history: censorship and self-censorship in translation

The censorship mechanism developed by the Romanian Communist Party aimed to exert a strict control over the mentality, culture, and society as a whole. In order to achieve this, the censorship apparatus had to destroy all previous structures, annihilate all the residues of “bourgeois decadence” (Tismăneanu 2005: 147), and then reconfigure them according to the ideology of the totalitarian regime and create a new literature, a new history, etc. A new history meant a history without a past, written according to the standards of totalitarianism. Scholars and writers were asked to be increasingly engaged, and those who had already pledged their engagement were asked to be increasingly dedicated to the cause of the Party and to focus on what was specifically necessary to build socialism: to prepare a new literature, a new biology, a new mathematics, etc.

If in the 1950s the translations were mainly from Russian, starting with 1958 and in the 1960s, there was an increase in the number of socialist and classic writers from the West. It is also a moment of awakening for certain major, minor, or obscure writers, who understood that they could not survive artistically, financially or even physically outside the Party: examples of such writers are M. Sadoveanu, V. Eftimiu, G. Călinescu, G. Galaction, Camil Petrescu, Cezar Petrescu.

The brave new world promised by the Party fascinated many writers. However, some knew from the beginning, other realised along the way that the freedom promised to intellectuals and artists was just an illusion and there was an overwhelming probability that their activity would be paralysed (Comarnescu 2003: 275, 289). While possible in principle, neutrality is a complicated issue. Sometimes it is opportune, and at other times it represents a way of avoiding controversy and consequences. For the Romanian intellectuals, however, neutrality was not an option, because it was associated with opposition to the regime. Free will was not abolished in totalitarianism, but the intellectuals who tried to remain neutral were stripped of any chance to succeed professionally, socially, or even in terms of family life (Boia 2013: 335). In such a context of constraints, censorship, and threats, translation became a means of escaping censorship and terror. Writer-translators, however, no longer benefited from the prestige enjoyed by this group before 1944, when publishers asked writers to translate the works of Western authors and recognised their cultural contribution in financial terms as well. By 1952, publishers no longer resorted to writers for translations (Constantin 2009: 4-6). The freedom to be a writer became a thing of the past and authors now wrote what was dictated to them, about what others believed (see ACNSAS, Felix Aderca, I 375824, quoted by Boia 2013: 345); the same degrading situation is experienced by M. R. Paraschivescu in the 1970s:

I do not want anything to do with the disappointing performance of our present literature. I do know that a new aesthetics and a new art can and must be born from these Middle Ages we live in. But this art shall not be official, it cannot and must not be animated by this regime, where the destiny of cultures is managed by all kinds of Fadeevs. For the public, I will continue to publish poetry translations. (Paraschivescu 1975: 102, my translation)

To build a socialist identity, a new type of individual, *Homo Sovieticus*, had to be formed. Be it individual, collective or national, the socialist identity could be achieved only with the help of the intellectuals, who were mobilised to reshape mass education in order to carve this new, communist human being, whose fundamental “rights” were the unconditional devotion and absolute submission to the regime. The new intellectual class, which called itself progressive and opposed the old, and therefore bourgeois and retrograde intellectual elite, fabricated for the proletariat their own class and mass identity (Lungu 2003).

The programme of the Cartea Rusă publishing house served this purpose. In 1945, a year after the Soviet troops were stationed in Romania, this house published translations only from Russian, while other publishers translated and published extremely few foreign writers (cf. *Ce vom citi anul acesta?* [‘What will we read this year?’], *Veac nou*, October 6, 1945, qtd. in Constantin 2009: 2):

- From Dutch, Martha Albrand, *Nu ne predăm*, translated by Eugen B. Marian;
- From Yiddish, Sholem Asch, *Judecata. Evreul cu psalmii*, translated by M. Rubin and Cecilia Weschler;
- From French, Auguste Bailly, *Orgiile lui Nero*, translated by M. Săveanu; Gabriel Chevalier, *Clocherle*; and a reprint of the translation of B. de St Pierre, *Paul și Virginia*, translated M. Săveanu.
- From Austrian German, Vicki Baum, *Marion*, translated by Nora and Paul B. Marian;
- From American English, Louis Bromfield with two titles: *Lotus amar*, translated by Paul B. Marian, and *Secolul de aur*, translated by Ana Edith Răileanu;
- Pearl S. Buck, *Promisiunea*, translated by Eduard Ellenberg;
- James Mallahan Cain, *Serenade*, translated by Eugen Marian;
- Erskine Caldwell, *Drumul tutunului*, translated by Silviu Iosifescu.

In the 1950s, the Soviet embargo on the decadent and destabilising Western literature culminated in the institutionalisation of the Soviet censorship mechanism in the entire Soviet bloc. This was doubled by each country’s own censorship. Only those works were translated (from Russian or other languages) that were considered appropriate from the point of view of the Proletkult ideology or were censored in such a way as to become appropriate (Popa 2002: 9). We could almost speak of a Soviet political correctness. Translations worth mentioning here are:

From Russian:

- A. N. Ostrovsky, *Așa s-a călit oțelul* (‘How the Steel Was Tempered’);
- Ilya Ehrenburg, *Puterea cuvântului* (‘The Power of the Word’),
- A.P. Cehov, *Opere* (‘Works’), 11 volumes,
- N. V. Gogol, *Taras Bulba* (‘Taras Boulba’).
- L. N. Tolstoi, *Opere* (‘Works’), 14 volumes
- I. S. Turgheniev, *Opere* (‘Works’), 11 volumes

From other languages:

- A. Malraux, *Speranța* (*L’espoir*),
- L. Aragon, *Cartierele fericite* (*Les beaux quartiers*),
- John Dos Passos, *1919, Paralela 42* (*The 42nd Parallel*),
- J. Steinbeck, *Cartierul Tortila* (*Tortilla Flat*),
- W. Faulkner, *Lumină de august* (*Light in August*), etc.

The interference of Eastern European ideological conformism with the choice of writers to be translated in the space of the ex-Soviet bloc also functioned

as a filter for Eastern European writers who were to be translated in the West. Prejudices work on both sides. Because of the same ideological conformism, the literary products of Romania and other countries from the Soviet bloc were rejected in the Western world. The communist countries translated only those works that served the ideology of the USSR. The modern impulse of opening up towards the West through translation was suppressed in the 1950s. The closing of Romania was the sole effect of ideological conformism. Western works were anachronistically and tendentiously labelled as politically incorrect and accused of promoting a decadent bourgeois spirit. This became the reason why they were not translated anymore. On the other hand, though, those writers endorsed by the Kominform (the information bureau of the communist and workers' parties from USSR, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, France, Italy, Yugoslavia, Poland, Romania, and Hungary, created in 1947-1956) were published. They were commended for publishing biographies and monographs dedicated to Stalin or for promoting the values of communism. Among the beneficiaries were Louis Aragon, Selma Lagerlöf, Romain Rolland, Lion Feuchtwanger, etc. (Manolescu 2008: 1394). In Romania, although short lived, the internal liberalisation and the resumption of commercial exchanges with the West provided an impulse to translation, although overall this activity remained faithful to the Proletkult principles. Among the conformist translations, though, several exceptional translations from Russian and world classic authors managed to squeeze in, probably also because they came from a safe distance in time and were deemed impossible to assimilate ideologically: Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Rabelais, but also Balzac, Dumas, Daudet, Verne, etc. The 1980s brought a deterioration of the economic and social circumstances. Censorship, terror, and isolation complicated for the worse a situation in which Romania tried to regain its status as an open country, its freedom, and autonomy.

According to the inventory provided by the Casa Rusă publishing house at the end of 1952, during the period 1944-1951, 1,131 titles of Russian literary works were translated and printed in about 19 million copies - 1,069 titles into Romanian and 200 into the languages of the ethnic minorities living in Romania (Constantin 2009: 4). The best sold authors were: Mihail Sholokhov, A. Fadeyev, N. Ostrovsky, Maxim Gorky, L. N. Tolstoy, N. G. Chernyshevsky, A. P. Chekhov, M. I. Lermontov. The 25 collections of the Cartea Rusă publishing house were accomplished with the help of 335 translators, of whom 125 translated at least one title (ibid.). There were two categories of translators who published at the Cartea Rusă publishing house: prolific translators and well-known writer-translators, like Tatiana Berindei, Eusebiu Camilar, Paul Celan, Rotislav Donici, Izabela Dumbravă, Andrei A. Ivanovski, George Lesnea, Cezar Petrescu, Alexandru Philippide, Ada Steinberg. The ideological censorship and the fact that their own writings were banned forced some of the great Romanian intellectuals to choose either translating from several languages or translating several authors from the same foreign literature. Here is a brief list of writers and the translations they did:

- **Tudor Arghezi** translated Dostoyevsky, *Записки из Мёртвого дома* /*Amintiri din Casa morților* – 1921, reprinted in 1991; Anatole France, *La vie en fleur* /*În floarea vieții* – 1953; La Fontaine, *Fables* /*Fabule*– 1954, reprinted in 1955, 1998; Villon, *Balade et autres poésies* /*Balade și alte poezii*– 1956; Gogol, *Похождения Чичикова, или Мёртвые души* / *Suflete moarte: poem* – 1963, reprinted in 1987, 1995, 1997, 1998; Bertolt Brecht, *Die Dreigroschenoper* / *Opera de trei parale* – 1967; Molière, *Théâtre* (*Avarul, Mizantropul, Domnul de Pourceaugnac*, George

Dandin sau Soțul păcălit) – 1958, reprinted in 1964, 1972, 1986); excerpts from works by Rabelais, Rimbaud, Baudelaire, Verlaine – 1964;

- **Lucian Blaga** translated Goethe, *Faust*, Lessing, *Nathan înțeleptul / Nathan der Weise* – 1956, *Opere* – 1958, *Laocoon sau Despre limitele picturii și ale poeziei / Laokoon: oder über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie* – 1971; excerpts from works by R. M. Rilke;

- Between 1944 and 1947, **Paul Clean** translated: Lermontov (*Городу нашего времени / Un erou al timpului nostru* – 1946); S I Galperin (*Viață și moarte în lumina științei moderne*, 1947) ; K. S. Simonov (*Chestiunea rusă*, 1947); A. P. Cehov (*Moujiki/Țăranii*, 1948); and into German: *Drei russische Dichter: Blok, Mandelstam, Esenin*, 1963, reprinted 1988; Alexandre Blok (*Die Zwölf*, 1958, new editions in 1965, 1977), Ossip Mandelshtam (*Gedichte*, 1959), etc.

- **Miron Radu Paraschivescu** translated Pușkin, *Basme* -1962, *Ruslan și Ludmila* – 1963; Malraux, *Calea regală* – 1970, *Cuceritorii* ; Marie-Anne Desmarest, *Torente* – 1943; Jean-Richard Bloch, *Toulon: cronică franceză în 3 epoci* – 1945; Ungaretti, *Poezii* + (1998) *Fântâna dragostei*; Nekrasov, *Opere alese* - 1953 et *Poezii* – 1959; Juliusz Slowacki, *Ceasul meditației* – 1962; Adam Mickiewicz, *Poezii, Îndoiala* – 1957; *Juan de la Cruz. Antologie de texte* – 1946, *L. Aragon, Antologie de texte* – 1946; excerpts from works by Ovidius Naso in 1969, Rilke, etc.

- **Cezar Petrescu** translated Balzac, *Eugénie Grandet* – 1950, reprinted in 1959, 1965, 1972, 2012; *Père Goriot*, 1959, reprinted in 1964, 1965, 1968 ; Sienkiewicz, *Pentru pâine* – 1953 and *Nuvele*– 1960, 1987; Tolstoy, *Părintele Serghi*, reprinted in 2005, 2008, *Sonata Kreutzer* – 1971, reprinted in 1991, 2008; Makarenko, *Poemul pedagogic* – 1951, *Cartea pentru părinți* – 1954; Gorky, *Copilăria* – 1959, reprinted in 1960, 1981, 1988, 1994, 2013, 2018; Konstantin Sedyh, *Daura* – 1951; Vasili Ajaev, *Departa de Moscova* – 1950; Sholokhov, *Pe Donul liniștit* – 1948, reprinted in 1953, 1957, 1959, 1968, 1983-1986, 1987; Sădăbecov, Turgel'bij, *Oameni de azi (Lădi nașih dnej)*– 1951);

- **Marin Preda** translated *Ciuma* by Camus, 1965, and *Demonii*, by Dostoevsky, 1970.

Apart from the writer-translators, we also need to mention the names of certain linguists and intellectuals from the old elite who translated from at least three foreign languages and literatures (Russian, English, French, German) into one or two languages (Romanian and/or German, etc.):

- **Alexandru Philippide** translated Baudelaire, *Flori alese*, 1957 (reprinted in 1965, 1998, 2012); A. R. Lesage, *Istoria lui Gil Blas de Santillana*, 1960; Voltaire, *Naivul*, 1962, reprinted as *Candid sau optimismul* (in 1969, 1998, 2008); Choderlos de Laclos, *Legăturile primejdioase, sau, Scrisori culese într-o societate și publicate pentru instruirea altor societăți*, 1969 ; Lermontov, *Un erou al timpului nostru*, 1946 (Cartea Rusă Publishing House); Tolstoy, *Război și pace*, 1949, translated together with Nicolae Paroescu; Nicolae Teică; Nina Radici; Schiller, *Don Carlos*, 1955 (new editions in 1950, 1965, 2002); *Hoții*, 1965 (new edition in 2002); Thomas Mann, *Moarte la Veneția*, 1965; H. C. Andersen, *Povestiri*, 1968; etc.
- **Leon Levițchi** translated Theodore Dreiser, *O tragedie americană*, 1954 (reprinted in 1971, 1994); Jerome K. Jerome, *Trei într-o barcă (fără a mai socoti și câinele)*, 1959; J. Swift, *Călătoriile lui Gulliver*, 1967 (reprinted in 1997, 2009); W. Shakespeare, *Opere*, 1956, 1957, 1960, 1963 et passim; (with D. Duțescu)

Hamlet, 1974 (reprinted in 2009); (with Duțescu et al.), *Henric al IV-lea. Mult zgomot pentru nimic. Henric al V-lea. Nevestele vesele din Windsor*, 1985; etc. Philip Gosse, *Istoria pirateriei*, 1975; Ch. Marlowe, *Teatru*, 1988; V. I. Lenin, *Opere complete*, 1960

Other translators were interested in translating either several authors from a foreign language and literature, or just from a literary current, a period or an author. For example, Romulus Vulpesco or Al. Hodoș translated several authors from French – Villon, Rabelais, Flaubert, Baudelaire, etc.; Dan Duțescu, A. Dima, A. Bantaș translated one author – Shakespeare; George Lesnea translated Lermontov, Esenin; Alexandru Miran translated from Ancient Greek, Ștefan Bezdechi, from Latin, Ion Roman translated 20th century German literature; Nicolae Iliescu and Janina Ioanoși translated from Russian; Andrei Bantaș and Irina Horea, from English; Emanoil Marcu, from French; Mihai Cantuniari and Cristina Hăulică, from Spanish; Ion Petrică, from Polish, Micaela Ghițescu from Portuguese, George Lăzărescu from Italian, Grete Tartler from Arabic and Persian.

The literary and historical study of the aesthetic issues posed by translation in the period under scrutiny reveals the divergent and diverging efficiency of this practice (see Braga 1982: 224-227), who develops ideas put forth by Ibrăileanu 1908 and Iorga 1936. Braga also claims that re-translations were and continue to be relevant, because they display the vitality of a language and culture and are determined by a cultural necessity situated beyond a short-term, relative interest. To fulfil this vocation for re-translations, several types of censorship had to be overcome: an official, thematic, and external censorship, exerted by the regime; an economic censorship; an individual, inner censorship, i.e., self-censorship; and a linguistic and stylistic censorship, which complied with the Proletkult norms. Inevitably, since 1949 and under the control of the State, the translations from Russian had contributed to the transformation and Russification of the Romanian vocabulary and syntax. In order to control the Romanian cultural and linguistic values, the regime and its censorship mechanism aimed to impose certain linguistic norms that would conform to Lisenko's (1949) genetic theory, to Zhdanov's (1947) doctrine, and to Stalin's theory of language (1951). Among those who publicised these discoveries was also linguist Alexandru Graur, a member of the academy, in his series of lectures "For a proper orthography of the Romanian language" (see Selean 1994: 246).

The selection of the foreign writers to be translated was based on ideological cleansing criteria borrowed from the USSR and on linguistic censorship. The authors who met the requirements, were classic or socialist writers who, one way or another, observed the required standards, a sifting process laid bare by the inventories of translations done at the time. The works of the contemporary engaged writers carried a double endorsement, both from a literary and a translation point of view, guaranteed by the critical and censorship agencies, responsible for the literary import and export. Although the disengaged contemporary writers did not meet the Proletkult requirements, they did produce and publish a few translations from Duras, Sarraute, Butor, Perec, or Robbe-Grillet:

- Marguerite Duras, *Moderato cantabile*, 1966, translated by Alexandru Baciu, reprinted in 1974 (retranslated in 2006 by Carmelia Leonte);
- Nathalie Sarraute, *Portretul unui necunoscut (Portrait d'un inconnu)*, 1967 translated by Paul Dinopol; *Fructele de aur (Les fruits d'or)*// excerpts in 1965 and full translation in 1977 by Radu Toma

- Michel Butor, *Renunțare (La Modification)*, 1967, translated by Georgeta Horodincă
- Georges Perec, *Lucrurile. Povestire din anii 60 (Les Choses. Une histoire des années 60)*, 1967, translated by Livia Stroescu
- Alain Robbe-Grillet, *Gumele (Les Gommages) //1967, În labirint (Dans le labyrinthe)*, 1968, translated by Dumitru Tsepeneag

It is a commonplace that translation has a significant and beneficial influence on literature. This influence did not disappear entirely during the totalitarian regime, although it diminished substantially. Even when the decrease was not so much quantitative, it was visible in qualitative terms. Whether they were involved or not in translation as actants-agents, some Romanian writers (actants-objects) were translated into other languages. Their translation is a reflection of the relationship they had with the regime or of their international standing. The following categories are worth mentioning:

- Engaged writers, translated and advertised in the circles validated by Kominform, as a reward for being reliable party members (an example would be Zaharia Stancu and his novel *Descult*);
- Disengaged writers of international standing, such as Mircea Eliade (*Maitreyi, Elixirul Diavolului, Pădurea Interzisă*), or Paul Celan, a multilingual poet (Romanian, Russian, French, English, German), who chose German to express himself in, and it is from German that he was translated into other languages);
- Dissident writers from outside Romania, for example Paul Goma (*Celula Liberalilor, Gherla*, etc.), Dumitru Tsepeneag (*Arpièges, Cuvântul nisiparniță*);
- Dissident writers from within Romania, officially not published and not translated.

3. Conclusion

The versatile nature of the censorship apparatus between 1944 and 1989, as well as the censors' ability to renew and redefine the censorship criteria led to the generalisation of censorship and self-censorship in the Romania of Nicolae Ceaușescu, a chameleonic Big Brother. Several reasons emerge for taking into consideration the retranslation of all the writers translated between 1944 and 1989. The first reason is the inevitable ageing of the language used in the translated texts, a language which cannot escape the passage of time, in the same way that, paradoxically, the source language can (Benjamin 1921). The second reason relates to the (d)ef(f)ects produced by the ideological circumstances, by an exaggerated visibility of the translators of certain canonical or non-canonical works. The third reason is, in fact, a combination of the first two, and refers to the black-listed translator-writers, who unleashed their creativity and talent in translation, compensating in this way for the lack of opportunity to publish their own works. A study of these translations would allow the discovery of the mechanisms through which the writer-translator represented the translated author and, more interesting still, the analysis would shed light on the mind and personal history of the translator. Self-censorship did not disappear after 1989; various forms of censorship and self-censorship persist and emerge, including censorship prompted by the global phenomenon of political correctness.

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BOOK REVIEWS

DOI: 10.35923/BAS.30.24

ONCE UPON A TIME IN RURITANIA

Vesna Goldsworthy, *Iron Curtain. A Love Story*

New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 2022, 336 pages,
ISBN-10: 1324021721, ISBN-13: 978-1324021728

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In the 1990s, after the Berlin Wall and the Soviet Union collapsed, a substantial literature about the West imagining the East (of Europe) emerged. Larry Wolff, in *Inventing Eastern Europe. The Map of Civilization* (1994) starts from the assumption that, despite the great chasm between East and West, the boundaries separating the two have always been variable. While pre-Enlightenment divisions opposed the North and the South, the agenda of the eighteenth-century western states favoured the invention of an “East”, projected against the urgency of stabilizing the concept of civilization. This is the moment when, according to the historian, the tradition of an alleged superiority emerged, a tradition which has dominated geopolitical thought ever since. While the Far East may have benefitted from a degree of romantic embellishment, encouraged by remoteness, the East of the European continent was at a disadvantage because of its proximity, being presented as a handy model of underdevelopment. Maria Todorova, in *Imagining the Balkans* (1997), writes that, a decade after communism had collapsed, the instability in the region sparked the attention of the West again, this time in the sense of an overall stigmatization. The Bulgarian scholar proposes an alternative term to Said’s Orientalism – Balkanism, a strategy not of defining otherness, but of finding the underlying difference within the European continent. For her, Balkanism is also something more concrete than Orientalism, something transitional, not Western, but, at the same time, not entirely non-European. If it is, after all, European, it is a more immature, more barbaric European territory. Todorova senses the ultimate paradox in the process of “Balkanizing” Eastern Europe: while blaming the forced homogenization for the conflicts in the region, the western imagination about the Balkans tends to regard the region in homogenizing terms.

Vesna Goldsworthy’s imagological study about the Balkans completes the list. In *Inventing Ruritania. The Imperialism of the Imagination* (1998), Goldsworthy illustrates the process of the imaginative colonization of the European East by the West, especially by British nineteenth-century fiction. Whether it is Bram Stoker’s Transylvania or Anthony Hope’s Ruritania and Kravonia, the East of the continent is an exotic and a threatening space, which is mapped textually rather than geographically. If not proper colonies of the western empire(s), the countries in the Balkans have been subject to a form of neo-imperialism, Goldsworthy argues

– not economic, but narrative, literary. What else could be the plot of *The Prisoner of Zenda* (1894), where an imaginary country in the East is rescued from chaos and war by an English gentleman who happens to drop by?

Vesna Goldsworthy applies this theoretical framework in her own, more recent fiction. *Gorsky* (2015) is a rewriting of Fitzgerald's *Great Gatsby*, set in contemporary London. The British capital is rendered exotic by virtue of being populated significantly by Eastern European emigrés – Russian, Serbian, Bulgarian. The American story of the roaring twenties is rewritten so as to fit a new sort of cosmopolitanism, which could also indicate a reverse imaginative colonization – from East to West. In *Monsieur K* (2018), Goldsworthy uses the intertextual connection with Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* to evoke an equally cosmopolitan landscape. This time, it is postwar London, impoverished and grey, in which the survivors of a bygone age strive to adapt to a new world order. The fact that these survivors are not just any Russian emigrés, but also the descendants of the fictional nineteenth-century tragic heroine, spices up the plot even further.

In *Iron Curtain*, the intertextual backdrop is present in the name of the male protagonist, Jason, a poet who hits fame after the publication of a collection entitled *The Argonauts*. Like his mythological namesake, Jason embarks on a trip eastwards to find a special kind of Golden Fleece, in the person of a “red princess”, the privileged daughter of a high official in an unnamed communist country. Goldsworthy's latest novel is set in the last decade of European communism, one that progresses towards the dissolution of the Cold War geopolitical organization of the old continent. Several consecutive literal thaws which dominate the climatic context of the novel foretell the metaphoric thaw of Glasnost and Perestroika, the relaxation that eventually brought about the fall of the USSR. The protagonists of the story play the alternative roles of insider and outsider in each other's country, the clash, merge, and separation between East and West taking a romantic turn. Jason arrives in the communist bloc for a poetry reading at a festival, a fair-haired, light-headed nonconformist, out of place in the “staid” atmosphere of Soviet-inspired patriarchy. Milena Urbanska, Jason's interpreter during the festival, falls in love with him and decides to leave her homeland behind for his sake. Arriving in London, Milena, who has had the privilege to travel in style in other western countries, finds the metropolis, the people and the mentalities entirely different from what she had expected.

Goldsworthy operates a certain relativization in depicting the East and the West in the novel. The unnamed communist country, which could be any Soviet satellite or another imaginary Ruritania, with all its restrictions and deprivations, with the control and the surveillance that any reader from the Eastern bloc can recognize and relate to instantly, is not entirely dreary and pathetic and doesn't always look like the Gulag. This is even less true for the members of the elite. Milena, her mother, and her friends live in large villas in the suburbs, go shopping abroad, are in contact with western culture in their home cinemas, in short, lead a sheltered existence, which brings them closer to the standards of those above average living in the West. Conversely, the West is not necessarily a paradise. When Milena moves to Britain, she is shocked to take in the shabbiness of a metropolis she had pictured as glamorous and wealthy. She lands in a post-Winter of Discontent landscape, the Thatcherite Britain of the 80s, where even well-paid yuppies live in mouldy basements, walk in dirty neighbourhoods and drink cheap wine from coffee mugs.

In Vesna Goldsworthy's novel, the divide between East and West doesn't lie mainly in lifestyle and mentalities. The passion which brings the two characters together, against all odds, wears off soon enough because of the differences in their personalities. Jason is immature, self-centered and a fair-weather Marxist, while Milena, with her more traditional upbringing, has a strong sense of family and duty.

Iron Curtain may be partially an autobiography – less so than *Chernobyl Strawberries* (2005), but definitely more so than *Gorsky* or *Monsieur K*. Milena is, as Vesna presented herself in the evocation of her youth's Belgrade, “a spoilt child of communism”, only more determined, strong and realistic. The heroine's voice and outlook, like Goldsworthy's, reveal both worlds, in the years of troubled transition and paradoxes which were the 80s, in a crude, almost naturalistic light, where raw emotions and sharp observation dominate, topped by a vivid writing style and an alert pace.

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DOI: 10.35923/BAS.30.25

SANDRA M. GILBERT, SUSAN GUBAR
STILL MAD: AMERICAN WOMEN WRITERS
AND THE FEMINIST IMAGINATION, 1950-2020

New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 2021, 441p. ISBN 978-0-393-65171-3.

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Outraged at Donald Trump's election as President of the United States in 2016 and the defeat of Hillary Clinton, the first woman ever to compete in an American presidential election sponsored by a major political party, scholars Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar wrote a sweeping sociocultural survey of the lives of women writers and the anger motivating them to write professionally. The academic duo represents an already well-established partnership, as they are responsible for giving us the unforgettably impactful *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (1979) and *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century* (1991).

Steering away from literary theory and adopting an approach closer to cultural criticism, the authors of *Still Mad: American Women Writers and the Feminist Imagination, 1950-2020* read "the overall arc of women's lives in the context of the community and culture in which they are living" (Gilbert and Hoepker 2022:3), concentrating on the social and cultural changes that women have made possible in the USA. Spanning in scope over a period of 70 years and focusing on the backgrounds and "the unique contributions of poets, novelists, dramatists, memoirists, and literary theorists" (p. 355), as well as artists and activists, *Still Mad* is divided into five sections, in turn subdivided into eleven chapters. They are preceded by an "Introduction" dominated by the emblematic figure of Hillary Rodham Clinton and her transformation from career woman through wife and First Lady, to an assertive politician and first woman presidential candidate, all the way to a demonised wicked witch in the Trumpist discourse.

Importantly, Gilbert and Gubar justify the adjectival use of "mad" in the title as "enraged [...], maddened, confused, or rebellious" (pp. 3-4), arguing that, despite social and political advancements, women remain angered at the enduring barriers that still hinder their progress in many areas. Although full agreement about the number of feminist waves has not yet been reached, with some opining that America is currently undergoing the third wave, while others claiming that intersectionality and the internet use of activism has already introduced the fourth wave, Gilbert and Gubar conceptualize the second wave of feminism as still ongoing, having grown from the 1950s until the present day: "tremulous, tumultuous, tremendous, ongoing." (p. 3)

An important metaphor introduced in the book from the very beginning is that of “glass ceilings”, the barriers encountered by marginalised groups, which younger generations perceive as shattered, even if the American socio-political context has often proven them wrong. In the authors’ view, there are still battles to be fought by feminists even as the book ends in the aftermath of Joe Biden’s election as President of the US, with genuine hope for a better, brighter future in terms of women’s rights.

The following well-researched chapters, written with wit and supporting documentary evidence, follow the intricate relationships of professional women writers and women’s rights activists. The chapters seem to flow one into the other, as the “especially charismatic” women (p. 2) selected and discussed grow over time, both personally and professionally, adopting different viewpoints, becoming radical activists or more culturally influenced.

The two chapters in “Section I: Stirrings in the Fifties” look at the formative years in the lives of such women writers as Sylvia Plath, Adrienne Rich, Diane di Prima, Lorraine Hansberry, Audre Lorde, Joan Didion and Betty Friedan – all of whom were “singularly determined and eccentric mad women who would make their mark on history” (p. 47). The authors highlight the racial stereotypes associated with Black people and emphasise the fact that “the classic picture of the tranquilised fifties belies the furious though sometimes furtive resistance of women who never bought into the fantasy of docile femininity or women whose surface conformity masked deep dissent” (p. 46).

The second section – “Eruptions in the Sixties” – features another two chapters dedicated in particular to an exploration of “marital domesticity and its discontents” (p. 88) from women’s viewpoint. We accompany Gilbert and Gubar on a journey of rediscovering such angry voices as those of Sylvia Plath, Adrienne Rich, and Nina Simone. Moreover, the sexual revolution, made possible by the appearance of the birth control pill, is linked to protests against the Vietnam war and discussed in the lives and publications of Gloria Steinem, Helen Gurley Brown, Susan Sontag, Joan Didion, and Valerie Solanas, as well as through the activism of Denise Levertov.

“Section III: Awakenings in the Seventies” encompasses three chapters reflecting the many changes that occurred during the 1970s in the United States. This is the decade which sees “an explosion of incendiary feminist publications” (p. 132), among which are counted Kate Millet’s *Sexual Politics*, with its postulation that it is family that conditions gender roles (i.e. “the (aggressive or sadistic) masculine and the (passive or masochistic) feminine traits” necessary to maintain the structure, p. 140), and Susan Sontag’s radically feminist essays, which “sought to dismantle the notion of woman as null, submissive, and irrational” (p. 147), and which so far have remained largely unknown to the general public. For instance, Sontag’s “The Double Standard of Aging”, which essentially addresses age in relation to men and women, argues that, whereas old men are perceived as powerful and even virile, old women are considered “obscene”, performing femininity like actresses in the theatre, and thus anticipating Judith Butler’s theory of the performativity of gender.

One chapter, the sixth, is dedicated to speculative poetry and fiction, examining in particular feminist science-fiction through the lives and works of Alice B. Sheldon (a.k.a. James Tiptree, Jr.), Joanna Russ and Ursula Le Guin, or revisiting history as a dystopian narrative, in which women are defined as mere accessories, as does Adrienne Rich. The section’s last chapter covers, on the one

hand, the establishment and growing influence of *Ms.* magazine (1972) as the first national American feminist publication, and some of its contributors, like Gloria Steinem, Alice Walker, and Audre Lorde; on the other hand, in light of the emerging concept of “identity politics”, Maxine Hong Kingston contributes to the ongoing conversations about feminism by adding geographical, linguistic, ethnic, and culinary differences, “to mark what it means to grow up female” (p. 221), thus engendering cultural dialogue and preparing the ground for Kimberlé Crenshaw’s intersectionality theory.

The fourth section, “Revisions in the Eighties and Nineties”, highlights the positive changes brought by the women’s movement into women’s lives and the switch to a more academic form of activism. Feminist thinking is now reshaped by two new approaches: identity politics (with its focus on coalitions and communities of women) and poststructuralist theory (with its challenge of conventional ideas of femininity and masculinity). Here is traced the influence of authors and works like Andrea Dworkin’s investigation of pornography, rape, and the objectification of women through sexual intercourse, Gloria Anzaldúa’s “mestiza consciousness” defined in *Borderlands*, which inspired feminist thinking about ethnic identity politics (Chicana) and transnational issues, or Toni Morrison’s deep exploration of racism and sexism. Although the 1980s saw an increased awareness of the women’s movement as an international phenomenon, with contributions from French feminist authors (e.g. Helene Cixous, Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva), the decade also witnessed culture wars, in which the Reagan government targeted feminism and homosexuality as archenemies. The field of queer studies emerged with essential works by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (*Epistemology of the Closet*) and Judith Butler (*Gender Trouble*). Women’s rights spread to include gay men’s rights and trans women’s rights, with several authors challenging stereotypical or binary perceptions of gender. Donna Haraway’s cyborg, part flesh and part machine, was a significant concept for the period, offering a very graphic image of a creature “able to hold contradictions together” (p. 281). Sadly, the end of the 20th century also witnessed disputes and attacks of women against women, as well as acts of self-sabotage within the movement, the commodification of feminism used as a marketing strategy, or even the creation of “feminazis”, a portmanteau term used to designate extreme or militant feminism, but also to silence women.

“Section V: Recessions / Revivals in the Twenty-first Century” looks at the stirrings in the 21st century, among which are counted the establishment and activism done by Code Pink: Women for Peace (2002) to protest the war in Iraq, the legalisation of gay marriage (2015), the #MeToo movement (2017-2018), the extension of the Civil Rights Act to include trans people (2020). Some of the authors and artists tackled here are Alison Bechdel and her graphic memoirs about growing up with parents who matured in the 1950s, Eve Ensler and her celebrated *The Vagina Monologues*, while Susan Stryker and others drew attention to a growing population that resisted binary classifications. New routes were mapped by younger generations of women writers, artists, activists, and politicians. In this section, Gilbert and Gubar survey aspects related to racial markers and interracial violence – for example, in the work of Claudia Rankine, her 2013 Black Lives Matter, and her literary use of the pronoun “you” in order to signal the alienation of Blacks who challenge systemic racism. In best-selling novels N.K. Jemisin revisited stories of slavery, oppression and cultural conflict, Patricia Lockwood addressed the masculinism of institutionalised religion, while Rebecca Solnit’s

scathing essay “Men Explain Things to Me” (2008) led to the coining of the derogatory term “mansplaining”.

The Epilogue, symbolically titled “White Suits, Shattered Glass”, returns to the initial metaphor of glass ceilings, which – in the authors’ view – have finally been shattered by women like Kamala Harris, incumbent Vice-President, or Jill Biden, Doctor in Education and First Lady. In addition, the Epilogue paints a vivid picture of the white trouser suit worn by various women politicians (e.g., Shirley Chisholm in 1969, Hillary Clinton in 2016, Nancy Pelosi and Kamala Harris in 2020) to mark their respective breakthroughs in terms of political achievements as well as, or perhaps even more so, a visually symbolic ‘thank you’ to the suffragettes. As Gilbert and Gubar note, the shards and slivers of the broken glass ceilings now “glitter with possibility” (p. 350), continuously inspiring new generations of women to counter male violence and patriarchal structures.

Overall, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s ambitious and well-informed survey records “not only the pioneering achievements of second-wave feminism but also the sometimes edgy dialogues, disagreements, and divisions within feminism, most of which ended up enriching the collectivity that feminists seek to foster and promote.” (p. 355) The result of a tremendous team effort, *Still Mad* brings up less known works, intriguing biographical information, and offers fascinating information about the impact of American women who have helped to shape the country over the past seven decades. At the same time, although some feminist critics (cf. Roiphe 2021, Baumgardner n.d., DeVere Brody n.d., Green n.d.) may find fault with the content organisation or the selection of women and/or texts discussed, the book raises awareness, opens dialogues and sparks debate, particularly in relation to women’s rights, gender equity, toxic masculinities, and female anger. Written in a style that is both accessible to and engaging for the general readership, *Still Mad: American Women Writers and the Feminist Imagination, 1950-2020* represents a must-read for any student or scholar interested in the fields of feminist history, gender studies, or literature by women in the North-American context.

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Imprimat la
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din Timișoara**
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