

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
FACULTY OF PHILOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF BELGRADE, SERBIA

BELGRADE
ENGLISH
LANGUAGE &
LITERATURE
STUDIES

VOLUME XV
2023



Belgrade, 2023

Belgrade English Language and Literature Studies (Belgrade BELLS)

2023 – VOLUME XV

Editor-in-Chief:

Aleksandra V. Jovanović (University of Belgrade)

Editor of Volume XV:

Aleksandra Vukotić (University of Belgrade)

Editorial Board:

Bharathi Harishankar (University of Madras, India), Andrej Bjelaković (University of Belgrade, Serbia), Vesna Bratić, (University of Montenegro, Montenegro), Andrijana Bročić (University of Belgrade, Serbia), Biljana Čubrović (University of Belgrade, Serbia), Mirjana Daničić (University of Belgrade, Serbia), Ana Đorđević (University of Belgrade, Serbia), Frédéric Dumas (Université Stendhal UFR d'Etudes anglophones, Grenoble, France), Biljana Đorić-Francuski (University of Belgrade, Serbia), Greta Goetz (University of Belgrade, Serbia), Aleksandra V. Jovanović (University of Belgrade, Serbia), Istvan Kecskes (State University of New York, USA), Ulla Kriebneregg (University of Graz, Austria), Sergej Macura (University of Belgrade, Serbia), Jelena Marković (University of East Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina), Jelisaveta Milojević (University of Belgrade, Serbia), Aleksandra Nikčević Batričević (University of Montenegro, Montenegro), Zoran Paunović (University of Belgrade, Serbia), Novica Petrović (University of Belgrade, Serbia), Katarina Rasulić (University of Belgrade, Serbia), Stephen Regan (Durham University, UK), James Shiff (University of Cincinnati, USA), Nina Sirković (University of Split, Croatia), Milica Spremić Končar (University of Belgrade, Serbia), Nataša Šofranac (University of Belgrade, Serbia), Nenad Tomović (University of Belgrade, Serbia), Ivana Trbojević Milošević (University of Belgrade, Serbia), Jelena Vujić (University of Belgrade, Serbia), Radojka Vukčević (University of Belgrade, Serbia), Aleksandra Vukotić (University of Belgrade, Serbia)

Reviewed by:

Radmila Bodrić (University of Novi Sad), Ksenija Bogetić (Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts / Lancaster University), Andrijana Bročić (University of Belgrade), Nevena Daković (University of Arts, Belgrade), Ana Đorđević (University of Belgrade), Vladislava Gordić Petković (University of Novi Sad), Boris Hlebec (University of Belgrade), Sanja Ignjatović (University of Niš), Aleksandra Izgarjan (University of Novi Sad), Aleksandra V. Jovanović (University of Belgrade), Dejan Karavesović (University of Kragujevac), Ana Kocić Stanković (University of Niš), Ksenija Kondali (University of Sarajevo), Marija Lojanica (University of Kragujevac), Vesna Lopičić (University of Niš), Marko Lukić (University of Zadar), Sergej Macura (University of Belgrade), Ljubica Matek (University of Osijek), Aleksandra Nikčević-Batričević (University of Montenegro), Tijana Parezanović (Alfa BK University), Zoran Paunović (University of Belgrade), Tomislav Pavlović (University of Kragujevac), Vladan Pavlović (University of Niš), Vesna Perić (Faculty of Diplomacy and Security, Drama and Audiovisual Arts and Media Production Department, Belgrade), Katarina Rasulić (University of Belgrade), Zoran Skrobanović (University of Belgrade), Milena Tanasijević (Metropolitan University), Nenad Tomović (University of Belgrade), Ivana Trbojević Milošević (University of Belgrade), Bojana Vujin (University of Novi Sad), Vladimir Vujošević (University of Donja Gorica, Podgorica), Radojka Vukčević (University of Belgrade), Aleksandra Vukotić (University of Belgrade)

Editorial Secretary:

Andrijana Bročić (University of Belgrade)

Proofread by:

Andrijana Bročić (University of Belgrade), Ivana Čorbić (University of Belgrade), Nataša Ilić (University of Belgrade), Jonathan Pendlebury (University of Belgrade), Mirjana Vučković (University of Belgrade)

Published by:

Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade

Technical Support:

Msr Dragana Mihailović

Graphic design:

Biljana Živojinović

Printed by:

Čigoja štampa, Belgrade, Serbia, 2023

ISSN 1821-3138 (Printed volume)

ISSN 1821-4827 (Online text)

UDC 811.111+82

CONTENTS

EDITORS' PREFACE	7
------------------------	---

THEORETICAL AND APPLIED LINGUISTICS

<i>Krasimir Kabakčiev and Desislava Dimitrova</i> HEARER'S REAL-TIME ASPECT RECOGNITION IN ENGLISH AS A COMPOSITIONAL-ASPECT LANGUAGE VIS-À-VIS ASPECT RECOGNITION IN VERBAL-ASPECT LANGUAGES	13
<i>Nenad Tomović</i> WHAT ARE PSEUDO-ANGLICISMS AND HOW CAN WE DEFINE THEM?	33
<i>Sofija Stefanović</i> CONCEPTUAL INTEGRATION IN <i>ALTERED CARBON</i> OCCASIONALISMS	45
<i>Cinzia Giglioni and Ellen Patat</i> A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON IMAGE-TEXT RELATIONS IN BIG PHARMA'S CODES OF ETHICS.....	65
<i>Svetozar Poštić and Kasparas Gaižauskas</i> THE EFFECT OF VIDEO WATCHING IN THE EFL CLASSROOM	89
<i>Aurelija Daukšaitė-Kolpakoviene</i> PROVIDING FEEDBACK ON STUDENTS' WRITING IN EFL CLASSES WITH #LANCSBOX	121

Danijela Ljubojević
THE PEDAGOGY OF HANDWRITING IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE
TEACHING: A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF RESOURCES
AND CHALLENGES IN SERBIA'S ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS..... 139

LITERARY AND CULTURAL STUDIES

Radojka Vukčević
THE PATHWAYS OF EZRA POUND'S POETRY
IN SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO..... 167

Tijana Parezanović and Melina Nikolić
OTHERNESS AND SHARING: SPACE, EMOTIONS, AND DISCOURSE
IN ELIZABETH VON ARNIM'S *THE ENCHANTED APRIL*..... 175

Nataša Damljanović
KUREISHI'S HYBRID IDENTITIES – *THE BLACK ALBUM*
AND *MY SON THE FANATIC*..... 197

Soultana (Tania) Diamanti
TESTIMONIES OF TRAUMA AND POSSIBILITIES OF HEALING IN
OCEAN VUONG'S *ON EARTH WE'RE BRIEFLY GORGEOUS* (2019)..... 215

Goran J. Petrović
REVERSAL OF ROLES BETWEEN MEN AND MACHINES
IN WILFRED OWEN'S POEM "THE LAST LAUGH"..... 241

Khalid Chaouch
MAY SINCLAIR AND HER ILLUSTRATORS: THE LIMITS
OF CO-AUTHORSHIP 259

Stefan Č. Čizmar
"ATROCIOUS LUSTS": THE VAMPIRE AND TRANSGRESSIVE
SEXUALITY IN POLIDORI, LE FANU, AND RICE 275

Aleksandra V. Vukelić
ZENIA AS A CANADIAN MONSTER
IN MARGARET ATWOOD'S *THE ROBBER BRIDE*291

Bojana Vujin

IN FAERY LANDS FORLORN: THE FANTASTIC NARRATIVE
POETRY OF QUEEN'S EARLY LYRICS..... 313

Vera Nikolić

PROCESS AND PRODUCT, TRANSFER AND ADAPTATION PROPER:
THE ESSENTIALS OF TEXT-TO-SCREEN ADAPTATION 333

CONTRIBUTORS..... 351

EDITORS' PREFACE

The fifteenth issue of *Belgrade English Language and Literature Studies* (*Belgrade BELLS*) brings together a collection of insightful papers by scholars across various fields. We remain committed to our aim of providing a forum for scholarly dialogue and prompting interdisciplinary research. The essays cover a wide range of topics and offer valuable perspectives on numerous scholarly themes. The insights shared by our contributors deepen our understanding of the emerging trends in the fields of theoretical and applied linguistics, as well as literary and cultural studies. The current issue is divided into two main sections: *Theoretical and Applied Linguistics*, and *Literary and Cultural Studies*.

The first section opens with the essay by **Krasimir Kabakčiev** (Athens Institute for Education and Research) and **Desislava Dimitrova** (Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv). The paper examines how the hearer recognizes in real-time speech the aspect of a sentence or clause in English as perfective or imperfective by exposing the interplay between referents of situation-participant NPs and the referent of the verb, while considering the possible role of the adverbials. The authors highlight the compositional nature of aspect in English, implying that the full meaning and aspect of a sentence are revealed as a result of the speech act. **Nenad Tomović** (University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology) explores pseudo-anglicisms in various European languages. Although originating from the English language, pseudo-anglicisms are defined by other languages and invariably bear traces of other language influences. The focus of the present analysis is on how pseudo-anglicisms are formed and defined by local linguists. Essentially, it aims to analyze the phenomena of borrowing and adapting English words within non-English speaking communities.

Sofija Stefanović (University of Belgrade, Faculty of Transport and Traffic Engineering) deals with the language in the science fiction novel *Altered Carbon*. Given the advances of technology, the paper claims that language changes and adopts new terminology, which affects our reading of old texts. The change in language, since the publication of *Altered Carbon*, has exposed the altered attitude in the humanities towards

modern technology. Using the methodology of cognitive linguistics, the paper explores the modalities of blending between the human and the technological field. In their research study **Cinzia Giglioni** and **Ellen Pata** (Department of Political Sciences, Sapienza Università di Roma) focus on the interconnectedness of image and text, which is crucial for understanding and conceptualizing visuals. Employing an interdisciplinary approach, the authors analyze visuals within the context of corporate documents labeled as codes of ethics (CoEs). The research examines codes of ethics issued by corporations in the pharmaceutical sector, aiming to demonstrate how companies use images and text in their codes of ethics. The paper offers a model of interdisciplinary research, relying on both quantitative and qualitative analysis to illustrate a specific type of image-text relations implemented in this context. **Svetozar Poštić** and **Kasparas Gaižauskas** (Vilnius University, Faculty of Philology) report on the effects of watching educational videos in the classroom. The research was conducted in a Vilnius middle school. The paper describes the process of choosing the material, discussing and evaluating the results of using digital material in the English language acquisition process. **Aurelija Daukšaitė-Kolpakovienė** (Vytautas Magnus University) deals with EFL classes and describes a corpus-based approach to students' writing. The research scrutinizes the posts on Moodle by Lithuanian students of English, intending to gain information about students' development. The analysis employs LancsBox, a corpus tool, to analyze spelling, wording, and sentence patterns. The article claims that corpus-based analyses provide a method of gaining indirect feedback aimed at improving proficiency of EFL students. **Danijela Ljubojević** (Institute for Educational Research) remarks on the importance of gaining and maintaining good handwriting habits. In Serbian schools, children encounter the Cyrillic alphabet in Grade 1, and the Latin alphabet in Grade 2. The English alphabet is introduced in Grade 3. The paper analyzes the textbooks used in Grades 1 and 2 in terms of their sufficiency as instructive tools for the English script, which is introduced in Grade 3. Based on these analyses, the aim is to provide recommendations for the teaching process.

The *Literary and Cultural Studies* section commences with the paper contributed by **Radojka Vukčević** (University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology) which focuses on the reception of Ezra Pound's poetry in Serbia and Montenegro. Additionally, it examines the potential influence of Pound's poetry on Serbian and Montenegrin poets. The paper also traces the changes in the cultural and political context in the selected

regions and explores the effects these changes had on the publication and reception of Pound's poetry. **Tijana Parezanović** and **Melina Nikolić** (Alfa, BK University) analyze Elizabeth von Arnim's 1922 novel *The Enchanted April*. As this modernist travelogue features four women in different parts of Italy, the paper addresses their experiences of Otherness. The theoretical framework of heterotopia and Christian love is employed in the close reading of selected fragments to expose the "indirect free speech" as a narrative method, which reveals/hides Otherness. **Nataša Damljanović** (an independent researcher) offers a comparative analysis of Hanif Kureishi's novel *Black Album* and his short story "My Son the Fanatic". The paper depicts contemporary British society in light of the ongoing troubles of immigrants living in Britain. The analysis is grounded in the postcolonial theoretical agenda of cultural hybridity, identity issues, and the third space. **Soultana (Tania) Diamanti** (an independent researcher) traces the manifestations of trauma as an intergenerational phenomenon in Ocean Vuong's semi-autobiographical novel *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* (2019). The Vietnamese American immigrant experience is viewed within a broader context of trauma studies, investigating both the transgressive power of trauma and the possibilities of healing through writing. The paper by **Goran J. Petrović** (University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology) offers a new insight into the poetry of Wilfred Owen. Owen's poem "The Last Laugh" is analyzed from the perspective of a dystopian vision contextualized by a broader dispute of humanity vs. machines. **Khalid Chaouch** (Sultan Moulay Slimane University, Beni Mellal) writes about the world before the widespread use of visual media when illustrations sought to present in an image what was written in the text. Illustrations are seen as a mode for highlighting meaning, but at times, they may interfere with the implied meanings of words and affect the reception of the written work. The paper analyzes the negotiations of meaning between the visual and written elements, focusing on the work of May Sinclair. **Stefan Č. Čizmar** (University of Novi Sad, Faculty of Philosophy) tackles the topic of gender transgression within the generic conventions of the Gothic genre. The paper traces changes in cultural norms regarding the themes of gender and sexuality as reflected in the selected works to show how the topic of transgressive sexuality has been represented in Gothic fiction through time. **Aleksandra V. Vukelić** (University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology) explores how one of the protagonists of Margaret Atwood's novel *The Robber's Bride* reflects the main issues of the Canadian society and the self. In many of her novels,

Atwood defines Canadianism by commenting on its main characteristics, which, in her view, include doubleness, victimhood and the treatment of otherness. However, the paper argues that the character of Zenia, one of the figures in this particular novel, represents the “hidden hauntings” of Canadianism through her audacity and the spell she casts over everyone around her. **Bojana Vujin** (Faculty of Philosophy, University of Novi Sad) traces the links between popular music lyrics and mainstream poetry. The paper analyzes the early songs of the band Queen using traditional interpretative tools, with a focus on narrative elements such as story, plot, and narration. It argues that the fantastic creatures that appear in the world of the songs belong to the same imaginary universe that creates Freddie Mercury’s fantasy land of Rhye. The paper highlights the songs’ intertextuality with the aim of placing them in a broader literary context and asserting “their status as poetry”. **Vera Nikolić** (an independent researcher), in her paper, highlights the importance of understanding the adaptation studies, focusing on challenges, requirements, and possibilities involved in adapting literature into film. The paper addresses Robert Stam’s reevaluation of adaptations based on “intertextual dialogism” and Linda Hutcheon’s understanding of adaptations as both processes and products.

We extend our gratitude to all the authors who contributed their work to the fifteenth issue of *Belgrade BELLS*. Thanks are also due to the esteemed reviewers who conducted the rigorous peer-reviewing process. Special thanks go to Andrijana Bročić for her role in preparing the present issue of the journal. We express our appreciation to our proof-readers: Andrijana Bročić, Ivana Čorbić, Nataša Ilić, Jonathan Pendlebury, and Mirjana Vučković. Their generous help certainly led to the improvement of this volume. We also thank the dean of the Faculty of Philology, Professor Iva Draškić Vićanović, for her abiding support and understanding of our goals. Further appreciation goes to the Ministry of Science and Technological Innovations for their financial aid. Our gratitude extends to all the members of the editorial team for their collaborative efforts in putting this issue together. We sincerely hope that the articles in the present issue of *Belgrade Bells* will serve as an inspiration for our readers in their new academic inquiries.

Belgrade, 15 December 2023

Aleksandra V. Jovanović and Aleksandra Vukotić

***Theoretical and
Applied Linguistics***

Krasimir Kabakčiev*

Athens Institute for Education and Research, Greece

Desislava Dimitrova**

Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv, Bulgaria

HEARER'S REAL-TIME ASPECT RECOGNITION IN ENGLISH AS A COMPOSITIONAL-ASPECT LANGUAGE VIS-À-VIS ASPECT RECOGNITION IN VERBAL-ASPECT LANGUAGES

Abstract

This paper deals with the way the hearer recognizes in real-time speech the aspect of a sentence or clause in English as perfective or imperfective. Due to the compositional effectuation of aspect in English, the aspect (perfective/imperfective) of an English sentence is explicated through an elaborate interplay between referents of situation-participant NPs and the referent of the verb, plus a possible impact from adverbials. This interplay involves the need for the hearer to wait until the end of a sentence or clause in compositional-aspect languages to identify the aspect of the situation and forms a stark contrast with verbal-aspect languages, where the aspect value of the verb can be clear even from the very beginning of a sentence.

Key words: real-time recognition of aspect, compositional and verbal aspect, compositional-aspect languages and verbal-aspect languages, temporal values of situation-participant NPs, biaspectuality

* kkabakciev@atiner.gr, kkabakciev@gmail.com

** desislava_dimitrova@uni-plovdiv.bg

1. Introduction

1.1. On hearer's real-time aspect recognition

In today's age of automated text generation from real speech that seemed a dream not too long ago but is now a reality even in public official events, this paper deals with real-time recognition of aspect by the hearer in sentences – viewed as temporal sequences of phonemes, morphemes, words, phrases. However, as automated text generation from live speech for producing translations from the original language is performed in real time, and only in real time, this cannot guarantee the adequacy of the translation into the other language. The reason is the time difference in the appearance of the different grammatical and other markers, particularly in this case indicating aspect, and in the realization of the various semantic values, including aspectual ones.

There is a problem well-known in the community of interpreters with the German language. Due to the specificity of the word order in German, in oral translations from German the interpreter often has to wait until the end of the sentence – that may be a very long one, to be able to recognize the verb and perform the translation. This paper deals with a similar problem: ways of explicating (signaling) perfectivity and imperfectivity in English, a compositional-aspect language, viewed against verbal-aspect languages, mainly Greek and Bulgarian, and partly some other Slavic data – Serbian and Russian. In principle, there is encoding of perfectivity and imperfectivity when the data analyzed is from a verbal-aspect language and the aspect – either perfective or imperfective, is directly located in the relevant verb form. In contrast to *encoding* (i.e., directly signifying) aspect, as in the Slavic languages, Greek, Georgian, etc., the phenomenon of *signaling* (i.e., explicating) aspect is characteristic of compositional-aspect languages. It is a much more complex process because aspect is not located in a single verb form in the sentence but is calculated and identified each time by the hearer – subconsciously, and the calculation takes into account a large number of elements in the sentence/clause or the context. Furthermore, this number grows larger in longer sentences and larger texts.

The description and subsequent inventory of the possibilities for real-time recognition of aspect can be useful not only for the interpreter's profession. Apart from real-time automated generation of text from speech

and for the general theory of linguistics, it is relevant for many other areas, mainly in applied linguistics, for example, for studies of first and second language acquisition, for a better representation in grammars of the way aspect is realized in different languages, etc. But before returning to the issue of real-time recognition of aspect, let us first discuss what exactly aspect is.

1.2. What is aspect?

In purely semantic (not formal – morphological, periphrastic, etc.) terms, aspect is the well-known contrast between perfectivity and imperfectivity, and there is a general agreement in the literature that these two notions are best represented in Slavic linguistics, with its long tradition (e.g., Binnick 1991: 136). However, some experts in language typology, agreeing that the Slavic system is the most representative one, also point out that it has certain idiosyncrasies (Dahl 1985: 69).

What are imperfectivity and perfectivity? We understand imperfectivity as a non-bounded Vendlerian situation: state or activity. Conversely, perfectivity is a bounded Vendlerian situation: accomplishment or achievement (Vendler 1957).¹ While imperfectivity is, generally speaking, a non-bounded situation on the time axis, perfectivity is not solely and simply a bounded situation with an initial (starting) point and a final point (end-point). Perfectivity is a specifically bounded situation, with an achieved (reached) telos (Dimitrova and Kabakčiev 2021: 196–197).²

Aspect is instantiated in two ways both in and across languages: either as compositional aspect – in English, the other modern Germanic languages, Finnish, Albanian, etc. in Europe, or as verbal aspect – in the Slavic languages, Greek, Georgian, and many other around the world. The phenomenon of compositional aspect, discovered by Verkuyl in 1971 (see Verkuyl 1972), and the theory of compositional aspect, still being refined by the finder of the phenomenon (see Kabakčiev 2023, a large review of Verkuyl's discovery and his work through the decades), can be understood through Verkuyl's two aspectual schemata, a perfective and an imperfective one, whereby a major notion for understanding imperfectivity is the so-called aspectual leak in the imperfective schema (see below). Note meanwhile the important circumstance that compositional aspect can

be observed in verbal-aspect languages and that, vice versa, verbal aspect exists in many compositional-aspect languages (e.g., in the progressive forms). Another major tenet for the correct understanding of aspect as a universal and cross-language phenomenon is that compositional-aspect languages are exclusively characterized by the *absence of perfective verbs*. It sharply counters traditional aspectological descriptions of English and similar languages – which abound in myths related to perfectivity. Two major examples of myths are: (i) the English past indefinite (simple) verb form is an aspectual one, capable of “signifying” perfectivity; (ii) English phrasal verbs (*drink up, bring about, etc.*) are perfective markers (e.g., Brinton 1988: 4). It will be shown below, using numerous examples of perfective and imperfective sentences, that the English past indefinite is incapable of “signifying” perfectivity. It only *allows* the explication of perfectivity and the explication is a result of an extremely complex interplay of sentence components, especially NPs – that ought to have nothing to do with aspect. As for *drink up, bring about, etc.* as “perfective markers”, even the staunchest supporters of this idea are reluctant to state that phrasal verbs are “perfective markers”. They admit instead that the addition of a particle to a single verb is actually only *thought to lend* perfective meaning (Brinton 1988: 4).

In the theoretical framework employed here and best represented in Kabakčiev (1984, 2000, 2019, 2023), Dimitrova (2021), Dimitrova and Kabakčiev (2021), based on Verkuyl’s (1972, 1993, 2022) theory and similar to Bulatović’s (2013; 2019; 2020) model, the perfective-imperfective contrast in compositional-aspect languages arises as an extremely complex interplay in the sentence/clause between the referent of the verb and the referents of situation-participant NPs. Our model differs from the other two in one major respect. While in Verkuyl’s and Bulatović’s theoretical frameworks verb arguments are atemporal entities, in our model situation-participant NP referents (a.k.a. verb arguments) constitute temporal entities in the minds of speaker/hearer, no matter whether as lexical entries they stand for so-called abstract entities or for spatial (physical/material) objects. The crucial idea of the temporal nature in the minds of speaker/hearer of *all entities*, many of which are otherwise normally understood as spatial (physical/material), is explained in extensive detail elsewhere (Kabakčiev 1984, 2000, 2023), including BELLS (Kabakčiev 2021b), and is supported by at least

three aspectologists – Vounchev (2007: 86–87), Dimitrova (2021) and Shabashvili (in Shabashvili and Kabakčiev 2021).

2. On aspect recognition in verbal-aspect languages

The analysis of the data here is based on an approach which is essentially deductive and is well described in Dimitrova (2021). It *does not* strive to find and list formal grammatical devices in particular languages and then try to detail their semantic and other features. Instead, it first defines certain universal notions underlying language structure which possess and exercise certain functions. After that a decision is made on which and what formal grammatical and other (lexical, general semantic, pragmatic, etc.) devices realize the functions of the relevant universal notions in a particular language or particular languages (Dimitrova 2021: 52). In such an approach, a strict distinction is made between verbal and compositional aspect, whereby the latter is effectuated as a complex interplay in the sentence between situation-participant NP referents, the verb referent and certain types of adverbials (Kabakčiev 1984; 2000; 2019; 2021b; Dimitrova and Kabakčiev 2021). This understanding is not inconsistent with Verkuyl's and Bulatović's frameworks – which also take into account the various interactions between the verb and its arguments and the impact of adverbials, but in our model the major tenet is that *all* situation-participant NP referents are encoded in the minds of speaker/hearer as temporal entities.³ Conversely, in cases of verbal aspect, which means either in verbs as lexical entities or in their morpho-syntactic or periphrastic realization (as, for example, with imperfect and progressive verb forms in the Romance languages), *aspect is realized by the verb directly*, and not through NP referents. For this reason, and as we shall see below, aspect effectuation in verbal-aspect languages can take place from the very beginning of a sentence/clause, something impossible, or almost impossible, with aspectually ambivalent verb forms in compositional-aspect languages.

Aspect effectuation from the very beginning of a sentence/clause may not generally be typical, but it actually happens often in free-word-order languages like Bulgarian, other Slavic languages and Greek. Such effectuation is possible because, in contrast to English and other compositional-aspect languages, the verb in a sentence is allowed initial

position – systematically and not as some kind of a special exception. Consider an English sentence such as (1a) below translated into Bulgarian (1b), Greek (1c), Serbian (1d) and Russian (1e), with the verb for *wrote* placed in initial position in the latter four cases:

- (1) a. The woman wrote the letter but did not send it (English)
b. Napisa zhenata pismoto, no ne go izrprati
(Bulgarian)
Wrote woman-the letter-the but not it sent
c. Égrapse i gynaiika to gramma allá den to ésteile
(Greek)
Wrote the woman the letter but not it sent
d. Napisala je žena pismo, ali ga nije poslala
(Serbian)
Wrote is woman letter but it not sent
e. Napisala zhenschina pis'mo, no ne opravila ego
(Russian)
Wrote woman letter but not sent it

Note that the sentences in (1) in all the four verbal-aspect languages represent a type of sentences with an initial position of the verb that are not only grammatical but also completely natural, though, of course, not necessarily frequent. Note also that one of the languages, Greek, is not Slavic and belongs to a different Indo-European group, the Hellenic one, and that if, conversely, any of the four sentences above is to be rendered back into English, this can by no means be done with a verb in initial position. Furthermore, other elements of the sentences in the verbal-aspect languages above also have predetermined positions that are different from a standard SVO order and are different for the separate languages – compare the syntactic object in the dependent clause and the negative particle. It also strikes the eye that while the word order in the dependent clause in the Serbian sentence does not coincide with the word order in Russian, both languages being Slavic, the word order in the Bulgarian and the Greek sentences *coincides fully* – despite the different genealogy of the two languages.⁴ All this suggests that word order exercises certain specific functions in the separate languages (to be identified in future studies) and that word-order patterns arise as a result

⁴ Most probably due to common Balkansprachbund features and mutual influence.

of requirements imposed by language structure that at first sight are not at all related to word order.

Nevertheless, some specificities in the sentences in the separate verbal-aspect languages related to word order will be disregarded here for the time being – for not being directly related to the issue investigated. But otherwise they are important because they represent a significant phenomenon known in the different linguistic schools and trends under different names: “functional sentence perspective”, “theme-rheme contrast”, “communicative dynamism”, “logical focus”, etc. All the sentences in the four languages (1b, c, d, e) ought to translate into English as (2a) – depending on whether the relevant language has a definite article or not. But if we take it that word order ought to have certain universal characteristics, their word order in English ought to be something like (2b). However, a sentence with such a word order is completely non-grammatical, hard to understand, even nonsensical.

- (2) a. The/a woman wrote a/the letter but did not send it
b. *Wrote a/the woman a/the letter but did not it send

When in compositional aspect explication the aspect value of a verb is mainly determined by the temporal values of situation-participant NPs (Kabakčiev 2019; 2021b), obviously the recognition of aspect by the hearer will, as a rule, take place as late as after clarifying the temporal status of *the last* situation-participant NP in a sentence/ clause. Compare some longer imperfective sentences such as (3a) or (3b) below (analyzed in Kabakčiev 2020; 2021b: 35–40), where the recognition of imperfectivity is impossible prior to the appearance of the adverbial element at the end of the sentence, namely, *from nearby rivers* in (3a) and *from wells* in (3b):

- (3) a. The mountaineers escorted the horse to drink from nearby rivers
b. The woman made the child drink from wells

To sum up, underlying the recognition of aspect in the explication of aspect in compositional-aspect terms are factors, some of which are to a certain degree surprising, such as word order – apart from the complex mechanisms incorporated in Verkuyl's two aspectual schemata.

3. On aspect recognition in compositional-aspect languages

Some recent publications (Kabakčiev 2019; 2023) describe the way aspect is explicated in English perfective sentences such as (4a) below, with two bounded situation-participant NPs (containing quantifiers and not representing a Verkuylian leak), versus imperfective sentences with a non-bounded situation-participant NP – which in (4b) is the syntactic object:

- (4) a. This greengrocer sold a melon
- b. This greengrocer sold melons
- c. Melons were sold by this greengrocer
- d. Melons were sold by this greengrocer yesterday to the school kitchen nearby

The preliminary assumption for English SVO sentences such as (4a) and (4b) ought to be that in a compositional-aspect language the hearer of an utterance does not know and can hardly predict what the aspect (perfective or imperfective) of the final constitution of the utterance will be until the (syntactic) object situation-participant NP appears – as the final constitution can trigger aspectually different values (perfective or imperfective). Sentence (4a) is perfective while (4b) is imperfective, and in both the aspect cannot become clear until the last element appears. If the NP after *This greengrocer sold* is *a melon*, the sentence is perfective, if *melons* appear, the sentence is imperfective. However, after a passive transformation, the sentence may be structured so as to begin with a bare NP, see (1c), and its presence will allow making a prediction with some probability that this sentence is imperfective – and hence indefinitely iterative in this particular case. But even if the presence of a bare NP here (one with a zero article, i.e., lack of quantification) predicts roughly that the sentence will be imperfective, this is not necessarily always the case, as seen in (4d). In (4d) the extension *yesterday to the school kitchen nearby* actually perfectivizes (4c), or at least perfectivity is fully possible. Note the important circumstance that this kind of perfectivization triggers an assumption that implicated here is a certain quantifier before *melons*, e.g.: *many, a batch of, some*, etc. About implicated quantifiers and in particular *some*, “the prototypical quantifier”, see Bulatović (2022: 500); Kabakčiev (2023: 262). The implicated quantifier *some* is sometimes called “silent *some*”.

Amplifying the assumption here is a major feature of English, viz., the rather fixed SVO word order – which requires the object-NP to take final position, a status quo that can be reversed by the passive voice, as in (5c, d), but a passive voice sentence such as (5d) for some reason or other (pragmatic) fails to clearly explicate the imperfectivity of (5b):

- (5) a. John drank the/a/some beer
b. John drank beer [habitually, e.g., when he was younger]
c. The/a/some beer was drunk by John
d. Beer was drunk by John

The compositional explication of aspect in a language such as English is an extremely complex mechanism, and this explains a very large number of strange and deplorable circumstances in theoretical and applied linguistics, among which: more than half a century after Verkyul's discovery of compositional aspect this epochally important phenomenon "is not described in grammars of English, not mentioned in English coursebooks, and not taught in schools and colleges" (Bulatović 2022: 500–501).

In a language such as English the last sentence component that determines the aspectual value of the sentence or clause is typically an indirect prepositional object or an adverbial in the role of a situation-participant NP, as in (3a, b) above, where the non-quantified NP renders the relevant sentence imperfective. However, with the use of bare subject-NPs, the recognition of aspect as imperfective can sometimes be at least partly predicted – if not exactly determined – from the very beginning of a sentence/clause, as already established. This is especially clearly manifested in sentences with three situation-participant NPs and an initial non-bounded NP referent such as (6a), analyzed in Kabakčiev (2021b: 37), or with direct objects turned into subjects in passive-voice sentences like (4c) with two situation-participant NPs, the first of which is non-bounded:

- (6) a. Women made the child drink from the well
(4) c. Melons were sold by this greengrocer

4. Aspect recognition in sentences with three situation-participant NPs – in both verbal- and compositional-aspect languages

As argued for the first time in Kabakčiev (2020: 119–120), compositional aspect can best be analyzed in terms of sentences containing three situation-participant NPs – in compositional-aspect languages and in some verbal-aspect languages (see below). These sentences are rare to find in real-world texts and difficult to construct. In Dimitrova and Kabakčiev (2021: 193), the following four English sentences were specially constructed and then analyzed:

- (7) a. The valet will park our car in the nearby parking lot [perfectivity]
- b. The valet will park cars_{LEAK} in the nearby parking lot [imperfectivity]
- c. The valet will park our car in nearby parking lots_{LEAK} [imperfectivity]
- d. Valets_{LEAK} will park our car in the nearby parking lot [imperfectivity]

Sentence (7a) falls into Verkuyl's perfective schema and explicates perfectivity. The other three sentences (7b, c, d) belong to Verkuyl's imperfective schema with at least one leak (see the two aspect schemata described exhaustively in Verkuyl 1993) – and explicate imperfectivity. On Verkuyl's leaks – in his imperfective schema, a leak being a major notion in the theory of compositional aspect, see also Kabakčiev (2019: 204–206).

But how and when (in real-time speech) is aspect explicated in (7), particularly imperfective aspect?⁵ Sentence (7b) is imperfective because the non-quantified *cars* (third sentence component) explicates a non-bounded series of cars on the time axis. Then the entity *cars* with its feature iterativity is mapped back onto the referent of the verb *will park* (second sentence component) and the verb is thus coerced into signalling imperfectivity in the form of non-bounded iterativity. Sentence (7c) is imperfective because, in a similar way, the non-quantified *parking lots* (fourth sentence component) explicates a non-bounded series of parking

⁵ How perfective aspect is explicated will not be discussed here because it is an extremely difficult issue. Those who want to know must read at least most of the major literature on compositional aspect, including Verkuyl's three major monographs (Verkuyl 1971; 1993; 2022).

lots on the time axis one after the other; these are then mapped back onto the referent of the verb catena *will park* (second sentence component), and the verb referent is again coerced into signalling imperfectivity in the form of non-bounded iterativity. Note specifically how *our car* in (7c) turns from a single temporal instance of *our car* in (7a) and a single car as a physical entity into a recurrent kinetic entity, a serial multitude of the thing called “our car”, which in (7c) can actually be *not the same car* physically but different cars every time, despite the grammatical singularity of *our car*. Similarly, (7d) is imperfective because the non-quantified *valets* explicates a non-bounded series of valets on the time axis, the valets, as recurring entities, are mapped onto the referent of *will park* and the verb is again coerced into signalling imperfectivity in the form of non-bounded iterativity. It is truly remarkable how a single non-quantified situation-participant NP in a sentence (7b, c, d) can coerce an initially perfective sentence (7a) into imperfective ones. For further detail on aspect in sentences with three situation-participant NPs, (see Kabakčiev 2020; 2021a; 2021b; 2023) and (Dimitrova and Kabakčiev 2021).

Note that the English examples (7) were intentionally constructed by us with a verb (*to park*) that is biaspectual in Greek and also in Bulgarian. They were then translated into Greek, and this yielded the following four sentences:

- (8) a. O valé tha parkárei_{BIASP} to aftokínitó mas
 ston kontinó chóro státhmefsis [perfectivity]
 The valet will park the car our
 in-the nearby parking lot
 ‘The valet will park our car in the nearby parking lot’
- b. O valé tha parkárei_{BIASP} aftokínita ston
 kontinó chóro státhmefsis [imperfectivity]
 The valet will park cars in-the
 nearby parking lot
 ‘The valet will park cars in the nearby parking lot’
- c. O valé tha parkárei_{BIASP} to aftokínitó
 mas se kontinoús chórous státhmefsis [imperfectivity]
 The valet will park the car
 our in nearby parking lots
 ‘The valet will park our car in nearby parking lots’

- d. Valédestha parkároun_{BIASP} to aftokínító mas
 ston kontinó chóro státhmefsis [imperfectivity]
 Valets will park the car our
 in-the nearby parking lot
 ‘Valets will park our car in the nearby parking lot’

These Greek sentences, each with three situation-participant NPs, show that in cases of aspectual verb ambivalence, here of the verb form *tha parkárei* ‘will park’ (such biaspectual verb forms in Greek are relatively rare), the aspect of the sentence is not encoded in the verb and directly shown by it, but is effectuated as in English (and in compositional-aspect languages in general) through an elaborate interplay of features of NP-referents and the verb referent in a sentence/clause. This phenomenon is observable in Bulgarian too, even more frequently. All the Greek examples (8), when translated into Bulgarian, yield sentences that are structurally exactly the same. See below in (12) similar Bulgarian examples with biaspectual verbs and three situation-participant NPs.

To illustrate clearly our understanding of aspect as “an all-pervading and perpetual process of mapping temporal features between different elements of the sentence” (see definition and explanation in Kabakčiev 2019: 212) and the regularity consisting in the explication of aspect in two different ways in both verbal-aspect and compositional-aspect languages, we recently (Kabakčiev and Dimitrova 2023) constructed a set of English sentences with one and the same verb that would be biaspectual in all or at least several Slavic languages, with all the sentences containing identical or near-identical three situation-participant NPs:

- (9) a. Businessmen_{LEAK} sponsored concerts_{LEAK} of young virtuosi_{LEAK}
 [imperfectivity]
 b. Businessmen_{LEAK} sponsored concerts_{LEAK} of the young
 virtuoso [imperfectivity]
 c. Two businessmen sponsored concerts_{LEAK} of young
 virtuosi_{LEAK} [imperfectivity]
 d. Two businessmen sponsored concerts_{LEAK} of the young
 virtuoso [imperfectivity]
 e. Businessmen_{LEAK} sponsored the concerts of the young
 virtuoso [imperfectivity]
 f. Two businessmen sponsored the concert of the young
 virtuoso [perfectivity]

All these English sentences clearly explicate aspect: (9a, b, c, d, e) are imperfective, and (9f) is perfective – for reasons that can be drawn from the analysis of the sentences in (7) above. Phrased in the shortest terms possible, a Verkuylian leak in one or more than one situation-participant NP in a sentence with a telic verb turns a perfective sentence – here (9f), into an imperfective one, cf. all the other sentences in (9).

Let us now make a direct comparison with Serbian. In Serbian the verb for *sponsor* is a true biaspectual. It does not tend to take a prefix in order to form a perfective correspondence. Hence, the following Serbian sentences – correspondences of the English sentences in (9) – are correct, fully grammatical:

- (10) a. Biznismeni su sponzorisali_{BIASP} koncerte mladih virtuoza
 b. Biznismeni su sponzorisali_{BIASP} koncerte mladog virtuoza
 c. Dva biznismena su sponzorisali_{BIASP} koncerte mladih virtuoza
 d. Dva biznismena su sponzorisali_{BIASP} koncerte mladog virtuoza
 e. Biznismeni su sponzorisali_{BIASP} koncerte mladog virtuoza
 f. Dva biznismena su sponzorisali_{BIASP} koncert mladog virtuoza

However, all these Serbian sentences, or at least most of them, are actually *unanalyzable* in terms of the aspectual value of the verb, viz., whether it signals perfectivity or imperfectivity. Thus sentence (10a) can be, and actually must be, interpreted as *either* perfective *or* imperfective, because apart from the biaspectuality of the verb, all the three situation-participant NPs fail to provide clarity as to their quantificational temporal status. Is it bounded? Is it non-bounded? For example, *biznismeni* ‘businessmen’ in (10a) can be interpreted in three *completely different* ways (in English as a metalanguage): (i) *businessmen* – equivalent to a bare NP, with a zero article; (ii) *some businessmen* – with an implicated/silent quantifier *some*; (iii) *the businessmen* – implicated definiteness, equivalent to a definite article in languages with articles. The same applies to *koncerte* ‘concerts’ and *mladih virtuoza* ‘of (the) young virtuos’. These can be interpreted as: (i) non-quantified NPs – bare NPs, with a zero article; or, (ii), as having an implicated/silent quantifier *some*, or; (iii), as implicating definiteness – as if with a definite article in a language like English. The first case triggers imperfectivity, the latter two perfectivity.

And here is the catch, the difficulty for the analysis of aspect explication with biaspectual verbs in languages such as Serbian or Russian. If implied/understood by *biznismeni*, *koncerte* and *mladih virtuoz*a are *some businessmen*, *some concerts* and (of) *some virtuosi*, then the aspect of the sentence will be perfective, as per Verkuyl's perfective schema. It will also be perfective if implied/understood by *biznismeni*, *koncerte* and *mladih virtuoz*a are *the businessmen*, *the concerts* and (of) *the young virtuosi*, again according to Verkuyl's perfective schema. But if implied/understood by *biznismeni*, *koncerte* and *mladih virtuoz*a are *businessmen*, *concerts* and (of) *young virtuosi*, i.e., non-quantified situation-participant NPs, then the aspect value of *sponzorisali* will be imperfective, as per Verkuyl's imperfective schema, due to the leaks.

To further check these observations, let us turn to another verbal-aspect language, again Slavic, again with no articles, Russian. The Russian correspondence of the English verb *sponsor* is also a truly biaspectual one, *sponzirovat'*. It does not tend to take a prefix in order to form a perfective correspondence. Hence, the Russian sentences (11) display the same features as the Serbian ones (10):

- (11) a. Biznismeny sponsirovali_{BIASP} kontserty yunyh virtuozov
 b. Biznismeny sponsirovali_{BIASP} kontserty yunogo virtuoz
 c. Dva biznesmena sponsirovali_{BIASP} kontserty yunyh virtuozov
 d. Dva biznesmena sponsirovali_{BIASP} kontserty yunogo virtuoz
 e. Biznismeny sponsirovali_{BIASP} kontserty yunogo virtuoz
 f. Dva biznesmena sponsirovali_{BIASP} kontsert yunogo virtuoz

When *biznismeny* 'businessmen', *kontserty* 'concerts' and *yunyh virtuozov* 'of young virtuosi' are understood as "the/some businessmen", "the/some concerts" and "of some/of the young virtuosi", the aspectual value of the sentence is perfective. When these NPs are understood as bare NPs (with a zero article and with no other quantifier), the aspectual value of the sentence is imperfective.

Thus now it can be generalized that the use of a truly biaspectual verb in a Slavic language such as Serbian or Russian brings about confusion as to the aspectual meaning of sentences with three situation-participant NPs, a conclusion already reached in Kabakčiev (2020; 2021a). This circumstance is clearly demonstrated in the examples (10) and (11).

Although the speaker may have in mind a particular aspectual value for each of the verbs in these sentences, the hearer will certainly have difficulty in recognizing the aspect of most or even all of these sentences, given the ambivalence and ambiguity in the temporal values of the referents of the relevant NPs.

Note, however, that this is not the case for Bulgarian, although it is otherwise a verbal-aspect language just like Serbian and Russian. The presence of a definite article in Bulgarian (as in Greek) allows eliminating most of the aspectual ambiguities present in the Serbian and Russian examples above. Consider in (12) the Bulgarian correspondences (again with a truly biaspectual verb) of the sentences in English (9), Serbian (10), and Russian (11):

- (12) a. $\text{Biznesmeni}_{\text{LEAK}} \text{ sponsoriraha}_{\text{BIASP}} \text{ kontserti}_{\text{LEAK}} \text{ na}$
 $\text{mladi} \text{ virtuoz}_i_{\text{LEAK}} [\text{imperfective}]$
 Businessmen sponsored concerts of
 young virtuosi
- b. $\text{Biznesmeni}_{\text{LEAK}} \text{ sponsoriraha}_{\text{BIASP}} \text{ kontserti}_{\text{LEAK}} \text{ na}$
 $\text{mladiya} \text{ virtuoz} [\text{imperfective}]$
 Businessmen sponsored concerts of
 young-the virtuoso
- c. $\text{Dvama} \text{ biznesmeni} \text{ sponsoriraha}_{\text{BIASP}} \text{ kontserti}_{\text{LEAK}}$
 $\text{na} \text{ mladi} \text{ virtuoz}_i_{\text{LEAK}} [\text{imperfective}]$
 Two businessmen sponsored concerts
 of young virtuosi
- d. $\text{Dvama} \text{ biznesmeni} \text{ sponsoriraha}_{\text{BIASP}} \text{ kontserti}_{\text{LEAK}}$
 $\text{na} \text{ mladiya} \text{ virtuoz} [\text{imperfective}]$
 Two businessmen sponsored concerts
 of young-the virtuoso
- e. $\text{Biznesmeni}_{\text{LEAK}} \text{ sponsoriraha}_{\text{BIASP}} \text{ kontsertite} \text{ na}$
 $\text{mladiya} \text{ virtuoz} [\text{imperfective}]$
 Businessmen sponsored concerts-the of
 young-the virtuoso
- f. $\text{Dvama} \text{ biznesmeni} \text{ sponsoriraha}_{\text{BIASP}} \text{ kontserta} \text{ na}$
 $\text{mladiya} \text{ virtuoz} [\text{perfective}]$
 Two businessmen sponsored concert-the of
 young-the virtuoso

These Bulgarian sentences allow marking the relevant NPs as leaks, as per Verkuyl's imperfective schema, and hence identifying each sentence as either imperfective (12a-e) or perfective (12f). Marking certain NPs as leaks according to Verkuyl's imperfective schema is also possible in other cases in similar Bulgarian sentences with three situation-participant NPs and a biaspectual verb. But, as already demonstrated, this is generally not possible in Slavic languages such as Serbian and Russian – because of the non-availability of a definite article.⁶

5. Conclusions and implications for future research

On the basis of the analyses above, several assumptions, generalizations and conclusions can be drawn, and certain important questions can be asked – with a view to future research in the problem field.

The recognition of the aspect of a sentence or clause as perfective or imperfective by the hearer in real-time speech *in verbal-aspect languages* – when aspect is encoded by the verb in a sentence/clause, *presents no problem* in grammatical or semantic terms: simply, aspect is where the verb is. The verb directly expresses (i.e., it denotes, signifies, encodes) the aspect (perfective or imperfective), and the verb (verb catena) may be located in different places – at the beginning of a sentence, in the middle or at the end. However, the recognition of the aspect of a sentence or clause as perfective or imperfective by the hearer in real-time speech in English and similar compositional-aspect languages is *very different*. Generally, the hearer will identify – and this is done intuitively – the aspect of an utterance in real speech *only after the whole utterance is produced*.⁷

⁶ An anonymous reviewer argues that in languages like Serbian there are other ways to indicate definiteness in the absence of articles: use of demonstratives, quantifiers, specifying adjectival constructions, etc. This is true but our task here is to show what happens when such devices are *absent* in certain grammatically correct sentences or types of sentences in verbal-aspect languages without articles such as Serbian and Russian. We are also launching a conjecture – in need of future research, that word-order semantico-syntactic patterns and mechanisms may turn out to be key to understanding how definiteness and indefiniteness are explicated in languages with no articles.

⁷ It is common knowledge that native speakers of compositional-aspect languages without special linguistic knowledge have no idea what perfectivity-imperfectivity is. However, when given appropriate examples, they start to grasp why, for example, *John drank a beer* is a perfective situation, while *John drank beer* is an imperfective one. This means

Furthermore, the identification of the aspect of a sentence/clause with three situation-participant NPs in the use of biaspectual verbs in verbal-aspect languages turns out to be different in the different verbal-aspect languages. In Bulgarian and Greek the presence of a definite article provides the necessary conditions for classifying the relevant sentences as belonging to one of the two aspect schemata built by Verkuyl. In cases of a leak/leaks, its/their recognition by the hearer will deploy the relevant sentence in Verkuyl's imperfective schema; conversely, the absence of a leak/leaks will classify the relevant sentence as perfective.

It is worth asking what implications the two clear circumstances above can have for linguistic research. The circumstances are: (i) an easy and immediate identification of the aspect of a sentence/clause in verbal-aspect languages; (ii) a very complex identification of the aspect of a sentence/clause in compositional-aspect languages. The two circumstances have significant and far-reaching implications for both theoretical and applied linguistics. One of these implications for both fields is that more research is needed for a better understanding of how aspect is recognized in real speech in compositional-aspect languages – from a theoretical and a practical point of view. Another very important one is the necessity for research directed towards the mechanisms of explicating values such as indefiniteness and definiteness in verbal-aspect languages without a definite article. As has already been demonstrated, there are two modern European languages featuring simultaneously verbal aspect and a definite article: Bulgarian, Greek. As shown in this paper and in previous publications, the identification of aspect at the sentence/clause level in cases of verbal aspectual ambivalence (biaspectuality) in these two languages is radically different from those verbal-aspect languages that have no articles, such as Serbian or Russian. Among other things, this points to a necessity to distinguish between types of verbal-aspect languages in terms of other grammatical subdomains in them, in this case nominal determination.

And lastly, the analysis has demonstrated that word order must also be investigated in the following very important direction. It can hardly be treated as accidental that, on the one hand, verbal-aspect languages have a free word order that allows the identification of the aspect of a sentence to be effectuated from the very beginning of a sentence. On the other hand, free word order is obviously relevant to the explication of

that they *can intuit* and obviously *always intuit* the difference between perfectivity and imperfectivity when confronted with sentences like these two.

the values of definiteness and indefiniteness of NPs. When a language has verbal aspect (the Slavic languages, Georgian), it tends not to have articles or at least not to have a regular pattern of a definite and an indefinite article (it may have a definite article only – Greek, Bulgarian). Conversely, when a language has a regular pattern of a definite and an indefinite article (English, the other modern Germanic languages, etc.), it lacks verbal aspect. Thus, two questions begging answers and mutually dependent are the following.

First, why does English – along with many other languages, have a definite and an indefinite article, when numerous languages can do without grammatical entities of this kind – burdening the mind of the native speaker and the foreign learner alike? This question was given an answer a long time ago: because English lacks aspect in verbs and there exists an inverse relationship across languages of markers of boundedness in verbs and nouns (Kabakčiev 2000: Chapter 7). But the recognition of this significant cross-language interdependence is still rare in the literature – see it in, e.g., Abraham and Leiss (2012: 326). And as a result, in view of the large diversity of languages around the world, numbering thousands, it remains understudied typologically, hence not sufficiently representative, embracing mainly European languages.

Second, if we take it that definiteness and indefiniteness are important semantic and pragmatic values for *any* natural language, *exactly how* are these values explicated in languages such as Serbian, Russian, almost all the other Slavic languages and Georgian? And isn't the free word-order observed in them instrumental for revealing the way definiteness and indefiniteness are effectuated in such languages and in language in general? This question is entirely left for future research. But it is our belief as authors that studies of word order across languages can open up larger vistas for a future adequate description of the mechanisms for explicating definiteness and indefiniteness and similar values – specificity, genericity, etc., particularly in verbal-aspect languages with no articles.

Division of labor. Kabakčiev is responsible for the correct presentation of the Slavic data. Dimitrova is responsible for the correct presentation of the Greek data. The authors are equally responsible for the correct presentation of the overall theoretical model.

Acknowledgements. We would like to express our gratitude to: Vesna Bulatović and Elka Hristova for their help with the Serbian and Russian data, respectively; the reviewers for their very reasonable standpoints; the editors for their kind assistance.

References

- Abraham, W. and E. Leiss (2012). The Case Differential: Syntagmatic versus Paradigmatic Case – Its Status in Synchrony and Diachrony. *Transactions of the Philological Society*, 110(3), 316–341.
- Binnick, R. I. (1991). *Time and the Verb A Guide to Tense and Aspect*. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Brinton, L. J. (1988). *The Development of English Aspectual Systems: Aspectualizers and Post-Verbal Particles*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bulatović, V. (2013). Modern Theories of Aspect and Serbian EL2 Learners. *Belgrade English Language and Literature Studies* 5(1), 65–79.
- Bulatović, V. (2020). Thinking for Speaking in the Right Aspect – On Whether Modern English Grammars Can Do More. *Revista Española de Lingüística Aplicada/Spanish Journal of Applied Linguistics (RESLA/SJAL)* 33(2), 384–415. <<https://doi.org/10.1075/resla.18007.bul>>
- Bulatović, V. (2022). Aspect Semantics and ESL Article Use. *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language (IRAL)* 60(2), 491–521. <<https://doi.org/10.1515/iral-2019-0016>>
- Dahl, Ö. (1985). *Tense and Aspect Systems*. Oxford/New York: Basil Blackwell.
- Dimitrova, D. (2021). Aspect Coercion in Greek Aorist and Perfect Verb Forms. In: D. Papadopoulou et al. (eds.), *Studies in Greek Linguistics* 41. Thessaloniki: Institute of Modern Greek Studies, 45–53.
- Dimitrova, D. and K. Kabakčiev (2021). Compositional and Verbal Aspect in Greek: the Aorist-Imperfect Distinction and the Article-Aspect Interplay. *Athens Journal of Philology* 8(3), 181–206. <<https://doi.org/10.30958/ajp.8-3-2>>
- Kabakčiev, K. (1984). The Article and the Aorist-Imperfect Distinction in Bulgarian: an Analysis Based on Cross-Language “Aspect” Parallelisms. *Linguistics* 22(5), 643–672.
- Kabakčiev, K. (2000). *Aspect in English: A “Common-Sense” View of the Interplay between Verbal and Nominal Referents*. Dordrecht: Kluwer. <<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-015-9355-7>>

- Kabakčiev, K. (2019). On the History of Compositional Aspect: Vicissitudes, Issues, Prospects. *Athens Journal of Philology* 6(3), 201–224. <<https://doi.org/10.30958/ajp.6-3-4>>
- Kabakčiev, K. (2020). Two Major Manifestations of Compositional Aspect in Bulgarian. *Studia Philologica Universitatis Velikotarnovenssis* 39(1), 115–125.
- Kabakčiev, K. (2021a). Compositional Disambiguation of Biaspectuality in Languages with Verbal Aspect: on Russian and Bulgarian Data. *Atiner's Conference Paper Series*, No LNG2021-2723, 1–23.
- Kabakčiev, K. (2021b). Mapping Temporal Features between Nominals and Verbs in English and the Article-Aspect Interplay Diachronically. *Belgrade English Language and Literature Studies*, 13(1), 29–57. <<https://doi.org/10.18485/bells.2021.13.2>>
- Kabakčiev, K. (2023). After Verkuyl's Discovery Aspect is No Longer a Mystery, but Aspectology Needs a Reform. Review Article: Henk Verkuyl, The Compositional Nature of Tense, Mood and Aspect. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022. *Athens Journal of Philology* 10(3), 247–274. <<https://doi.org/10.30958/ajp.10-3-4>>
- Kabakčiev, K. and D. Dimitrova (2023). How to Teach Compositional Aspect on Verbal-Aspect Languages Data: Biaspectuality in Bulgarian and Greek. *International Journal for Multilingual Education* 33.
- Miller, J. (2002). *An Introduction to English Syntax*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Shabashvili, G. and K. Kabakčiev (2021). Verbal Aspect vis-à-vis Compositional: a Typological Case Study of Georgian, against Russian and English Data. *Studies in Greek Linguistics* 42. Thessaloniki: 375–384.
- Vendler, Z. (1957). Verbs and Times. *The Philosophical Review* 66, 143–160.
- Verkuyl, H. (1972). *On the Compositional Nature of the Aspects*. Dordrecht: Reidel. <<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-2478-4>>
- Verkuyl, H. (1993). *A Theory of Aspectuality. The Interaction between Temporal and Atemporal Structure*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Verkuyl, H. (2022). *The Compositional Nature of Tense, Mood and Aspect*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Vounchev, B. (2007). *Aspektialnite karakteristiki v novogratskiya ezik – sredstva za izrazyavane i semantika*. Sofia: Sofia University Press.

Received: 15 September 2023

Accepted for publication: 2 October 2023

Nenad Tomović*
University of Belgrade
Faculty of Philology
Belgrade, Serbia

WHAT ARE PSEUDO-ANGLICISMS AND HOW CAN WE DEFINE THEM? **

Abstract

Although it is a well-known fact that many languages borrow words and phrases from English, there are also many words coined from English elements that do not exist in varieties of English used by native speakers. These words are described as anglicisms in a broader sense, but since they are created by speakers of other languages, contain English elements, but do not appear in English, they are often referred to as pseudo-anglicisms. Pseudo-anglicisms differ across languages in terms of how they are formed and how they are defined by local linguists. It is possible to say that pseudo-anglicisms are often compounds, but according to various linguists, some languages also use derivation, semantic shift, or other processes to create them. In this paper, we will analyze different types of words described as pseudo-anglicisms in several European languages and attempt to provide a comprehensive definition based on their common features.

Key words: anglicisms, pseudo-anglicisms, borrowing, languages in contact

English is often referred to as a global language due to its influence and widespread use around the world. Its impact is evident in many languages,

* E-mail address: nenad.tomovic@fil.bg.ac.rs

** This paper was originally presented at the *English Language & Literature Studies: Modern Perspectives and Beyond* conference, which took place on October 20-21, 2023, at the Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade.

which makes it a major donor language. Words or phrases borrowed from English are usually called anglicisms. Although some authors include calques from English under this term, for the purposes of this paper, we will adhere to the definition which is limited to English or English-based words and phrases.

This paper will focus on a particular group of anglicisms – pseudo-anglicisms, also known as false anglicisms. These words or phrases consist of English elements, but do not exist in varieties of English used by native speakers. However, this definition is meant to introduce this concept, it is not definitive, and it is important to emphasize that many authors offer different definitions of pseudo-anglicisms.

Pseudo-anglicisms are coined by speakers of other languages whose proficiency in English is often limited, but still sufficient to create a new word from English elements (Furiassi 2010: 60-61) because English holds a prestigious status in their communities.

We can start by providing a simple but often cited definition of pseudo-anglicisms in German, which are described as German neologisms composed of English elements (Duckworth 1977: 54). Another definition of the same concept in German linguistics states that pseudoanglicism “describes the phenomenon that occurs when RL [receptor language] uses lexical elements of the SL [source language] to create a neologism in the RL that is unknown in the SL” (Onysko 2007: 52).

In the case of Russian, where pseudo-anglicisms are also used, we can cite a definition provided by Dyakov: “Pseudo-anglicisms are understood as: a) units borrowed from the English language by another language that have a different meaning than in the source language and are used in contexts and situations in which they are never used in English; b) Russian word formations created by using a combination of English morphemes or imitating the English word’s form or its phonetic appearance¹” (Дьяков 2012: 115).

When describing pseudo-anglicisms in Serbo-Croatian, Filipović (1986: 193), defines them as “words or expressions composed of elements of English origin, (i.e., anglicisms), but the whole they form is not taken from English because it does not exist in it”. The author concludes that they are formed in only three ways, which include composition, derivation, and ellipsis (Filipović 1986: 194). In the case of the same language, Prčić (2023: 208) states that pseudo-anglicisms are “English words and affixes combined in some other or third language”.

According to Furiassi (2010: 34), who focused on pseudo-anglicisms in Italian, “a false Anglicism may be defined as a word or idiom that is recognizably English in its form (spelling, pronunciation, morphology, or at least one of the three), but is accepted as an item in the vocabulary of the receptor language even though it does not exist or is used with a conspicuously different meaning in English“. Furiassi (2010: 38-39) went on to divide Italian pseudo-anglicisms into eight categories based on the processes of their formation: autonomous compounds (*recordman* = record holder), autonomous derivatives (*footing* = jogging), compound ellipses (*basket* = basketball), clippings (*happy end* = happy ending), semantic shifts (*mister* = trainer or coach in sports), eponyms (*pullman* = bus), toponyms (*new jersey* [sic!] = type of median barrier which separates lanes in highways) and generic trademarks (*Autogrill* = motorway restaurant).

Furiassi’s categorization seems to have become widely accepted among linguists interested in pseudo-anglicisms, but it cannot be applied to other languages without adaptation. In the case of Serbo-Croatian, an attempt to adapt this categorization was made just four years after the publication of Furiassi’s book. These categories are slightly different from Furiassi’s, and were developed by Savić (2014), but some of them were not substantiated with examples. Savić (2014: 472) introduces thirteen categories: autonomous compounds (*golman* = goalkeeper), autonomous derivatives (*fejslifting* = facelift), compound ellipses (*koktel* = cocktail party), clippings (*hepiend* = happy ending), toponyms (*teksas* = denim), eponyms (*martinke* = Dr Martens boots), generic trademarks (*starke* = Converse All Stars sneakers), autonomous compounds with Serbian suffixes (*striptizeta* = stripper), autonomous derivatives with Serbian endings (*barbika* = Barbie doll), clippings with Serbian endings (*bokserice* = boxer shorts), clippings with a Serbian translation (*info tačka* = info point), blends (*youniverse*; the author does not provide the meaning of this word in Serbian), and incorrectly spelled anglicisms that are consistently used in that incorrect form (examples in the cited paper are not clear).

In the case of Russian, Szabolcs (2018: 59) offers six categories: compounds (*бизнес-леди* = businesswoman), derivatives (*автостоп* = hitchhiking), ellipses (*паркинг* = parking lot), clippings (*хеппи-энд* = happy ending), semantic shifts (*олдтаймер* = classic or vintage car), and trademarks (*скотч* = adhesive tape).

German pseudo-anglicisms, i.e. words defined as such by the cited authors, can also be described in terms of Furiassi’s categories, and we

will present a model offered by Knospe (2015), which was published in a volume edited by Furiassi himself. In line with other German linguists, Knospe divides pseudo-anglicisms into three categories – morphological, semantic and lexical, which are in turn described using an adapted version originally developed by Furiassi (2010). Morphological pseudo-anglicisms comprise compound ellipses (*Basecap* = baseball cap) and clippings (*Happy End* = happy ending), but it is important to mention that the former category is rare in German (Knospe 2015: 109). Apart from that, there are some other pseudo-anglicisms which cannot be described using the original version of Furiassi's categorization, such as *Profi* (which refers to a professional and is a clipping with the diminutive suffix *-i*), or *Pulli* (= pullover), while *Smoking* (= tuxedo), which involves compound ellipsis and a semantic modification (Knospe 2015: 110).

Semantic pseudo-anglicisms are described rather vaguely in terms of Furiassi's categories. Although examples include words such as *Handy* (= cell phone), *Oldtimer* (= classic car), *kicken* (= to play association football) and the like, the reason for not using Furiassi's categories is in the fact that some examples from the German corpus are not transparent in terms of etymology (Knospe 2015: 113).

Lexical pseudo-anglicisms include autonomous compounds (*Dressman* = male model) and autonomous derivatives (*Shooting* = photo shoot) (Knospe 2015: 114-115).

Even after a brief examination of words described as pseudo-anglicisms in several languages, it is possible to notice that they do not share the same morphological, lexical, or semantic features. It seems difficult, if not impossible, to devise a set of categories that would include all of them and could be universally applied.

Let us now analyze some of the cited definitions of pseudo-anglicisms more closely to see how they are perceived among linguists.

Duckworth's view that pseudo-anglicisms in German are neologisms composed of English elements (Duckworth 1977: 54) is correct in the sense that they include English elements coined by German speakers (or speakers of any other language if the definition is taken universally), but focusing on neologisms narrows down the concept of pseudo-anglicisms and does not describe their real nature. A neologism is a new lexeme which has not gained wide acceptance, and describing pseudo-anglicisms as neologisms does not reflect the fact that many pseudo-anglicisms have become widely

accepted and fully integrated into many languages, e.g. *Talkmaster*, which refers to a talk show host in German.

Onysko's definition reiterates that pseudo-anglicisms are neologisms and adds they are unknown to speakers of the source language, although they consist of its elements (Onysko 2007: 52). Although this author provides a better definition, it seems that their "newness" is still perceived as a distinctive feature. We can agree that pseudo-anglicisms are neologisms when they appear for the first time, but it is not necessary to emphasize this fact since every new word in any language is a neologism by definition, while its status can evolve over time.

The meaning of pseudo-anglicisms is also of importance. In some the definitions provided in the preceding sections, their meaning is described as different from the meaning in the source language (Дьяков 2012: 115; Furiassi 2010: 34), although many linguists, including those whose works are not cited, generally agree about that. To be more precise, Furiassi's definition of pseudo-anglicisms includes a "*conspicuously* different meaning" [italics added by N.T.], which indicates that a change in meaning does not always mean that a word is necessarily a pseudoanglicism. Even typical anglicisms that can be found in many languages, like *football*, *link* or *sport* usually retain just one sememe, while some anglicisms can even acquire additional meanings. For example, the Serbian anglicism *kauboj* can denote both a cowboy and a rough man whose manners are bad. In line with the previous definitions, we might hastily conclude that *kauboj* is both an anglicism and pseudoanglicism, which is not the case because this word acquired a new meaning which can easily be associated with the cowboy stereotype. There are no Serbian linguists who wrote about pseudo-anglicisms in Serbian and consider *kauboj* to be a pseudoanglicism.

Although semantic shifts are common, it would be useful to mention some pseudo-anglicisms and show how (in)significant these shifts can be. On the one hand, pseudo-anglicisms like *oldtimer* (= classic car in several languages), *dres* (Polish: tracsuit; Serbian: sports uniform) or *camping* (= campsite in several languages) retain an association with their original meanings in English. On the other hand, the Italian *mister* (= sports coach) is an example of semantic shift which is difficult to explain. Somewhere in between these two examples is the German word *Handy*, which refers to a cell phone, while the association can only be assumed; Knospe (2015: 114) mentions *handy* (adjective), *hand-held phone* or *portable handset* as potential sources. According to Gottlieb and Furiassi (2015: 18), "there

is no such thing as interlingual synonymy; having settled in a different lexicological context, with differing semantic distinctions and overlaps, no imported word is able to carry its foreign semantic field and network with it into a new language". Although the authors do not admit that this statement undermines their understanding of pseudo-anglicisms, it can still be said that semantic changes in the meaning of a word do not necessarily make that word a pseudoanglicism. Regardless of certain examples whose meaning is not easily associated with the English model, such as *mister* (= coach; Italian) or *new jersey* (= median barrier; Italian), most words that are described as pseudoanglicisms have more or less clear origins and their meaning can often be understood or at least inferred.

Apart from the semantic shifts of the forms which already exist in English, as is the case with those in the previous paragraph, there are two groups of pseudo-anglicisms which belong to Furiassi's categories termed compound clippings and ellipses, such as *parking* (= parking lot), *basket* (= basketball) or *happy end* (= happy ending), which are used in several languages. Although the English forms underwent morphological changes, it is possible to assume that some of these lexemes may also have undergone a semantic shift. If the creators of pseudo-anglicisms have at least some knowledge of English, as stated above, they may have decided to use *parking* as a lexeme with an extension of meaning. It is also possible to assume that *happy end* lost the *-ing* form because the creator was aware of its purpose in English and its redundancy in their language, but naturally, this is not an example of a semantic shift. We can also add that certain morphological processes, such as clipping, occur in English, such as *exam* (= examination) or *gator* (= *alligator*), but these words are still English. Thus, it would be possible to say that compound clippings and ellipses should not be termed pseudo-anglicisms.

Other categories of pseudo-anglicisms vary across languages, and the previously cited authors used Furiassi's categories in slightly modified versions which would suit the languages they describe. Since it is impossible to analyze each and every example or category, we will try to highlight the most interesting examples. Before doing that, it is important to emphasize that other categories are based on various morphological and derivational processes specific for each language and that it is not possible to apply them universally.

We can begin with eponyms like *pullman* (= bus; Italian), *martinke* (= Dr Martens boots; Serbian), toponyms, e.g. *new jersey* (= median

barrier; Italian) or *teksas* (= denim; Serbian) and generic trademarks such as *Autogrill* (= motorway restaurant; Italian), *starke* (= Converse All Stars sneakers; Serbian), *скотчи* (= adhesive tape; Russian) or *džip* (= SUV, off-road vehicle; Serbian). It is obvious that *pullman*, *new jersey*, *teksas*, *Autogrill* and *jeep* simply underwent semantic change, while *martinke* and *starke* also underwent morphological adaptation. Except in the last two examples, all the other words have simply undergone semantic shift, while the categorization of *martinke* and *starke* should have been more precise since not all the changes were carefully noted.

There are some other examples that deserve our attention. Serbian pseudo-anglicisms, as described by Savić (2014: 472), include autonomous derivatives (*fejslifting* = facelift), autonomous compounds with Serbian suffixes (*striptizeta* = stripper), autonomous derivatives with Serbian endings (*barbika* = Barbie doll), clippings with Serbian endings (*bokserice* = boxer shorts), and clippings with a Serbian translation (*info tačka* = info point). The first one, *fejslifting*, includes an English morpheme (-ing), and it is a noun in Serbian, while *facelifting* can be used as a gerund in English, i.e. it can function as a noun in many cases, e.g. *reasons for facelifting*, *the art of facelifting* etc. The next example, *striptizeta*, actually consists of the word *striptiz* (= striptease) and *-eta*, which is a noun-forming suffix, although it is not very frequent in Serbian. While *info tačka* is simply a hybrid anglicism, *barbika* and *bokserice* are similar to *Pulli* (= pullover) and *Profi* (= professional), which are used in German. Since clipping has already been explained, we can just add that in these cases there are no significant semantic changes which would deserve any special attention. In *A Dictionary of European Anglicisms*, Görlach (2005) seems reluctant to classify certain words cited here, such as *parking* (= parking lot), *basket* (= basketball) or *camping* (= campsite), as pseudo-anglicisms. The author also describes certain words, like *Pulli* or *Profi*, as morphological adaptations.

Despite the arguments presented in the preceding paragraphs, we are not claiming that pseudo-anglicisms do not exist, but just that this term needs to be reexamined and refined. Pseudo-anglicisms can be identified in numerous languages, and the following examples will provide a clearer classification of such words.

To begin with, let us look at examples such as *recordman* (= record holder; Italian and French), *go(a)lman* (= goal keeper; several languages), *autostop* (= hitchhiking; several languages), *бизнес-леди*

(= businesswoman; Russian), *Basecap* (= baseball cap; German), *Talkmaster* (= talk show host; German) or *Dressman* (= male model; German). What these words have in common is obvious – they are compounds, there is no semantic shift, and they do not exist in standard English. They consist of two roots or of their replicas which are never combined in English, and which have never existed in English in the given combinations. The examples from the previous paragraphs included semantic shifts in the already existing English words, addition or deletion of morphemes and derivational processes, which also happen within one language. Creating new words from elements of a foreign language, which are never combined in that language is something different and can be described as “pseudo” or “false”. Even though all the words included in this paper (and those in the cited papers) are “unEnglish”, there is a difference in the degree of their “falsehood”, since words which are merely modified, morphologically or semantically, can only be described as adapted. Adaptation of already existing English units is one category, while creation of absolutely new words and new meanings from English elements is another. In other words, there is obviously a terminological issue when describing pseudo-anglicisms. It would therefore be useful to redefine the very terms (both pseudoanglicism and false anglicism) and to introduce a new term, and a category, which might contribute to solving this problem.

Even prominent authors who wrote about pseudo-anglicisms are aware of the problem with the terminology. Gottlieb and Furiassi (2015: 6) state that “ideally a neutral label like *English-based neologism* might replace the commonly used terms false Anglicism and pseudo-Anglicism, the latter of which has been preferred in most scholarly publications”, and even mention other terms, e.g. *creative coinage* or the aforementioned *English-based neologism*, although they admit they use the term *pseudoanglicism* for practical reasons. Apart from that, it is possible to notice that *creative coinage* is too broad, while *English-based neologism* would also be a problem since words which are fully accepted and become a frequently used integral part of another language are no longer neologisms.

We would therefore like to propose a different categorization and terminology. Words which have so far been known as pseudo-anglicisms can be divided into two categories: pseudo-anglicisms, and English-based coinages. In line with the cited definitions, pseudo-anglicisms could be described as words which consist of two English elements, two words or a word and an affix, which are created in a language other than English

by a non-native speaker, whose combination does not exist in any native English variety and does not involve semantic shift because the constituent parts retain their original meanings.

This definition is not very different from the previous ones, but it reduces the number of words that can be described as pseudo-anglicisms. Thus, words like *go(a)lman*, *recordman*, *Talkmaster*, *Dressman* or *footing* remain pseudo-anglicisms. At this point, it is useful to emphasize that the central component of our definition is the absence of semantic change in pseudo-anglicisms because the English elements keep the original meaning. A good example which illustrates this is the Italian word *footing*, which combines the English free morpheme *foot* and *-ing* to create a totally new meaning ('jogging'), and has nothing with the English noun *footing*, which refers to a basis, secure placement of the feet and other things that are in no way associated with jogging.

Other words described as pseudo-anglicisms in this paper are simply English-based coinages. English-based coinages include words like *martinke*, *striptizeta*, *Pulli*, *Profi*, or *bokserice*, which include an English root or base and non-English derivational endings, inflectional endings or affixes. They also include words like *boks meč* (= boxing match), *air-condition* / *erkondišn* (= air conditioning or air conditioner) (examples modified from Filipović 1986: 194) or *happy end*, where *-ing* was deleted. The common feature of these words is that they retain a strong association with the original meaning.

It is also possible to say that English-based coinages are just a subset of common anglicisms which undergo processes that typically occur when a foreign word is adapted. In some cases, the spelling remains the same, while in some it is adapted, which depends on the orthography of each language. While German generally retains the original spelling except for capitalizing the first letter of a noun, anglicisms and pseudo-anglicisms are always transcribed in Russian, sometimes in Serbian and Croatian, and not so often in Italian or French.

Although we have used a relatively small number of languages to illustrate pseudo-anglicisms as a phenomenon, it is still possible to say that the new perspective offered in this paper can be applied to Indo-European languages. Of course, this refers to the revised definition of pseudo-anglicisms, while Furiassi's categories of pseudo-anglicisms could be further adapted. In fact, these categories should be applied to English-based coinages as defined in this text. The adaptation of these categories

should be carefully developed for each language, since it is not always possible to find “pure” categories due to the fact that certain processes can happen concurrently.

Apart from the fact that each language is a unique system, which further exacerbates this problem, it is also important to note that languages are primarily described by their native speakers, who adhere to local linguistic traditions that are not always compatible with one another, which is why certain morphological and derivational processes are sometimes incongruent and cannot be applied universally.

In the end, it would be useful to provide a set of guidelines which would help us determine if a word is a pseudoanglicism and to mention potential flaws in the definition of pseudo-anglicisms we provided.

In order to categorize a word as a pseudoanglicism, the word must:

- not exist in any native variety of English;
- not undergo semantic shift;
- not be an affixed or clipped replica of an English model;
- be coined by a non-native speaker;
- be coined in a language that is not English, and
- consist of two words or of (at least) one word and one affix.

If all the criteria are met, then it is possible to categorize a word as pseudoanglicism. If not, the word is just an anglicism, or an English-based coinage.

The definition of pseudo-anglicisms provided in this paper can be applied generally, but it is difficult to develop a set of criteria that would better describe English-based coinages since national traditions describe morphological processes in different ways. For example, Furiassi (2010: 58) describes *autostop* as an autonomous compound in Italian, whereas the Russian counterpart *автомон* is defined as a derivative in Russian (Janurik 2018: 59).

Finally, it is not always easy to determine if a word is a pseudo-anglicism or an English-based coinage if it is impossible to determine its etymology. In some cases, such as the Italian *footing*, it is known that it comes from *foot*, and that *-ing* was simply added to make it sound English, while it has nothing to do with the English homonym. Without this information, it would be impossible to classify it as pseudoanglicism.

Regardless of the problems mentioned above, it is possible to say that the proposed solutions shed some light on the problems in terminology and classification of pseudo-anglicisms.

References

- Duckworth, D. (1977). Zur terminologischen und systematischen Grundlage der Forschung auf dem Gebiet der englisch-deutschen Interferenz. Kritische Übersicht und neuer Vorschlag. In: *Sprachliche Interferenz. Festschrift für Werner Betz zum 65. Geburtstag*. Tübingen: Niemeyer, 36–56.
- Дьяков, А. И. [Dyakov, A. I.]. (2012). Уровни заимствования англицизмов в русском языке. *Известия Южного федерального университета. Филологические науки* 2012/2, 113–124.
- Filipović, R. (1986). *Teorija jezika u kontaktu*. Zagreb: JAZU/Školska knjiga.
- Furiassi, C. (2010). *False Anglicisms in Italian*. Milano: Polimetrica.
- Görlach, M. 2005. *A Dictionary of European Anglicisms*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gottlieb; H. and C. Furiassi. (2015). Getting to grips with false loans and pseudo- Anglicisms. In: Furiassi, C. and H. Gottlieb. (eds.) *Pseudo-English*. Berlin/Boston/Munich: De Gruyter Mouton, 1–33.
- Janurik, S. (2018). On the registration of pseudo-Anglicisms in modern Russian lexicography. In: *Studia Slavica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 63, 57–66. doi 10.1556/060.2018.63.1.7.
- Knospe, S. (2015). Pseudo-Anglicisms in the language of the contemporary German press. In: Furiassi, C. and H. Gottlieb. (eds.) *Pseudo-English*. Berlin/Boston/Munich: De Gruyter Mouton, 99–122.
- Onysko, A. (2007). *Anglicisms in German*. Berlin/New York: De Gruyter.
- Prčić, T. (2023). *Srpski sa engleskim*. Novi Sad: Filozofski fakultet.
- Savić, M. (2014). Pseudoanglicizmi u srpskom jeziku. In *Jezici i kulture u vremenu i prostoru* III. Novi Sad: Filozofski fakultet, 467–477.

Received: 26 October 2023

Accepted for publication: 10 November 2023

Sofija Stefanović*

University of Belgrade

Faculty of Transport and Traffic Engineering

Belgrade, Serbia

CONCEPTUAL INTEGRATION IN ALTERED CARBON OCCASIONALISMS

Abstract

Since language has to adapt and follow technological advancement, terminology is much different than twenty years ago when *Altered Carbon*, a science fiction novel, was written. This paper explores its occasionalisms through the lens of cognitive linguistics, specifically Fauconnier and Turner's theory of conceptual integration, with the aim of determining the entries' integration network type (simplex, mirror, single-scope, double-scope). Within each, special attention was paid to the recurring blend between the human and the technological. It was assumed and later proven that double-scope is the most frequent network, and that the conceptual meaning of human + machine occurs in every network type, confirming that science fiction requires cognitive blending in order to understand the integration between these frequently reoccurring mental spaces.

Key words: cognitive linguistics, conceptual integration, *Altered Carbon*, science fiction, occasionalisms

1. Introduction

1.1 The study and its aims

In the century that knows nothing if not high technology and its rapid development, we have adapted to the use of new, emerging language

* s.stefanovic@sf.bg.ac.rs; sofstefanovicb2@gmail.com

without a second thought. We have, in fact, become so desensitized to its nuances that expressions such as the ones used in everyday language (and which can even be found below in this paper) – *our brains are hardwired*, or *files and folders of our mental lexicon* – go by undetected, despite their obvious blurred boundaries between the *living* and the *machine*. Not only did the conceptual meaning of the amalgamation between humans and machines gain popularity with the development of technology, but it also flourished in the post-Covid era where almost every aspect of life had to be transformed into virtual.

The constant need for new words as technology advances is even more radical and discernible in the genre of science fiction. Here, the authors need not only to follow technological advancement, but also to invent new words for notions which exist solely in their imagination, otherwise known as *nonce formations* or *occasionalisms*. This setting therefore represents a favorable ground for both novel coinages and the amalgam between the biological and the mechanical.

These contemporary blends were noticed by many linguists, such as Fauconnier and Turner, who interpreted the phenomenon through conceptual integration: “[artificial life] is a dramatic double-scope blend, with one input organized by the frame for a manufactured product, *computer*, and the other organized by the frame *biological virus*. [...] That integration network was rapidly developed to create a much richer category of *computer virus*, with associated categories like *disinfectant*, *vaccine*, *safe interface*, and *computer health maintenance providers*” (2002: 274–5).

The aim of this study is to examine occasionalisms in *Altered Carbon*, a science fiction novel from the beginning of the XXI century (such as *plasma gun*, *tetrameth*, *Real Death*, *Protectorate forces*, *tank flesh*, *cortical stack*), through the lens of Fauconnier and Turner’s four integration network types: simplex, mirror, single-scope, and double-scope, which shall be clearly defined in section 1.3. These conceptual integration networks shall be identified within the sample, and their occurrences shall be quantified. Likewise, another purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that in all integration network types identified and described below, there exists the socio-cultural blend between humans and technology, which manifests itself within the conceptual meaning of the constituents of each respective integration network (*neurachemically speeded vision*, *eleventh body*, *hotel’s memory*, *carbon-reinforced tendons*, etc.).

It is, therefore, assumed that evidence will show that this genre of literature contains human + machine blend at every layer of integration.

Precisely due to the nature of this corpus, and this blurred human-machine distinction in a dystopian, futuristic (and yet almost tangibly close and sociologically relatable) setting, the hypothesis predicted that the double-scope network would be the most frequent one. Another expected outcome was that the simplex integration network would be abundant, purely owing to its defining quality of naming and assigning role values, and qualities to items. All of the aforementioned hypotheses were confirmed.

1.2 Material and Methods

Coincidentally, the same year (2002) Fauconnier and Turner published their integration networks in *The Way We Think*, Richard Morgan first published his novel *Altered Carbon*, which, much like any science fiction novel, is a fertile ground for conceptual integration research due to the expected abundance of novel words and concepts – “The cognitive mechanism of blending can also be found in literary works. As a matter of fact, literature produces a large number of blends, and many of these are of the impossible kind” (Kövecses 2010: 274). The reason for the selection of occasionalisms was their idiosyncrasy and the presumed necessity for engaging the cognitive process of blending. Likewise, language analyses of *Altered Carbon* have yet to be conducted, and as such present a pristine and fertile ground for the exploration of nonce formations. Most comprising elements in the occasionalisms may not be new to the readers, but their blended meaning represents a new concept, whose semantics is unfamiliar to our mental lexicon: “Whereas all abstract and semi-abstract constructions are lexical items, the fully specified forms that arise from these patterns may or may not be stored” (Schlücker 2020: 38).

On the following pages we shall examine the sample of items that have been, and still are, considered occasionalisms, which are identified, predominantly contextually but also morphologically, only within the scope of science fiction, and appear in the novel *Altered Carbon*. The words and multi-word units denoting inexistent notions were carefully selected from the novel, and the ones which made their way into our everyday use were omitted from the sample, since a portion of the concepts made up by Richard Morgan has come into use during global lockdowns (*living virtual*, *virtual psychiatric counselling*, *virtual supermarkets*, *virtual interview*, *virtual practice*). Every individual entry was examined and sorted in accordance with Fauconnier and Turner’s four types of integration

networks, and assigned a value based on these distinct categories defined in the introduction, forming a corpus which shows a list of words and multi-word units restricted to this novel, as well as the integration network they belong to. The corpus was constructed for the purpose of this paper and consists of 888 items in total, which can be used in further research and expanded to show trends in the science fiction register. Corpora is nowadays used in cognitive linguistics increasingly more frequently, since corpora can provide from context a manifold of relevant data for linguists, not only with the potential of storing qualitative data, but also quantifying it, thereby enabling easier statistical analysis (Gries 2014: 280).

Additionally, as it was previously mentioned, the modern blend between the human and the machine is used in its denotative, conceptual meaning now more than ever – we have *virtual meetings*, *internet social gatherings*, *virtual tabletop games*, *online conferences and events*, and *3D museum tours* from the comfort of our homes. Technology has made an impact on the socio-cultural context of our lives, and, as such, it should bring the conceptual meaning of science fiction terms even closer to the present, as hi-tech is becoming necessary for everyday life: “Meanwhile, alien words, technobabble and other SF neologisms are increasingly being incorporated into contemporary discourse” (Shaw 2021: 2). Therefore, in each of the four conceptual integration networks defined by Fauconnier and Turner, examples of this phenomenon are selected and presented as evidence for how widespread the human/machine blend is in this work of science fiction, regardless of the complexity of the integration network.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

Since language is ever-changing, its intricacies challenge language users and researchers to constantly adapt; whether it concerns neologisms and jargon, idiolects, or something as idiosyncratic as occasionalisms, language is inseparable from thought and cognition:

Language, from a psychological perspective, is not simply an expression of human organismic capacity; rather, it is the most important symbolic mediator between developing organism, psychological subjectivity, and culturally evolving surround. It is, in my view, the adequacy with which Cognitive Linguistics addresses this dynamic, processual, relational complex that will be decisive for its lasting disciplinary contribution. (Sinha 2007: 1287)

Certain aspects of meaning had become so subtle that they were undetected even by the most proficient of speakers, and even language theorists according to Fauconnier and Turner, who state that many approaches thus far, which were predominantly analytical, were oblivious to the creativity and the imagination of the semantic construction processes, which happen at the speed of light, completely below the level of consciousness (2002: 15). Fortunately, Cognitive Linguistics provided procedures and techniques which help us keep in mind how our brains are hardwired by using a manifold of different approaches which all have the same language viewpoint and research methodologies in common: “One feature that is shared by all the approaches covered by the umbrella term ‘Cognitive Linguistics’ is that they attempt to ground language description in well-established and well-documented aspects of cognition” (Taylor, Littlemore 2014: 6).

One of the processes that Cognitive Linguistics helped clarify is *conceptual integration*, our mind’s subconscious tendency to combine, extrapolate, and hypothesize: “The essence of the operation is to construct a partial match between inputs, to project selectively from those inputs into a novel ‘blended’ mental space, which then dynamically develops emergent structure” (Fauconnier 2021). The creativity that fuels this process is explicitly obvious in examples of portmanteau words made via the process of morphological blending (1), or even puns (2), because not only do we need language comprehension, but also – basic knowledge of the context where the blends occur enable the aforementioned comprehension. Birdsell emphasized how significant background knowledge and the context of the discourse are, because they combined with the basic cognitive processes provide the reader or listener with the necessary, missing structural elements to complete the blend, like missing pieces of a puzzle (2014: 74).

(1) motel (motor + hotel), smog (smoke + fog), froyo (frozen + yogurt)

(2) What did the prescriptivist owl say? Whom whom.

(Prescriptivism advocates that language should follow strict rules, and ‘whom’ is considered as the correct form when the pronoun is used as an object.)

Nevertheless, one can easily fall into the trap of deeming the most obvious examples of conceptual blending the principal ones, or even the sole representatives. What often seems to go under the proverbial radar is the fact that blending is not merely used to create new words, when need be, or a humorous effect. Without conceptual integration we would

fail to understand many, if not most, mundane expressions, references, collocations, and even compounds. Without the ability to interconnect the files and folders of our mental lexicon, we could not even understand when a reported event took place, since we could not remove someone's account of the story from the present time and place it in a different timeframe: "Human beings go beyond merely imagining stories that run counter to the present story. We can also make connections between different stories, or more generally, between different and conflicting mental spaces" (Turner 2007: 378).

Despite the discrepancy between the available technology in 2002 and the reality imagined by Richard Morgan in *Altered Carbon*, and owing to these cognitive processes, the plethora of blends found in the sample was both imaginable and comprehensible to readers: "People pretend, imitate, lie, fantasize, deceive, delude, consider alternatives, simulate, make models, and propose hypotheses. Our species has an extraordinary ability to operate mentally on the unreal, and this ability depends on our capacity for advanced conceptual integration" (Fauconnier, Turner 2002: 217).

According to Fauconnier and Turner, and hereinafter relevantly for this study, these connections are made below the conscious level, using one of four types of *integration networks*: simplex, mirror, single-scope, and double-scope (2002: 120–135). Simplex networks have fully compatible inputs, e.g., assigning roles to values or naming, such as the type of father in (3). Here we see the compression of a role (father) and the value (whose father) into one, which makes the emergent structure seem so well-blended and renders the integration process subtle. Mirror networks seem compatible because they share a mental space and an organizing frame, but have clashes below the surface – the identified father is not actually the speaker's biological father, despite them defining him as such (4).

(3) Paul is Sally's *father*. Jesus has a mortal *father*.

(4) [to a father-figure] "You are my long-lost *father*."

Unlike them, in single- and double-scope networks, both organizing frames are different, except that in the former one mental space is used to organize the other (5), i.e., the characteristics of one input are projected onto another, thereby personifying them (someone will be taking on the role of someone's father for the day). Unlike in single-scope networks, where the entirety of one frame is projected onto another, in the latter (6) both spaces contribute certain parts to form the blend – parent as a maker combined with something that isn't living and which cannot be fathered.

- (5) “I’ll be your *father* for today.”
- (6) Newton is the *father* of physics. (Fauconnier, Turner 2002: 140–145)

As it is obvious in the examples 3–6 found in Fauconnier and Turner: “Blending is not the mere addition of one existing meaning to another to get their sum. Words by themselves give very little information about the meaning they prompt us to construct” (2002: 146). The fact that a seemingly simple word like *father* can denote a variety of different meanings does indicate that the word in isolation – without context, background, or purpose – gives little insight into its true meaning in a specific context.

In contrast, nonce formations only exist with a particular meaning in a given context, and the science fiction register contains an abundance of them. We define occasionalisms as a word or a multi-word unit with a form and meaning that communicates a specific notion, a word or multi-word unit which has not been used or invented previously, and which can be seen and used in writing or speech only in a novel context over time (Igorevna 2015: 26). The fact that these constructions are necessary for the specific context, but completely redundant in everyday language (since they do not denote anything that exists) makes them an interesting research topic, albeit not too frequent: “However, precisely because they are low-frequency, there is often a lack of authentic data substantiating their use” (Ramonda 2014: 70). The context-dependence of occasionalisms in combination with the dynamic nature of cognitive blending provides clear distinctions into four categories of conceptual integration.

The process of cognitive blending, hence, happens when two different, separate *mental spaces* are merged, which by default do not go together. The aforementioned *input spaces*, which exist independently outside of the blend, are integrated into a singular *generic space*. Ungerer and Schmid give the example of the slogan for marketing a car – *Unleash a Jaguar*, which connects the domain of vehicles with the domain of wild animals and “instructs the readers to simultaneously construct two ‘mental spaces’: a ‘car’ space containing associations like powerful engine, high maximum speed, attractive design, etc.; and a ‘wild animal’ space including associations normally attributed to jaguars, such as their ferocity, speed of running, liveness and elegance” (2006: 3). The *generic space* in this blend would be observing the car as a wild cat, which prompts the *emergent structure* of a powerful, strong, fast, cat-like vehicle: “The emergent structure arises as the result of multiple projections of elements from input mental spaces onto the blended space” (Polak 2017: 33).

Another important notion mentioned in this study is *vital relations*, i.e., associations between the elements of the mental spaces which are connected within the blend (cause-effect, change, part-whole, representation, role, analogy, disanalogy, property, category, intentionality, uniqueness, time, space, identity, similarity). These elements are compressed in order to achieve one of the network types listed above by linking input mental spaces and compressing their relations inside the blend itself (Fauconnier, Turner: 92–3).

The mental spaces which contain vital relations may also have concrete *organizing frames*. Frames are categorized structures that consist of all the meaning units with a mutual connection: “Conceptual categories are not only linked in memory with attributes associated with the category members, but also embedded in a huge conceptual network of more or less firmly stored knowledge structures” (Schmid, Ungerer 2011: 613). These frames help better understand the nature of the blend by specifying the nature of the pertaining activities, events, participants, and agents within the organizing frame (Fauconnier, Turner: 104) and are particularly important for the single-scope integration network type.

Since it is our job to scrutinize language phenomena, we must, therefore, backtrack our cognitive processes in search for the *modus operandi* of conceptual integration: “Because we have no awareness of the imaginative work we have done, we hardly even recognize that there was a problem to be solved” (Fauconnier, Turner: 12).

There have been few studies which dealt with the nature of language invented by science fiction writers. Some explore language typology (Shaw 2021), descriptive grammar of invented languages as a whole (Adams 2011), or stylistics (Mandala 2010). None of them, however, scrutinized the conceptual integrations hidden within, especially not through the prism of Fauconnier and Turner’s integration network types, nor did they explore the language of *Altered Carbon*, which has been mostly of interest for literature studies, despite its potential for the exploration of nonce constructions.

2. Research results

After an overview of statistical data in order from most to least abundant in quantity, this section shall cover each integration network, in order

published by Fauconnier and Turner (from simplex, mirror, to single-scope, and ultimately double-scope), alongside several of their most representative examples (and some of the collocations and compounds they produced) extracted from this corpus. Special focus will be placed in each section on those items containing the conceptual meaning which blends the human and the technological, and the integration network they belong to shall be explained in more detail in these particular examples.

Out of the mentioned 888 items in the corpus, it was discovered that there were 422 instances of double-scope networks, which constitute almost half of the sample – 47.5%. The following most numerous network was simplex, with 315 occurrences comprising just over a third (35.5%) of the sample. It is followed by the single-scope network at 15.5%, i.e., 138 cases. The smallest number of entries belonged to the mirror network – only 13 examples making up 1.5% total.

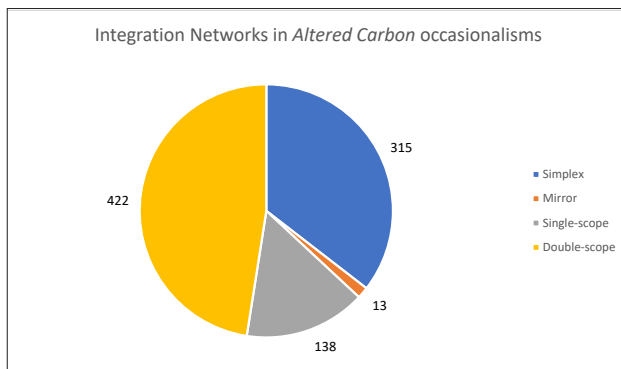


Figure 1: Altered Carbon Occasionalisms: Data Pie Chart

2.1 Simplex

The first integration network type we defined was the *simplex* network, which was shown to be the second most abundant. As explained hitherto, this type has multiple common functions, such as assigning values to roles and naming, which are also visible in the sample. The corpus has a manifold of unique names – of institutions and known locations in the universe (7), science and arts (8), plants and animals (9), weapons (10), and even chemical substances and materials (11), all depicting the simplex network. Aside from the proper nouns and collocations including them,

we also see idiosyncratic collocations which are either unique in the given semantic context, or present an unusual word choice (12). In all the listed examples, to somebody who knows the context these specifications would be as seamless as the previously listed example ‘Sally’s father’. Namely, if we mentioned the inexistent Glimmer System to somebody from the novel’s setting, they would be able to identify which planetary system we are referring to, as opposed to, e.g., the Solar System. They would also be able to conjure up a mental image of a swamp panther, or illuminium, and have attitudes based on someone’s political identification as a Quellist (in-context similar to a disestablishmentarian, or a rebel) or an Envoy, whose characteristics they possess (their wisdom or reflexes). Therefore, all of the constructions below assign values to roles, as simplex networks should.

- (7) Envoy Corps (military unit), Harlan’s World (a planet), Glimmer System
- (8) Empathist work (art movement), Quellist philosopher (anti-eternal life philosopher)
- (9) Songspire tree, bellaweed, mirrorwood, martyrweed, swamp panther (all types of plants and animals unknown to us)
- (10) Philips squeeze gun, plasma gun, frag rifle, shard gun (weapons that shoot special ammunition)
- (11) Tetrameth, betathanatine (both psychoactive substances), illuminium (type of metal)
- (12) Envoy intuition/wisdom (traits belonging to an Envoy)

Interestingly and similarly to Fauconnier and Turner’s example, in certain contexts simplex networks also specify what might in others seem redundant. In a religious surrounding, the example “mortal father” (Fauconnier, Turner 2002: 141) is essential for comprehension, much like certain specifications are required in a science-fiction setting (13). By the same token, the structure consisting of modifiers in front of newly-coined nouns also falls under the umbrella of simplex networks, despite the fact that those nouns themselves might belong to a different integration network entirely (14). In the stated example, both nouns in *italics* fall under the double-scope network domain, but by inserting a modifier in front of them, which serves the purpose of assigning values, the author changed the relationship between the constituents.

- (13) Real Death (after which you cannot be reincarnated, as opposed to *sleeve death*), ground car (the only type of car people can own outside of a sci-fi setting)
- (14) Direct *needlecast* (method of transferring your consciousness to another body), military/cheap *neurachem* (specifies the type of upgrade to the nervous system)

In spite of the fact that in the simplex network there are no clashes between the domains, and therefore the humane cannot clash with the technological, there are still occurrences where the constituents themselves contain both human and machine in one notion (15). In the first example, we see the typical representation of the simplex network – X is the Y of Z, whereby the noun *fear*, an inherent characteristic of living beings, is assigned an identifying component – *of sleeving*, which is the process of changing the denotational casing in which our consciousness is stored, i.e., the physical body. Therefore, it is an optimal example for the conceptual meaning sought after in this paper. The following two examples in (15) also denote the same phenomenon, where Richard Morgan blended the organic (*vision, enzyme*) with artificial. *Neurachemically speeded vision* is indeed an identification of a certain type of vision, which assigns the item to the simplex network, but it also supports the recurring conceptual meaning of technologically augmented humans.

- (15) Fear of sleeving, neurachem-speeded vision, enzyme-triggered explosive

2.2 Mirror

The smallest group in the corpus was shown to be the *mirror* network, with as few as 13 occurrences, which is characterized by the constituents sharing a mental space. Since there are no visible clashes of meaning on the surface, this network has a subtle variable which compresses one of the vital conceptual relations in the perceived occasionalism. Some compress the spatial relation, so in the following example (16) the common noun *colony* in *colony years* does not refer to a country or a territory, but rather the entire planet, but otherwise the organizing frame is the same. Likewise, there are examples in which we find certain analogy or disanalogy with notions that are not within the scope of occasionalisms. Some of them have the exact same structure as existing terms, but the clash is even less conspicuous.

Despite the first impression, they do not refer to a single country serving the role of protector, but rather an interplanetary organization protecting entire planets or systems (17), or to an advertisement broadcast loudly in the middle of the street, but instead projected directly into a person's head and consciousness (18) – however, the organizing frame remains.

The majority of examples from this sample, however, compress the relation of time (19), since the characters (particularly richer ones) are given the option of eternal life through countless incarnations. Despite this being the least abundant network in our sample, even here the conceptual meaning of human + technology is evident in the majority of entries. What would otherwise belong to the simplex network (30 years of marriage, etc.), due to the clash in our cognition within the scope of time, is attributed to the mirror network. The examples denote technology increasing the quantity of human experience, giving people a machine-like longevity. Substantiating this denotation, there are few examples that portray a science-fiction equivalent to a mundane collocation or expression, such as *mind and body* (20). Owing to technology, our minds are transformed into denotational stacks, and our bodies become casings.

- (16) Colony years (a colony can be an entire planet)
- (17) Protectorate forces, Protectorate generals (not a country, but an organization performing the same function)
- (18) Street [broad]cast advertisement (advertisement broadcast in the street, but into a person's consciousness directly)
- (19) 250 years of marriage, 200-year dislocation, 61 children, [his] three and a half centuries, eleventh body (all numbers unreachable by ordinary human beings)
- (20) Stack and sleeve (*mind and body*)

2.3 Single-scope

Single-scope network is the third most frequent network (15.5%) and it is used for source-target metaphors when one frame takes over for the second, differing frame. In spite of comprising less than a fifth of our sample, quite a few examples are recurring, and extremely productive. One of the blends is the name of a narcotic – *Reaper*. The word in itself presents an example of conceptual integration: “The Grim Reaper resides in the blend but cannot reside in any of the input spaces” (Fauconnier, Turner 2002: 293),

but here the writer took the existing concocted frame, and projected its qualities to a drug which induces near-death experiences by slowing down organic functions almost to a halt. This is also an example how an initial double-scope blend such as the Grim Reaper can be used as grounds for a single-scope network, despite it not being the most productive (21).

Single-scope networks in the sample also showed cases of frames used typically for other living organisms being projected onto people. Such is the case with *tank*, where people are kept, grown, and nurtured, much like other species, such as fish, or reptiles (22).

- (21) Reaper, riding the Reaper, Reaper cocktail (a psychoactive sedative)
- (22) Tank grown, tank nutrients, waiting tank, tank flesh (Used for describing organic bodies without a mind or a chip containing human consciousness, which are grown for the purposes of being used as a spare, in case the main one gets damaged.)

We shall see that the double-scope network frequently portrays blurred distinctions between people and objects due to the mix of its separate frames, but the single-scope network often tends to project qualities of physical objects (from one frame) onto people (the other frame). One of those occurrences is *storage*. All the collocations and compounds might exist outside of this particular context, except that the frame of *storage* has a modified purpose – from being used for objects to being used for keeping chips with human consciousness in it. It is even used as a kind of prison, or a punishment for certain crimes, where the individual is just removed from the world and detained without a physical body, like in a deep sleep (23). In addition to this, we notice a second example of using a physical object to mold humanity – the most important occurrence of *stack* may fall under the domain of double-scope networks (the name of the chip that holds an individual's consciousness and personality), but since it is also used in the novel for storing data, this method used in computing is also applied to create the blend (24).

- (23) Storage, storage facility, monitored police storage, re-storage (places where human consciousness is stored, either by police or themselves voluntarily)
- (24) Entertainment stack, on/off stack, colonial stack, central data stack (Computer servers where information is stored, or which serve a specific purpose.)

Since the denotational cross between humans and technology is scrutinized in this paper, it is important to note how the nature of this network (where one frame is used to organize the other) limits us to either human characteristics being projected onto machines, or machine features being attributed to humans. The only case of the former is seen below, where a human concept such as a memory of events is personalized in an artificial intelligence hotel (25). However, the latter was proven more productive in our sample. One of the cases of this conceptual meaning is *freight*, except that under the umbrella of single-scope networks in this novel, it is usually used in the form of a verb to refer to the act of the human personality being transmitted into the consciousness chip (26). Interestingly, one of the most numerous instances is the word *sleeve*, where the author transplanted the notion of sleeves being the container of an item important enough to require protection, and used it in a science-fiction context. Here, it refers to the physical body in which our consciousness is placed, or re-placed, or misplaced, as well as the qualities of that temporary body, and verbs surrounding the process (27). In these occurrences, the mental space of a disposable sleeve (a word often used in collocation with pieces of technology that it contains) is projected onto a human and organizes the frame for the blend. This objectification of the human body enables the fictional humans to live longer, replacing their parts as if they were a machine, and, ultimately, achieving the conceptual meaning of the blend we took interest in.

- (25) Hotel's memory (the entirety of the hotel is run by one AI)
- (26) Freight, re-freighted, freighted off (the process of transferring consciousness)
- (27) Newly sleeved, synthetic/artificial sleeves, re-sleeving, spare sleeve, sleeve transporter, alternate sleeves, temporary re-sleeve, sleeve adjustment

2.4 Double-scope

Lastly, the double-scope integration network, which boasts the largest quantity of items, encompasses instances that take inputs from both frames in order to create a blend. What is interesting is that all examples listed below are, as predicted, a manifestation of the conceptual overlap between humans and machines. They combine features from the domain

of technology with those taken from living creatures in order to create a separate mental space from the amalgamation.

As mentioned in the previous section, *stack* is often seen in an IT context, but it is also part of the blend that signifies the object where the human consciousness is stored, which is surgically inserted into a body, and therefore can be removed and kept for any amount of time. Our brains are transmuted into microchips, denoting a perfect blend of living and technological (28). Likewise, a near-synonym would be a *digital human*, so the following examples include some (but not all) variations of our computerized backup equivalents in *Altered Carbon* (29).

- (28) Cortical stack, stack incision (the universal consciousness chip all humans have), stacked ancestors (ancestors whose bodies are not alive, but their consciousness is), holding stack (police detainment for chips), stacks on ice (chips which are without a body for some reason)
- (29) Digital Human Freight (DHF), freighted minds, digitized minds, digitizing humans, DHF soldiers, digitized rich folks (backed-up humans)

In the section about simplex networks, examples *direct needlecass* and *military neurachem* were mentioned. Much alike our Grim Reaper example, these simplex networks contain another, different integration network, and in both cases, it is the double-scope. The former refers to downloading the digital consciousness and its backups and updates remotely and wirelessly (30), and the latter to technology used to artificially improve the human capabilities (31).

- (30) Needlecass download, hyperspacial/interstellar needlecass, buy a needlecass, needlecass authorization, update needlecass (consciousness download, backup, and update)
- (31) Neurachemical upgrade, neurachemically alert/wired, neurachem system, neurachem brain, neurachem glitch (neurological and physical augmentation)

Since artificial improvement was just mentioned, it is worthy of emphasizing that a significant number of blends denotes the domains of technology and the human body in such a way that the purpose of the blend is to manifest certain upgrades of human physique and abilities in a biotechnological way, or vice versa – the upgrades of technology in a biological way (32). This

directly links back to previous examples of human and machine features being projected onto each other withing the single-scope network (25–27), except that within this network, those features are combined rather than projected. Our fictional augments are the epitome of the conceptual human-machine meaning.

Sleeves were noted as one of the most abundant examples of the previously described integration network. However, they are also one of the most productive double-scope mechanisms, involving our single-scope blend, where human bodies (sleeves) are considered disposable, in combination with economy, transactions, gender, etc., all portraying humans as commodities, objects, or machines (33).

- (32) Implanted knowledge, retinal watch, internal mike/hardware, augmented vision, canine-augmented nostrils, recording implants, carbon-reinforced tendons, marrow alloy bones, synaptic chemical amplifiers (technological body modifications which improve human performance)
- (33) Sleeve lease, black market sleeve, sleeve mortgage, double/cross-sleeved, sleeve policy, sleeve dealers, renting a sleeve, SleeveMart, untenanted sleeves, sleeve tenant (all referring to empty bodies without a consciousness, or even after they are inhabited, as a synonym for a body)

Lastly, a significant number of blends fused technology with sex, which is one of the areas of life where conceptual integration occurs frequently, even outside of our corpus: “The world’s literatures explore the febrile and exquisite sophistications of mental sexual fantasies and their grave consequences in reality” (Fauconnier, Turner 2002: 28). The author used technology to project these double-scope blends as the future of sex work (34). In four final instances below, sexual intercourse is combined with engineering to denote our mixture of technology with one of the most basic biological functions.

- (34) holoporn, holoporn comic (referring to holograms), biocabins (locations similar to cubicles where real sex workers are employed), biocabin whore, aerial whorehouse, virtual brothel, AI whorehouse, virtual whorehouse (locations where virtual sex workers are employed), multiple copy sex (relations with multiple copies of the same person’s consciousness in several sleeves)

3. Conclusion

The aim of the study was to examine and quantify integration network types of nonce formations within the novel *Altered Carbon*. Likewise, another aspect of research was the socio-cultural blend between humans and technology in the science fiction context, and proving the frequency with which it appears. Our corpus analysis confirms the hypotheses: first of all, blending in science fiction does indeed yield numerous manifestations of conceptual meaning that denote an overlap between humanity and machinery within every one of the four integration network types. In the simplex and mirror types, this relation is subtle, noticeable only if we are aware of the context which clarifies there are human and technological elements present in the blend (*fear of sleeving, enzyme-triggered explosive*), or if we inspect the difference between the sample and the human experience (*250 years of marriage*). In the single-scope integration network, an additional organizing frame is introduced, and either the machine is organized by the aspect of humanity (*hotel's memory*), or the living being is changed, augmented, and adapted so that it gains some machine-like features (*re-freighted, re-sleeving*). The double-scope blends epitomize the merge between human and technology by combining elements of both and integrating them. These notions are not merely one organized by the other, but rather interreact to the extent that the resulting structure is in equal parts both biological and technological (*cortical stack, retinal watch, carbon-reinforced tendons*).

Secondly, it was proven that the double-scope network is the most plentiful, due to the mentioned presumption that science fiction is expected to produce novel expressions, and therefore must combine parts of existing entry frames. The simplex network is the runner-up, presumably owing to a simple relation between the constituents of assigning role-value and organizing identity. We have also shown that single-scope blends are far from uncommon in the sample, unlike the mirror integration network, assuming due to the nature of the corpus i.e., the imminent clashes between the frames at a far more conspicuous level than the mirror integration network offers.

These results demonstrate that when engaging in writing science fiction and coining new words, Richard Morgan most frequently uses the process of combining two input spaces to produce a blend, particularly those two input spaces that contain denotational meanings of human and

technology. This investigation could be further expanded to encompass other science fiction writers, implying a trend in the genre as an entirety, as well as discovering how the genre followed the developmental tendencies in the English language. Furthermore, exploring nonce formations, which are essential for the genre, may shed light on the processes behind constructing them, thereby helping both readers' creativity when it comes to understanding them, and writers' creativity for their future coinages.

The development of technology will show us exactly which of these occasionalisms might in the future turn into neologisms, since already a portion of Richard Morgan's coinages became reality over the course of these two decades. Therefore, it would be beneficial for future research to investigate the sample from a lexicological perspective, creating a gradient in order to clarify those language items which are considered neologisms now, which signify notions that are still within the scope of science fiction, and therefore still inexistent, and which signify concepts that have been invented and given a different name: "Although all vocabularies constantly expand to keep pace with technological developments, the process is generally taken for granted" (Adams 2011: 198). The potential status of these words and multi-word units changing from occasionalism to neologism over the twenty-year period between the novel's publishing and now would help us gain proof of the creativity behind the author's processes, and determine which integration network was most applied in those items which made it into everyday use. Those results could imply quality of the emergent meaning, or at the very least, its transparency, which could help us further separate the applicability of each integration network in everyday language use.

Additionally, a corpus analysis of nonce words and multi-word units from *Altered Carbon* as well as its sequels might yield interesting results: by determining the frequency of repetition of occasionalisms found in *Altered Carbon* in its sequels, we could determine their productivity, and then compare it back to the sample from each integration network, in order to specify the potential of every network type in this context.

Evidently, there is an abundance of potential research topics for cognitive linguists involving our sample, and this subconscious operation. Nevertheless, what comes to mind is the famous Dalí-meets-Freud dilemma: if one is aware and actively scrutinizing an aspect of cognition, does that mean it can no longer be deemed subconscious? Does that bring danger to unearthing the omnipresence of blending, since it might make us overthink

and therefore impede the most basic cognitive processes? Fauconnier and Turner did not seem to concern themselves with such anxious thoughts. Rather, it is our job as linguists to explore the unexplored, even if it sometimes means delving into the still-inexistent language of science fiction. However, considering the speed of technological advancement, the time might come soon when even the blends in this paper no longer signify occasionalisms, but rather concepts which made their way into everyday language. This gives the science fiction writer an almost prophetic attribute, whereas the fantasy behind the conceptual integration accurately predicted the course of technology in the future: “It is not just the blends that can be fantastic. Real life, from a certain point of view, can be fantastic, too” (Fauconnier, Turner 2002: 51).

References

- Adams, M. (ed.) (2011). *From Elvish to Klingon: Exploring Invented Languages*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Birdsell, B. J. (2014). Fauconnier’s Theory of Mental Spaces and Conceptual Blending. In: Taylor, J. R. and J. Littlemore (eds.), *The Bloomsbury Companion to Cognitive Linguistics*. London: Bloomsbury, 72–90.
- Fauconnier, G. and M. Turner. (2002). *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind’s Hidden Complexities*. New York: Basic Books.
- Fauconnier, G. (2021). Conceptual Integration. Ten Lectures on Cognitive Construction of Meaning. (22 June 2022) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mNSHjqBRP78>>
- Gries, S. Th. (2014). Corpus and Quantitative Methods. In: Taylor, J. R. and J. Littlemore (eds.), *The Bloomsbury Companion to Cognitive Linguistics*. London: Bloomsbury, 279–294.
- Igorevna, K. N. (2015). Contemporary Occasional Word-Formation in the Cognitive Aspect: Basic Theses of the Conceptual Integration’s Theory. *European Journal of Literature and Linguistics*, 26–29.
- Kövecses, Z. (2010). *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mandala, S. (2010). *Language in Science Fiction and Fantasy: The Question of Style*. London: Continuum.
- Morgan, R. (2020). *Altered Carbon*. London: Orion Publishing.

- Polak, J. (2017). The role of emergent structure in Conceptual Blending Theory – case studies of children in advertisements. *Crossroads. A Journal of English Studies*, 2, 30–45.
- Ramonda, K. (2014). Goldberg's Construction Grammar. In: Taylor, J. R. and J. Littlemore (eds.), *The Bloomsbury Companion to Cognitive Linguistics*. London: Bloomsbury, 60–71.
- Sinha, C. (2007). Cognitive Linguistics, Psychology, and Cognitive Science. In: Geeraerts, D. and H. Cuyckens (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1266–1294.
- Taylor, J. R. and J. Littlemore. (2014). Introduction. In: Taylor, J. R. and J. Littlemore (eds.), *The Bloomsbury Companion to Cognitive Linguistics*, London: Bloomsbury, 1–26.
- Turner, M. (2007). Conceptual Integration. In: Geeraerts, D. and H. Cuyckens (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics*. New York: Oxford University Press, 377–393.
- Schlücker, B. (2020). Between word-formation and syntax: Cross-linguistic perspectives on an ongoing debate. *Zeitschrift für Wortbildung / Journal of Word Formation*, 4, 26–74.
- Schmid, H. J. and Ungerer, F. (2011). Cognitive Linguistics. In: Simpson, J. (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Applied Linguistics*. London: Routledge, 611–624.
- Shaw, M. (2021). Alien Languages in Science Fiction. *Digitala Vetenskapliga Arkivet*. (22 August 2022) <<https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/search>>.
- Ungerer, F. and Schmid, H. J. (2006). *An introduction to cognitive linguistics* (2nd ed.). London, New York: Pearson Longman.

Received: 22 August 2022

Accepted for publication: 21 December 2022

Cinzia Giglioni*

Sapienza Università di Roma
Department of Political Sciences
Rome, Italy

Ellen Patat*

Sapienza Università di Roma
Department of Political Sciences
Rome, Italy

A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON IMAGE-TEXT RELATIONS IN BIG PHARMA'S CODES OF ETHICS

Abstract

The study of image-text interconnections offers an interdisciplinary approach to understand and contextualise visuals. The present research explores image-text relations in codes of ethics (CoEs), which are corporate documents issued by corporations. Drawing from a generalised system of image-text relations (Martinec & Salway 2005), quantitative and qualitative analyses are conducted to illustrate the type of image-text relation implemented in CoEs by companies operating in the global pharmaceutical sector, the so-called Big Pharma industry. Findings suggest that visual type does not necessarily determine a fixed pattern of image-text relations in CoEs. While pictures, drawings and tables display a clear, recurring trend, graphics do not.

Key words: codes of ethics, image-text relations, corporate communication, Big Pharma.

* Correspondence: cinzia.giglioni@uniroma1.it

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, C.G.; data collection and formal analysis, E.P. and C.G.; methodology, C.G.; writing—original draft, E.P.; writing—review and editing, C.G. Both authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

1. Introduction

Image-text combinations are ubiquitous in all sectors, including in the corporate environment. Powerful vectors of meaning, visuals, as much as words, play a fundamental role in representing company profiles. “A picture is said to be worth a thousand words because of its ability to hold as much meaning in one frame as can only otherwise be expressed in that many words” (de Laat 2004: 123). The image-text interplay should be masterfully arranged to convey corporate stance, especially in the 21st century, where global presence and appearance are key factors in conducting business. Internationally oriented companies and groups, which are generally engaged in intense competition, share their societal values to create high-profile corporate identities and cultures through the issuing of Codes of Ethics (CoEs) – corporate documents available on a company’s website.

Barthes (1997) claimed that “in advertising the signification of the image is undoubtedly intentional; [...] If the image contains signs, we can be sure that in advertising these signs are full, formed with a view to optimum reading: the advertising image is *frank*, or at least emphatic” (33). In this sense, CoEs, which could practically be considered a company’s ‘business card’, ‘advertise’ a company’s values and principles of conduct. Hence, the interconnection between the broader category of visuals (here intended as pictures, drawings, charts, and tables) and texts in CoEs, which, as stated, are documents drafted with obvious intentions, could be a significant standpoint from which to analyse and better understand a company’s ethical approach.

As a first step in this direction (see Giglioni 2021), drawing from a specific theoretical system of image-text relations, this study provides a new viewpoint and suggestions for working in a domain that has scarcely been explored to date, i.e. the analysis of CoEs in terms of image-text relations. The research focuses on a specific group of globally influential companies, namely large pharmaceutical firms and groups, the so-called Big Pharma (Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America). These companies need to conform to the law; hence, they must state their legitimacy by also releasing a set of values set out in CoEs. Within this framework, CoEs can be considered tools exploited by companies to state their awareness of social responsibility, to manifest the development of corporate ethics policies and the ability to implement these policies through suitable organisation structures and sanctions (D’Orazio 2003: 128).

Determining ‘meaning multiplication’ (Bateman 2014), i.e. the formation of new meaning through the interplay of image and text, casts light on meaning-making, composition and intent. Therefore, this paper aims to establish the type of CoEs image-text relations in the Big Pharma domain by discussing two main research questions, each connected to one hypothesis:

RQ1: What type of image-text interconnections are primarily implemented in CoEs issued by companies working in the pharmaceutical field?

Hypothesis (H1): In commitment-oriented CoEs, the image-text correlation is unequal; in particular, it is an image-subordinate-to-text relationship.

RQ2: Does visual type determine the type of correlation in the analysed CoEs?

Hypothesis (H2): Some visuals may determine the type of relation due to the use of standard visuals in code drafting.

1.1. Objectives of the Study

The major objectives of the study were:

1. To select commitment-oriented CoEs (see 3.1) issued by independent *Fortune 500* pharmaceutical, biotechnology and medical companies (see 3.3)
2. To identify the number of visual aids employed in these CoEs (quantitative survey)
3. To analyse the image-text correlation in each code based on Martinec and Salway’s model (2005) (qualitative analysis – see 2)
4. To identify image-text correlation trends in companies operating in the pharmaceutical field (qualitative analysis).

2. Theoretical framework

Information is conveyed through all sorts of media, including visuo-verbal units where visual images work in conjunction with language. Relevant taxonomies for image-text interplay have developed within semiotics (Marsh & Domas White 2003; Martinec & Salway 2005; Otto, Springstein,

Anand & Ewerth 2020; Zhang, Hwa & Kovashka 2018) based on previous research in the field (i.e. Halliday 1994; Barthes 1977; Lemke 1998; Royce 1998). Nevertheless, the synergy between visual and verbal units has been widely analysed. For instance, a ‘holistic’ approach to image-text interplay that considers multimodal units (Rose 2016), models for computational analysis of multimodal news (Cheema, Hakimov, Müller-Budack, Otto, Bateman & Ewerth 2023), and reflections on the visual/verbal divide (Bateman 2014), on transparency (Grange & Lian 2022), or on multiliteracies (Unsworth 2006) have been presented.

In addition, due to its ubiquity, the interplay between images and texts has been explored in several fields, like marketing, for example, product evaluation (Huang, Du, Xu & Hu 2022), and advertising (Zhang, Hwa & Kovashka 2018), but also in other disciplinary areas. These include education, for instance, with studies on text-image relationships at the level of design strategy (Peterson 2011, 2014) or multimedia learning (Zhao, Schnotz, Wagner, Gaschler 2020), discourse production or intent by using different types of text-image interactions on social media, e.g. Twitter (Morin, Mercier & Altani-Duault 2019; Vempala & Preot, iuc-Pietro 2019) or Instagram (Kruk, Lubin, Sikka, Lin, Jurafsky & Divakaran 2019), text-diagram relations in academic discourse (Martin 1994), literature, for graphic narratives (Spanjers 2021), and film documentaries (van Leeuwen 1991).

From this brief yet significant literature review, it is safe to say that image-text relations could be explored in all fields where the interplay between image and text occur, hence, the objective of the present study. This study makes use of Martinec & Salway’s model (2005) which “is based on combining Halliday’s (1985–1994) logico-semantic and status relations, developed to classify the relation between clauses in the clause complex, with Barthes’ (1977a [1961], 1977b [1964]) text relations, whose main object seems to be newspapers, photographs and, to a lesser extent, moving images and dialogue in film” (340).

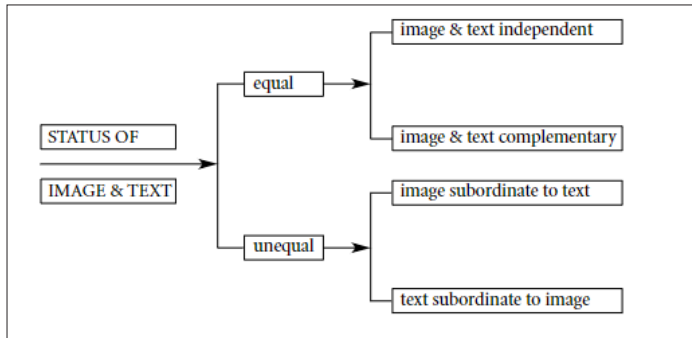


Figure 1: Martinec and Salway's model (2005: 349) for image-text relations

As claimed, Martinec and Salway suggest a taxonomy using status and semantic relations. Relevant to this study are the status and its realisations. The authors draw from Barthes's three modalities of image-text relations – anchorage (text supporting image), illustration (image supporting text), and relay (text and image with equal status). Accordingly, the units can relate to each other in an equal (whole image-whole text) and unequal (whole image-part of text) relation. They further divide the equal status into complementary, when the two units combine to form a larger syntagm, and independent, when they provide separate information (Figure 1).

3. Research design

3.1. Study context

As for previous international research on CoEs, several studies based on a wide range of approaches, small or large-scale corpora from various perspectives, have been published (e.g. Frankel 1989; Langlois & Schelegelmilch 1990; Pierce & Henry 1996; Farrell & Farrell 1998; Ekin & Tezölmez 1999; Wood 2000; Farrell & Cobbin 2000; Adams, Tashchian & Shore 2001; Schwartz 2001, 2004; Somers 2001; Pollach 2003; Wood & Rimmer 2003; Singh, Carasco, Svensson, Wood, & Callaghan 2005; Bethoux, Didry, & Mias 2007; Fairfax, 2007; Long & Driscoll, 2008; Stevens 2008; Kaptein 2004, 2011; Singh, 2011; Holder-Webb & Cohen 2012; Chua 2015; Andrade, Hamza, & Xara-Brasil 2017; Babri, Davidson,

Helin 2021). Similarly, in Italy, studies on CoEs have been conducted from different standpoints (e.g. Arrigo 2006; Lugli, Kocollari & Nigrisoli 2009; Mion, Broglia & Bonfanti 2019; Mion & Bonfanti 2019), but seldom semiotically as most research opts for a non-discursive perspective in code analysis (Gigliani 2020: 6).

On the other hand, important Italian studies stemming from discursive or linguistic frameworks can be found. These concentrate on the distinctive features of CoEs, which led to the identification of two type of codes: legalistic and commitment-oriented (Catenaccio & Garzone 2017, 2022), based on their macro- and micro-textual level analysis (Gigliani 2019, 2020) and on pedagogical implications in ESP (English for Specific Purpose) courses (Gigliani & Patat 2020, 2021; Gigliani 2022).

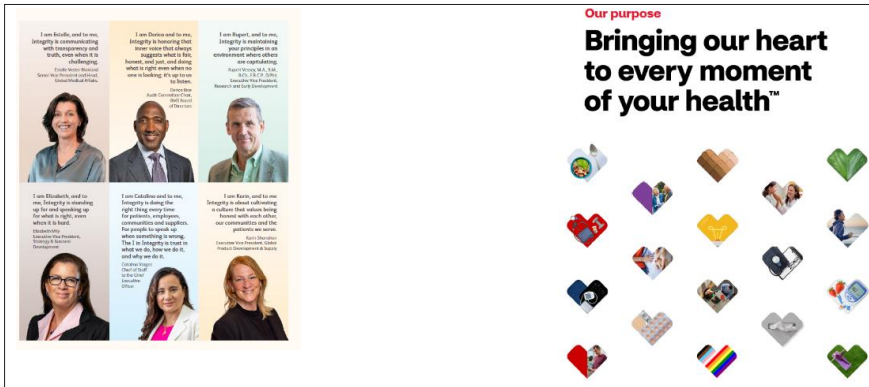
For the purposes of the present study, we focused on commitment-oriented codes that generally make wide use of visuals and present comprehension aids, *ad hoc* titles and the message of the CEO (Gigliani 2019).

3.2. Methodology

The goal of this study was to identify the trends in image-text relations in commitment-oriented CoEs released by big pharmaceutical companies. The conceptual frame was set by C.G., who decided to investigate a specific domain, i.e. Big Pharma, by concentrating on image-text relations in CoEs. Companies had to be included in *Fortune 500*, a list published by “Fortune Magazine” that highlights the largest American companies based on their total revenue. In line with the theoretical framework and the study context, the CoEs of the selected companies had to be commitment-oriented (see 3.1).

Once the study framework was finalised, data collection, i.e. retrieval of CoEs from the companies’ websites, was conducted in Spring 2023. A meeting was then held to discuss and agree on key concepts, i.e. visuals as in drawings, graphics, pictures and tables, and to decide on code inclusion and visual computing. Company logos and background pictures (whether abstract or concrete, e.g. geometric shapes) were not taken into account and, therefore, they were not counted as separate items. Significant units were considered to be formed by the association of a visual and a verbal unit. For instance, Picture 1 includes six significant units whereas visual clusters (i.e. a set of pictures) bound to a single verbal unit (Picture 2) were counted as one item. Data were processed both quantitatively (mean

and median) and qualitatively. Within the theoretical framework of image-text analysis (Martinez and Salway 2005), to ensure reliability and validity, content analysis and data processing were conducted by independent coders in line with the inter-coder reliability theory (O'Connor & Joffer 2020).



Picture 1: Example of six significant units (Bristol Meyers Squibb 25)

Picture 2: Example of one significant unit (CVS 5)

3.3. Corpus

The population for the present study is comprised of 18 commitment-oriented CoEs in English and of varying length. The CoEs were retrieved in Spring 2023 from the following company websites: Abbott Laboratories, Abbvie, Amerisource Bergen, Amgen, Biogen, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Cardinal Health, CVS Health, Eli Lilly, Gilead Sciences, Johnson&Johnson, McKesson, Merck & Co., Pfizer, Regeneron Pharmaceuticals, Vertex Pharmaceuticals, Viatrix, and Zoetis (see Corpus in References).

All codes belong to companies that made the *2022 Fortune 500 List*, an annual list of the 500 largest American companies according to total revenue for the previous fiscal year. Hence, the sample is representative of all *Fortune 500* Big Pharma companies. Despite being ranked in the *Fortune 500* list (#195), Moderna's CoE did not meet the inclusion criteria due to its legalistic nature (see 3.1).

4. Findings

Figure 1 displays the overall visual (pictures, drawings, graphics and tables) distribution based on the analysis of the 18 selected CoEs (page mean 35.4).

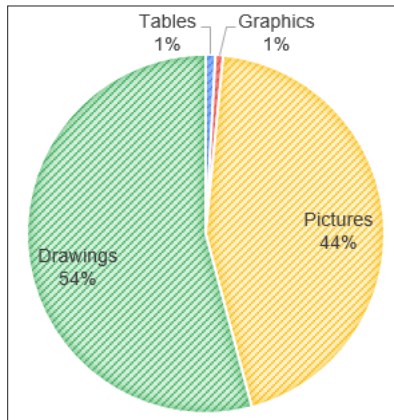


Figure 1: Visual distribution in the selected corpus

Table 1 lists the number of visuals organised according to type for each CoE.

Codes	Pictures	Drawings	Graphics	Tables	Total visual
Abbott	22	44	–	1	67
Abbvie	31	45	–	2	78
AmerisourceBergen	17	5	–	–	22
Amgen	33	2	–	2	37
Biogen	21	84	2	–	107
BristolMyersSquibb	28	1	–	–	29
CardinalHealth	11	9	–	3	23
CVS	11	9	–	–	20
EliLilly	6	2	–	–	8

Gilead	21	--	2	--	23
Johnson&Johnson	27	26	1	--	54
McKesson	45	154	1	--	200
Merck	7	1	--	--	8
Pfizer	27	57	--	1	85
Regeneron	48	39	1	--	88
Vertex	27	58	--	--	85
Viartis	35	--	--	--	35
Zoetis	37	18	--	--	55

Table 1: Number of visuals organised by type in the selected population

Overall, the 18 codes included 454 pictures and 554 drawings (median values: 27 and 13.5, respectively), seven graphics and nine tables (mean values: 0.3 and 0.5, respectively). Considering the inherently subjective nature of qualitative coding data, two pictures were not taken into account due to disagreement between coders (total visuals 1022, 100%). The least represented visual categories were graphics and tables, while the most represented category was drawings. The lowest number of visuals was found for Eli Lilly and Merck (eight respectively), whereas the largest number of visuals was found for McKesson (200). The median value for visuals was 45.5.

The relation between visual and verbal units was analysed for all visuals. Table 2 displays the content analysis performed by the two coders following Martinec & Salway's (2005) model.

Codes	e/i	e/c	un/im	un/t
Abbott	16	2	48	1
Abbvie	23	18	35	2
AmerisourceBergen	11	1	10	–
Amgen	11	1	22	3

Biogen	22	3	82	--
BristolMyersSquibb	–	1	27	1
CardinalHealth	10	–	10	3
CVS	5	1	14	–
EliLilly	2	3	3	–
Gilead	7	4	12	–
Johnson&Johnson	24	1	28	1
McKesson	28	7	164	1
Merck	4	2	2	–
Pfizer	18	5	61	1
Regeneron	27	3	56	2
Vertex	17	7	61	–
Viartis	23	3	9	–
Zoetis	21	4	30	–

Table 2: Classification of visuals based on Martinec & Salway's model (2005)

e/i: equal/independent; e/c: equal/complementary; un/im: unequal/image subordinate to text; un/t: unequal/text subordinate to image

Overall, 267 equal independent, 66 equal complementary, 674 unequal, image-subordinate-to-text and 15 text-subordinate-to-image relations were detected. Out of 333 equal relations, 268 (80.4%) were independent and 65 (19.5%) were complementary. Out of 689 unequal relations, only 15, i.e. 2.1%, were text-subordinate-to-image whereas the majority, 674 (97.8%), were image-subordinate-to-text interplay.

Pictures were likely to be in an equal independent (252, 55.7%) (Picture 3) or unequal image-subordinate-to-text relation (162, 35.8%) (Picture 4). Some (36, 7.9%) equal complementary (Picture 5) but few (2, 0.4%) unequal text-subordinate-to-image relations were detected. In terms of the pictures-equal independent ratio status, i.e. a lack of combination between the visual and verbal unit, 12 codes (66.6%) displayed a high

rate, ranging from 90.9% for Cardinal Health to 56.7% for Zoetis.¹ The biopharmaceutical Bristol Meyers Squibb was the only company whose code did not present pictures unrelated to text, with 28 pictures and one drawing for a total of 27 (93.1%) unequal, image-subordinate-to-text relations.

2.1 Inclusion and Diversity

Inclusion, encompassing diversity, is one of our core values. We value and respect inclusion and diversity and promote equal opportunities through our recruiting and promoting processes. We evaluate employees based on their skills and proficiency, irrespective of their age, ethnic origin, gender, religion or sexual orientation or any other characteristic protected by applicable employment laws.



Picture 3: Example of an equal independent relation (Gilead 8)

Dear Colleagues,

We have set forth bold goals to redefine health care to be centered around the consumer. Our success requires a strong foundation of integrity. That foundation will strengthen how we work with each other and help us earn the trust of the millions of customers who depend on us.

As CVS Health[®] colleagues, we are committed to doing what is right in every situation. This includes following the laws and regulations that govern our business, adhering to all company rules, and demonstrating our purpose and Heart & Work behaviors[™] every day.

The CVS Health Code of Conduct guides us in everything we do and ensures every colleague — regardless of role or level — understands what is expected of them. While the Code of Conduct covers a variety of issues and situations, there will be instances where there is no written rule or precedent. In those moments, remember that your actions and decisions should always reflect the spirit of the Code and be consistent with our purpose of bringing our heart to every moment of your health[™].

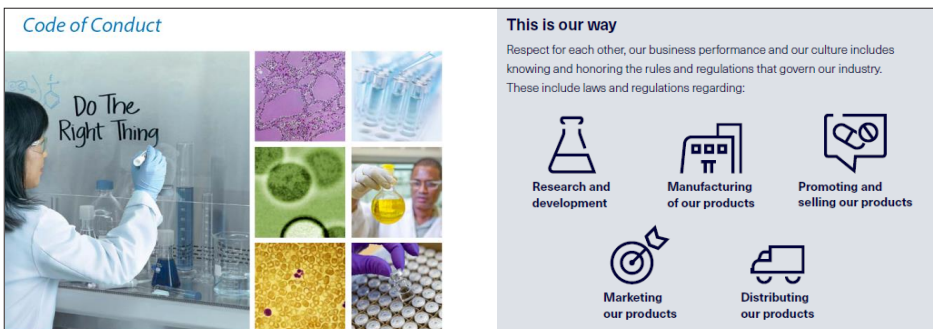
Thank you for reviewing the Code of Conduct and for ensuring your actions not only support our business but also deepen the trust our customers have in us.

Best regards,

Karen S. Lynch
President and CEO
CVS Health



Picture 4: Example of an unequal, image-subordinate-to text relation (CVS 2)



Picture 5: Example of an equal complementary relation (Amgen, cover)

Picture 6: Examples of drawings in an unequal, image-subordinate-to-text relation (Abbvie 34)

¹ Abbott 72.7%, Abbvie 74%, Amerisource Bergen 64.7%, Johnson&Johnson 88.8%, McKesson 62%, Merck 75.1%, Pfizer 66.6%, Regeneron 56.25%, Vertex 62.9%, Viatrix 65.7%

On the other hand, drawings (such as stylised books, question and exclamation marks, balloons, etc.) tended to be subordinate to text (510, 92%) (Picture 6). However, some equal complementary (27, 4.8%) and equal independent (15, 2.3%) relations were found. Two drawings (0.4%) were in an unequal text-subordinate-to-image correlation. There were also codes that did not resort to the use of drawings – Viatrix and Gilead – or only added a few – Amerisource Bergen with one (3.4%) and Amgen with two (5.4%). On the other hand, McKesson used a wide variety of drawings 164 (82%), followed by Pfizer with 57 (67%).

In terms of tables, in all instances (nine, 100%) the text was subordinate to the image (Picture 7), while graphics displayed variations: two (28.5%) were equal independent (Picture 8), one (14.2%) was equal complementary (Picture 9), two (28.5%) were unequal subordinate to text (Picture 10), and two (28.5%) were subordinate to image (Picture 11).

Contacts and helpline

There are many ways to contact us when you have a question or concern. We encourage employees to use the method that is most convenient. This list is your guide.

Resource	Issue	Contact information
Ethics and Compliance Helpline Share concerns confidentially and anonymously where permitted by law, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week	Any issue or concern	To report your concerns on situations that you believe might be inconsistent with our Code or possibly in violation of laws or regulations, please use the Global Helpline Portal.
Vice President, Chief Ethics and Compliance Officer	Any issue or concern	Mail: Vice President, Chief Ethics and Compliance Officer, AbbVie, Department 9304, 1 North Waukegan Road, North Chicago, IL 60064 U.S.A. Mark envelopes: "Confidential" - to be opened by the Vice President, Chief Ethics and Compliance Officer only.

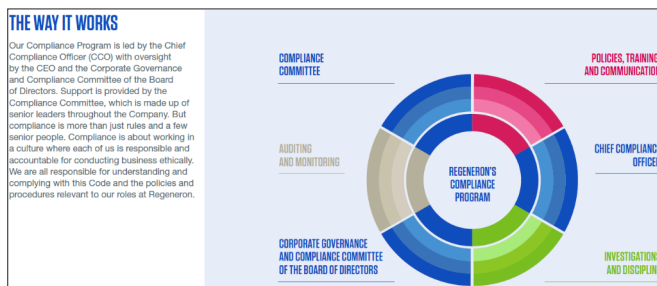
THE HEADLINE TEST

```

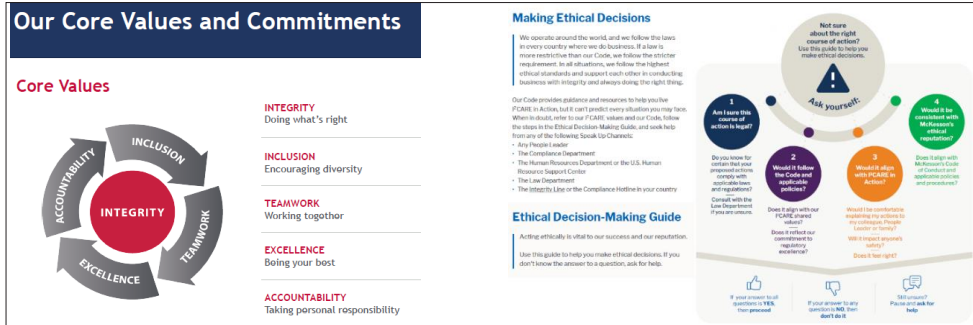
graph TD
    Q1{Is it legal?} -- yes --> Q2{Is it consistent with our values, Code and policies?}
    Q1 -- no --> D[DON'T do it]
    Q2 -- yes --> Q3{Okay as a news headline?}
    Q2 -- no --> D
    Q3 -- yes --> P((Passed the Headline Test))
    Q3 -- no --> D
    
    Q1 -- not sure --> C{Check it out}
    Q2 -- not sure --> C
    Q3 -- not sure --> C
    
    C --> L[Check it with:  
- Your Manager  
- Compliance Helpline  
- Corporate Compliance  
- Human Resources  
- Legal]
    
```

Picture 7: Example of a table in a text-subordinate-to image relation (Abbvie 64)

Picture 8: Example of a graphic in an equal independent relation (Biogen 52)



Picture 9: Example of a graphic in an equal complementary relation (Regeneron 8)



Picture 10: Example of a graphic in an unequal, image-subordinate-to-text relation (Gilead 3)

Picture 11: Example of a graphic in an unequal, text-subordinate-to-image relation (McKesson 9)

Table 3 displays the frequency and the most common variety of image-text relations for each code.

Codes	Most common variety of image-text relation		Number of varieties	
	equal	unequal	III	IV
Abbott	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Abbvie	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
AmerisourceBergen	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Amgen	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Biogen	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BristolMyersSquibb	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
CardinalHealth	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
CVS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
EliLilly	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gilead	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Johnson&Johnson	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
McKesson	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Merck	x	□	x	□
Pfizer	□	x	□	x
Regeneron	□	x	x	□
Vertex	□	x	x	□
Viatrix	□	x	x	□
Zoetis	□	x	x	□

Table 3: The most common types of image-text relations and number of types per code

The image-text relation was considered mainly equal in 22.2% (four) and unequal in 78.7% (14) of the codes. 12 (66.6%) displayed three while six (33.3 %) showed four varieties of image-text relations.

5. Discussion

According to our findings, the CoEs issued by the 18 pharmaceutical companies in the selected corpus (3.3) are characterised by an unequal image-text relation, i.e. the visuals only partially relate to part of the text. This answers RQ1 and confirms H1. The primary scope of a code of ethics or conduct – the terms may be interchangeable as, indeed, a company’s set of guidelines is presented in a code to promote appropriate ethical behaviour (Giglioni 2020: 5) – is not merely promotional, however. As a ‘business card’, codes present company values and principles. Values, as well as principles of conduct, as abstract concepts, may be difficult to represent or be enclosed within a single visual frame. This reasoning could easily be an explanation for the prevalent visual-text relations that emerged from the present content analysis.

Moreover, as suggested in H2, there seems to be a trend in visual selection by companies, especially when it comes to pictures. Regarding this aspect, some tendencies can be highlighted. Codes of ethics are likely to include images that have a positive connotation, representing stereotyped subjects, generally avoiding any potential discrimination according to sex, age and ethnicity, in a generic work environment. This helps explain the equal independent status as quite often the selected pictures provide

information in parallel without forming a larger syntagm (see Martinec & Salway 2005: 343). To better describe this generalisation, the recurrence of some images can be addressed. Pictures 10 and 11 are taken from two and three different CoEs, respectively.



Picture 12



Picture 13

Picture 12 appears in identical form in Amgen (19) under the heading “Government inspections and requests” and in Pfizer (30) above this line: “We advance equity when we seek perspective”. On the other hand, Picture 13, with 3 different close-ups of the same building with the American flag, appears in Amgen (28) under the heading “Political activities and political donations”, in CVS (27) in “Government requests”, and in Regeneron (50) in “Communication with government officials and employees”. While Capitol Hill metonymically relates to the idea of legislation by bringing to mind the United States Congress, Picture 12 is not clearly related to the texts. Actually, a quick image search on the Internet is enough to document the overuse of this image in different working contexts (leadership development, enterprise business applications, promotion of scientific and technological activities, insurance, to cite just some). This lack of correlation, though, is found quite often when trying to relate images to texts as the selected pictures do not seem to engage with the text, thus requiring a very different conceptualisation process. This occurs with some drawings as well. They activate a precise association that is, however, unrelated to the concept that the drawing is referring to in the CoE. For example, in Biogen (14), there is a green circle with three stylised figures who have linked their hands in the centre giving the idea of collaboration and teamwork, but the verbal unit is about respecting and doing what is right for patients.

As for the least represented visual types, i.e. tables and graphics, some reflections can be put forward. Due to the nature of CoEs, unlike, for instance, annual reports that include numerical data on market expansion, revenue, number of products in relation to countries, etc., tables in CoEs do not report quantitative data. Thus, the text is likely to be subordinate to the image. Annual reports also include the number of employees and the turnover and allocated budgets, which could potentially be an interesting addition to a CoE as well.

As for graphics, when compared to other visuals, they are used less (0.6%) and with a variety of image-text relations (equal independent, equal complementary, unequal image-subordinate-to-text, and text-subordinate-to-image). This may also suggest the potential adaptability of such a visual asset in CoEs that has not been exploited by companies yet.

Hence, in terms of RQ2, it can be inferred that, rather than determining a clear-cut type of relation, visual types are likely to present a tendency in use. If, statistically speaking, due to its notably different data points in the drawings category, McKesson were to be considered an outlier, the distribution of pictures (407, 49.4%) and drawings (400, 48.6%) would be quite balanced in the selected corpus and account for the majority of visuals. Ultimately, pictures tend to be in an unequal, image-subordinate-to-text relation, while drawings are divided between equal independent and unequal, image-subordinate to text.

6. Conclusion

The present study aimed at identifying the types of relations between the visual and the verbal units presented in corporate CoEs. The analysis of 18 CoEs issued by 18 American companies operating in the pharmaceutical sector was based on Martinec and Salway's (2005) suggested model. Results indicate that visuals adopted in CoEs are mainly pictures and drawings. These visuals relate to the text with equal independent and unequal, image-subordinate-to-text relations. In terms of the former, picture selection in particular often seems to be standardised as images are mostly unrelated to the verbal unit they refer to. Images tend to convey a conformed message. Drawings, commonly stylised icons, are generally more intuitively understood, forming a larger unit of meaning, supporting the text they refer to. Tables and graphics are the least represented visuals.

Tables can be found in text-subordinate-to-image relations whereas graphics are found in all four varieties of associations. In today's overwhelmingly visual communication, considering the unprecedented innovation and technological tools at hand, companies should exploit visuals in a more effective way so as to ignite a conceptualisation process through which the association between a visual unit and a verbal unit – even if representing an abstract concept – is more immediate. Within this framework, CoEs should be considered to be another type of corporate document used to engage and interact with due accuracy with both employees and third parties.

Corpus²

Abbott Laboratories (2015), *Code of Business Conduct*. Retrieved from <https://webstorage.abbott.com/cobc/ebook_us.html#pNum0>

AbbVie (n.d.), *The AbbVie Code of Business Conduct*. Retrieved from <https://www.abbvie.com/content/dam/abbvie-com2/pdfs/cobc/cobc_English.pdf>

Amerisource Bergen (2020), *Code of Ethics and Business Conduct*. Retrieved from <https://s27.q4cdn.com/189772748/files/doc_downloads/policies/2020/FY2020_COE.pdf>

Amgen (n.d.), *Code of Conduct*. Retrieved from <<https://www.amgen.com/about/how-we-operate/corporate-governance/-/media/Themes/CorporateAffairs/amgen-com/amgen-com/downloads/dotherightthing.pdf>>

Biogen (n.d.), *Code of Business Conduct*, Retrieved from <<https://investors.biogen.com/static-files/bfa93069-f077-472e-8083-da6bd94d98c4>>

Bristol-Myers Squibb (n.d.), *Principles of Integrity: BMS Standards of Business Conduct and Ethics*. Retrieved from <<https://www.bms.com/assets/bms/us/en-us/pdf/principles-of-integrity.pdf>>

Cardinal Health (n.d.), *Standards of Business Conduct*. Retrieved from <<https://www.cardinalhealth.com/content/dam/corp/web/documents/fact-sheet/cardinal-health-standards-of-business-conduct-booklet-english.pdf>>

² All links were last checked on March 1 2023.

- CVS Health (n.d.), *Code of Conduct*. Retrieved from <<https://www.cvshealth.com/content/dam/enterprise/cvs-enterprise/pdfs/cvs-health-code-of-conduct.pdf>>
- Eli Lilly (2021), *The Red Book. Code of Business Conduct*. Retrieved from <<https://www.ifpma.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Code-of-Business-Conduct-2021.pdf>>
- Gilead Sciences (2022), *Code of Ethics*. Retrieved from <https://s29.q4cdn.com/585078350/files/doc_downloads/gov_docs/11/GILD-Code-of-Ethics-2-November-2022.pdf>
- Johnson & Johnson (2020), *Code of Business Conduct. Live Our Credo, Know Our Code*. Retrieved from <<https://www.jnj.com/code-of-business-conduct/english.>>
- McKesson (n.d.), *Code of Conduct*. Retrieved from <<file:///C:/Users/ellen/Downloads/Code%20of%20Conduct.pdf>>
- Merck & Co. (n.d.), *Code of Conduct. Our Values and Standards. The Basis of Our Success*. Retrieved from <https://www.merck.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2023/01/Code-Of-Conduct_MERCK_4-3_US_English.pdf.>
- Pfizer (n.d.), *Breakthrough that change people's lives. The Blue Book: Pfizer's Code of Conduct*. Retrieved from <https://cdn.pfizer.com/pfizercom/investors/corporate/Pfizer_2023BlueBook_English_v5_03092023.pdf.>
- Regeneron (2022), *Code of Business Conduct and Ethics*. Retrieved from https://www.regeneron.com/downloads/code_of_business_conduct_and_ethics.pdf.
- Vertex (n.d.), *Code of Conduct*. Retrieved from <https://www.vrtx.com/sites/global/files/Vertex-Code-of-Conduct.pdf>.
- Zoetis (n.d.), *Code of Conduct. The Way We Do Business*. Retrieved from <https://www.zoetis.com/_assets/pdf/code-of-conduct-zoetis.pdf.>

References

- Adams, J.S., Tashchian, A. and Shore T. H. (2001). Codes of ethics as signals for ethical Behavior. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 29.3, 199–211. DOI:10.1023/A:1026576421399

- Andrade, J., Hamza, K. M. and Xara-Brasil, D. M. (2017). Business ethics: International analysis of Code of ethics and conduct. *REMark*, 16.1, 1–16. DOI:10.5585/remark.v16i1.3529
- Arrigo, E. (2006). Code of Conduct and Corporate Governance. *Symphonya, Emerging Issues in Management*, 1, 93–109. SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2213238>
- Babri, M., Davidson, B. and Helin, S. (2021). An Updated Inquiry into the Study of Corporate Codes of Ethics: 2005-2006. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 168, 71–108. <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-019-04192-x>>
- Bateman, J. (2014). *Text and Image: A Critical Introduction to the Visual/Verbal Divide*. London: Routledge. Barthes, R. (1977). *Image-Music-Text*. London: Fontana Press.
- Bethoux, É., Didry, C. and Mias, A. (2007). What Codes of Conduct Tell Us: corporate social responsibility and the nature of the multinational corporation. *Corporate Governance*, 15.1, 77–90. DOI:10.1111/j.1467-8683.2007.00544.x
- Catenaccio, P and Garzone, G. E. (2017). Poster session held at *Association for Business Communication 82nd Annual International Conference*. Dublin: Ireland.
- Catenaccio, P and Garzone, G. E. (2022). *Ethics in Professional and Corporate Discourse: Linguistic Perspectives*. Berlin: Frank and Timme.
- Cheema, G. S., Hakimov, S., Müller-Budack, E., Otto, C., Bateman, J. A. and Ewerth, R. (2023). Understanding image-text relations and news values for multimodal news analysis. *Frontiers in Artificial Intelligence*, 6, 1–29. <<https://doi.org/10.3389/frai.2023.1125533>>
- Chua, F. C.-K. (2005). *Discourse analysis of corporate codes of ethics*. A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Accountancy. Manawatu, Massey University, New Zealand.
- D’Orazio, E. (2003). Codici etici, cultura e responsabilità d’impresa. *Notizie di POLITEIA*, XIX.72, 127–143. ISSN 1128–2401
- De Laat, S. (2004). Picture Perfect (?): Ethical Considerations in Visual Representation, *Nexus*, 17, 122–149.
- Ekin, M.G. S. and Tezölmez, S. H. (1999). Business Ethics in Turkey: An Empirical Investigation with Special Emphasis on Gender. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 18.1, 17–34. DOI 10.1023/a:1006021607288

- Fairfax, L. M. (2007). Easier said than Done: A corporate law theory for actualizing social responsibility rhetoric. *Florida Law Review*, 59.4, 771–828. <https://digitalcommons.law.umaryland.edu/fac_pubs/481>
- Fortune Magazine, *Fortune 500*. (29 July 2023) < <https://fortune.com/ranking/fortune500>>.
- Farrell, B. J. and Cobbin, D. (2000). A content analysis of codes of ethics from fifty-seven national accounting organizations. *Business Ethics: A European Review*, 9(3), 180–190. DOI 10.1111/1467-8608.00189
- Farrell, H. and Farrell, B. J. (1998). The language of business codes of ethics: Implications of knowledge and power. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 17(6), 587–601. DOI <<https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1005749026983>>
- Frankel, M. S. (1989). Professional Codes: Why, how, and with what impact? *Journal of Business Ethics*, 8 (2-3), 109–115. DOI 10.1007/bf00382575
- Giglioni, C. (2019). Legalistic and commitment-oriented corporate codes of ethics: distinctive macro textual and lexico-syntactic traits. *Ostrava Journal of English Philology*, 11.2, 5–21. ISSN: 1803-8174.
- Giglioni, C. (2020). Italian corporate codes of ethics: legalistic or commitment-oriented?. *BRNO Studies in English*, 46.1, 5–20. DOI <https://doi.org/10.5817/BSE2020-1-1>
- Giglioni, C. and Patat, E. (2020). Pedagogical implications of teaching codes of ethics at tertiary level: An Italian case study. *E-JournALL, EuroAmerican Journal of Applied Linguistics and Languages*, 7.2, 51–69. <<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0994-8415>>
- Giglioni, C. (2021). Interconnections between visual and verbal units in corporate codes of ethics: a comparative study. Paper presented at the 6th International Conference Asia-Pacific LSP & Professional Communication Association. *Multimodality and Beyond: Addressing complexity and emerging needs in LSP*, 3–5 July, 41.
- Giglioni, C. and Patat, E. (2021). *Teaching codes of ethics at tertiary level: further steps in the research*, 5th International Conference Contemporary Challenges in Teaching the Language of the Profession, 1–2 July 2021, Zagreb.
- Giglioni, C. (2022). Further Research on Pedagogical Implications of Teaching Codes of Ethics at Tertiary Level. *Lingue e Linguaggi*, 52, 97–109. DOI 10.1285/i22390359v52p97
- Grange, H. and Lian, O. S. (2022). ‘Doors Started to Appear:’ A Methodological Framework for Analyzing Visuo-Verbal Data

- Drawing on Roland Barthes's Classification of Text-Image Relations. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 21, 1–12. <<https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069221084433>>
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1994). *An introduction to Functional Grammar*. London: Arnold.
- Holder-Webb, L. and Cohen, J. (2021). The cut and paste society: Isomorphism in codes of ethics. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 107.4, 485–509. DOI:10.1007/s10551-011-1060-1
- Huang, Z., Du Y., Xu, F. and Hu, C. (2022). How Does the Horizontal Position of Pictures and Text Affect Product Evaluation? Based on Left and Right Position Effect. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 1–11. <<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.841480>>
- Kaptein, M. (2004). Business Codes of Multinational Firms: What Do They Say? *Journal of Business Ethics*, 50, 13–31. <https://doi.org/10.1023/B:BUSI.0000021051.53460.da>
- Kaptein, M. (2011). Toward effective codes: Testing the relationship with unethical behavior. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 99.2, 233–251. DOI:10.1007/s10551-010-0652-5
- Kruk, J., Lubin, J., Sikka, K., Lin, X., Jurafsky, D. and Divakaran, A. (2019). Integrating Text and Image: Determining Multimodal Document Intent in Instagram Posts. *arXiv*, 1–11. <<https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.1904.09073>>
- Langlois, C. C. and Schlegelmilch, B. B. (1990). Do corporate codes of ethics reflect national character? Evidence from Europe and the United States. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 21.4, 519–539. DOI:10.1057/palgrave.jibs.8490340
- Lemke, J. L. (1998). Multiplying Meaning: Visual and Verbal Semiotics in Scientific Text. In J.R. Martin and R. Veel (Eds), *Reading Science*, London: Routledge, 87–113.
- Long, B. S. and Driscoll, C. (2008). Codes of ethics and the pursuit of organizational legitimacy: Theoretical and empirical contributions. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 77.2, 173–189. DOI 10.1007/s10551-006-9307-y
- Lugli, E., Kocollari, U. and Nigrisoli, C. (2009). The Codes of Ethics of S&P/MIB Italian Companies: An Investigation of Their Contents and the Main Factor that Influence Their Adoption. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 84, 33–45. DOI <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-008-9692-5>>

- Marsh, E. E. and Domas White, M. (2003). A taxonomy of relationships between images and text. *Journal of Documentation*, 59.6, 647–672. DOI:10.1108/00220410310506303
- Martin, j. R. (1983). Conjunction: The Logic of English Text. In J.S. Petofi and E. Sozer (Dds), *Micro Macro Connexity of Texts*, Hamburg: Helmut Buske Verla, 1–72.
- Martin, J. R. (1994). Macro-genres: The Ecology of the Page. *Network 21*, 28–52.
- Martinec, R. and Salday, A. (2005). A system for image-text relations in a new (and old) media, *Visual Communication*, 4.3, 337–371. DOI:10.1177/1470357205055928
- Martinec, R. (2013). Nascent and mature uses of a semiotic system: the case of image-text relations, *Visual Communication*, 12.2, 47–172. DOI:10.1177/1470357212471603
- Mion, G, Broglia, A. and Bonfanti, A. (2019). Do Codes of Ethics Reveal a University’s Commitment to Sustainable Development? Evidence from Italy *Sustainability*, 11.4, 1–18. <<https://doi.org/10.3390/su11041134>>
- Mion, G. and Bonfanti, A. (2019). “Drawing up codes of ethics of higher education institutions: evidence from Italian universities. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 33.7, 1526–1538. DOI:10.1108/IJEM-08-2018-0264
- Morin, C., Mercier, A. and Altani-Duault, L. (2019). Text-Image Relationships in Tweets: Shaping the Meaning of an Epidemic. *Societies*, 9.12, 1–18. <<https://doi.org/10.3390/soc9010012>>
- O’Connor, C. and Joffe, H. (2020). Intercoder Reliability in Qualitative Research: Debates and Practical Guidelines. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 19, 1–13. <<https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069198999>>
- Otto, C., Springstein, M., Anand, A. & Ewerth, R. (2020). Characterization and classification of semantic image-text relations. *International Journal of Multimedia Information Retrieval*, 9, 31–45. <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s13735-019-00187-6>>
- Peterson, M O. (2011). *Comprehension with instructional media for middle school science: Holistic performative design strategy and cognitive load*. (Doctoral dissertation). Raleigh, North Carolina, USA: North Carolina State University.
- Peterson, M. (2014). *The Integration of Text and Image, Its Cognitive Impact for Learning with Media, and Science Instruction: a Ph.D. in Design*

- Study, *Connecting Dots: Research, Education + Practice*, Cincinnati, OH: University of Cincinnati, 124–137. <<https://textimage.org/indices/pdf/A-PhD-in-Design-Study.pdf>>
- Pierce, M. A. and Henry, J. W. (1996). Computer ethics: The role of personal, informal, and formal codes. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 15.4, 425–437. DOI 10.1007/bf00380363
- Pollach, I. (2003). Web: A discourse analysis of selected company websites. *Business & Society*, 42.2, 277–287. <<https://doi.org/10.1177/00076503030420020>>
- Royce, T. (1998). Synergy on the Page: Exploring Intersemiotic Complementarity in Page-Based Multimodal Texts. *JASFL Occasional Papers*, 1(1), 25–50.
- Rose, G. (2001). *Visual methodologies: An introduction to the interpretation of visual materials*, London/Thousand Oaks/ New Delhi: Sage.
- Schwartz, M. (2001). The Nature of the Relationship between Corporate Codes of Ethics and Behaviour. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 32.3, 247262. DOI 10.1023/a:1010787607771
- Schwartz, M. S. (2004). Effective Corporate Codes of Ethics: Perceptions of Code Users. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 55.4, 323–342. DOI 10.1007/s10551-004-2169-2
- Singh, J. B. (2011). Determinants of the effectiveness of corporate codes of ethics: An empirical study. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 101.3, 385–395. DOI 10.1007/s10551-010-0727-3
- Singh, J., Carasco, E., Svensson, G., Wood, G. and Callaghan, M., A comparative study of the contents of corporate code of ethics in Australia, Canada and Sweden. *Journal of World Business*, 40.1, 91–109. DOI:10.1016/j.jwb.2004.10.007
- Somers, M. J. (2001). Ethical codes of conduct and organizational context: A study of the relationship between codes of conduct, employee behavior and organizational values. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 30.2, 185-195. DOI:10.1023/A:1006457810654
- Spanjers, R. (2021). 3 Text-Image Relations. In S. Domsch, D. Hassler-Forest and D. Vanderbeke (Eds.), *Handbook of Comics and Graphic Narratives*, Berlin-Boston: De Gruyter, 81–98. <<https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110446968-004>>
- Stevens, B. (2008). Corporate ethical codes: Effective instruments for influencing Behavior. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 78.4, 601–609. DOI:10.1007/s10551-007-9370-z

- Unsworth, L. (2006). Image/Text Relations and Intersemiosis: Towards Multimodal Text Description for Multiliteracies Education. *ISFC, 33rd International Systemic Functional Congress*, 1165–1205. <<https://hdl.handle.net/1959.11/2206>>
- Van Leeuwen, T. (1991). Conjunctive Structure in Documentary Films and Television. *Continuum*, 5.1, 76–114. DOI: 10.1080/10304319109388216
- Vempala, A. and Preoțiuc-Pietro, D. (2019). Categorizing and Inferring the Relationship between the Text and Image of Twitter Posts. Proceedings of the 57th Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics, Florence, Italy, July 28 – August 2, 2019, Association for Computational Linguistics, 2830–2840. <<https://aclanthology.org/P19-1272>>
- Zhang, M., Hwa, R. and Kovashka, A. (2018). Equal But Not The Same: Understanding the Implicit Relationship Between Persuasive Images and Text. *arXiv*, 1–14. <<https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.1807.08205>>
- Zhao, F., Schnotz, W., Wagner, I. and Gaschler, R. (2020). Text and pictures serve different functions in conjoint mental model construction and adaptation. *Memory & Cognition*, 48, 69–82. <<https://doi.org/10.3758/s13421-019-00962-0>>
- Wood, G. (2000). A Cross Cultural comparison of the Contents of Codes of Ethics: USA, Canada and Australia. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 25.4, 287–298. DOI:10.1023/A:1006034209956
- Wood, G. and Rimmer, M. (2003). Codes of ethics: What are they really and what should they be? *International Journal of Value-Based Management*, 16.2, 181–195. DOI:10.1023/A:1024089509424

Received: 13 September 2023

Accepted for publication: 18 November 2023

Svetozar Poštić*

Vilnius University
Faculty of Philology
Lithuania

Kasparas Gaižauskas

Vilnius University
Faculty of Philology
Lithuania

THE EFFECT OF VIDEO WATCHING IN THE EFL CLASSROOM

Abstract

This paper presents the research conducted in a Vilnius middle school related to the effect of watching educational animated videos on the English acquisition process. For this purpose, 98 fifth- and seventh-graders participated in the research by taking a pre-test before watching a video three times, and then taking a post-test to check their improvement in different foreign language proficiency areas, all related to the shown video. The results overwhelmingly demonstrate the effectiveness of watching this sort of video content in the language learning process during adolescence, provided that the content is interesting and useful. In addition, the same students filled out a questionnaire on their preferences and their opinion about the improvement of foreign language skills related to video watching. The results provide a valuable insight into the EFL acquisition in the era of digital education.

Key words: video watching, cartoons, EFL classroom, second language acquisition.

* svetozar.postic@gmail.com

1. Introduction

One of the effects of globalization – an overwhelming economic, political and cultural process – has been the adoption of a single language for the purpose of intercultural communication. Since the end of the last century, English has truly become what is generally referred to as *lingua franca*. One of the main locations where learning a new language takes place is primary and secondary schools. As the world increases its versatility, the usual textbooks and educational process of language learning are progressively superseded, and they are often substituted by alternatives practices. Some of them, like learning a foreign language through visual practice, are also becoming more prominent, because they have proved to be highly efficient. During the past hundred years, not only has the reading culture first been seriously challenged by film, TV and then internet video-watching culture, now education, mainly due to the Covid-19 pandemic, has also been rapidly moving into the exclusively virtual setting. Instructors are forced to use interactive digital tools and materials in their teaching practices, and students, having developed their learning habits in the computer- and smartphone-watching environment, are less painfully moving to a complete distant-learning mode. Although the pandemic caused many inconveniences, and the educational system required much time and effort to adapt, online classes have now become widespread. Consequently, there are new, diverse and constantly improving possibilities to improve the language learning process.

In light of the increasing need to exploit digital technologies in the educational process, this paper looks at the innovative possibilities in teaching practices still not widely accepted, but whose effectiveness has already been proven. According to the research and experience of many teachers and scholars that will be pointed out, the digitized foreign language acquisition process can help students increase their proficiency. As this paper will demonstrate, the use of short films, videos, interactive games and cartoons in the target language can greatly speed up comprehension, vocabulary and speaking proficiency. This paper explores one of the most useful and stimulating ways to adapt English teaching and learning practices to the new circumstances. Building on the studies that have demonstrated the benefits of watching short films and cartoons, it takes a look at some visual learning practices across the globe, and then suggests the most effective ways to use videos, cartoons, and online communication to attain English proficiency.

The empirical study conducted in a Lithuanian secondary school measures the effectiveness of video-watching among fifth- and seventh-graders. Based on an original pre-test and post-test design, it quantifies the students' improvement in comprehension and other aspects of language proficiency after viewing a selected video several times. It also analyses the perception of this method through a questionnaire. This inquiry based on quantitative and qualitative research methods aims to make a valuable contribution to EFL studies, multilingualism practices and applied linguistics.

2. Literature review

The term “digital education” is defined as “the innovative use of digital tools and technologies during teaching and learning and is often referred to Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) or e-Learning” (McLaughlin 2022). Almusaed et al. (2021) explain that this type of education is only extending its value and importance with each year in both formal and non-formal education. It is clear that the world is developing at a very fast pace, and education is not any different, as it must adapt to the changing situation immediately from the kindergarten to the university (Hrbaček, 2011, as cited in Lamanaskas 2011). The COVID-19 pandemic and all the measures taken against it have reversed the usual learning system and shaped a new way of teaching and learning. Traditional school education has shifted onto a digital platform and transformed into the so-called online or remote education. Physical classroom was substituted by online meeting platforms, where everything is taught through virtual means. The new circumstances have led teachers to devise new ways to engage students in order to maintain their attention and interest.

Digital education has numerous advantages. Kuznetsova and Azhmukhamedov (2020) argue that it provides broader and more universal access to learning. Courses can be taught by instructors from any place on Earth through digital platforms available to anyone through the Internet. The method also facilitates the learning process for students with disabilities, as it is much easier for them to stay connected online rather than move from one place to another. This logistics problem is also emphasized by Borisova (2020), who writes that digital learning saves people financial and physical resources that had to be spent on

transportation and eating out. The digital learning model is more flexible because of the variety of learning platforms, applications, different types of sources instantly available whether in written or visual form, depending on what is suitable for the student. Online courses or learning material can be recorded or are constantly available online, so the learners can check and revise the material or assignments whenever they want.

There are also some drawbacks. Kuznetsova and Azhmukhamedov (2020) explain that teachers have noticed a significant increase in plagiarism among students when teaching online: the possibilities for sharing content and copyright violations appear more often than during the classroom teaching. Borisova (2020) also points to the absence of direct interaction with the instructor. The indirect transformation of information through digital tools is less effective and more difficult without the physical presence of the educator. In addition, certain subjects cannot function properly when digitalized: for example, students of natural sciences and medicine need to develop their practical skills in laboratories and hospitals. It is also important to mention the possibility of poor or lost internet connection that can often emerge when learning online.

Despite the obvious benefits and conveniences, a total digitalization of educational system in the near future is not realistic. As a number of researchers have pointed out, there have been numerous inventions and new technologies that proved not to be as revolutionary as initially thought. (Malak, Mikošek 2004; Hrbaček, 2011, as cited in Lamanuskas, 2011). Nevertheless, it is evident that this concept of education has become significant. According to Greenhow, Robelia, Hughes (2009, as cited in Lamanuskas, 2011), it is clear that digital education can make teaching and learning more efficient and attractive if the educator is competent with the digital tools. Digital education is still in the process of development, and it is not capable of replacing the usual educational process completely, nevertheless, mainly because certain subjects demand practice and significant difficulties occur when learning online.

The approaches and the concepts used in teaching English as a foreign language differ depending on the country in which English is used or taught. For example, according to Ku, Furukawa and Hiramoto (2021), the Japanese distinguish between three main attitudes towards the use of English: as a fundamental, as an unneeded and overestimated competence and, lastly, as a label of generic interaction. The inclusion of English into elementary and secondary education in Japan and the

growing encouragement to study abroad testify to its significance. The Rahimi and Hassani (2012) study describes Iranian students' view of EFL as favorable, as they are eager to learn this foreign language; however, their attitude towards Iranian EFL textbooks is negative. Students in Iran assessed this learning material as inefficient and even useless. The Kiziltepe (2000) research showed that Turkish EFL students' point of view is quite pragmatic: they are greatly motivated to learn English, and they are dedicated and receptive to challenges in the learning process, but their interest in acquiring British or the American culture through EFL is depicted as mediocre.

Lithuanian approach towards EFL, as given in Misevišiūtė (2018), is also a bit ambivalent: the most obvious problem is a lack of in-depth English written communication. The most common way to teach it is through exams that usually test learners' lexis, reading comprehension and grammatical competences, and it does not fully develop their practical knowledge. However, Lithuanian students' attitude towards the EFL is positive – it has been one of the most popular exam choices among Lithuanian high school graduates in the past decade. The average final exam score of the past three years is 64.5 out of 100. Moreover, the positive evaluation of the EFL final exam in 2021 was even higher than the native language exam's – 97,9 percent for English in comparison with 91,4 percent for Lithuanian (LRT 2022).

Nowadays, students acquire language differently than a decade or more ago. The role of visual data is only growing in scope, as the Internet is overloaded with various visual content. Foreign languages students acquire information more effectively through images, diagrams, videos, cartoons, slide shows and films. Educators can use these tools to simplify vast amounts of information and present it in a student-friendly manner. In one study, Ralyn (2016) demonstrated that 75 percent of the data processed by the human brain is extracted from visual formats. In education, visual learning enhances learners' visual thinking, which is the most significant part of the learning process. Students most readily associate their thoughts, written information or concepts with images. Raiyn (2016) demonstrated that students who were exposed to visual learning showed better results than students who studied in a traditional way. Primary and middle school students who used visual learning achieved significant improvements in their high-order thinking skills. According to Shrum and Glisan (2016), the textbooks are gradually being replaced by visuals in teaching languages,

and video material in teaching has proved to be an effective tool for transmitting the culture of the target language.

One of the most popular visual learning tools today is video. The exponential growth of the social media has only increased the importance of the video format. Harmer (2006, as cited in Hadijah 2016), explains that video can enhance students' use of language skills, and it provides significant advantages in the learning experiences. It also develops their cross-cultural awareness, increases language motivation and enhances creativity. Nevertheless, educators occasionally face the challenge of finding a way to make the video material both informative and appealing, so they could reach the maximum effectiveness.

Chung (2009) discovered that video-based English teaching is indeed helpful in the learning process by dividing his students into random groups and showing two video clips to one of them, which later outperformed the other groups in both multiple-choice and open-ended tests. In addition, Secules, Herron and Tomasello (1992) revealed that showing videos with native speakers conversing in everyday situations had improved students' listening competence more than the traditional material. Herron, Corrie and Cole (2006) learned that although text-based studies enhance students' foreign language grammar skills, video-based curriculum significantly improves both the learners' grammar and listening skills. In order to keep the improvement, videos or films have to have high appeal among students in order to enhance their motivation and maintain their attention.

Due to the sheer quantity and varying degree of quality, the selection of videos used in an EFL classroom is very important. Video clips can be useful in a variety of ways in an EFL classroom, especially enriching the learner's vocabulary. In the research conducted by Yawiloeng (2020), learners who viewed a video containing English target vocabulary got better post-test results than in earlier tests when they did not have any video content shown. Bonk (2008, as cited in Kabooha and Elyas 2018) argues that YouTube provides endless possibilities to significantly enhance language learning skills for students, and it has the potential to be a rich leaning material. Kabooha and Elyas (2018) carried out a study in which one group of EFL learners were shown YouTube videos during their reading activities, and the other group was not. Needless to say, the one that watched YouTube video material achieved better post-test results than the other group. It was also noticed that the students had increased their vocabulary competences and expressed a positive attitude towards YouTube

videos incorporated in their English lessons. The research conducted by Alwehaibi (2015), shows a better assimilation of theoretical information in EFL students through the use of YouTube videos than through usual classroom methods.

Video material in a EFL classroom can also ameliorate students' attitude towards the subject and the culture of the target language. In a research conducted by Park and Jung (2016), fifteen Korean EFL students took part in a two-month English course with strongly incorporated video material such as TED talk replays, sitcoms, news reports and movies. The study revealed that EFL students enhanced their motivation and positive attitude towards both English language and culture and were more active during the activities than before.

Nevertheless, certain obstacles can diminish the effective usage of videos in the EFL curriculum. The main ones are: irritating or noisy background sounds, unappealing or meaningless images or videos, uncomfortable size of captions (Yawiloeng 2020). In addition, according to Kabooha and Elyas (2018), it is essential that YouTube video content (the same applies to the video teaching material in general) be sorted out and based on language proficiency, cultural context criteria, and it must match the lesson's goals and objectives.

Another video-based curriculum format, which is appreciated by children and adolescent EFL students, and can be a useful teaching tool with all age categories, is cartoon. Cartoons can be used in the EFL classroom and help students improve their proficiency, and this especially applies to primary school student. Shu Sim's (2012) ten-week study revealed that the cartoon is more effective in increasing foreign language competences than watching news or even films. Cartoons can help young students of EFL to improve their pronunciation skills, which is a significant obstacle in EFL acquisition in many foreign countries. Alghonaim (2020) emphasizes the impact of cartoons on children's correct English pronunciation. His study revealed that pre-pubescent EFL students can acquire a native-like English pronunciation by watching cartoons and overcoming all mispronunciation obstacles that occur with many foreign English learners. In another study, Nhung and Dieu (2020), examined the EFL learners' communicative skills improvement with the help of cartoons as a teaching tool. It was found that in six weeks the target group, for which the English cartoons were incorporated into their English lessons, has shown much greater improvement in listening and speaking skills than the control group that

had lessons without them. Lastly, Poštić (2015) revealed that constant cartoon watching in the period of childhood can even build a particular English accent, as his research has shown that people, who frequently watched American TV channel *Cartoon Network* in childhood, acquired native-like language proficiency.

3. Methodology

In order to achieve a better understanding and evaluate the influence of English videos on Lithuanian EFL students, qualitative and quantitative research has been carried out. An educational English video, “3 Tips to Boost Your Confidence” by TED-ED production was shown to students. The narration in the video is not simplified for foreign speakers, but it does not contain any difficult words or constructions. An intermediate student of English can understand the meaning of the message in only one viewing.

Most importantly, the pre-test, post-test and a feedback questionnaire were distributed and filled out by students. Each of the research segments was given to 98 eleven to fourteen-year-old children in a Vilnius middle school (grades 5–8). The pre-test and post-test were devised by one of the authors of this paper and were used to measure the level of impact of English videos on the language learner. Both the pre-test and post-test are provided in the appendix.

The questionnaire was designed to gauge students’ attitudes and opinions regarding the impact of English video content on their language skills, its significance in their daily lives, and their views on digital education and its tools.

So, a total of 98 completed pre-tests, post-tests and questionnaires were reviewed and analysed. Pre-tests and post-tests were analysed with a focus on the measurement of students’ English skills improvement after listening to the video, with competences separated into use of English, vocabulary, reading, listening and understanding. Having done the research with video demonstration and the tests, quantitative data were collected, and then described and analysed in the empirical part.

After completing the tests, students were asked to fill out a questionnaire and the qualitative data were collected. The following section describes in detail the whole experimental set-up and results with the help of descriptive statistics. After the empirical part, final conclusions were

drawn and formulated. The tests and the questionnaires were anonymous, and the authors have guaranteed in a written statement that no names would be revealed in the publication of the research.

4. Empirical research

4.1 Summary of the research

In order to carry out this research, the pre-test, post-test method was selected. There were no control or comparison groups. All the practical research segments were conducted with the same target group of students. The pre-test was given in the introductory part of the research in order to determine the students' initial grasp of the measures, in this case the existing English vocabulary, use of English, reading and understanding competences.

The participants of the practical research were supposed to be 101 middle school students from seven different classes; since three of them were absent that day, and the final number of participants was 98. There were 27 fifth-graders, aged 11 to 12 years, and 71 seventh-graders, aged 13 to 14 years. Each participant attends the same school and has the same number (three) of EFL lessons per week. Although the age of the participants differs, the majority of the students have high English competences, 86% with a mark equal or higher than 8 (on a 1–10 scale), meaning that the selected video was not supposed to pose significant difficulties in terms of comprehension.

Students' last semester's EFL mark							
Mark (1–10)	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Number of students	0	3	3	8	17	29	38
Percentage	0 %	3,06 %	3,06 %	8,16 %	17,34 %	29,88 %	38,76 %

Table 1: Students' final marks in English from the previous semester

It was decided that the experimental video had to be educational and at least partially matching the school's educational plan. As mentioned in the

theoretical part, one of the main features of the selected video was to be appealing to the target audience – eleven to fourteen-year-olds, so it would enhance their productiveness and involvement in the research process. Taking all these criteria into consideration, the educational cartoon “3 tips to boost your confidence” from the YouTube channel “TED-Ed” was chosen due to its relevance for teenagers’ life, and it was also in line with the educational plan. The level of difficulty for the age group of the target audience was also deemed adequate. The video was shown three times – first time so the students would get acquainted with the content and understand its essence, the second time to listen attentively and to pay more attention to details, and the third time for final consolidation of knowledge, although a significant part of students stated that two times was enough for them to understand the video clearly. It was decided to present the video with English subtitles turned on, in order to activate more competences of English, and to make it easier for the students with different learning abilities.

The post-test was given to the target audience after having listened to the video three times to measure the improvements or deteriorations of students’ English competences. Both pre-test and post-test were fully related to the shown video. The tests were not identical; the post-test had tasks of the same type and principle as the pre-test, but with different content, albeit directly connected to the video. Twenty minutes were allocated for the completion of both tests.

During the following lesson, a questionnaire was given to the participants in order to get an insight into the students’ opinion on digital education, its tools and their significance in their daily life and the English learning process.

4.2 Analysis of the pre-tests and post-tests

During the empirical research, 98 pre-tests and post-tests were collected. The pre-test and the post-test had different content for the same type of tasks to get more accurate results and to measure the actual enhancement or worsening of their performance. The content of both tests was directly connected to the video that was shown, be it vocabulary, reading or use of English; all the elements were taken directly from the video transcript. Both pre-test and post-test consisted of five tasks and the total of 35 points. The main English competences were listening and understanding, vocabulary,

use of English and reading skills. After collecting both completed tests, arithmetical calculations were made. It was decided to measure the differences between the results by comparing the arithmetic averages of the two test points, taking and comparing the point average of each task separately and the total point averages.

The first task tested the general knowledge of vocabulary. The respondents were given a total number of 15 vocabulary items from the video transcript, and they had to translate the words into Lithuanian or, if it was less difficult for them, explain their meaning in English. The results showed that the average respondent of the pre-test knew less than seven vocabulary items (6.82) while the average post-test respondent knew a bit more than eight (8.03). After the final calculations, it was discovered that after the post-test, students' vocabulary has improved 15.07% on the average. Having in mind that the participants were given connected yet completely different set of vocabulary items in each of the tests, this margin is quite significant, and it shows the improvement of general vocabulary knowledge of the respondents, suggesting that the video was indeed an effective tool for widening the target vocabulary on the given topic.

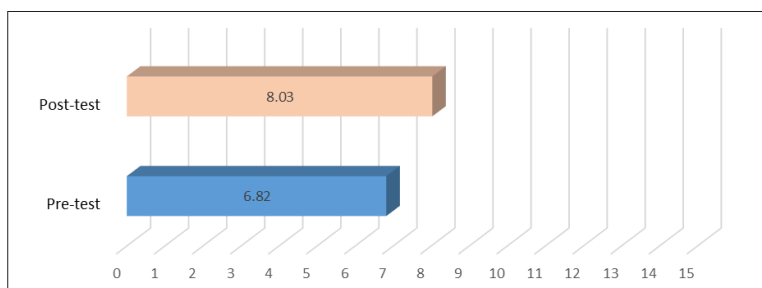


Figure 1: Comparison of points averages in the respondents' first task

The second task was connected to the first one and it was connected to a deeper knowledge of general vocabulary. Respondents had to explain the given English phrases or collocations in English, or Lithuanian if that was too difficult for them. Four different English phrases were given in each test. The results showed that the demonstration of the video did not have a significant effect on the participants' knowledge of vocabulary. The average score of the pre-test was 1.13 phrases out of 4, while the post-test result reached only 1.22 phrases on the average, resulting in a

9,26% improvement. These measurements demonstrate that listening to the video only slightly affected phrasal or collocational vocabulary comprehension. So, students improved by remembering single words rather than compounds.

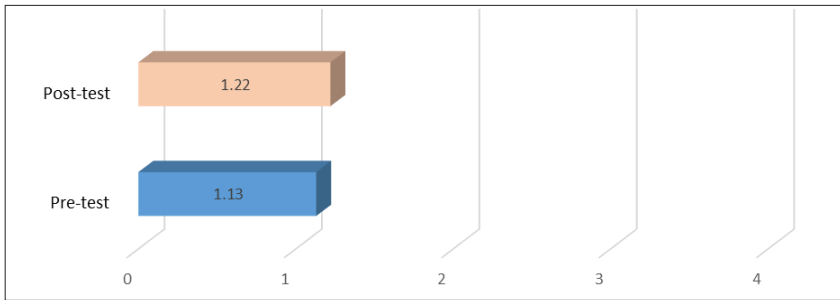


Figure 2: Comparison of points averages in the respondents' second task

The third and fourth tasks of the tests evaluated the English comprehension and use of English competences of the participants. In the third task, five different lexical items were chosen for a multiple-choice exercise with three distractors and a single correct answer. Students had to read the given situation and choose the corresponding lexical item. Four possible answers were given and only one was correct. The results of both tests turned out to be almost identical: the pre-test average number of points was 3.48 correct answers out of 5, while the post-test number this time was even a bit lower – 3.43. The averages indicate that the result decreased by 1.44%; nevertheless, the results are very close.

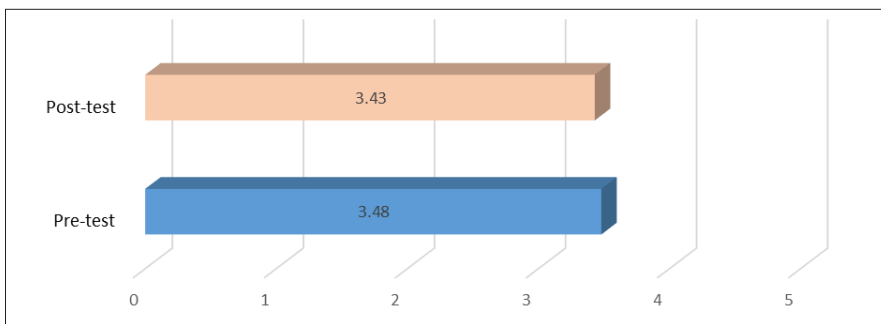


Figure 3: Comparison of points averages in the respondents' third task

The fourth and the third tasks were connected, since they both focused on the use of English, comprehension and reading skills. Two different extracts from the transcript of the shown video were taken for both tests; the pre-test had an extract from the initial and the post-test from the middle part of the video. In each of the extracts, there were five missing words, so the participants had to fill in the gaps with the appropriate words. Four possible options were given with only one correct answer. The post-test task had an extra condition/reminder included: “remembering the video,” so that respondents would think about the context of the video heard before doing the task. The results showed that the post-test average numbers of 2.81 correct answers out of 5 total were much higher than the pre-test result of 1.13 correct answers. The 148.7% improvement in the post-test results suggests that viewing the video had an immense impact on the students’ English comprehension.

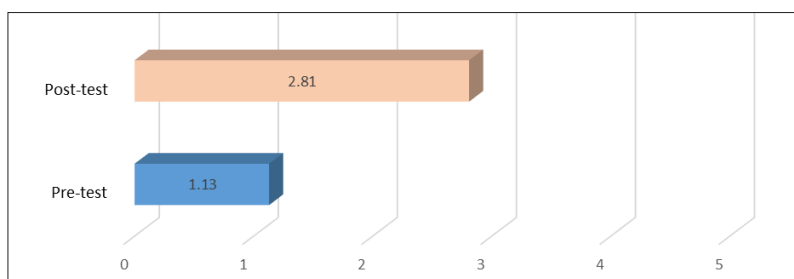


Figure 4: Comparison of points averages in the respondents’ fourth task

The fifth and the final assignment was a reading comprehension task. Two different extracts of the aforementioned video transcript were used, and six different questions on text comprehension were given in each test in order to measure the change in participants’ English reading and understanding competences. These questions were multiple-choice and true-false. It was revealed that the post-test results were again higher than the pre-test ones – 2.53 average correct answers in the pre-tests and 3.48 in the post-tests. A convincing 37.5% progress was made after the post-tests, which demonstrates the importance of video watching and its connection to listening and reading tasks. This shows that it is more effective to listen to the text first, and then read and complete the given reading task.

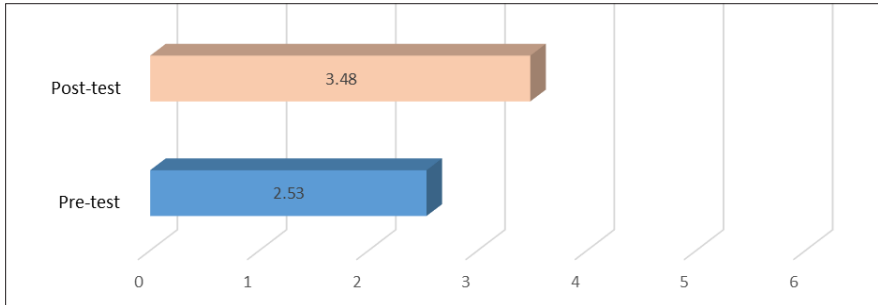


Figure 5: Comparison of points averages in the respondents' fifth task

A comparison of both tests and the total number of points collected by the 98 respondents shows that the average score increased by 26.01 percent. Having in mind the total number of 35 total points, the average score increased from 15.03 in pre-tests to 18.94 in post-tests.

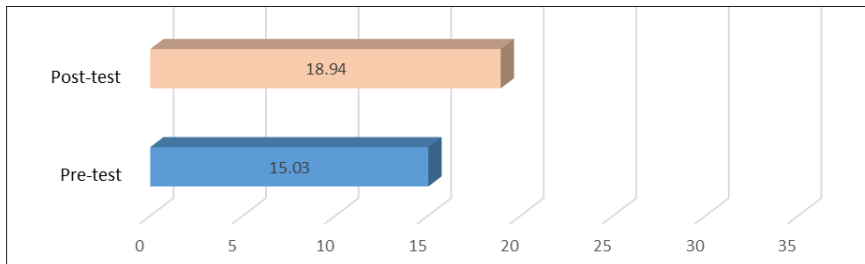


Figure 6: Comparison of the respondents' total points averages

To conclude, the comparison of the separate tasks and the total score averages of pre-tests and post-tests showed that the English video watching in the EFL classroom is an effective tool for improving students' proficiency. Only one task showed a deterioration of 1.44%, while the others demonstrated various levels of positive increase. Although some of the improvement may not seem convincing enough, it is vital to understand that the measurements were made after only two English lessons, so this suggests there is a lot of room for further improvement if continuing to apply this teaching method.

4.3 Analysis of the answers to the questionnaire

A majority of the questions in the questionnaire were open-ended, which provided a variety of different answers. In most cases, several important aspects have been identified by the same respondent, which made it more difficult to analyse because the number of significant answers was greater than the number of respondents. It was decided, therefore, to collect all the meaningful statements. Those statements were analysed by grouping them into main sections and then measuring and comparing their number. The number of meaningful statements was then turned into percentage for each section, which was then compared to the percentages in other sections.

1. What (other than English lessons), in your opinion, helped you to learn/acquire English throughout your life?

A total number of 172 meaningful answers were singled out here. The visual sources of information, such as films, series, cartoons, video content and video games dominated among the respondents' answers, receiving two thirds of the total number of statements (115 of 172). This result only emphasizes the importance of visual and digital content for acquiring a foreign language. The personal factor – family and international friends – are also worth mentioning, showing that human interaction is still important among youngsters.

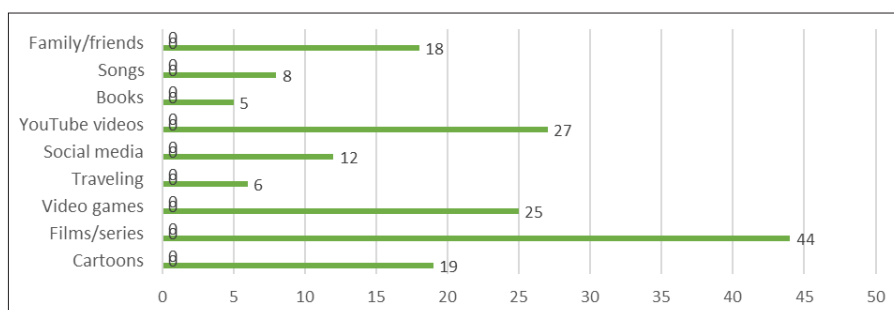


Figure 7: Aspects that helped students to learn/acquire English in their lives

2a. Do you like watching videos in English?

The first part of this question, considering the likeability of videos, showed predominantly positive answer. Out of the 98 participants, 85 respondents (86,7 percent) stated that they like watching video content in English, while only 13 (13,3%) answered negatively.

2b. If yes – what kind of videos do you watch?

Answers to this question were diversely distributed – films or series dominated alongside short videos, receiving 31 and 29 percent respectively, or receiving 46 and 44 meaningful statements out of 151. The rest of the answers was split almost evenly – funny, educational and gaming videos received the same amount of interest from the respondents. These data directly correlate with the results of the first question, which suggest that most respondents are keen on films, series, gaming and watching short video content.

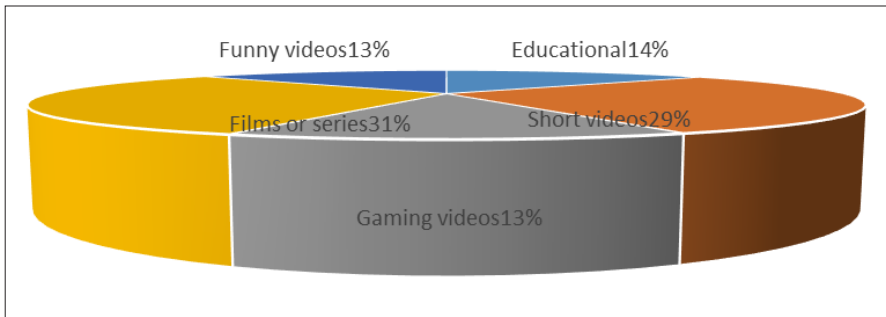


Figure 8: What kind of videos do students watch?

2c. Where do you watch them (Netflix, YouTube, Tik-Tok etc.)?

For this question, 171 meaningful statements were found. Out of those, 69 (40%) was given to YouTube as the favourite source of video content. Social media networks, such as Tik-Tok, Instagram and Facebook received 48 (28%) picks. Beside social media, Netflix stood out, receiving a quarter of the answers. Finally, television got only 11 mentions out of 171, proving that its era is coming to an end, and digital platforms are taking over the contemporary video content market, at least among the younger generations.

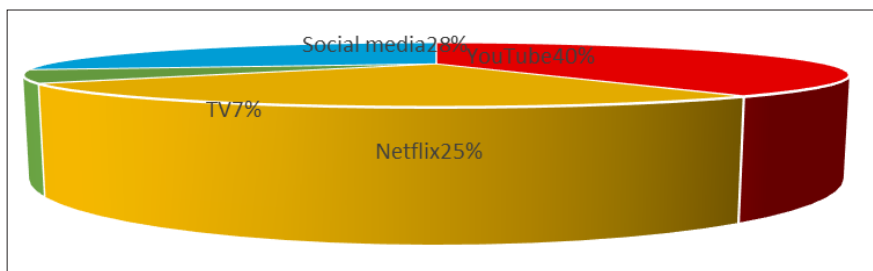


Figure 9: Where do students watch English videos?

3. Which do you like more: remote learning or going to school?

Out of the 98 total respondents, 58 (59.2%) students stated that the learning in person is their preferred method, while 40 (40.8%) favoured remote learning. This shows that despite the online educational mandate during the pandemic, which enhanced the impact of digital education and its tools, the younger generation still prefers the face-to-face model. This was a bit of a surprise, considering all the practical amenities for students in remote learning, especially for children aged 11–14, such as a chance to “hide“ behind a webcam.

4. How useful (on a 1–10 scale) and helpful are English videos for your English skills improvement?

In this question, students had to measure the impact of English videos on their proficiency and rate it from 1 to 10. The majority of respondents evaluated English videos as a very effective and helpful tool to improve their English skills, as a bit more than 70 percent rated the importance of videos 9 or 10 out of 10. Only 14 participants measured the usefulness by a mark lower than 8, which accentuates English video content as a tool of great efficiency that significantly helps them to improve their English skills.

The usefulness (on scale 1–10) of English videos for students' English skills improvement										
Scale	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Amount of students	1	0	0	2	6	2	3	15	30	39
Percentage	1.02 %	0 %	0 %	2.04 %	6.12 %	2.04 %	3.06 %	15.3 %	30.6 %	39.8 %

Table 2: The usefulness of English videos for the improvement of English skills

5a. Do you like when teachers use technologies and digital tools during their lessons (slides, interactive whiteboard, educational apps, videos, projector etc.)?

The first part of this question had to reveal whether students like digital tools or technologies used during their lessons, while the second asked for a broader explanation if the respondent answered positively. Unsurprisingly, all 98 participants responded positively to the use of digital tools and technologies in classroom.

5b. Why do you like/don't like it?

Elaborating on the reasons why technologies and digital tools are beneficial and not detrimental, the respondents provided a total of 115 meaningful statements. The reason that stood out the most was that class becomes more interesting. The statement that followed was that students' acquisition of the class content becomes better, and it is easier to understand everything. This fact again shows the importance of visual content in the learning process. The fun factor was also the key, as 20 percent of all statements indicated it. Somewhat unexpectedly, there were eleven statements (10%) indicating that the usage of projector, educational applications, videos, slides, interactive whiteboards and other digital tools in classrooms is still considered unusual.

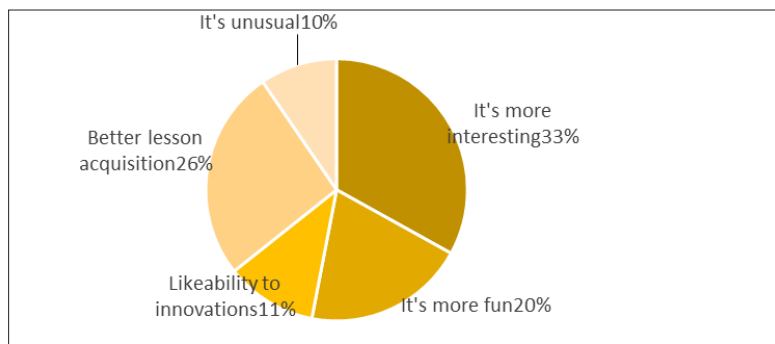


Figure 10: Why do students like technologies/digital tools in their classroom?

6. What do you learn/improve when watching video content in English language?

Among the answers to this question, 125 meaningful statements were selected. More than a third, or 34% (43 out of 125), named the English vocabulary aspect as the most important. Pronunciation and spelling received 20 (16%) and 10 (8%) votes, respectively. Participants also emphasized speaking (22%) and listening (15%), which is logical since they have to listen attentively to the video content to understand it properly, and by successfully doing that they can correctly replicate it. English grammar skills were overshadowed by other competences, since the main focus when watching video content is based more on visualization and listening.

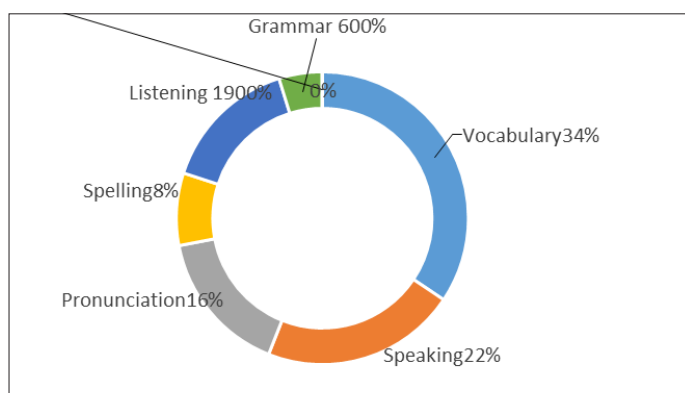


Figure 11: Students' improvements when watching video content in English

7. How many hours a day do you approximately spend watching video content in English?

A third of the respondents indicated that that they do not watch English videos much, starting from a few minutes a day to an hour maximum. The largest part (41.8%) tends to watch English video content between two and three hours a day. Quite a large number, or 24.5% of respondents watch videos even longer. These percentages demonstrate that English video watching is an important part of the young students' daily lives, which can be explained by their age and the significant impact of YouTube and other social media on children.

How many hours a day do you approximately spend on watching video content in English?			
Scale	Less than 1 hour	2-3 hours	3+ hours
Amount of students	33	41	24
Percentage	33.7 %	41.8 %	24.5 %

Table 3: Time that students approximately spend on watching English videos during the day

8a. Do educational videos like the one you watched in class help you to acquire English knowledge better?

The first part of this question had to demonstrate participants' opinion about the effectiveness of educational English videos on their language learning process. The results were one-sided – 86 out of 98 total participants (87.8%) expressed positive attitude and stated that English educational videos do help them to acquire English-language skills, and only 12 of them (12.2%) disagreed.

8b. If yes, which English skill do you think improves the most?

For this question, eight different answers were provided by 86 respondents who previously reacted positively. A total number of 98 meaningful statements was selected. The most common answer, named 31 times (32%), was improving vocabulary. The rest of the answers received quite

a similar number of mentions. The listening competence was in second place with 13 mentions. There were 12 respondents to whom it was clear that the educational videos are an effective English learning tool, yet they could not decide which one. The other five options received gradually fewer picks; general knowledge and pronunciation competences received respectively ten mentions each, as well as grammar and speaking skills (both 8 mentions). The spelling skill was named least frequently. The distribution of the meaningful statements is quite predictable and logical, as the educational videos as well as the video content in general tend to stimulate vocabulary, listening, pronunciation skills and the general knowledge.

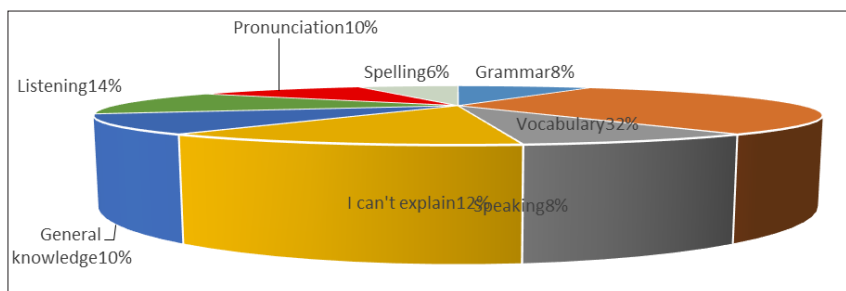


Figure 12: English skills that, in students' opinions, improve when watching English educational videos

One possible limitation of the research could be that the first set of words given to the students might be more challenging than the second set, but there are no objective methods to measure this difference in the difficulty of the vocabulary.

5. Conclusions

After the empirical research was carried out and analyzed, the following conclusions have been made: First, the reviewed literature has shown the importance of using digital content in English classes, as well as its significant influence on the language-learning process. Previous research also shows that the acquisition of English language skills through video content is an effective tool for the development of EFL learners. According

to researchers, this digital tool is particularly useful for improving students' comprehension, listening, vocabulary development and speaking competences. However, this is still an underexplored and under-researched linguistic field. The video content chosen as a digital education tool in the classroom must be relevant and should correspond to the curriculum, also be informative and appealing.

Second, empirical research and its analysis of 98 respondents' pre-tests and post-tests demonstrated that the average student's score increased by 26.01 percent after watching the chosen video. The result of only one task out of five had a deterioration of 1.44%, while the rest of the tasks demonstrated an improvement from 9.26% to a very high 148.7%. Taking into consideration that this average improvement of more than a quarter is achieved after viewing only one particular video during two English lessons, it is evident that a further incorporation of English videos in the learning process can lead to gradual but significant improvements in the long run.

Third, the results of a questionnaire revealed that English videos, both educational and other, are strongly influential in the EFL acquisition processes. Students have a very positive attitude towards the English video content, as the majority of them spend more than two hours a day watching them. Their opinion clearly matched the results of the empirical research, and they indicated that the English vocabulary, listening, speaking, comprehension and pronunciation skills all improved significantly. Students also reacted affirmatively to the digital education and its tools used during the lessons. Interestingly, more students (59.2%) prefer face-to-face classes to online learning. This shows that a combination of digital tools and personal contact is the best formula for effective foreign language instruction.

So, this research has proven that English videos are a significant and important tool in the digital education era. The pre-tests and post-tests successfully demonstrated improvements of students' EFL competences. The questionnaire demonstrated students' favourable attitude towards English video content, its incorporation in the English lessons and its effectiveness for their EFL competences. If selected according to the lesson plan, they are an effective digital education tool.

References

- Almusaed, A., Almssad, A. and Cortez, M. R. (2021). *Online Education During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Issues, Benefits, Challenges, and Strategies* (S. Jackowicz and I. Sahin, Sud.). ISTES Organization Monument, CO, USA.
- Alwehaibi, H. O. (2015). The Impact of Using YouTube in EFL Classroom in Enhancing EFL Students' Content Learning. *Journal of College Teaching and Learning*, 12(2), 121–126.
- Borisova, E. V. (2020). Students in the digital format of the educational process of the higher educational institution: Risks and advantages. *Journal of Physics: Conference Series*, 1691(1). <<https://doi.org/10.1088/1742-6596/1691/1/012075>>
- Chung, J. (2009). The Effects of Using Two Advance Organizers with Video Texts for the Teaching of Listening in English. *Foreign Language Annals*, 35(2), 231–241. <<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1944-9720.2002.tb03157.x>>
- Hadijah, S. (2016). Teaching by Using Video: Ways to Make it More Meaningful in EFL Classrooms. In *Proceedings of the Fourth International Seminar on English Language and Teaching (ISELT-4), October* (pp. 307–315).
- Herron, C., York, H., Corrie, C. and Cole, S. P. (2013). A Comparison Study of the Effects of a Story-based Video Instructional Package Versus a Text-based Instructional Package in the Intermediate-level Foreign Language Classroom. *CALICO Journal*, 23(2), 281–307. <<https://doi.org/10.1558/cj.v23i2.281-307>>
- Kabooha, R. and Elyas, T. (2018). The Effects of YouTube in Multimedia Instruction for Vocabulary Learning: Perceptions of EFL Students and Teachers. *English Language Teaching*, 11(2), 72. <<https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v11n2p72>>
- Kiziltepe, Z. (2000). Attitudes and Motivation of Turkish EFL Students towards Second Language Learning. *ITL – International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 129–130, 141–168. <<https://doi.org/10.1075/itl.129-130.01kiz>>
- Ku, E., Furukawa, G. and Hiramoto, M. (2021). “EFL + α ”: Attitudes Towards English Use in Japan Around Necessity, Value, and Ability. *International Journal of TESOL Studies*. <<https://doi.org/10.46451/ijts.2021.10.06>>

- Kuznetsova, V. and Azhmukhamedov, I. (2020). *Advantages and Risks of Using the Digital Educational Environment*. 1369–1381. <<https://doi.org/10.3897/ap.2.e1369>>
- Lamanauskas, V. (2011). Digital Education: Some Implications. *Journal of Baltic Science Education*, 10(4), 216–208.
- LRT (2021). Jau galima sužinoti visų brandos egzaminų rezultatus, tarp jų – ir anglų kalbos, už kurią šimtukų pelnyta mažiau. *LRT.LT*. (7 July 2021). Available at: <<https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/1454867/jaugalima-suzinoti-visu-brandos-egzaminu-rezultatus-tarp-ju-ir-anglu-kalbos-uz-kuria-simtuku-pelnyta-maziau>>
- McLaughlin, C. (2022). “What is Digital Education?” *The University of Edinburgh Institute for Academic Development*. (13 August 2022) <<https://www.ed.ac.uk/institute-academic-development/learning-teaching/staff/digital-ed/what-is-digital-education>>.
- Misevičiūtė, V. (2018). A Desperate Call for Process and Post-Process Approach in Lithuanian ESL Classrooms. *Sustainable Multilingualism*, 13(1), 210–224. <<https://doi.org/10.2478/sm-2018-0018>>
- Nhung, L. T. T. and Dieu, T. D. V. (2020). Impacts of using cartoons as an instructional tool on English communicative skills of young learners at a Vietnamese primary school. *SOCIAL SCIENCES*, 10(2), 78–86. <<https://doi.org/10.46223/HCMCOUJS.soci.en.10.2.553.2020>>
- Park, Y. and Jung, E. (2016). Exploring the Use of Video-clips for Motivation Building in a Secondary School EFL Setting. *English Language Teaching*, 9(10), 81. <<https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v9n10p81>>
- Poštić, S. (2015). INFLUENCE OF CARTOON NETWORK ON THE ACQUISITION OF AMERICAN ENGLISH DURING CHILDHOOD. *Verbum* 6, 188–195.
- Rahimi, M. and Hassani, M. (2012). Attitude towards EFL textbooks as a predictor of attitude towards learning English as a foreign language. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 31, 66–72. <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2011.12.018>>
- Raijn, J. (2016). The Role of Visual Learning in Improving Students’ High-Order Thinking Skills. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 7(24).
- S. Alghonaim, A. (2020). Impact of Watching Cartoons on Pronunciation of a Child in an EFL Setting: A Comparative Study with Problematic Sounds of EFL Learners. *Arab World English Journal*, 11(1), 52–68. <<https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no1.5>>

- Secules, T., Herron, C. and Tomasello, M. (1992). The Effect of Video Context on Foreign Language Learning. *The Modern Language Journal*, 76(4), 480–490. <<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.1992.tb05396.x>>
- Shrum, J. L. and Glisan, E. W. (2009). *Teacher's handbook: Contextualized language instruction* (4th ed). Boston, MA: Heinle Cengage.
- Shu Sim, T. (2012). Audiovisual news, cartoons, and films as sources of authentic language input and language proficiency enhancement. *The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, 11(4), 56–64.
- Yawiloeng, R. (2020). Second Language Vocabulary Learning from Viewing Video in an EFL Classroom. *English Language Teaching*, 13(7), 76. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v13n7p76>

Appendix

Pre-Test

1. Translate these words into Lithuanian:

- confidence –
- to boost smth –
- likely –
- certain –
- ability –
- mindset –
- grades –
- to attempt –
- challenge –
- to reject –
- knowledge –
- pep talk –
- to consider –
- setback –
- to untangle smth –

2. Explain these phrases:

- to face a challenge –
- to lurk at every corner –
- give somebody a pep talk –

3. Choose the one word or phrase that best completes the sentence.

1. "Hey, look, he's just like his father, they do everything the same way." "Yes, it's in his _____".
a) legs b) genes c) eyes d) armpit
2. When everything was going just fine, in a moment Erin faced a _____ to run 10 kilometres.
a) grandma b) injury c) challenge d) bad thing
3. A feeling when you can really trust yourself and know that you are capable of doing something is called:
a) grudge b) power c) confidence d) trusted
5. A _____ mindset is thinking that you were born with some abilities and now you're growing with them.
a) true b) fixed c) correct d) growth
6. If you want to be successful and confident, you also have to be _____ to yourself.
a) mean b) angry c) confident d) kind

4. Read and fill in the gaps with appropriate words.

There are a few tricks that give you an immediate confidence in the short term. Picture your (6) _____ when you're beginning a difficult task, something as simple as listening to music with deep bass: it can (7) _____ feelings of power. You can even (8) _____ a powerful pose or give yourself a pep talk. Tip two: believe in your ability to improve. If you're looking for a (9) _____ change, consider the way you think about your abilities and talents. Do you think they are fixed at birth, or that they can be developed, like a muscle? These beliefs matter because they can (10) _____ how you act when you're faced with setbacks.

6. a) success b) feelings c) emotions d) face
7. a) fulfil b) promote c) provide d) make
8. a) do b) put on c) strike d) make
9. a) long b) long-term c) short-term d) medium-term
10. a) influence b) show c) look d) change

5. Read the Text Part 1 and choose the most suitable answer for the following questions.

Text Part 1

When faced with a big challenge where potential failure seems to lurk at every corner, maybe you've heard this advice before: "Be more confident." And most likely, this is what you think when you hear it: "If only it were that simple." But what is confidence? Take the belief that you are valuable, worthwhile, and capable, also known as self-esteem, add in the optimism that comes when you are certain of your abilities, and then empowered by these, act courageously to face a challenge head-on. This is confidence. It turns thoughts into action. So where does confidence even come from? There are several factors that impact confidence. One: what you're born with, such as your genes, which will impact things like the balance of neurochemicals in your brain. Two: how you're treated. This includes the social pressures of your environment. And three: the part you have control over, the choices you make, the risks you take and how you think about and respond to challenges and setbacks. It isn't possible to completely untangle these three factors, but the personal choices we make certainly play a major role in confidence development.

Text Part 1 is written in order to:

11. a) intrigue writer
- b) advertise smth
- c) make a suggestion
- d) catch reader's attention

When a person deals with serious problems or tasks, there's always a possibility of:

12. a) making it
- b) failure
- c) facility to try to do it
- d) frightening feeling

How many aspects of confidence are there?

13. a) two
- b) three
- c) four
- d) there's only you and yourself

Your decision making model isn't important for being self-confident:

14. a) true
b) false
c) not mentioned

You have to be both mentally and physically prepared in order to become confident:

15. a) true
b) false
c) not mentioned

Social pressure boosts the environment and your feelings.

16. a) true
b) false
c) not mentioned

Post-Test

1. Translate these words into Lithuanian:

- greater –
- to include –
- action –
- social pressure –
- environment –
- certainly –
- to respond –
- a choice –
- to support –
- short term–
- abilities –
- failure –
- an airplane–
- an advice –
- excitement –

2. Explain these phrases:

- to strike a pose –
- to play a major role –
- to picture your success –
- turn thoughts into actions –

3. Choose the one word or phrase that best completes the sentence.

1. "The confidence doesn't come after a day, it can be _____, like a muscle."
a) stronger b) developed c) training d) strong
2. "What shows that they will win the war?" "Well, there are several _____."
a) failures b) facts c) factors d) things
3. "Don't be afraid, stand up, give yourself a _____, and go for it."
a) Ted talk b) prep-talk c) small talk d) pep talk
5. The crimes he did in the past will probably _____ his time in jail.
a) evaluate b) erase c) impact d) insist
6. If you want to be successful and confident, you have to _____ in yourself.
a) build b) become c) belief d) believe

4. Read and fill in the gaps with appropriate words.

When faced with a big challenge where potential (6) _____ seems to (7) _____ at every corner, maybe you've heard this advice before: "Be more confident." And most likely, this is what you think when you hear it: "If (8) _____ it were that simple." But what is confidence? Take the belief that you are valuable, worthwhile, and capable, also known as self-esteem, add in the optimism that comes when you are (9) _____ of your abilities, and then empowered by these, act courageously to face a challenge head-on. This is confidence. It turns (10) _____ into action. So where does confidence come from? There are several factors that impact confidence.

6. a) failure b) success c) mistake d) thought
7. a) wait b) leak c) lurk d) sneak
8. a) – b) just c) could d) only
9. a) knowing b) certain c) capable d) cursed
10. a) idea b) body c) things d) thoughts

5. Read the Text Part 1 and choose the most suitable answer for the following questions.

Text Part 1

Tip 1: a quick fix. There are a few tricks that can give you an immediate confidence boost in the short term. Picture your success when you're beginning a difficult task, something as simple as listening to music with deep bass; it can promote feelings of power. You can even strike a powerful pose or give yourself a pet talk. Tip two: believe in your ability to improve. If you're looking for a long-term change, consider the way you think about your abilities and talents. Do you think they are fixed at birth, or that they can be developed, like a muscle? These beliefs matter because they can influence how you act when you're faced with setbacks. If you have a fixed mindset, meaning that you think your talents are locked in place, you might give up, assuming you've discovered something you're not very good at. But if you have growth mindset and think your abilities can improve, a challenge is an opportunity to learn and grow. Neuroscience supports the growth mindset. The connections in your brain do get stronger and grow with study and practice. It also turns out, on average, people who have a growth mindset are more successful, getting better grades, and doing better in the face of challenges. Tip three: practice failure. Face it, your' going to fail sometimes. Everyone does. J. K. Rowling was rejected by twelve different publishers before one picked up *Harry Potter*. The Wright Brothers built on history's failed attempts at flight, including some of their own, before designing a successful airplane. Studies show that those who fail regularly and keep trying anyway are better equipped to respond to challenges and setbacks in a constructive way. They learn how to try different strategies, ask others for advice, an persevere.

Text Part 1 is written to:

11. a) read about confidence
- b) speak about J. K. Rowling and the Wright Brothers
- c) give three strict rules to boost your confidence
- d) give three advices to boost your confidence

If you add the number of J. K. Rowling rejections to the number of tips given, you get:

12. a) 15
- b) 12
- c) not mentioned

The scientists say that the _____ mindset is better.

- 13. a) fixed
- b) growth
- c) not mentioned

Tip ____ says that a person should trust him/herself and that he/she can get better:

- 14. a) one
- b) two
- c) three

Who in Text Part 2 says that you shouldn't practice fails:

- 15. a) Neuroscience
- b) Tip one
- c) nobody

According to the text, certain music can boost your confidence.

- 16. a) true
- b) false
- c) not mentioned

Received: 23 June 2023

Accepted for publication: 7 October 2023

Aurelija Daukšaitė-Kolpakoviene*
Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania

PROVIDING FEEDBACK ON STUDENTS' WRITING IN EFL CLASSES WITH #LANCSBOX

Abstract

Heavy workloads do not always allow EFL teachers to be sole feedback providers, so there is a need to search for tools to facilitate the feedback provision process. This exploratory case study regarding students' writing in EFL classes adopted a corpus-based approach. It used #LancsBox, a corpus tool, to analyse posts written on Moodle by Lithuanian students of English, as the study aimed to see what kind of information could be received and then provided to the students. The analysis revealed certain spelling variations, collocations, and patterns of information. The article suggests that corpus-driven analysis of written texts could be used for providing indirect feedback to higher-proficiency EFL students to foster their ability to correct their errors independently.

Key words: corpus tools, EFL writing, feedback, university students, VMU

1. Introduction

Due to high numbers of students in their classes, limited time, heavy workloads, and other reasons, EFL teachers are in constant need to search for additional ways and innovative tools, for instance, applications (e.g., see Rosmalen et al. 2013), to facilitate the process of feedback provision on students' receptive and productive skills. As “technology finds a number of applications in and outside the classroom” (Abdel-Haq & Bayomy Ali

* aurelija.dauksaite-kolpakoviene@vdu.lt

2017: 15) in various spheres of life, teachers of foreign languages and other study subjects have started using them in their teaching to make student learning more interesting and engaging as well. The need for such tools to assist teacher feedback provision to their students became especially urgent during the Covid-19 pandemic when education of all study subjects at all study cycles moved to online environments. Even before there had been attempts to create and/ or employ ICT and other tools to assist teacher feedback in physical classrooms as well, but in the past several years technologies have definitely become an integral part of every class: online, hybrid, blended, or face-to-face. Some teachers have welcomed the shift enthusiastically as a way to make their teaching more lively and effective and help to improve various skills (Abdel-Haq & Bayomy Ali 2017), while some others have been less happy about it but cannot pretend not to notice the present-day reality that involves the use of the newest technologies and tools.

This paper describes an exploratory case study employing #LancsBox, a software package developed at Lancaster University, as a corpus tool and innovative means that potentially could be used to provide feedback on EFL students' writing, even though traditionally the tool is not meant for this purpose. The study considers its advantages and disadvantages through its actual application to pieces of writing produced by EFL students. Corpora are quite often employed in the context of EFL in order to create wordlists, grammar, and other exercises, but this study attempts to see whether one specific corpus tool could be used for feedback, formative feedback in particular. As Ashkan and Seyyedrezaei noted in their publication, "corpus-based teaching is [...] a democratic instrument of learning" (2016: 195). It is hoped that the use of #LancsBox as an instrument to provide feedback would at least slightly expand the boundaries of EFL teaching and learning and encourage utilising corpus tools (and other not typical means for feedback) in EFL classes more often.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Innovative Tools for Feedback on EFL Writing

According to Thi and Nikolov (2021), teachers are not always able to provide timely and good quality feedback because they have limited time for it, while their students are mixed in their abilities but expect individual

feedback. Naturally, there is a great need for automated feedback tools to solve or at least reduce this problem. Thi and Nikolov provide an example of *Grammarly* and in their study compare its feedback with teacher feedback. Their analysis showed that *Grammarly* focused only on “surface-level errors” and provided feedback on them, while teacher feedback paid attention to “lower- and higher- level writing concerns” (Thi and Nikolov 2021: 1). This means that the feedback provided by the teacher and the tool differed in scope, but a combination of both could be used in order to provide effective feedback. The study also revealed that the source of feedback was not important, since the students were able to revise their errors in both cases.

The research by Alvira (2016) in the Colombian context analysed another tool and its possibilities. A web 2.0 tool based on screencasts, defined as “digital recordings of the activity on a computer screen, accompanied by voiceover narration” (Alvira 2016: 83), was utilised to provide feedback on EFL writing. The findings demonstrated that the use of the tool increased students’ autonomy and level of motivation, improved their paragraph writing skills (structure, cohesion, and coherence), and even their grades.

Hatziapostolou and Paraskakis (2010) emphasise that certain ICT tools or a mixture of traditional and e-tools could be used to provide or rather communicate formative feedback in a variety of contexts or teaching modes (face-to-face, blended, or distance), but they neither name nor discuss those tools. However, they warn that not all of such tools can provide quality feedback or at least the quality can be arguable in relation to such characteristics of good feedback as time, link to assessment criteria/ learning outcomes, personalisation, and the ability to motivate students. Yet, they describe the so-called Online FEdback System (OFES) which is an e-learning tool used to provide effective formative feedback. It can be integrated into any LMS (Learning Management System) and in turn, engage and motivate students to reach their learning objectives. In their study, the OFES tool focused on effective communication of feedback. The students tried the tool for two years and provided positive feedback on it. The fact that the tool was designed only for a particular unit (topic) the class covered was seen as a limitation by its authors who agreed there was a lot of space left for improvement of the tool in the future.

Another study carried out by Pedrosa-de-Jesus & Guerra explored “innovative ways for promoting written formative feedback in the context of

undergraduate studies and for assessing the effectiveness of [...] feedback mechanisms” (Pedrosa-de-Jesus & Guerra 2018: 3), while Rosmalen et al. (2013) described how they designed an application using automatically created visualisation for formative feedback on summarising. In other words, the studies that have been carried out so far have put their attention to the already existing tools used in education (of foreign languages) and/ or the creation and testing of new ones that could be used for feedback provision on EFL writing. It is also important to point out that the results of such studies are inconclusive and/ or sometimes conflicting and often hardly comparable. Yet, the constant search, creation, and testing of such tools only proves how important it is to have them in the first place in order to ease teachers’ workload and at the same time meet students’ needs so that they can take the provided feedback into account and improve their skills in the future.

2.2. Corpus Tools and Language Teaching

Corpus linguistics tools are not actual ICT tools and traditionally are not meant for EFL teaching and learning. However, since the 1980s (Ashkan & Seyyedrezaei 2016), it has become quite common to use them in language teaching, especially while creating corpus-informed EFL/ ELT materials, since various corpora contain and reflect real-world language use (written and/ or spoken authentic data for data-driven learning) in a variety of contexts. Learner language corpora are explored and exploited for various purposes as well.

The use of corpora in teaching different language skills has been documented in numerous publications. Previous studies have focused on the usefulness of corpora for teaching academic writing skills (Abdel-Haq & Bayomy Ali 2017; Al-Quahtani 2021; Kaya et al. 2022; Özbay & Kayaoğlu 2015), English speaking performance in terms of epistemic markers (Şahin Kızıl & Savran 2018), and logical connectors (Wu 2019). They also focused on vocabulary learning and retention (Ashkan & Seyyedrezaei 2016; Roca Varela 2012), grammar learning (e.g., who and whom in relative clauses) (Phoocharoensil 2012), and analysis of cultural and collocational input in EFL textbooks (Wardani 2020). Other publications on the topic have explored the difficulties (e.g. related to unknown vocabulary or difficult grammatical structures) faced by EFL learners using corpora (Abdel-Haq & Bayomy Ali 2017; Şahin Kızıl & Savran 2018; Oktavianti et al. 2022), as

well as the benefits of corpora as perceived by (prospective) EFL teachers (Özbay & Kayaoğlu 2015; Oktavianti et al. 2022) and language educators building learner corpora (Crosthwaite 2012), etc. In general, the research on language skills in relation to the use of corpora usually focuses on how the language is used by other people (even though they are real, often native speakers but not necessarily), not the students themselves who are in a particular EFL class.

Ashkan and Seyyedrezaei (2016) claim that the use of corpora by language teachers can sometimes be seen as abusive, as they use corpora too much/ often or rely on them too much while creating wordlists and other materials. Özbay and Kayaoğlu (2015) point out that the opposite is the case, as EFL teachers usually lack knowledge and skills related to corpus tools, which results in their resistance to or avoidance of such tools. In either case, when they do use them for writing skills in the language teaching and learning context (e.g., EFL), the following main ways (of usage) can be identified:

Practically, corpora have principally been used in two main ways to inform writing instruction, either through a corpus-based approach where worksheet materials are derived from concordance output, or through a corpus-driven approach, commonly referred to as data-driven learning (DDL), which requires the student to interact directly with the corpus. (Abdel-Haq & Bayomy Ali 2017: 22)

The study of this paper does not fall under either of the main two usages of corpora. Even though the use of a particular corpus tool will serve as a way to inform writing instruction, no materials will be created based on any already existing corpus, and the students will not be interacting with the corpus directly either. Moreover, the search for information on the use of corpora to provide feedback on EFL students' writing or other skills revealed that such studies could not be found. The author of the present paper does not dare to claim that such studies do not exist at all, but this might suggest a gap in the current knowledge, which could be addressed. That is, the value of the paper lies in the fact that it might be one of the first attempts to propose the use of EFL teacher-created corpora compiled from their students' writing in order to provide formative feedback.

3. Research Methodology

The following *research question* was posed before the study: what sort of feedback is possible to receive and provide on EFL students' writing with #LancsBox? To answer this question, an exploratory case study, adopting a *corpus-based approach*, was carried out with actual pieces of writing by EFL students. It *aimed* to identify the advantages and disadvantages of the mentioned tool concerning feedback provision on students' writing.

Research materials and tools: 53 “My memorable trip” posts written by Lithuanian students of upper-intermediate English at Vytautas Magnus University (Lithuania) in the autumn semester of 2021 were taken from Moodle and put into a Word.docx document, which became a mini-corpus of 38,613 characters with spaces (*materials*) and then was imported into LancsBox 6.0 (Brezina 2021) that served as a *research tool*. As mentioned before, #LancsBox is a software package developed at Lancaster University. It is available for downloading and possible to use free of charge on all operating systems. Since data can be loaded and imported into #LancsBox, it is a useful tool for many purposes: everyone can upload a variety of selected texts (of their own or taken from somewhere) and work with them. It can be applied to analyse existing or newly built corpora consisting of one file or a number of separate files. For example, if students work on a task where they write something on a shared word.docx on any online platform (e.g., Microsoft Outlook or Google Docs), it saves time for the teacher, since it is easy to download the file and load it into the tool as a mini-corpus. In the present paper, the analysis of a newly built “My memorable trip” corpus will focus on the language used in it.

A variety of tools can be employed in order to provide effective feedback in all classroom contexts. However, how much feedback should be provided might differ depending on particular students, their needs, their proficiency in a particular language if it is a foreign language classroom, such as EFL, expected study outcomes, particular skills, etc. Moreover, Wulandari (2012) points out that students should be given a chance to adopt the provided feedback themselves by making informed decisions based on whether particular feedback is related to their own skills when feedback is general rather than directed at every student personally. For this purpose, it is a good idea to try out #LancsBox as this study does.

4. Results and Discussion

In #LanCSBox 6.0, the concordance tool KWIC gives insight into how a particular word or phrase is used in the corpus, so it is possible to see if there is a particular pattern of using that word or phrase. It provides key words in context and “textual enhancements by highlighting the target structure in a sentence making the input more salient” (Kaya et al. 2022: 48). As it allows searching for words, phrases, and grammatical patterns, it is especially useful for EFL teachers who wish to provide feedback on their students' written production in their own created corpus or corpora. The search via KWIC was done in this study as well in order to see what sort of information could be received and later provided to students in the form of feedback. As the students' task was to write about their memorable trip, “trip” was entered into the search engine (the settings stayed as they had been originally set – seven words before and after the keyword) to find all of its instances. We found 111 occurrences of “trip” as a keyword. Figure 1 presents some of them.

Index	File	Occurrences	Texts	Corpus	Context	Display Text
53	my memorab	111 (154.02)	went to Italy. We talked about this	trip	for about two months and one day	
60	my memorab		Marino. And this was the best spontaneous	trip	in my entire life. The trip to	
61	my memorab		spontaneous trip in my entire life. The	trip	to Jurmala beach is the most beautiful	
62	my memorab		to Jurmala beach is the most beautiful	trip	we take, it is a special trip,	
63	my memorab		trip we take, it is a special	trip	especially if it is with my friends	
64	my memorab		I have the most unique journey. My	trip	was planned for school, because I traveled	
65	my memorab		best trip. And this time, my	trip	with class was a new experience, and	
66	my memorab		around the island. We agreed on this	trip	one day before it. For this trip	
67	my memorab		trip one day before it. For this	trip	we rented a van where we all	
68	my memorab		say about this island. Crete. My memorable	trip	to France was two years ago. I	
69	my memorab		was two years ago. I planned the	trip	for the whole family very carefully. I	
70	my memorab		parks. First of all, my most memorable	trip	was to Bulgaria last summer. We decided	
71	my memorab		Last February, in 2020, my school organised	trip	to Czech Republic, city Prague. We chose	
72	my memorab		new connections. It was a three day	trip	At the day time we all visited	
73	my memorab		each other. That was like some team-building	trip	as it helped to find new friends	
74	my memorab		daughter went to Italy. We don't plan	trip	we just bought it from agency. It	
75	my memorab		it from agency. It was a summer	trip	on June. We were taking bus. It	
76	my memorab		the past. Nothing bad happened during the	trip	everyone was happy. One of my most	
77	my memorab		of my most memorable trips was a	trip	to Slovakia. I was offered this trip	
78	my memorab		trip to Slovakia. I was offered this	trip	a few years ago by an English	
79	my memorab		Slovakia at the end of October. The	trip	was very long, we rode the bus	
80	my memorab		mountains, visited the Slovak capital. So, this	trip	left a lot of positive memories, experiences	
81	my memorab		such an incredible country. Even though our	trip	to China last more than 24 hours	
82	my memorab		best thing I can remember about our	trip	was people who couldn't hide their surprised	
83	my memorab		journey I have ever had. My last	trip	was one of the most memorable trips	
84	my memorab		saw Buckingham Palace. Every part of the	trip	was amazing. I really enjoyed the food	
85	my memorab		back, my family and I planned a	trip	to Poland. We were always thinking about	
86	my memorab		with each other. That was a great	trip	I don't remember my memorable journey, but	
87	my memorab		my life. It was not my first	trip	on a train. When I was 7	
100						

Figure 1. “Trip” as a Keyword in Context

The concordance lines were then sorted by the left context alphabetically. The patterns of occurrence that were spotted were: “trip” was preceded by an indefinite article “a” (10 instances), the adjective “memorable” (13 instances), which is not surprising in the context of the task, the possessive form “my” (6 instances), as the task required to write about their own trip,

or “our” (8 instances), the definite article “the” (19 instances), and the demonstrative “this” (24 instances). This does not provide us with much information about the kinds of trips the students wrote about, as these are mostly grammatical words (except for the adjective), although individual instances reveal “planned,” “solo,” “spontaneous” (2 instances), “summer” and “unexpected” trips. However, as the students had studied articles in their course before, their usage could be a possible focus of feedback.

When the concordance lines were sorted by the left context alphabetically (Figure 2), it became possible to see certain patterns of information that the students provided about their memorable trips in order to write their paragraphs about them. These could be used for general, positive, or neutral collective feedback, especially about a particular topic such as a memorable trip.

Index	File	Left	Node	Right
42	my memorab	idea to visit Laos and Cairo. The	trip	to Cairo by bus was exciting but
91	my memorab	such an incredible country. Even though our	trip	to China last more than 24 hours
44	my memorab	memorable moments. A memorable trip was a	trip	to Croatia. This trip I did not plan,
71	my memorab	Last February, on 2020, my school organised	trip	to Czech Republic, cth Prague. We chose
68	my memorab	say about this island Crete. My memorable	trip	to France was two years ago. I
23	my memorab	from above. It was a long planned	trip	to Greece. My family have that prearranged
98	my memorab	or 10 years old, I had a	trip	to gymnastics competition in Russia, Moscow. My
91	my memorab	spontaneous trip in my entire life. The	trip	to Jamaica beach is the most beautiful
3	my memorab	summer me and my friends took a	trip	to Latvia, for a week we stayed
4	my memorab	and strong storm started on our way	trip	to Latvia was different experience, because I've
100	my memorab	my holidays in foreign countries, but the	trip	to Palanga this summer. My best best
95	my memorab	back, my family and I planned a	trip	to Poland. We were always thinking about
7	my memorab	Netherlands me and my friends organized a	trip	to Rotterdam. We decided to go with
102	my memorab	we decided to go on a road	trip	to Slovakia and travel by car. Well,
77	my memorab	of my most memorable trip was a	trip	to Slovakia. I was offered this trip
34	my memorab	was seven. My aunts family planned a	trip	to the sea. Aunt called my dad
17	my memorab	and I had long dreamed of a	trip	to Wolf Lair, which is located in
49	my memorab	new experiences and friends. My most memorable	trip	took place in July 2019. The team and
105	my memorab	wanted to visit my brother. The whole	trip	took place two years ago, it started
43	my memorab	of knowledge and memorable moments. A memorable	trip	was a trip to Croatia. This trip I
84	my memorab	saw Buckingham Palace. Every part of the	trip	was amazing. I really enjoyed the food
22	my memorab	are stunning. I think my most memorable	trip	was in 2016- my first flight. It
90	my memorab	do. Jtd participate in the competition. That	trip	was in Autumn, because I remember that
91	my memorab	a short from memory story, but that	trip	was memorable from train with beds till
101	my memorab	trip was the city of Porto. That	trip	was memorable not only because of the
93	my memorab	the sun was set. Overall, this spontaneous	trip	was one of the best thing that
82	my memorab	journey I have ever had. My last	trip	was one of the most memorable trips
84	my memorab	best thing I can remember about our	trip	was people who couldn't hide their surprised
64	my memorab	I have the most unique journey. My	trip	was planned for school, because I traveled

Figure 2. “Trip” Sorted by the Left Context

Our EFL students provided information on time (e.g., a few years ago, three years ago), abstract place (e.g., abroad); reasons for travelling (e.g., because we wanted to visit my brother), cost, duration (e.g., lasted for seven days), occasion (e.g., for our anniversary), means of transport (e.g., on a train), destination (e.g., to Cairo, to China, to Greece, to France, to Slovakia, etc.), and who they travelled with (e.g., with my boyfriend). The most frequent form was the form ‘to be’ in the past tense - ‘was’ (25 instances). As the students described their past trips, not their planned

trips for the future, this finding is not unexpected. Thus, the use of past grammatical forms could be a source of feedback in the corpus as well. On the other hand, other past forms might need to be searched for separately and would require more time.

Based on the textbook this particular class of EFL students used, the actual “My memorable trip” task and the orientation questions that had been given on Moodle before the study were the following:

Think of a memorable journey/ trip you have been on. Write a description of it (something similar to the text about travelling by train that we read in class) and your experience in 60–100 words. The following questions might help you:

- 1. How did you plan your trip?*
- 2. Where did you go and when?*
- 3. Who went with you?*
- 4. What means of transport did you use?*
- 5. Which places did you visit? What did you see?*
- 6. Did anything exciting/bad/ interesting, etc. happen?*

Thus, through the application of the corpus tool, it is possible to see that in their posts written on Moodle, the students definitely focused on these questions, especially on questions 2, 3, and 4 discussed above. That is, the paragraphs were to the point, but at the same time, the students added some other pieces of information that they considered to be relevant about their memorable trips, such as costs, reasons for travelling, or duration that made their paragraphs more detailed and informative, which is an interesting finding. However, as one could expect, it is not possible to check whether the written paragraphs were coherent, as the KWIC search focuses on the form(s) in the corpus, not the structure of the texts in it.

The GraphColl tool on #LancsBox allows visual representation in terms of collocations (co-occurrence of words/ word clusters) for a chosen word in any imported corpus or corpora. The set GraphColl settings were the following: span 5<>5, statistics 03-MI, threshold statistic value 3.0, and collocation frequency 5; unit – no change in settings). Having chosen this option, “trip” in the “My memorable trip” corpus had 37 close and not-so-close collocates that Figure 3 displays. The closer the word to the node (“trip”), the stronger the collocation in the corpus. The words on

the left of the figure usually precede “trip” in the corpus, while those on the right are used after. Others (those that are above or below “trip”) appear sometimes before but sometimes after “trip.” These may or may not be actual collocations per se, as is the case in this study, but such visual representation could be a useful way for EFL teachers to check whether their students use certain collocations correctly, when a writing task asks them to use particular collocations they have studied in class recently.

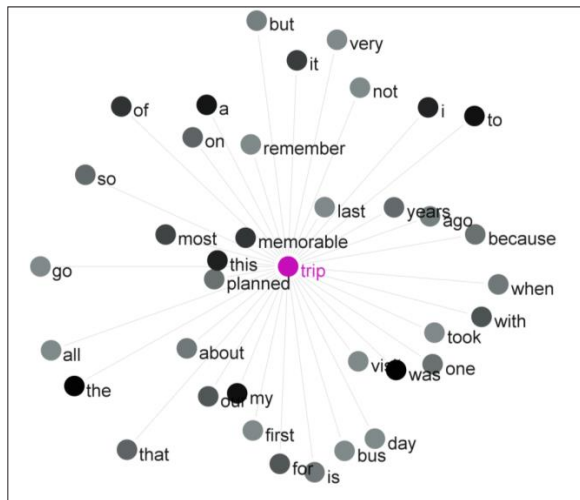


Figure 3. Collocates of “Trip” in the Corpus

As being on a trip involves travelling, it was also interesting and useful to see how the verb “travel” was used by the students who wrote about their memorable trips. “Travel” in all its forms was searched for by using the KWIC tool on LancsBox 6.0. This involved knowledge of advanced search options in the corpus, as the search for “travel”, just like “trip” discussed above, would have provided only the instances of this exact form, not all the forms of “travel” present in the corpus. Therefore, EFL teachers would definitely need more training on such options in order to be able to make use of this and other #LancsBox (or other corpus) tools effectively and efficiently. The command that was necessary in this particular case is seen in the search section of Figure 4.

Index	File	Left	Node	Right
1	my memorab	up with the idea of wanting to	travel	by train from Sacramento to New York,
2	my memorab	but the excitement was much greater. I	traveled	through several states. During the day, I
3	my memorab	darkening, it was possible to discuss with	travellers	of different races and nationalities. For me,
4	my memorab	the longest and most impressive journey of	traveled	alone. Me and my three friends decided
5	my memorab	in 2000. We rented the car and	traveled	whole island, except the Turkish territory. We
6	my memorab	years ago I have visited Norway. I	traveled	with my mum and sister. In Norway
7	my memorab	years ago I have visited Italy. I	traveled	with a sport dance club. We all
8	my memorab	St. Peter's Basilica. The next day we	traveled	to Venice. I really enjoy the environment
9	my memorab	in which part of Lithuania I was	travelling	For me all the process is very
10	my memorab	most of the time in Orcaea we	traveled	to find or rented a car. Although there
11	my memorab	but it was the first time I	traveled	abroad. As long as I remember, the
12	my memorab	we had to sleep in there and	travel	numerous kilometres till we reached the hotel
13	my memorab	When I was twelve years old, I	traveled	with my family to Russia, the Anapa
14	my memorab	We planned this trip all year because	travel	to this country is not so easy.
15	my memorab	us, my mom's friend lives there. We	traveled	by car. That was really challenging because
16	my memorab	was the best and the most exciting	travel	in my life. I never had a
17	my memorab	years ago I had a chance to	travel	with my school to four famous European
18	my memorab	Germany, France and Netherlands. Luckily I was	travelling	with a friend who also was great
19	my memorab	go by train. It was first time	travelling	to train for all of us, up
20	my memorab	my favorites. A few years ago, I	traveled	to the United Arab Emirates with my
21	my memorab	there, our family had to resort by	travelling	with public transport. It was very interesting
22	my memorab	interesting experience since we got to by	travelling	with Shinkansen (Japanese bullet trains), and we
23	my memorab	rested for three days and then we	traveled	all over the West Coast. I did
24	my memorab	was offered by my mother. I agreed. I	traveled	to Croatia seven years ago. I traveled with
25	my memorab	agreed. I traveled to Croatia seven years ago. I	traveled	with my mom. I rode the bus all
26	my memorab	be repaired. My most memorable trip was	travelling	to Belgium with the Erasmus+ project. It
27	my memorab	First time in my life, I was	travelling	without my friends and family. Only eight
28	my memorab	place in July 2019. The team and I	traveled	to Portugal. Together with three other teams
29	my memorab	Portugal. Together with three other teams we	traveled	by bus, still stopping in another country. On the

Figure 4. All Forms of “Travel” in the Corpus

There were 51 occurrences of “travel” being used in the corpus. As can be seen in Figure 4, there were some spelling variations when the verb “travel” was used in the past and continuous tenses – one “I” (AmE) or double “I” (BrE). As the Lithuanian education system prefers British English rather than American English, there should have been 35 cases of double “I” usage in the corpus, not 9 as it was. This would not be considered an error in a university test or examination, but the students could be informed about their preference for American spelling, which they may or may not have noticed themselves, and which might be explained by the influence of American popular culture (e.g., songs, films, social media, etc.). In addition, some more differences between American and British English could be highlighted by the teacher (e.g., spelling in some other words, differences in vocabulary, etc.). Thus, the corpus-driven feedback could go alongside or be expanded by teacher feedback.

When the concordance lines were sorted by the right context alphabetically, it became possible to see three patterns of how the students used “travel”: to provide information on means of transport with the preposition “by” (e.g., by bus, by car) (task question 4), where they travelled (e.g., to Portugal) (task question 2), and with whom (e.g., with my family) (task question 3). When the concordance lines were sorted by the left context alphabetically, it showed that the students mostly wrote about their travelling from the personal point of view by using the pronoun

“I” and the collective “we”. These results are similar to those about the use of “trip” discussed above.

Having discussed the findings of this exploratory case study concerning students’ writing while utilising #LancsBox, the following main advantages of the corpus method in EFL could be observed (the order of the list does not mean the order of importance):

- 1) It is possible to generalise about the tendencies of students’ writing without focusing solely on errors.
- 2) This may motivate students when positive or neutral feedback is provided rather than only negative (positive reinforcement).
- 3) Corpus-driven feedback could serve as a means for formative assessment (no grades given, as it is feedback meant for improvement in the future).
- 4) It is objective, accurate, unbiased, trustworthy, and valid feedback.
- 5) Students may not take such feedback personally/ emotionally (information is given by the tool).
- 6) It would be useful for adult learners or higher proficiency students, including for self-revision.
- 7) It would enhance the efficacy of teacher feedback.
- 8) It is data-driven learning.
- 9) It saves time and energy on the part of the teacher.
- 10) It has an option of visual representation.
- 11) It can focus on particular pre-selected (by the teacher or maybe even by the students) aspects (e.g., specific grammar or lexis covered in class recently).
- 12) It encourages independent student error correction.
- 13) It can go alongside teacher or peer feedback if needed or be followed by peer feedback activities (e.g., for structure and coherence).

Previous studies suggest that such focused (selective) feedback seems to be more effective than comprehensive feedback (Cheng et al. 2021). In the context of this case study, data-driven learning would take place, based on certain issues discussed in class, with details and examples provided, as the students would be asked to improve their writing, whether it is a paragraph, an essay, or some other piece of writing. This activity could be followed by group or pair work where peer feedback would be given on the

structure, content, organization, and/ or other elements of the texts (global issues). In other words, corpus data-driven feedback (focused corrective feedback when a limited number of forms is focused on or selective corrective feedback when one form is selected) would be an important part but not the only source of feedback. In fact, a combination of forms and methods of providing feedback is supported by previous research (e.g., Zaman and Azad 2012). In addition, some studies (e.g., Saidon et al. 2018) show that sometimes students take teacher-provided feedback personally and emotionally. Therefore, corpus data-driven feedback would help the students see the feedback as impartial.

Moreover, as prior studies (e.g., Zaman and Azad 2012; Daukšaitė-Kolpakovienė 2022) suggest, students prefer teacher feedback rather than peer feedback, and, despite their learning styles (Tasdemir and Yalçın Arslan 2018), want it to be frequent. Therefore, students should be made aware of the fact that their peers may also bring valuable insight into their writing. They could consult their teachers if they do not agree with or are not sure about the feedback provided by their peers in the activities following the corpus-driven feedback, since sometimes EFL students doubt the value of peer feedback due to their self-perceived or likely peer low(er) proficiency in English (Daukšaitė-Kolpakovienė and Mačianskienė 2023). Furthermore, both peer feedback and data-driven feedback, in this case, would be formative feedback activities, and the provided feedback could be both positive and negative. Thus, the focus of feedback would not necessarily be on errors, even though the purpose of the discussed feedback would be to improve students' writing skills. Formative feedback as such is useful in low-stakes assignments (Owen 2016; Gedye 2010) or medium-stakes assessments (Shute 2008) in which students have a chance to practice certain skills before submitting the final version of their written work and improve that way.

Undoubtedly, the corpus method for feedback on EFL students' writing has its limitations:

- 1) It mostly involves indirect collective feedback (rather than local and direct), even though personalised feedback is possible.
- 2) It is selective rather than comprehensive feedback (as it focuses on only several pre-selected aspects).
- 3) It focuses on the form rather than content in writing (even though some information about it can be received, as, for instance,

whether some of the task questions are answered in the Moodle posts as discussed above).

- 4) It is not suitable for low-proficiency EFL students.
- 5) Students may not take such feedback seriously.
- 6) It is difficult to comment on the structure or organisational features of written pieces (but this can be left for other activities involving, for example, group or peer work).
- 7) It would require teacher training on corpus linguistics and the use of corpus tools, especially their advanced options.
- 8) It could be time-consuming if a teacher would like to make use of the tool to the fullest in order to provide feedback on EFL students' writing.

If learner data had been coded in the corpus or it had been annotated, it could have provided more information about the students' language use. However, this would be time-consuming on the part of the teacher, and it would not be possible to provide timely feedback either. Of course, this would require a lot more skills and knowledge related to corpus linguistics as well. On the other hand, as some researchers, such as Tehrani (2018), point out, feedback should be personalised. As a result, collective feedback may be seen as a limitation or rather a disadvantage of the use of #LancsBox for feedback on EFL writing, but even if collective feedback provided using data-driven corpus analysis turned out to be not effective for every individual student, undoubtedly it could still be handy in the learning process in many ways.

If separate files rather than one file with students' writing were used, a certain degree of individual feedback would be possible in comparison to the collective one. It is also possible to apply the tool using one file with one student's writing at a time. In such a case, the provided feedback would definitely be personalised, but it would require a lot of time in order to provide such feedback to every student in the class. This would not necessarily be very meaningful, as it would be difficult to spot tendencies and variations of all sorts of forms, especially when a piece of writing is quite short (as it was in the "My memorable trip" task).

It is important to mention that if there is a need to analyse very large corpora, a new version of the tool has already been released – #LancsBox X. However, this particular case study is limited in the size of the used corpus (based on a particular task) and the functions of the corpus tool it

employed. Therefore, future studies could try to apply other options of this or other corpus tools in EFL writing or other skills. They could also involve students' opinions on or perceptions of feedback on their writing or other skills provided utilising corpus tools.

5. Conclusions

#LancsBox is only one of a variety of types of media to provide formative feedback to EFL students on their writing without reading every single piece (e.g., a paragraph, Moodle post, etc.) word for word, which would be time-consuming for all teachers, including those who teach other subjects. Information from the tool is relatively easy and quick to collect, so it is a great advantage for teachers, but at the same time, the use of the tool could be seen by their students as an interesting and objective means to provide feedback. Effective integration of #LancsBox in writing instruction can definitely provide insight into students' writing and increase the efficacy of teacher feedback, promote data-driven learning, boost student motivation to study, and encourage them to take responsibility for their independent error correction and improvement of their writing. Various findings received through the corpus tool integrating students' writing can be successfully employed for both positive and negative feedback in an EFL or other classroom. The feedback provided using the corpus tool could also go together with teacher feedback and/ or peer feedback. Of course, the disadvantages of the use of #LancsBox to provide feedback on students' writing in the EFL setting should not be disregarded, as a quick use of the tool would not allow personal feedback (unless a separate file imported in the tool uses one student's writing). This means that it is a good idea to employ this and possibly some other corpus tools only while providing feedback for higher proficiency (and/ or adult) EFL students who would have enough skills to perceive indirect collective feedback as beneficial and in turn act based on it.

The use of corpora to provide feedback to EFL students seems to be quite promising and has the potential for successful implementations in EFL classrooms. Even though it has its limitations (considering the fact that the discussed tool is not meant for feedback provision), the advantages the article discusses are worth considering. It is hoped that this exploratory case study will contribute to the promotion of the use of corpora tools in

the EFL context for a greater variety of purposes (not only corpus-informed materials or student activities using corpora), as ample objective evidence they offer proves their pedagogical usefulness.

References

- Abdel-Haq, E. M., and Bayomy Ali, H. S. (2017). Utilizing the Corpus Approach in Developing EFL Writing Skills. *JRCIET*, 3(2), 11–44. (5 August 2023) <https://jrciet.journals.ekb.eg/article_24458_57856b5c81595ea130b5ce061adb7f68.pdf>.
- Al-Quahtani, A.A. (2021). The Integration of Corpus-based Approach with EFL Academic Writing in the Saudi Context. *International Journal of English and Literature Studies*, 10(1), 22–45. <https://doi.org/10.18488/journal.23.2021.101.22.45>
- Alvira, R. (2016). The Impact of Oral and Written Feedback on EFL Writers with the Use of Screencasts. *Profile*, 18(2), 79–92. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15446/profile.v18n2.53397>
- Ashkan, L., and Seyyedrezaei, S. H. (2016). The Effect of Corpus-Based Language Teaching on Iranian EFL Learners' Vocabulary Learning and Retention. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 6(4), 190–196. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v6n4p190>
- Brezina, V. (2021). #LancsBox: Lancaster University Corpus Toolbox (Version 6.0). Lancaster University. (17 August 2022) <<http://corpora.lancs.ac.uk/lancsbox/download.php>>.
- Cheng, X., Zhang, L. J., and Yan, Q. (2021). Exploring Teacher Written Feedback in EFL Writing Classrooms: Beliefs and Practices in Interaction. *Language Teaching Research*, 1-31. (16 August 2022) <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/13621688211057665>>.
- Crosthwaite, P (2012). Learner Corpus Linguistics in the EFL Classroom. *PASAA Journal* (44), 133–147. (15 August 2022) <<https://hub.hku.hk/bitstream/10722/205823/2/Content.pdf?accept=1>>.
- Daukšaitė-Kolpakovienė, A. (2022). Attitudes of English Students Whose Skills are Peer-Assessed. *Human, Technologies and Quality of Education. Proceedings of Scientific Papers= Cilvēks, tehnoloģijas un izglītības kvalitāte. Rakstu krājums*. Ed. Linda Daniela. Riga: University of Latvia, 360–368. <https://doi.org/10.22364/htqe.2022.26>

- Daukšaitė-Kolpakovienė, A., and Mačianskienė, N. (2023). Peer Assessment of Oral Presentations in EFL Classes: Assessors' View. *Pedagogika*, 150(2), 102–118. <https://doi.org/10.15823/p.2023.150.6>
- Gedye, S. (2010). Formative Assessment and Feedback: A Review. *Planet*, 23(1), 40–45. <https://doi.org/10.11120/plan.2010.00230040>
- Hatziapostolou, T., and Paraskakis, I. (2010). Enhancing the Impact of Formative Feedback on Student Learning through an Online Feedback System. *Electronic Journal of e-Learning*, 8(2), 111–122. (16 September 2022) <<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ895699.pdf>>.
- Kaya, F.Ö., Uzun, K., and Cangir, H. (2022). Using corpora for language teaching and assessment in L2: A narrative review. *Focus on ELT Journal*, 4(3), 46–62. <https://doi.org/10.14744/felt.2022.4.3.4>
- Oktavianti, I. N., Triyoga, A., and Prayogi, I. (2022). Corpus for Language Teaching: Student Perceptions and Difficulties. *Project: Professional Journal of English Education*, 5(2), 441–455. <https://doi.org/10.22460/project.v5i2.p441-455>
- Owen, L. (2016). The Impact of Feedback as Formative Assessment on Student Performance. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 28(2), 168–175. (16 September 2022) <<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1111131.pdf>>.
- Özbay, A. Ş., and Kayaoğlu, M. N. (2015). EFL Teachers' Reflections towards the use of Computerized Corpora as a Teaching Tool in Their Classrooms. *Çukurova Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 44(1), 85–104. <https://doi.org/10.14812/cuefd.54367>
- Pedrosa-de-Jesus, H., and Guerra, C. (2018). Teachers' Written Formative Feedback on Students' Critical Thinking: A Case Study. *Journal of Education*, 9(1), 3–22. (16 September 2022) <<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/294779569.pdf>>.
- Phoocharoensil, S. (2012). Language Corpora for EFL Teachers: An Exploration of English Grammar through Concordance Lines. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 64, 507–514. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.11.060>
- Roca Varela, M. L. (2012). Corpus Linguistics and Language Teaching. *ES. Revista de Filología Inglesa*, 33, 285–300. (5 August 2023) <<https://dialnet.unirioja.es/download/articulo/4546831.pdf>>.
- Rosmalen, P., Kester, L., and Boshuizen, E. (2013). Towards App-based Formative Feedback to Support Summarizing Skills. *CEUR Workshop Proceedings*, 1147. (5 August 2023) <<http://ceur-ws.org/Vol-1147/paper4.pdf>>.

- Saidon, M. A., Said, N. E. M., Soh, T. M. T., and Husnin, H. (2018). ESL Students' Perception of Teacher's Written Feedback Practice in Malaysian Classrooms. *Creative Education*, 9, 2300–2310. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ce.2018.914170>
- Shute, V. J. (2008). Focus on Formative Feedback. *Review of Educational Research*, 78(1), 153–189. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654307313795>
- Şahin Kızıl, A., and Savran, Z. (2018). The Integration of Corpus into EFL Speaking Instruction: A Study of Learner Perceptions. *International Online Journal of Education and Teaching*, 5(2), 376–389. (5 August 2023) <<http://iojet.org/index.php/IOJET/article/view/368/241>>.
- Tasdemir, M. S., and Yalçın Arslan, F. (2018). Feedback Preferences of EFL Learners with Respect to Their Learning Styles. *Cogent Education*, 5(1), Article 1481560. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2018.1481560>
- Tehrani, F. A. (2018). Feedback for Writing or writing for feedback? *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 14(4), 162–178. (19 August 2022) <<https://www.jlls.org/index.php/jlls/article/view/981>>.
- Thi, H. K., and Nikolov, M. (2021). How Teacher and Grammarly Feedback Complement One Another in Myanmar EFL Students' Writing. *Asia-Pacific Edu Res*, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40299-021-00625-2>
- Zaman, M., and Azad, A. K. (2012). Feedback in EFL Writing at Tertiary Level: Teachers' and Learners' Perceptions. *ASA University Review*, 6(1), 139–156. (19 August 2022) <<http://asaub.edu.bd/data/asaubreview/v6n1sl11.pdf>>.
- Wardani, E.C. (2020). A Corpus-Based Exploration of Indonesian EFL Textbooks: Cultural and Collocational Input. *Seminar Nasional Ilmu Pendidikan Dan Multidisiplin*, 3, 92–100. (19 August 2022) <<https://prosiding.esaunggul.ac.id/index.php/snip/article/view/13/16>>.
- Wulandari, Y. (2012). Effective Feedback to Improve Students' Writing Skills. *Educalitra. English Education, Linguistics, and Literature Journal*, 1(1), 10–17. (16 September 2022) <<https://jurnal.unupurwokerto.ac.id/index.php/educalitra>>.
- Wu, H. (2019). A Corpus-based Analysis of TESOL EFL Students' Use of Logical Connectors in Spoken English. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 9(6), 625–636. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17507/tpls.0906.04>

Received: 10 August 2023

Accepted for publication: 1 November 2023

Danijela Ljubojević*

Institute for Educational Research
Belgrade, Serbia

THE PEDAGOGY OF HANDWRITING IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING: A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF RESOURCES AND CHALLENGES IN SERBIA'S ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS**

Abstract

Establishing good handwriting habits in the earliest grades is very important for the entire schooling. It affects school performance and promotes learning. In Serbia, pupils start learning Cyrillic letters in Grade 1, while the Serbian Latin alphabet is taught in the second term in Grade 2. When it comes to ELT, there is no official introduction to the English Roman alphabet and children are expected to acquire the new script from Grade 3 and use it efficiently. In this paper, we analysed the learning resources for English (student's books and workbooks) used in Grades 1 and 2 to determine the type of writing activities given, whether they provide sufficient support to develop writing skills, and how they can be improved. Based on the results, recommendations are given to improve the teaching instruction.

Key words: ELT, handwriting method, handwriting, cursive writing, writing strokes, English alphabet, letter formation, legibility, primary grades, Grade 1, Grade 2

* danijela.ljubojevic@ipi.ac.rs

** The paper was presented at the 7th International Conference ELLS 2023 English Language & Literature Studies: Modern Perspectives and Beyond, 20–22 October 2023.

1. Introduction

Learning a foreign language is usually regarded as a process of developing four essential language skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Nonetheless, in regular foreign language programmes in Serbia, this process does not start with all of them: children in primary grades establish first contact with a foreign language only through listening and speaking, and later through reading and writing. Although foreign languages are taught from age 7 (Grade 1), it is only at the age of 9 (Grade 3 of primary schooling) that children are introduced to reading and writing. The reason for this lies in the fact that there are different scripts: the Cyrillic script is used to write the Serbian language while all foreign languages in the Serbian educational system, apart from Russian, use the Roman / Latin script. However, the Serbian Latin script is also used, but is to be taught from the second term in Grade 2.

Learning two different scripts in such a short time can be a challenging task for young learners. If the third script is introduced, it can become really demanding. That is one of the reasons why the National Curriculum on Foreign Languages in Serbia explicitly stipulates that there is no writing in Grades 1 and 2. Language instruction is based on communicative (the approach to language where communicating a message and interaction is important) and aural-oral approach (the approach to language learning through hearing and speaking). This process should resemble the process of language acquisition where children acquire or pick up a language in classroom conditions like the ones in the natural environment. Having this in mind, English language teachers in Serbia do not teach pupils writing in Grades 1 and 2.

On the other hand, more and more teachers feel the urge to change this because they find it problematic to jump to Grade 3 and start with reading and writing as if the students were completely literate when it comes to the Latin script. This research complements a recent study which aimed to determine the attitudes of foreign language teachers in Serbia teaching in younger grades of elementary school towards the teaching of writing. Although almost half of the teachers explicitly stated that they are against writing in the first grade, the research results show that the current teaching practice does not neglect writing in the first two grades; furthermore, writing is present even though it is not set out in the National Curriculum for Foreign Languages. One of the findings is that teachers

believe it is important to apply different techniques in the classroom so that their pupils become introduced to reading and writing in the early stages of schooling. It was interesting to see that half of the teachers see themselves as competent to deal with writing techniques from the first grade (Ljubojević, *in press*). The present study set out to explore the most effective techniques for the teaching process. Having in mind these results, it provides the first extensive examination of course material used in Grades 1 and 2 to fill a gap in the literature on how to tackle the problem of writing properly.

This paper examines the situation of current handwriting pedagogy in Serbia in English language teaching (ELT) learning resources (student's books and workbooks) and considers some specific aspects of teaching initial writing in English in the early grades of elementary school with the challenges that this teaching poses. This research is, in a way, a language program evaluation which is defined as "the systematic collection and analysis of all relevant information necessary to promote the improvement of a curriculum and assess its effectiveness and efficacy as well as the participants' attitudes within the context of the particular institutions involved" (Brown, 1989). The basic reason for this type of research is to improve the effectiveness of course materials, classroom activities, teaching, and students' learning process, i.e., handwriting tasks in Grade 1 and Grade 2.

It is necessary here to clarify exactly what is meant by 'writing' as it is a broad term. In the field of language teaching, various definitions of 'writing' are found. Throughout this paper, the term 'writing' refers to writing as a set of knowledge, habits, skills, and abilities of correct graphic formation of cursive and printed letters in English. It will not be used to describe writing activities and tasks, such as paragraph or essay writing, but activities that support the development of writing skills.

The term 'script' will be used in this paper to refer to "a set of letters in which a language is written" (Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary) but not with the meaning of "(English) alphabet". Throughout the paper, 'script' will be used for both Cyrillic script and Latin script. The term 'alphabet' will refer to "a set of letters or other characters with which one or more languages are written especially if arranged in a customary order" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary), i.e., the English alphabet, Latin alphabet, or Roman alphabet.

The first section of this paper will give a brief overview of recent research in the field of cognitive psychology and the importance of handwriting

for the learning process. It also lays out the theoretical dimensions of the research and looks at how handwriting is set out through the legal requirements of both the National Curriculum in England for pupils aged five to 11 and the National Curriculum in Serbia for Foreign Languages. The second section is concerned with the methodology employed for this research. Section 3 analyses the data gathered and addresses each of the research questions in turn. The purpose of the final section is to reflect on the extent to which this study has contributed to the changes in ELT. In the end, the activities, and techniques for developing writing techniques in foreign language classes are listed, by means of which this approach would be implemented into teaching practice, all in accordance with the developmental possibilities of students and didactic recommendations in our educational system. The recommendations are important not only for English language teachers, but also for all other foreign language teachers who teach languages based on the Latin alphabet.

2. Literature Review

The absence of a consensus on the appropriate start for children to embark on their reading and writing journey is a thought-provoking issue. Those in favour of postponing the introduction of reading and writing in the early grades offer various rationales. They argue that young learners may not be sufficiently psychophysically prepared for such tasks, emphasising the need for children to first acquire a foundation of concepts and ideas before diving into reading and writing. Furthermore, they are concerned about imposing additional cognitive burdens, especially in the context of learning a foreign language, as unrealistic expectations can potentially diminish children's motivation.

On the other hand, some authors believe there is no need to postpone writing in the first grade because contemporary living conditions and educational standards diminish all the previously stated arguments. One of the key messages from a 2006 EC report in respect of the teaching and learning of modern languages in the case of very young children across Europe emphasises the value of introducing reading and writing at an early stage rather than exclusively concentrating on oral communication (Edelenbos, Johnstone, & Kubanek, 2006: 9). It underscores the importance of a balanced approach to language learning. Research findings are also

cited in support of early writing instruction. Studies by Mertens and Vickov suggest that introducing writing skills in the first grade, even for foreign languages, can be advantageous and children benefit from being introduced to written foreign language immediately (as cited in Edelenbos, Johnstone, & Kubanek, 2006: 59). Vickov outlines essential principles for curriculum planning, emphasising the need for a holistic approach to writing instruction. It underscores the importance of linking writing with reading, promoting a gradual introduction, and ensuring that writing activities are relevant to pupils' lives. This aligns with the belief that, when executed thoughtfully, early writing instruction can enrich the learning experience without negatively impacting the acquisition of the native language (Vickov, 2005).

Along the same lines, Popović (2010) subsequently argued that children should start reading and writing from Grade 1 and presents several basic principles to follow in lesson planning:

- Writing needs to be closely linked to the development of reading skills.
- Writing in a foreign language should be closely linked to literacy development techniques in the native language.
- Writing should be introduced earlier and gradually and should be continuously used in class. Writing assessment should begin later.
- Students should practice both aspects of writing: orthography and the writing process.
- Writing must be connected to reality and must be relevant to children (Popović, 2010: 43).

Popović also provided examples of activities for integration into the curriculum and called on language policy creators to include writing and reading in the English language curriculum from the first grade.

Data from several studies in cognitive psychology suggest that there is a strong relationship between handwriting and learning. Many schools nowadays rely on technology and neglect writing. More and more course books are becoming increasingly digitised, offering only online materials. However, there is a growing number of researchers who argue it is vital that children are taught handwriting at school to help the brain learn and remember better. Ose Askvik et al. (2020) have determined that the involvement of the intricate hand movements and shaping of each letter makes the brain open for learning: “children, from an early age, must be exposed to handwriting and drawing activities in school to establish the

neuronal oscillation patterns that are beneficial for learning” (Ose Askvik, van der Weel, & van der Meer, 2020: 1). Their study aimed to explore if drawing and cursive writing are activating similar or different processes within the brain when compared to typewriting. The findings suggest that the delicate and precisely controlled movements involved in handwriting contribute to the brain’s activation patterns related to learning, while there was no evidence of such activation patterns when using a keyboard. (Ose Askvik, van der Weel, & van der Meer, 2020: 13). Van der Meer and van der Weel (2017) had previously determined that drawing stimulates such neuronal activity that it provides the brain with optimal conditions for learning. Along the same lines, a study carried out by Longcamp and Velay (2005) showed that children aged three to five were better at recognizing letters when they learned to write the letters by hand as opposed to writing them on the keyboard.

Moreover, research in this area has shown that poor handwriting skills affect school performance, particularly when it comes to written assessments. Several studies conducted in both the United States and the United Kingdom emphasise the significance of cursive handwriting in enhancing students’ cognitive capabilities (Van Galen & Meulenbroek, 1986). Research has identified a connection between students’ writing quality and their cognitive ability to process and recall information (Cripps & Cox, 1989). Proficient handwriting skills can contribute to academic achievement, particularly in spelling and vocabulary development.

In a study conducted by Fears and Lockman (2018), it was shown that there is a difference when children copy familiar (English letters) and unfamiliar (Cyrillic symbols) letter-like forms in real time. The results showed that younger children took longer to process letters and begin writing compared to older children, even though the writing time was similar for all age groups. Children were also more efficient at copying familiar English letters than unfamiliar Cyrillic symbols, as they spent more time and made more visual fixations on the Cyrillic symbols during the copying task. Additionally, children focused more on less common English letters compared to more frequently occurring ones. These findings are discussed in the context of how letter recognition impacts the development of automaticity in early handwriting.

Handwriting is more than just a motor skill and may make a very important contribution to children’s composition of a text. Handwriting difficulties are likely to impact pupils’ abilities to compose written language:

“There is evidence that intervention to teach handwriting can improve not only the handwriting of these children, but also their written composition.” (Medwell & Wray, 2008: 43) The importance of efficient handwriting in developing children’s writing skills is often overlooked in mainstream education. While there’s an emphasis on well-formed handwriting for spelling, the need for speed and automaticity in handwriting is neglected. Educators have prioritized the composing process, possibly as a response to past trends. Conversely, this approach may have led to the neglect of a valuable skill that contributes to the quality of writing.

To date, several studies have investigated the relationship between correct spelling and the use of fluent, joined up handwriting. Cripps and Cox (1989) suggested that by learning the movements of common spelling patterns by hand (kinaesthetically) as well as by eye, children would improve their chances of producing correct spelling and improve their vocabulary. The central point in this theory is that children should learn a clear, simple, and efficient handwriting script including exit strokes right from the beginning of writing teaching and joining of letters as early as possible. In a longitudinal study on the relationships of language in writing and between writing and reading, Abbott, Berninger, and Fayol (2010) argued that spelling (contrary to the common belief that spelling is a mechanical, memorisable skill) is a foundational skill for nurturing competent writers and composers, facilitating the expression of ideas and the interpretation of others’ texts it is.

Some other authors, although they support this theory, disagree on the degree of joining that should be taught. The study by Sassoon et al. (1986) offers probably the most moderate approach applicable to our teaching instruction. They concluded that encouraging children to use joining in their handwriting, as long as it felt comfortable, improved their ability to write smoothly and quickly. However, they advised against requiring joins that resulted in challenging hand movements (Sassoon, Nimmo-Smith, & Wing, 1986).

Significant research has been done to understand the role of working memory in writing. According to the results of some studies, it appears that working memory plays a significant role in the literacy scores of younger children. Specifically, when young learners need to allocate a substantial portion of their working memory to managing basic tasks like handwriting, it leaves them with limited capacity for more advanced cognitive processes. This heavy demand on working memory from handwriting can potentially hinder a child’s capacity to generate ideas, choose appropriate vocabulary,

oversee their writing progress, and make revisions to their text (Gathercole & Baddeley, 1993) To alleviate the issue of limited working memory capacity, automating tasks like handwriting can help. Automaticity means executing tasks quickly and accurately without conscious effort. This minimizes the load on working memory, allowing more cognitive resources for higher-level processes. Considering the evidence presented regarding the influence of handwriting skills on children's capacity to produce advanced text, it is crucial for them to develop smooth and efficient handwriting abilities.

Regulations and National Curriculum

One way to gauge the current status of handwriting in mainstream schools in Serbia is to examine its inclusion in the English language curriculum and to analyse its presence in the coursebooks accredited by the Ministry of Education. The National Curriculum for Foreign Languages in Serbia (including English) barely treats handwriting:

Reading and writing are optional activities in the second grade. Considering that the Latin alphabet is introduced in the teaching of the Serbian language in the second semester of the second grade, initial writing and reading can be offered as an option only for pupils who want and know it, at the elementary level (reading single words and simple sentences, completing words with a letter and the like, and by no means independent writing and dictations). This activity is not graded and has a minor role in the class. (Rulebook on the syllabus for the first grade of primary education, "Official Gazette of RS – Educational Gazette", number 10/17)

On the other hand, the National Curriculum for Serbian (as L1) deals with the techniques and outcomes when teaching a second script in more depth:

Students learn to write individual printed and cursive letters, words, and sentences; digits. The space between printed letters in words must be regular. When learning cursive letters, special attention should be paid to the joining of letters in words. Letters should be of the same size and shape, and the space between words should be uniform. Practice writing through copying, completing sentences, composing sentences based on pictures, composing sentences based on a series of pictures, dictation,

and independent writing of sentences and shorter text units. In addition to adopting the shape of the letter, and the direction of writing the letter itself, special attention should be paid to the spatial orientation in the notebook. Individual writing of letters is limited to one or two lines in the notebook. (Rulebook on the syllabus for the second grade of primary education, „Official Gazette of RS – Educational Gazette“, number 16/18)

The National Curriculum for England sets out the following teaching requirements for Key stages 1 and 2 (pupils aged 5-11) when it comes to writing:

In order to develop a legible style, pupils should be taught:

English key stage 1

Handwriting

a how to hold a pencil/pen

b to write from left to right and top to bottom of a page

c to start and finish letters correctly

d to form letters of regular size and shape

e to put regular spaces between letters and words

f how to form lower- and upper-case letters

g how to join letters

Presentation

h the importance of clear and neat presentation in order to communicate their meaning effectively.

English key stage 2

Handwriting and presentation

5 Pupils should be taught to:

a write legibly in both joined and printed styles with increasing fluency and speed

b use different forms of handwriting for different purposes [for example, print for labelling maps or diagrams, a clear, neat hand for finished presented work, a faster script for notes].

Attainment target 3: writing

Level 1 Letters are usually clearly shaped and correctly orientated.

Level 2 In handwriting, letters are accurately formed and consistent in size.

Level 3 Handwriting is joined and legible.

Level 4 Handwriting style is fluent, joined and legible.

Level 5 Handwriting is joined, clear and fluent and, where appropriate, is adapted to a range of tasks.

Level 6 Handwriting is neat and legible. A range of punctuation is usually used correctly to clarify meaning, and ideas are organised into paragraphs.

At age 7 demands that, 'In handwriting, letters are accurately formed and consistent in size'.

11 yrs Handwriting style is fluent, joined and legible the criteria include letter formation, orientation, relative size and fluency, fluency must be taken to mean evidence of the effective joining of letters an assumption that handwriting should be automatic and unproblematic.

(DfEE/QCA, 2000)

This summary of the regulations dealing with handwriting in mainstream primary schools underlines the minimal attention given to its teaching. Even the prescribed curricular instructions for the teaching of Serbian Latin are under scrutiny and some authors argue that there is a growing need for a different curricular framework for the improvement of the prescribed method of learning the Latin alphabet (Cvetanović, Negru, & Kelemen Milojević, 2017).

The study presented here is one of the first investigations to focus specifically on the importance of implementing the right techniques for developing (hand)writing skills with young language learners. There are several important areas where this study makes an original contribution: implementing proper techniques and tasks at such an early level of formal language learning, improving the effectiveness of course materials, and establishing handwriting courses for teachers, either as professional development courses or as a part of the formal syllabus at the philological faculties.

3. Methodology

Aims of the study

In light of the above discussion, this study aimed to examine writing activities provided in general EFL coursebooks used in Grades 1 and 2 in Serbia. Writing activities in the EFL coursebooks were analysed and evaluated in relation to the following study questions:

1. Are children exposed to written language throughout the course books?
2. What kind of language instructions prevail?
3. Are writing activities a regular or add-on component?
4. What kind of writing activity for developing fine motor skills is present throughout the course books?
5. Are these activities related to learning an English script in terms of the correct conventions so that the children will later:
 - a. Write letters using the correct sequence of movements?
 - b. Form lower case letters correctly in a script that will be easy to join later?
 - c. Use the four basic handwriting joins with confidence in independent writing?

The findings in this study draw our attention to the importance of considering teaching writing in the primary grades and might help us to find the most effective techniques for developing pupils' handwriting skills in Grades 1 and 2 when it comes to teaching a foreign script.

These five study questions allowed a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between writing activities and developing writing skills in English by using the selected coursebooks.

Procedure

The data used for this study were collected by analysing the content of 24 international general EFL coursebooks available for teaching English to learners aged 7–9 (Table 1). The titles were selected from the list of 40 accredited coursebooks, and their frequency of use in state primary schools was a significant criterion. Being widely adopted, these coursebooks were considered by the author of this paper to have been evaluated as quality materials by EFL teachers.

Grade	Title	Author(s)	Publisher(s)
1, 2	English Journey	Tatjana Mitrović	Nova škola
1, 2	Family and Friends	Susan Iannuzzi	Novi logos
1, 2	Happy House	Stella Maidment, Lorena Roberts	Oxford University Press
1, 2	My Disney Stars and Heroes	Tessa Lochowski	Akronolo
1, 2	Next Move	Mary Charrington	New Age Publishing
1, 2	New English Adventure – Starter A and B	Regina Raczynska, Cristiana Bruni	Akronolo
1, 2	Our Discovery Island Starter A and B	Tessa Lochowski	Akronolo

1, 2	Rainbow Bridge	Sarah M. Howell, Lisa Kester Dogdson	The English Book
1, 2	Rise and Shine Starter	Helen Dineen	Akronolo
1, 2	Smart Junior	H. Q. Mitchell	Data Status
1, 2	Smiles	Jenny Dooley	Freska
1, 2	Tam	Nataša Brown, Aleksandra Begović, Vesna Marković, Divna Kastratović, Kristina Crnojević	New Age Publishing

Table 1: The list of coursebooks surveyed in the study

This study focused on the content analysis of writing tasks given in the above coursebooks.

4. Results

The first set of questions aimed to determine whether pupils are exposed to written language at all throughout the course books and what kind of language instructions prevail. In order to answer these two questions, we analysed if there are unit/lesson titles, task instructions and key vocabulary. Additionally, we paid attention to the typeface, i.e., font family used.

As can be seen from Table 2, only one course book for Grade 1 (out of 12) does not include written lexis at all.

Course Book	Unit/ Lesson Title	Task instructions	Key vocabulary
English Journey 1	yes	yes	yes
Family and Friends Foundation	yes	yes	yes
Happy House 1	yes	yes	yes

My Disney Stars and Heroes 1	yes	yes	yes
Next Move 1	yes	yes	no
New English Adventure – Starter A	yes	yes	no
Our Discovery Island Starter A	yes	yes	yes
Rainbow Bridge 1	yes	yes	yes
Rise and Shine Starter	yes	yes	no
Smart Junior 1	yes	yes	yes
Smiles 1	yes	yes	no
Tam Tam 1	no	no	no

Table 2: Written forms throughout the course books

Unit / Lesson title and task instructions are present in the written form in 91,66% of the coursebooks analysed. Task instructions vary from a very simple verb (e.g., *Listen. / Say. / Chant.*) to more complex ones (e.g., *What's your favourite colour? Make a project. Present it to the class.*).

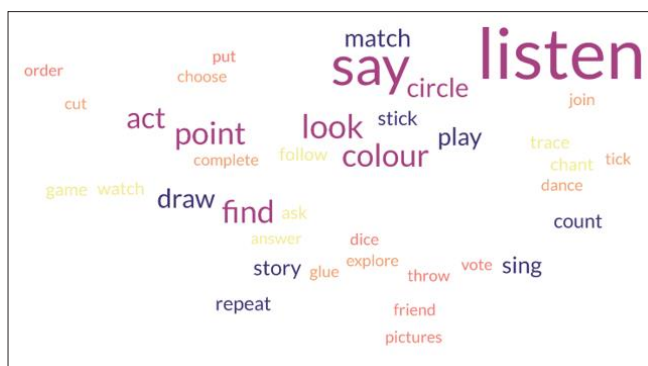


Figure 1: Word cloud of task instructions

Looking at the word cloud generated from the list of task instructions throughout the coursebooks (Figure 1), the most frequent verbs are “listen” and “say”, while the verbs denoting some kind of handwriting activity are only “colour” and “draw”.

When it comes to the key vocabulary in the written form, it is present in just over half of the coursebooks 58.33%. This percentage was higher when we analysed the coursebooks for Grade 2 – 91.66%. When a part of the lesson, the key vocabulary is usually written at the bottom of the page (Figure 2).

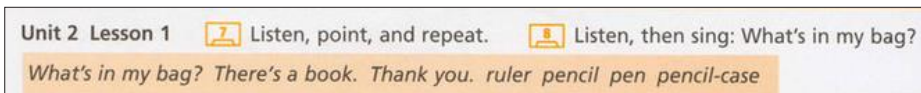


Figure 2: Representation of key vocabulary in coursebook
(Taken from a course book for Grade 1)

There is only one course book that offers word cards and includes games such as bingo with word cards and matching flashcards with word cards as a part of the teaching plan (e. g. *Show me the word [tiger]*). There are picture dictionaries at the end of the other course books, or some publishers offer a version of the picture dictionary with traceable words online.

When it comes to the font used in the course books, we identified several possible challenges which could interfere with the writing process:

1. Using only capital letters: SAY, FIND AND TRACE THE WORDS. THEN MATCH.
2. Using fonts with different letterforms (a vs α): **Come and play!**
3. Using a combination of both cursive and regular fonts (block letter f vs. cursive *f*):



The second set of questions aimed to analyse the types of (hand)writing activities. We tried to determine if the writing activities are a regular or add-on component and what kind of writing activity for developing fine motor skills is present. The final question was in direct connection to teaching writing and learning an English script:

Are these activities related to learning an English script in terms of the correct conventions so that the children will later:

- a. Write letters using the correct sequence of movements?
- b. Form lower case letters correctly in a script that will be easy to join later?
- c. Use the four basic handwriting joins with confidence in independent writing?

What is striking about the results is the 100% presence of handwriting activities for developing fine motor skills. The pupils are asked in every unit to colour, match, draw, join the dots, cut out, draw linking lines and draw along wiggly and zigzag lines, tick, manipulate stickers. All these activities are integrated as a regular component of the lessons. An interesting example for colouring activities can be found in one of the pupil's books for Grade 2: children are introduced to the letters of the alphabet by colouring them (Figure 3):

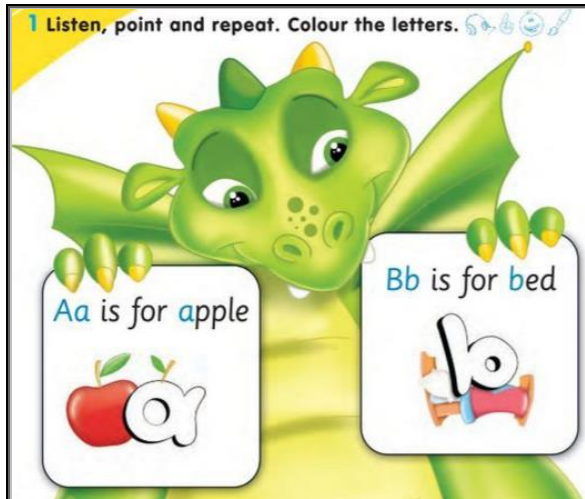


Figure 3: Colouring activity – colour the letters of the alphabet

This activity is a part of the section called *My first ABS* and is an integral component of every unit.

On the other hand, there are only two course books that provide activities which support learning an English script properly (Figure 4, note the beginnings where to start the letters correctly):

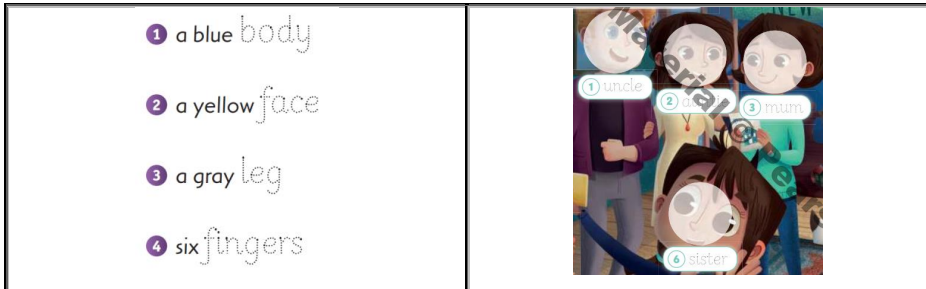


Figure 4: Tracing activities – writing
(Examples taken from two coursebooks for Grade 1)

There are tracing¹ activities present in the coursebooks for Grades 1 and 2; however, they do not provide anything more than a written form of a word (Figure 5):

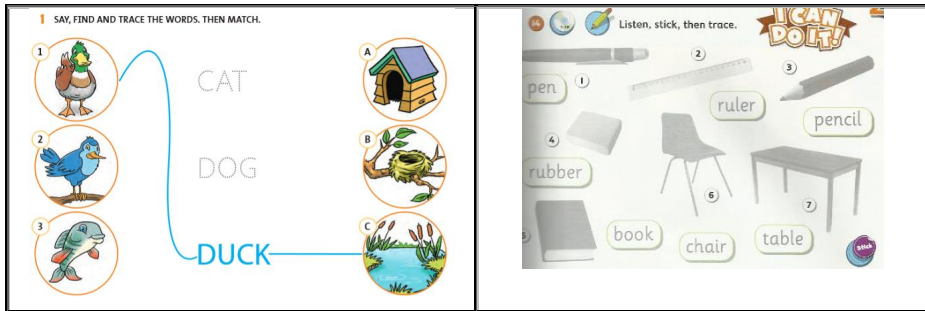


Figure 5: Examples taken from two coursebooks for Grade 1

¹ Tracing activities are activities that strengthen handwriting by helping children recognize the shape a letter takes while also practicing appropriate size of the letter and correct formation of the letter (see „Let’s practice writing: alphabet tracing“ by Winstrom, 2011)

Taken together, these results suggest that there is a significant presence of written lexis in the course books in Serbia for Grades 1 and 2. They indicate that pupils are introduced to written forms from the beginning of formal schooling, which is a good basis for starting reading and letter recognition. On the other hand, the typeface, i.e., font family can be challenging.

When it comes to writing in English, the results in this section indicate that there are insufficient activities provided to support developing writing skills from Grade 3. The next section, therefore, moves on to discuss the pedagogical implications for writing activities in the primary grades.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study clearly show that there is an abundance of written lexis in the coursebooks, but an insufficient number of activities that would develop writing skills with children. Young learners are exposed to the written lexis through unit titles, instructions, and key vocabulary, which is a good starting point for developing reading skills and letter recognition. The lack of writing activities is no surprise since this is in line with regulations of the National Curriculum, which stipulates that pupils should not write in English in Grades 1 and 2.

On the other hand, the National Curriculum for Foreign Languages does not prohibit writing completely. It is still possible for English language teachers to introduce letters even in the second grade: “initial writing and reading can be offered as an option only to students who want and know it, at an elementary level (reading single words and simple sentences, completing words with a letter and the like, by no means independent writing and dictation)” (Rule Book on the Second Grade Curriculum, 2018). This provides enough room for a wide range of pre-writing activities that will make the shift to Grade 3 smooth.

If pupils start with writing activities in Grade 3, this shift is very abrupt and sudden. The general presumption is that pupils have already learned the Serbian Latin script with their class teachers in Grade 2. However, this cannot be true for several reasons:

1. It takes time to master a second script and one term of learning is not enough. This particularly means that pupils start Grade 3 with very poor writing skills when it comes to using the Latin Alphabet even in their mother tongue.

2. Serbian Latin script, although similar to the English alphabet, does differ from it and these differences need to be taught and learned.

Having all this in mind, the focus of this paper is on choosing the best practices from the existing course books, recommending some additional activities, and suggesting a redefinition of the teaching instruction in Grades 1 and 2 through the incorporation of **the (hand)writing method**.

6. Implications

The study findings suggest several implications for writing activities in the primary grades. The findings will be of interest to language teachers, authors, and publishers, and can influence the content of writing activities in learning materials, teaching practices, professional development, initial training, and early writing and reading methods and techniques.

As we have seen from the results, there is a lack of supportive activities for writing in course books. Some publishers have already detected these limitations and incorporated tracing activities and even practice writing key words. However, most of them avoided these activities. Since letter writing is not foreseen by the National Curriculum, the solution is somewhere in between: to provide enough exercises that will gradually introduce pupils to the English script in Grades 1 and 2. The research has shown that a majority of teachers introduce Latin script writing in the second grade, even as early as the first grade, despite it being contrary to the official curriculum (Ljubojević, *in press*). This widespread practice calls for a re-evaluation of the existing regulations or taking a different approach. Instead of attempting to control this practice through regulations, it is advisable to focus on training foreign language teachers to effectively and professionally manage this aspect of the curriculum. Teachers should then be granted the freedom, within the bounds of regulations, to employ this approach. Furthermore, the fact that a significant portion of respondents had no strong opinions on the introduction of writing indicates the necessity for additional professional development for teachers concerning early writing methods and techniques. This awareness should also be raised during their initial education.

While primary school teachers are trained to instruct students in writing during their college education, it is suggested that language

teachers should also have the opportunity to attend relevant courses, even if they are optional. These courses would equip them with effective methods and techniques for early writing, which have proven to be successful. This could gradually lead to the phasing out of the traditional dictation technique for assessing writing. The substantial number of responses in the recent research by Ljubojević (*in press*) indicating the use of dictation for assessing writing, as opposed to other techniques, underscores the importance of raising awareness among teachers about alternative techniques (Ljubojević, 2010).

The abundance of lexis is significant and must not be underestimated because pupils are unconsciously exposed to the written language and letterforms. Similarly, research by Ljubojević (*in press*) has shown that teachers believe that children today already have a more substantial grasp of the Latin alphabet than previous generations, largely due to the influence of mobile phones and electronic devices, which expose them to the Latin script and even the English language. One noteworthy recommendation arising from this research is that first-grade students should be exposed to written words for visual memorization, without the immediate requirement of writing or copying words into notebooks. This underscores the need to change our teaching approach starting from the first grade. Although first-grade students with graphomotor skills may not be fully prepared to write in a foreign language, they can be introduced to words visually through various means, such as posters with inscriptions, flashcards in combination with word cards, word searches, hangman games, and more. From the beginning of the second grade, the introduction of writing can be facilitated through effective cooperation and coordination among teachers. To make these feasible, foreign language teachers should also undergo training on how to introduce a second script in a foreign language: it should be taught and practised directly and systematically, so that children learn the correct conventions and the correct sequence of movements in due time (Popović, 2010).

Differences in letterforms and scripts can be puzzling for young learners if not explained properly. Furthermore, they can interfere with the process of L1 writing literacy. The issue arises especially when it comes to writing cursive in Latin (L1) while writing letters in English is using a simplified form of printing, which is designed to lead easily into cursive writing at a later stage (Figure 6):

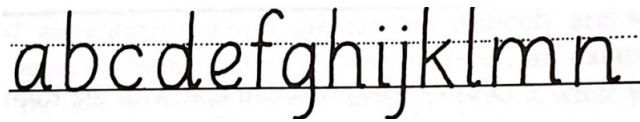


Figure 6: English letters

Simply having students replicate these letter forms isn't sufficient; they also need to develop the practice of moving the pen in the correct directions simultaneously (Figure 7):



Figure 7: Correct sequence of movements

Achieving this will enable them to easily transition to cursive writing in the future. Without this skill, they might likely adopt a personal, inefficient, and idiosyncratic approach to semi-joined printing that they will continue using throughout their lives.

The results of the analysis have shown that there are not enough writing activities that will prepare pupils for the English script in Grade 3. Many teachers believe that the first stage is to give pupils practice in forming the letters by copying them. However, this study suggests that there should be several phases prior to the straightforward copying of letters. Recent research by Cabahug and Mendez (2022) identified eight key elements that are essential to a child's ability to learn handwriting: knowledge of the alphabet, knowledge of the formation of letters, development of hand motor skills, proper hand grip and posture, tracing ability, visual perceptive skills, acknowledging mistakes and differences of forms, and repetition as a corrective action. Since this framework does not refer specifically to EFL, we would like to identify the key elements in the same vein:

1. Development of fine motor skills through activities such as drawing, colouring, matching, tracing, joining the dots, cutting out, drawing linking lines and drawing along wiggly and zigzag lines, ticking, manipulating stickers, etc.

Special attention should be paid to drawing activities. Instead of looking at Picture Dictionaries, pupils should draw pictures of their own words and create their own dictionaries as we have seen

the beneficial influence it has on learning as reported in the study by van der Meer & van der Weel (2017). Pupils should illustrate songs, chants, and vocabulary, not from time to time, but as an integral part of the language instruction.

2. Providing children with different activities that are preparatory for writing: get them to draw horizontal lines across the page in the right direction or rhythmic patterns corresponding to movements in Roman script (Figure 8):

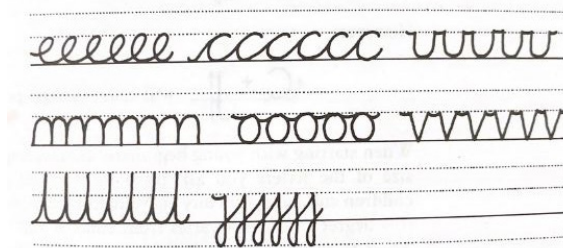


Figure 8: Preparatory activities for writing

3. Introducing tracing letters activities. Research by Smith, McLaughlin, Neyman, & Rinaldi (2013) has shown that providing students (even the ones with disabilities) with starting dots and the opportunity to trace letters to learn size, slant, and formation, and then fading those prompts was effective and applicable when teaching (Figure 9):

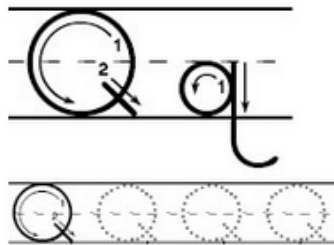


Figure 9: Alphabet tracing activities

4. Introducing “shape families”: the letters of the alphabet can be sorted into four main movement groups: **long letters** (l, t, i,

- u, j,), **curly letters** (c, a, g, q, o, e, f, s. Then **'bouncing ball' letters** (r, n, m, p, h, b, d), **'zig zag' letters** (v, w, x, k, y, z).
5. Preventing confusion between similar letters in their L1 (Cc, B, Pp, Xx, Yy).
 6. Teaching pupils how to join the letters. There are 4 main groups of letter joins: bottom joins, bottom to "c" shape joins, "e" joins (top and bottom join strokes), and top joins.

With such handwriting activities, pupils will become better prepared to start writing words, phrases, and sentences in Grade 3 and will not feel confused between three different scripts they are expected to master at the age of 8–9.

Teaching handwriting in the early grades is an important issue for future research. Further research should be undertaken to investigate whether these proposed writing activities for Grades 1 and 2 lead to better results in reading and writing in Grade 3.

7. Conclusions

The present study was designed to determine the extent of handwriting activities in the coursebooks for Grades 1 and 2, and whether they are supportive enough for children to develop good handwriting skills in English starting from Grade 3 when they are officially expected to write. The aim of these activities should be to teach children to write in a way that is legible, fluent, and fast enough to enable the letters to be joined easily later when children start writing cursive letters. One of the more significant findings to emerge from this study is that handwriting activities that support letter formation and legible handwriting are not present enough. They are randomly used instead being a part of the teaching method. The underlying principle of teaching presented in this paper is that children should have better results if the proposed handwriting method is applied alongside the communicative approach.

This is based on recent research, which has revealed that handwriting activates a specific part of the brain, which researchers believe is important for learning and memory. While analysing the coursebooks, we identified the following good examples for developing fine motor skills essential for good handwriting: colouring, matching, drawing, joining the dots, cutting out, drawing linking lines and drawing along wiggly and zigzag lines,

ticking, and manipulating stickers. What we determined as missing were more tracing activities and writing activities that would lead to the correct sequence of movements (writing strokes) and better joining of letters later when children start writing cursive letters.

The findings will be of interest to language teachers, course book authors, and publishers. They do not have to introduce letters and words from Grade 1, but meticulously chosen activities will suffice.

Future research should focus on determining the effects of introducing early writing. It would be interesting to assess the effects of its introduction when compared to the group of pupils who were only learning English from Grade 1 through communicative and aural-oral approaches. Overall, the findings of this study provide important insights into the relationship between handwriting and learning a foreign language in early grades and highlight the need for further research in this area.

Acknowledgements

Note. This research was funded by the Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation of the Republic of Serbia (Contract No. 451-03-47/2023-01/ 200018).

References

- Abbott, R. D., Berninger, V. W., & Fayol, M. (2010). Longitudinal relationships of levels of language in writing and between writing and reading in grades 1 to 7. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 102(2), 281–298. doi:10.1037/a0019318
- Brown, J. D. (1989). Language program evaluation: a synthesis of existing possibilities. In K. Johnson (Ed.), *The Second Language Curriculum* (pp. 222–41). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cabahug, A. M., & Mendez, M. L. (2022). Project Pagsulat: A Tool To Enhance Writing Skills of Grade One Pupils. *International Journal Of Advance Research And Innovative Ideas In Education*, 8(5), 1696–1702. (15 October 2023) <http://ijariie.com/AdminUploadPdf/PROJECT_PAGSULAT_A_TOOL_TO_ENHANCE_WRITING_SKILLS_OF_GRADE_ONE_PUPILS_ijariie18437.pdf>.
- Cripps, C., & Cox, R. (1989). *How and Why Handwriting and Spelling Should be Taught Together: Joining the ABC*. Cambridge: LDA Publications.

- Cvetanović, Z. V., Negru, M. A., & Kelemen Milojević, L. J. (2017). Metodčki problemi u programskom okviru za učenje latinice kao drugog pisma u nastavi srpskog jezika. *Inovacije u nastavi – časopis za savremenu nastavu*, 30(3), 1–11. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.5937/inovacije1703001C>.
- DfEE/QCA, D. f. (2000). *The National Curriculum Handbook for Primary Teachers in England: Key Stages 1 and 2*. London: HMSO. (15 October 2023) Retrieved from <https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/id/eprint/18150/7/QCA-99-457_Redacted.pdf>.
- Edelenbos, P., Johnstone, R., & Kubanek, A. (2006). *The main pedagogical principles underlying the teaching of languages to very young learners. Languages for the children of Europe. Published Research, Good Practice & Main Principles*. Brussels: European Commission. (15 October 2023) Retrieved from <https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/languages/policy/language-policy/documents/young_en.pdf>.
- Fears, N. E., & Lockman, J. J. (2018). How beginning handwriting is influenced by letter knowledge: Visual–motor coordination during children’s form copying. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 171, 55–70. doi:10.1016/j.jecp.2018.01.017
- Gathercole, S., & Baddeley, A. (1993). *Working Memory and Language*. Hove: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Ljubojević, D. (2010). Primena diktata u nastavi engleskog jezika na ranom uzrastu. *Inovacije u nastavi: časopis za savremenu nastavu*, 23(2), 72–79. (15 October 2023) Retrieved from <<http://www.uf.bg.ac.rs/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/ino02-ispravljeno.pdf>>.
- Ljubojević, D. (in press). Stavovi nastavnika stranih jezika prema nastavi početnog pisanja na mlađem školskom uzrastu. *Metodčki vidici – Jezičko obrazovanje na ranom uzrastu i razvoj plurilingvalne kompetencije*.
- Longcamp, M., & Velay, J. L. (2005). The influence of writing practice on letter recognition in preschool children: a comparison between handwriting and typing. *Acta Psychol*, 119, 67–79. doi:10.1016/j.actpsy.2004.10.019.
- Medwell, J., & Wray, D. (2008). Handwriting – A Forgotten Language Skill? *Language and Education*, 22(1), 34–4. doi:10.2167/le722.0
- Merriam-Webster Dictionary, M. (n.d.). Alphabet. *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*. Retrieved from <<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/alphabet>>.

- Ose Askvik, E., van der Weel, F. R., & van der Meer, A. L. (2020). The Importance of Cursive Handwriting Over Typewriting for Learning in the Classroom: A High-Density EEG Study of 12-Year-Old Children and Young Adults. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01810
- Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, O. (n.d.). Script. Retrieved from <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/script_1?q=script>.
- Popović, R. (2010). Razvijanje veštine pisanja na engleskom jeziku. *Inovacije u nastavi – časopis za savremenu nastavu*, 23(2), 37–47. (15 October 2023) Retrieved from <<http://www.uf.bg.ac.rs/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/ino02-ispravljeno.pdf>>.
- Sassoon, R., Nimmo-Smith, I., & Wing, A. (1986). An analysis of children's penholds. In H. Kao, G. van Galen, & R. Hoosain (Eds.), *Graphonomics: Contemporary Research in Handwriting* (pp. 93–106). Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- Smith, E., McLaughlin, T. F., Neyman, J., & Rinaldi, L. (2013). The Effects of Lined Paper, Prompting, Tracing, Rewards, and Fading to Increase Handwriting Performance and Legibility with Two Preschool Special Education Students Diagnosed with Developmental Delays, and Fine Motor Deficits. *Journal on Educational Psychology*, 6(4), 23–29. Retrieved from <<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1101773.pdf>>.
- van der Meer, A. L., & van der Weel, F. R. (2017). Only three fingers write, but the whole brain works: a high-density EEG study showing advantages of drawing over typing for learning. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8(706). doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00706.
- van Galen, G., & Meulenbroek, R. (1986). Movement Analysis of Repetitive Writing Behaviour of 1st, 2nd and 3rd Grade Primary School Children. (R. Hoosain, H. Kaor, & G. Van Galen, Eds.) *Advances in Psychology: Graphonomics*, 37, 29–35.
- Vickov, G. (2005). Postoji li negativan utjecaj ranoga uvođenja pisanja na stranome jeziku na pisanje na materinskome jeziku. *Strani jezici*, 34(4), 285–302. Retrieved from <https://stranijezici.ffzg.unizg.hr/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/SJ_34_4_1.pdf>.
- Winstrom, E. (2011). Let's practice writing: alphabet tracing. *Bright hub: The hub for bright minds*.

Received: 26 October 2023

Accepted for publication: 14 November 2023

***Literary and Cultural
Studies***

Radojka Vukčević*
University of Belgrade
Faculty of Philology
Belgrade, Serbia

THE PATHWAYS OF EZRA POUND'S POETRY IN SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO

Abstract

The paper aims to provide an introduction to the study of the reception of Ezra Pound's poetry in Serbia, and Montenegro. It also aims to examine the possible influences of his poetry on some Serbian and Montenegrin authors. I believe that his poetry is still alive and continues to evolve into new works and shapes – therein lies much of its challenge and fascination. An overview of the changing contexts for publishing Ezra Pound's poetry and reactions to it highlights a strong response from Serbian scholars but the modest reception of his poetry in Montenegro. This provides a vital contextual setting for discussing the reception not only of his poetry, but also of American literature in Serbia and Montenegro.

Key words: Ezra Pound, poetry, reception, Serbia, Montenegro

My preliminary idea was to explore the enduring appeal of Pound's poetry in Serbia and Montenegro, two countries which have until recently (and to some extent even now) been impacted by the epic tradition quite considerably. I wanted to investigate to what extent the idea of creating Pound's modern epic could influence such societies and their writers in modern times. What I discovered was great interest in Pound's poetry and

* vukcevicradojka@gmail.com

especially his *The Cantos* with a possible influence on Serbian poetry, but not the slightest interest in the modern epic as a form to be followed. Therefore, my research had to be narrowed to the pathways of the reception of Pound's poetry in Serbia and Montenegro from the fifties to the present day.

As can be seen from the research of distinguished Pound scholars such as Milovan Danojlić, Vera Savić, Mirko Magarašević, and Zoran Skrobanović, the pathway of his reception kept changing: it was very wide in some periods, but narrowed in others. In an extremely comprehensive study *Ezra Pound's Poetry in Serbo-Croatian Translations (Poezija Ezre Paunda u srpskohrvatskim prevodima, 2010)*, Vera Savić informs readers about Pound's translations into Serbo-Croatian published in ex-Yugoslavia in the second half of the 20th century. Her research shows that translations of Pound's poetry (modest in number) appeared rather late with the first only being published in the fifties (1952, Ivan Slaming and Antun Šoljan *Američka lirika*, Zagreb). Since then, to date, four books of his poetry, one book of critical essays, and eleven anthologies have been published in about thirty issues of literary magazines. In the fifties, the result was 10 poems from Pound's early period, translated by Šoljan, Slaming and Andrić, being published in anthologies (*Američka lirika*, 1952, *Antologija svjetske lirike*, 1956, Serbia; *Antologija savremene engleske poezije*, 1957). In this decade, seven more of his representative poems including *Canto LXXXI* (translators: Tišma and Miletić) were also published in Serbia in two literary journals (*Književne novine*, 1958 and *Letopis Matice srpske*, 1959).

In the sixties, according to Savić, greater interest in variety and number was shown. Consequently, two special editions of Pound's poems were published (*Poezija*, 1967 and *Cantos*, 1969), he was included in two collections of poetry (*Antologija svjetske lirike*, 1965 and *Antologija svjetske ljubavne poezije*, 1968), his poems were published in periodicals on eleven occasions (50 in translation), and "Hugh Selwin Mauberley" was also published. In this decade, Ladan, Šoljan and Sabljak stood out as extraordinary translators. The translations of Pound's poetry could be read in journals from all over former Yugoslavia (*Književne novine*, *Kolo*, *Bagdala*, *Razlog*, *Polja*, *Perspektive*, *Telegram*, *Forum*, and *Hrvatski književni glasnik*).

However, the seventies marked the peak in terms of the translations and variety of editions of Pound's poetry (*Sub Mare*; *Canto XII, XXXVI*; *Alba*, *Envoi*, etc.). This decade also resulted in some of the most successful translations

of Pound's most famous and best works in the first comprehensive book of his poetry (*Ezra Pound: Poezija*, 1975) and two anthologies (*Antologija moderne američke poezije* and *Antologija savremene engleske poezije*, 1975). There were also 10 appearances in periodicals with 40 poems translated by six translators. Some of them, who belonged to a new generation of translators (such as Branka and Ivan Lalić, Danojlić, Demirović, and Pavlović), produced some of the most successful translations, which are unrivalled to this day. Periodicals continued publishing translations of his poetry from both his early and later periods. These translations met with very strong and positive critical reception. Janićijević published the first Bibliography of Pound's reception, which illustrated just how extensive Serbian interest in his work was (Savić 2010: 131).

This flourish of translations and critical response in the seventies did not continue into the eighties, when there was much less interest in Modernism generally, and accordingly in Pound's poetics. Still, the new generation of translators appeared to maintain their interest in his works (From *Cantos*; *Libretto*; *Contemporaines*). Thus, seventeen of Pound's poems were included in two books of poetry (*Moderno svetsko pesništvo*, 1983, and *Zlatna knjiga američke poezije*, 1980), which also featured a very comprehensive analysis of his poetry by Sonja Bašić (Kuljanin 2008: *Poezija Ezre Paunda u srpskohrvatskim prevodima*).

During this decade, a more comprehensive book of his poetry was not published. Instead, there was also a decrease in the number of published poems in periodicals. Still, Pound's poetry appeared for the first time in six journals in Serbia (*Mladost*, *Gradac*, *Problemi*, *Život*, *Književne novine* and *Delfin*). The situation would not change dramatically in the nineties, which will be remembered for a comprehensive book of his early poetry (*Ezra Paund: Rane pesme*) and a special edition of Pound's *How to Read* (*Kako da čitamo*, 1999, translated by Danojlić). Vera Savić evaluates the translations from this period and concludes that there is a disparity between their number and their quality. Thus, the sixties saw some very successful translations while the seventies offered great variety in terms of number and editions, but also high quality translations produced by some distinguished poet-translators. However, as Savić notes, the eighties marked a disparity between the quantity and quality of some translations, which was most probably the result of the work of some inexperienced translators who could not cope with the complexity of Pound's poetry. As has been pointed out previously, the following decade was not much

different. It brought war and the disintegration of Yugoslavia and a weaker reception to many world authors, including Pound.

Savić points out that Ezra Pound's poetry echoes in the poetry of Serbian Modernism and she adds that his "hermetic expression, Biblical statements, mythological themes and characters, the presence of the past as an element of the present, an active presence of the poet together with impersonality, the change of the nature of traditional symbols – are elements of Pound's poetry, as well as of the poetry of Miodrag Pavlović, Ivan V. Lalić and Milovan Danojlić, the distinguished poet-translators of Anglo-American Modern poetry" (Savić 2010: 129–130).

It is difficult to disagree with Vera Savić's final conclusion on the translations of Pound's works into Serbo-Croatian: in most cases both the structure and quality of translations were satisfactory, as well as his presence in books of poetry and periodicals. However, it would be good, she believes, if a more comprehensive book of translations of his early poetry and some more poems from *The Cantos* appeared in the future. I would also agree with Savić's high praise for the translations of Pound's poetry by some poet-translators (Danojlić, Lalić, Demirović), whose translations are unequalled and should be, as she says, reprinted, not re-done, for the audience of the 21st century.

The audience of the 21st century in Serbia has continued not only to enjoy these translations but also to read new ones. Vera Savić's wishes have finally been fulfilled. In the second decade of this century, two significant books appeared by two of Pound's most distinguished translators and critics: *Pesme: Ezra Paund (Poems: Ezra Pound, 2011)* in translation and with a preface written by Milovan Danojlović, and *Ezra Pound's KITAJ (CATHAY, 2013)*, translated and annotated by Zoran Skrobanović. In addition, different aspects of Pound's poetry (ideology, Modernism, authority, language, Postmodernism) are discussed in Dubravka Đuric's outstanding book *Language, Poetry, Postmodernism: Language Poetry in the Context of Modern and Postmodern Poetry (Jezik, poezija, postmodernizam: Jezička poezija u kontekstu moderne i postmoderne američke poezije, 2001)*.

Twenty-one poems have been translated by a new generation of translators (Beljanski, Đorđević, Živanović, Jagličić, Belić) and three extracts have been reprinted from *How to Read (Kako da čitamo, translated in 1974 by Milovan Danojlić)*. Most of Pound's poems have been published in literary journals (*Polja, Poezija, Književni magazin, Gradina, Lipar, Bagdala, and Braničevo*), while some ("Na stanici metroa," "Pismo Henrijeti

Monro”) were published in *Antologija imажinističke poezije (An Anthology of Imagistic Poetry)*, compiled by Nikola Živanović in 2009.

Literary criticism follows these translations: prefaces, critical texts, and books by poets and scholars who have made a strong contribution to the reception of Pound in recent times. One of the outstanding critics today is Mirko Magarašević, who devotes a lot of space to Pound in his study *European Poets (Evropski pesnici, 2010)* and his latest most comprehensive study *The Poetic World of Ezra Pound (Pesnički svet Ezre Paunda, 2019)*. Poet-critics (Milovan Danojlić and Borislav Radović) have contributed greatly with translations and critical texts. They are joined by one of the most outstanding scholars, Zoran Skrobanović, who in this period has made the greatest contribution to Pound, not only by translating *CATHAY*, but by publishing some highly illuminating articles, such as “Reinventing China in London: Laurence Binyon and Ezra Pound’s *CATHAY*” (Preosmišljavajući Kinu u Londonu: Lorens Binjon i *KITAJ Ezre Paunda*”, 2016) and “Reinventing China: Early Translations od Ezra Pound Stirring up a Controversy”, 2011. His greatest contribution to the reception of Pound in Serbia comes from his study of European literatures in the context of the Chinese letter: *In Modernistic Teahouse: the experience of the Chinese letter in European Modernism (U modernističkoj čajdžinici: doživljaj kineskog pisma u evropskom modernizmu, 2014)*. In this highly illuminating study, Skrobanović explores the influence of Pound on certain Chinese authors on several levels: ideas, cultural exchange, strategies of translation, etc., to conclude that “just as Pound was inspired by Li Baj and Fenelosa’s interpretations of the Chinese letter and found proof for imaginistic ideas, Chinese Modernists discovered in Pound an inspiration for their own poetic imperatives and aims” (2014: 228). Skrobanović concludes that Pound’s interpretation of the Chinese letter is present in all his works and points out that Pound also created a new theory of literature, criticism and poetics. Pound “played with his own fragmentary understanding of Chinese characters, and then he created a very inspiring translational and literary poetics which he later applied to all segments of his own literary expression” (2014: 210). Finally, he adds that *The Cantos* is Pound’s most ambitious ideogrammatic enterprise in the last century.

The wide pathway of the reception of Ezra Pound’s poetry in Serbia can hardly be compared with the very narrow pathway of its reception in Montenegro. Only three essays and 3 translations of Pound’s criticism have been published so far. It is possible to find out most of these references

from Ana Kuljanin's master's thesis "The Reception of American Literature in Montenegrin Periodicals from the Beginnings Until 2000" („Recepcija američke književnosti u crnogorskoj periodici od početaka do 2000“, 2008). She concludes her research by pointing out that the reception of Pound's works is characterised more by translated criticism of some authors from abroad than by those written by authors from Montenegro.

Some of them include M. L. Rosenthal's "Ezra Pound – The Poet as Hero" („M. L. Rozental „Ezra Paund – pjesnik kao heroj“), published in *MA Poetry*, translated by Slavica Vukšić and published in *Prosvjetni rad* in 1972. Rosenthal describes Pound's image of a poet devoted to poetry before his coming to Europe with his belief in the beauty and power of poetry. However, he does not rate Pound's translations highly because of his alterations to the texts (v. Kuljanin 2008: 1–247).

Pound's essay on Walt Whitman "What I Feel About Walt Whitman" („Šta mislim o Voltu Vitmanu“) was published in 1995, translated by an outstanding scholar Tihomir Vučković. Vučković points out that Pound has contradictory feelings for Whitman: he appreciates and despises him at the same time, but still rates him as the only poet worth reading. Pound feels Whitman's rhythms and recognises him as his literary ancestor while experiencing the pain of reading his verses.

Ana Gorobinski and Dubravka Đurić translated a text by Charles Bernstein "Pounding Fascism: Appropriating Ideologies, Mystification, Aestheticization, and Authority in Pound's Poetic Practice" („Obuzdavanje fašizma – ideologija prisvajanja – mistifikacija, estetizacija i autoritet u Paundovoj pjesničkoj praksi“) (*Ovdje*, XXXVII/1995, 319–320–321, 69), in which he discusses Pounds's political ideas and his poetics. Ana Kuljanin in her text "The Reception of American Literature in Montenegrin Periodicals from the Beginnings Until 2000" (*Ovdje*, XXXVII/1995, 319–320–321, 91) focuses on Bernstein's final conclusion, which says that *The Cantos* represent "a specific testimony of the struggle between arts and politics" (Kuljanin 2008: 151).

It was only in 2000 that a chapter from Ronald Bush's biography of Pound was published in *Vijesti*, translated by a poet-translator, Aleksandar Bečanović (Kuljanin 2008: 151). It came out in ten parts. In her research on the reception of Ezra Pound in Montenegro, Ana Kuljanin highlights Bush's research as exploring the relationship between Modernism, Fascism and Pound as a poet and supporter of Mussolini's regime. Aleksandar Bečanović also gives his own contribution to Pound in the essay "What You

Really Like is Your Heritage" („Samo ono što doista voliš trajno je tvoje naslijeđe“), published the same year in *Vijesti* (Kuljanin 2008: 155). Here he ranks Pound top out of ten American modern poets.

The same year Boris Jovanović Kastelo published his essay “A Pagan in front of the Wheels of History” („Paganin pred točkovima istorije“) in *Pobjeda* (Kuljanin 2008: 153). Ana Kuljanin rightly singles out his conclusion on Pound, his insistence on erasing the borders between history, the present and the past: they do not exist as a subject but as a part of an integrated whole.

One more text, “Pound – the mystery of syntagma” („Paund – misterija sintagme“) by Goran Vujović, focuses on analysing some of Pound's verses from *Canto LXXIV*. It was published in the journal *Plima Plus*, also in 2000 (Kuljanin 2008: 154). It is a comparative analysis of a few translations of the chosen verses with special emphasis on the vocabulary and allusions.

In conclusion, Pound arguably holds a special place in both Serbia and Montenegro in spite of the changeable reception of criticism of his works and his translations. Although there was a delay of a few decades when it came to the first translations and studies appearing, translators of his poetry have compiled four books of poetry, one book of critical essays, and eleven anthologies in outstanding literary magazines. Previous studies of his translations cover his most outstanding poems by a few poet-translators who were able to give “afterlife” to his unique poetry. These translations not only kept his work alive, but maintained its strong influence on some poets from Serbia and Montenegro as well. Let us hope that future generations of poets, translators, and poet-translators will keep exploring the complexities of his poetry with even greater fervour and passion, wherever they come from.

References

- Bernstein, C. (1995). „Pounding Fascism: Appropriating Ideologies – Mystification, Aestheticization, and Authority in Pound's Poetic Practice. In Ana Kuljanin, „Recepcija američke književnosti u crnogorskoj periodici od početaka do 2000“, *Ovdje*, XXXVII/1995, 319-320-321.
- Đurić, D. (2001). *Jezik, poezija, postmodernizam: Jezička poezija u kontekstu moderne i postmoderne američke poezije*, Beograd: Oktoih.

- Kuljanin, A. (2008). „Recepcija američke književnosti u crnogorskoj periodici od početaka do 2000”/ “The Reception of American Literature in Montenegrin Periodicals from the Beginnings Until 2000”, magistarski rad, Filozofski fakultet: Nikšić.
- Magarašević, M. (2010). *Evropski pesnici*, Novi Sad: Akademska knjiga.
- Magarašević, M. (2019). *Pesnički svet Ezre Paunda*, Novi Sad: Akademska knjiga.
- Paund, E. (1999). *Kako da čitamo*, Prevod, Milovan Danojlić, Valjevo: Intelekt.
- Paund, E. (2011). *Pesme*, Prevod, Milovan Danojlić, Novi Sad: Orpheus.
- Paund, E. (2013). *KITAJ Ezre Paunda*, Prevod, Zoran Skrobanović, Beograd: Službeni glasnik.
- Pound, E. (1995). “What I Feel About Walt Whitman”, In Ana Kuljanin, „Recepcija američke književnosti u crnogorskoj periodici od početaka do 2000“, *Ovdje*, XXXVII/1995, 319–320–321.
- Savić, V. (2010). *Poezija Ezre Paunda u srpskohrvatskim prevodima*, Univerzitet u Kragujevcu.
- Skrobanović, Z. (2016). „Preosmišljavajući Kinu u Londonu: Lorens Binjon i KITAJ Ezre Paunda”. U: *Orijentalističko znamenje – sećanje na Mariju Đukanović (1923–1983)*, prir. Anđelka Mitrović. Beograd: Filološki fakultet.
- Skrobanović, Z. (2011). „Reinventing China: Early Translations of Ezra Pound”. U: *Anali Filološkog fakulteta*, Beograd: Filološki fakultet.
- Skrobanović, Z. (2014). *U modernističkoj čajdžinici: doživljaj kineskog pisma u evropskom modernizmu*, Beograd: Geopoetika.

Received: 24 August 2023

Accepted for publication: 1 October 2023

Tijana Parezanović*
Alfa BK University, Belgrade

Melina Nikolić**
Alfa BK University, Belgrade

OTHERNESS AND SHARING: SPACE, EMOTIONS, AND DISCOURSE IN ELIZABETH VON ARNIM'S *THE ENCHANTED APRIL*

Abstract

This paper deals with Elizabeth von Arnim's 1922 novel *The Enchanted April* as an example of modernist travel narrative. The novel focuses on four different women vacationing together in Italy for a month and the present analysis aims to address how these protagonists experience otherness – of the Italian place, their own emotions, and one another. To this effect, the analysis relies on the theoretical concept of heterotopia and descriptions of Christian love. Close reading of selected excerpts, which prominently feature free indirect discourse (as a signifier of otherness in the text), reveals that otherness can be overcome through sharing and love mediated through the specific (heterotopic) spatial setting, which bears the aspects of sacredness and the potential for transformation.

Keywords: *The Enchanted April*, fictional tourists, heterotopia, Christian love, free indirect discourse

* tijanaparezanovic@gmail.com

** melina.nikolic@alfa.edu.rs

1. Introduction

Freedom of travel was probably one of the first harbingers of modernity. In the early 20th century, travel was becoming more and more popular and available due to the technologically improved and more affordable means of transportation and among those who received the opportunity to travel freely and individually were women, whose “move to motion gained momentum in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when increasing numbers of Western women participated in the cultural logic of the individualizing journey.” (Smith 2001: X–XI). Women’s journeys were not only the subject of travelogues by authors such as Rosita Forbes, Freya Stark, Gertrude Bell, and Rebecca West (Bassnett 2002: 225), but also of a number of works of narrative fiction, including Elizabeth von Arnim’s 1922 *The Enchanted April*, the novel on which the present article focuses.¹

The Enchanted April opens on a miserable rainy afternoon in a Woman’s Club in London, where Mrs Wilkins sees a newspaper advertisement for a small mediaeval castle on the Mediterranean, in Italy, to be let for the month of April, with the promise of plenty of sunshine and flowers. Mrs Wilkins, who would later be introduced as Charlotte and, as the narrative progresses, even more intimately as Lotty, is the middle-class wife of aspiring lawyer Mellersh Wilkins, of whom she seems to be shy and slightly afraid, feeling that her presence is a constant embarrassment to Mellersh and that she does not live up to his social aspirations. The same advertisement is seen by Mrs Arbuthnot, later to be introduced as Rose. She, on the other hand, is well respected and supported, both financially and emotionally, by her husband, of whom she is in turn embarrassed – Frederick writes best-selling novels on the lives of historically famous mistresses, which is unacceptable to his wife, whose life is devoted to the church-related activities of helping the poor. Neither marriage is happy, so both women see the Italian castle in the spring as a way to escape from the gloomy everydayness, drudgery, and thwarted emotions. Lotty is more optimistic as regards April in Italy: she *sees* them both there, and this “visionary gaze” (von Arnim 2015: 15) becomes her trademark and she herself a prophetic figure whose anticipations always come true. Lotty, of course, has trouble letting her husband know that she intends to travel by herself; Rose does not, although she would actually like her husband to take a keener interest in her. The two decide to advertise the castle for subleasing so as to share space and thus reduce the costs. In this way, they acquire the company of

Mrs Fisher and Lady Caroline Dester. The former is an old (and haughty) lady with a Victorian heart and mind, filled with stories of illustrious Victorians such as Tennyson or Carlyle. With her own marriage long over and Mr Fisher dead, the only expectation she has of April in Italy is to be allowed to sit undisturbed and remember the “better” times. The latter is an incredibly beautiful socialite of noble birth, who wishes to spend her April thinking – an activity she does not commonly indulge in – and who is tired of people constantly seeking her company – these people she refers to as “grabbers.” Now in her late twenties, Lady Caroline has lost the only man she ever loved to war and does not believe she can ever love again. During the month in Italy, each member of this incongruous party rediscovers everything they lack in England and moreover ends their journey in mutual friendship and tenderness, despite the obvious initial misunderstandings and misconceptions about one another.

Through the close reading of narratively relevant excerpts from *The Enchanted April*, taken as an appropriate example of the early-20th-century women’s fiction about travel,² and relying on the theoretical framework established by Michel Foucault’s concept of heterotopia and Robert Wagoner’s description of Christian love, this paper aims to examine how otherness is perceived and eventually overcome through sharing in this particular type of literary fiction. To this effect, the analysis of the novel first focuses on the protagonists’ emotional response to the new surroundings and the changing relationship between space and emotion brought about by modernity. The second part of the analysis is focused on the question of whether (and how) experiencing the otherness of space also entails embracing the otherness of fellow humans. Finally, the third segment of the analysis deals with the narrative technique employed to express this otherness, namely, the extensive use of free indirect discourse as “imperceptible discourse that is attributed to no-one” (Mansfield 2015: 71) and its potential for creating a shared space for different participants in the narrative.

2. Space and (Dis)Order

Considerations of the relationship between space and emotions often retain focus on the concept of the sublime, which does not seem to have lost its appeal since the Romantic poets rediscovered and redefined it. When in the

late 18th century the first “Grand Tourists,” sons of wealthy North European families, first embarked on the long journey towards Italy to absorb the glory of the classical art, they usually crossed the Alps, which came to represent the landscape of sublimity to them. Mountains, chasms, and wilderness opposed the Enlightenment principle of a well-ordered universe established under some divine provision, and also came to signify how limited human abilities were and how incapable man was of comprehending the infinite wonders of nature. While the concept of the sublime initially (1st century) referred to the lofty style of expression in language, it was given new life in Edmund Burke’s 1757 *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, where it principally concerns “the psychological and physical nature of our response to the exalted and the fearful, the terrible and terrifying, both in art and nature” (Leitch 2001: 537). Burke was interested in the objects (or landscapes) that cause the effect of the sublime as well as in the psychological response to this effect. The sublime objects are characterised as vast – nearly infinite, extreme, obscure, and powerful; as such, they indicate an element *beyond order and proportion* when found in either nature or art. The psychological response is invariably one of awe; as Burke suggests, “the feeling of the sublime originates in the experience of the terrible greatness of a rugged natural object (such as Niagara Falls), which so astonishes the mind that it fills it with a ‘delightful horror’ or a sense of reverence.” (Phillips 2006: 24) With rapid urban development in the 19th and 20th century, the sublime came to be experienced not merely in natural scenery, but also in the growing cities that, “[b]uilt to rectify the apparent confusion and chaos of nature,” became “a disorienting physical environment” (Tuan 2013: 146), a jungle-like dangerous modern wilderness.

The Romantic sublime, that is, the response to the landscape perceived as sublime, originated from travel and movement, be it travel to foreign countries or a shift from rural towards urban areas. It is the encounter with the otherness of space that seems to have incited the feeling of the sublime. As a 20th-century tourist narrative, *The Enchanted April* also recounts an encounter with otherness, but this narrative seems to provide its reconsideration within the context of modernity. The protagonists travel away from the city, “the dripping streets” of London and “the really extremely horrible sooty rain falling steadily” (Von Arnim 2015: 1, 2). While not exactly a welcoming or comforting sight, the London of *The Enchanted April* is established, in line with Tuan’s idea of an ordered space which

is supposed to rectify confusion and chaos, as the place which contains “compass points of God, Husband, Home and Duty” or “the great four facts of life” (Von Arnim 2015: 13). The quote echoes the voice of Rose Arbuthnot, but can equally be applied to all the protagonists struggling with the norms society imposes on them. The Italian village in which they spend their April – San Salvatore, importantly, Holy Saviour – is the location which provides the potential to resist the idea of a well-ordered universe, but unlike the mountains and chasms that contained the same potential for the Romantics, San Salvatore differs from this “universe” (here, London) inasmuch as it is peaceful, joyous, and tame.

Any discussion of the otherness of space can certainly not forgo Michel Foucault’s famous concept of heterotopia. When Foucault first introduced it in *The Order of Things*, it appeared as a not purely physical but rather metaphysical concept of the space that “undermine[s] language,” “shatter[s] or tangle[s] common names,” “destroy[s] ‘syntax’ in advance” (Foucault 1989: xix). This is immediately obvious in *The Enchanted April* when, upon arrival in San Salvatore, Rose and Charlotte reprimand themselves for not knowing a word of Italian, which they see as “not only contemptible” but “definitely dangerous” (Von Arnim 2015: 51), only to start calling each other – as soon as they see they are safe – endearingly by their names or nicknames (Von Arnim 2015: 55). The syntax that is destroyed is the one provided by the above mentioned “compass points,” which brings us to Foucault’s further considerations of the concept of heterotopia. In the talk titled “Of Other Spaces,” he discusses the idea that “contemporary space is perhaps still not entirely desanctified,” which implies that certain oppositions “that we regard as simple givens” – which also include the space of living and the space of vacationing – “are still nurtured by the hidden presence of the sacred” (Foucault 1986: 23). Foucault locates the sacred in utopias, which are not real places, and heterotopias, which are real. It is at this point important to stress that in Foucault’s view the latter represent “a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which [...] all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted.” (Foucault 1986: 24) The idea is well explained by Charlotte Wilkins, the protagonist who first becomes aware of the singular power of San Salvatore:

‘You mustn’t long in heaven,’ said Mrs Wilkins. ‘You’re supposed to be quite complete here. And it is heaven, isn’t it, Rose? See how everything has been let in together, – the dandelions and

the irises, the vulgar and the superior, me and Mrs Fisher – all welcome, all mixed up anyhow, and all so visibly happy and enjoying ourselves.’ (Von Arnim 2015: 81)

Charlotte Wilkins here focuses on the idea of the other space as an effectively enacted utopia, the perfect setting she keeps referring to as heaven throughout the narrative. Her words reflect Foucault’s description of heterotopias as places capable “of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible”³ (Foucault 1986: 25), but they also call for a reconsideration of the established compass points. Namely, finding “heaven” as an actual physical location questions its metaphysical – religiously connoted and socially conditioned – conception. As religious Rose Arbuthnot explains upon meeting Charlotte Wilkins: “‘We are told that on the very highest authority. And you know the lines about the kindred points, don’t you [...] [t]he kindred points of heaven and home’ [...] ‘Heaven is in our home.’” (Von Arnim 2015: 12) Charlotte Wilkins immediately firmly denies this, which from the beginning positions her as the character most likely to experience the freedom and inevitable transformation (or inversion of the familiar and homely) that is inherent in the otherness of space. As soon as Charlotte and Rose cross the Channel, Charlotte contemplates:

Mellersh at Calais had already begun to dwindle and seem less important. [...] In Paris there was no time to think of him because their train was late [...] and by the afternoon of the next day when they got into Italy, England, Frederick, Mellersh, the vicar, the poor, Hampstead, the club, Shoolbred, everybody and everything, the whole inflamed sore dreariness, had faded to the dimness of a dream. (Von Arnim 2015: 44)⁴

³ The best example of this heterotopic quality, as explained by Foucault, is the garden, to which the present analysis will return in due course.

⁴ This contemplation is not merely fictional but rather firmly grounded in the reality of travel. As Brenda Bowen notes in her Introduction to the 2015 edition of the novel, “[t]he Ligurian Sea in December is jade green, not blue at all, and in April it must be a shock of color, especially to the benighted English tourist of 1921.” (Von Arnim 2015: xiv) This stark contrast certainly enhances the quality of otherness and extraordinariness that tourists grasp.

In this way the place to which the women travel stands in contrast and contests all the familiar and ordinary places of their everyday lives. Due to her “visionary gaze,” Charlotte Wilkins is the first to realise this, but the process of grasping otherness and simultaneously going through an individual change gradually starts affecting other protagonists too – under the influence of the house they share in San Salvatore. To this effect, it is important to address some recent theoretical views on the Foucauldian concept of heterotopia. In their 2008 study, Michiel Dehaene and Lieven De Caeter make an interesting point with reference to Foucault’s claim that heterotopic spaces are based on “a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable.” (Foucault 1986: 26) Foucault goes on to state that heterotopic places are not freely accessible like common public spaces: “[e]ither the entry is compulsory, [...] or else the individual has to submit to rites and purifications” and obtain a sort of permission to enter a heterotopic site (Foucault 1986: 26).⁵ Heterotopias are, so to say, semi-public, but according to Dehaene and De Caeter, this does not mean they are isolated or marginal; they are in fact “necessarily collective or shared spaces.” (Dehaene and De Caeter 2008: 6) It is precisely this quality that bears relevance to the narrative of *The Enchanted April*. As the protagonists gradually accept the otherness of the space in which they temporarily reside, they also adopt different views on their ordinary lives back at home. This, however, is only possible because they have to (learn to) share the house in San Salvatore. The transformative potential of this heterotopic site is achieved precisely because this heterogeneous group is brought together and forced to share, and the capability of San Salvatore to impose the necessity of sharing is what essentially sanctifies this place.

Learning to share is a process for all the protagonists. Old Mrs Fisher keeps thinking about “curbing” the other women, especially Mrs Wilkins, so that they respect the boundaries she herself has set in her life, based on the strict Victorian rules and norms of behaviour. Young Lady Caroline Dester is so used to other people “grabbing” her presence, her attention, her space, that she has herself become a grabber. Both Mrs Fisher and Lady Caroline arrive at San Salvatore unexpectedly and unannounced the day before Rose and Charlotte. Their purpose is revealed from the perspective of Mrs Fisher:

⁵ *The Enchanted April* indeed presents San Salvatore as not easily accessible; the journey from London is long and the path to the house itself rather arduous (Von Arnim 2015: 45–55).

And she had a very nice bedroom, too; it looked two ways, across the bay in the morning sun – she liked the morning sun – and on to the garden. There were only two of these bedrooms with cross-views in the house, she and Lady Caroline had discovered, and they were by far the airiest. They each had two beds in them, and she and Lady Caroline had had the extra beds taken out at once and put into two of the other rooms. In this way there was much more space and comfort. Lady Caroline, indeed, had turned hers into a bed-sitting-room, with the sofa out of the bigger drawing-room and the writing-table and the most comfortable chair, but she herself had not had to do that because she had her own sitting-room, equipped with what was necessary. Lady Caroline had thought at first of taking the bigger sitting-room entirely for her own, because the dining-room on the floor below could quite well be used between meals to sit in by the two others [...] (Von Arnim 2015: 75)

The two women show absolute possessiveness as regards the surrounding space and want to claim certain parts of the house as exclusively their own. Apart from the rooms, Lady Caroline also wants a garden (“Why should not this one spot be kept exclusively for her? She liked it; she liked it best of all.” [Von Arnim 2015: 84]) and Mrs Fisher the battlements, whereby they absolutely disrespect the equal right all four women have to the house for the month: “she had a right to expect them to stay inside the round drawing-room and not to emerge interrupting on to her battlements” (Von Arnim 2015: 97). Mrs Fisher goes so far as to order that an exit to the battlements be barred so that no one except her could approach it. Their selfish attempts to possess space and turn it into their own property, at least temporarily, reflect the assumption that the heterotopic place they occupy should be isolated and individualised. Even Rose initially acts selfishly as she minds the fact that Mrs Fisher behaves as a hostess in the dining room – the hostess, in her view, should be herself. The narrative, however, diverts from the idea of a secluded and individual heterotopia towards showing that any transformative power, any acceptance of otherness, is possible only if the heterotopic space is shared. Apart from Charlotte, who realises, or rather sees, this even before the company reach San Salvatore, Rose is the first to grasp the fact:

No, it didn't matter what Mrs Fisher did; not here; not in such beauty. Mrs Arbuthnot's discomposure melted out of her. In the warmth and light of what she was looking at, of what to her was a manifestation, and entirely new side, of God, how could one be discomposed? (Von Arnim 2015: 80–81)

Rose acknowledges a change of emotions when confronted with this particular space; moreover, she acknowledges the sanctity of the space. The necessity of forgoing one's own comfort and suppressing one's self to accommodate the collective experience can be brought into connection with the real historical facts of travel in the early 20th century. As mass tourism gradually superseded the Grand Tours of the Romantic Era (Buzard 2002: 38), so writing about it became more egalitarian and the places visited by tourists, while retaining the aura of difference and novelty, started inspiring not fear, awe, or the complexities of the mind, but rather love, empathy, and understanding.

3. Loving and Sharing

In the previously quoted lines, when Rose realises the sacred power of San Salvatore, her first thought is of her husband Frederick: “[...] If only Frederick were with her, seeing it too, seeing as he would have seen it when first they were lovers, in the days when he saw what she saw and loved what she loved...” (Von Arnim 2015: 81) The couple have grown apart and barely see each other; Rose has put God before her husband, of whom she is ashamed because she believes his ways of earning income are sacrilegious. Once faced with the beauty of San Salvatore, she starts missing him, the way he was in the early days of their marriage, and she remains nearly until the end of the narrative the most reticent of the four women. Charlotte's marriage is similarly unhappy and she has to lie to Mellersh that she has been invited to spend April at a friend's (Rose's) house in Italy, although she intends to spend her own savings on this holiday and does not ask for financial support from Mellersh (Charlotte is a homemaker). Mellersh sees her as a disobedient wife and the very idea of her travelling on her own infuriates him. Even though Charlotte forgets everything about Mellersh during her journey, on the very first day in San Salvatore she visualises him there. She believes such beauty as offered by

San Salvatore in abundance has to be shared and feels guilty for having left Mellersh in dreary London.

At first glance, Rose's and Charlotte's stories indicate romantic love thwarted for some reason or another. Additionally, Lady Caroline notes (at the point after Mr Briggs, the owner of the house in desperate search of love, visits and becomes instantly infatuated with her) that "[s]he was afraid of nothing in life except love." (Von Arnim 2015: 228) In love she has seen little but inevitable pain and loss, and the very idea of romance intimidates her. "Romantic" and "romance," however, are words frequently oversimplified: romantic love "is easily the best known idea of love in the popular imagination" while the true strength of romantic love is actually in the fact "that it makes love a religion" (Wagoner 1997: 5).

What follows from the fact that San Salvatore is presented as a heavenly place, a manifestation of God, is that the protagonists (primarily Charlotte Wilkins, then the other three women through mere observations of Charlotte) experience the feeling that can most closely be related to Christian love. The precondition for experiencing this difficult-to-achieve feeling is the complete acceptance of the surrounding (heterotopic) space: the four tourists first need to relinquish any desire to possess it and instead allow themselves to be possessed by it. Only subsequently can they also relinquish selfishness as regards their relationships with other people, be they romantic, friendly, or familial. In his study on the philosophical meanings of love, Robert Wagoner indeed makes a reference (quoting from Iris Murdoch⁶) to the spatial dimension of the emotion, stating that obsession and egotism destroy space, while unselfishness enlarges it:

This "sense of the 'space' of others" creates an atmosphere in which neither desire nor fear plays a role. Others are "given their rights," as it were. If this kind of love seeks anything, it is only to want others to stand in the same relation to transcendence as I do, so as to open up the space in which we live. (Wagoner 1997: 36)

The space of others is to be understood in metaphysical terms – similar to Foucault's initial conception of heterotopia – but it is in the narrative of *The Enchanted April* taken more literally, as real physical space with

⁶ Wagoner's reference is to Iris Murdoch's 1992 *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*.

the qualities of otherness. The connection between space and emotions is first grasped (perhaps even subconsciously) by Charlotte Wilkins. Rose Arbuthnot realises this as she talks to Lotty: “The extraordinary quickness with which, hour by hour, under her very eyes, Lotty became more selfless, disconcerted her. She was turning into something surprisingly like a saint.” (Von Arnim 2015: 122) As they discuss Lotty’s sudden wish to invite Mellersh to Italy, which is at first incomprehensible to Rose, Mellersh being one of the people they were getting away from, Lotty acknowledges: “It’s quite true. It seems idiotically illogical. But I’m so happy, I’m so well, I feel so fearfully wholesome. This place – why, it makes me feel *flooded* with love.” (Von Arnim 2015: 124) Christian love “involves something more than human relationships. Another factor, God, has to be considered, not just as an addition to the human equation, but as the very basis of human relationships.” (Wagoner 1997: 31) Since God in *The Enchanted April* is channelled through San Salvatore and its magically natural beauty, it might be assumed that space serves as the basis of human relationships, mediating and distributing emotions where their presence was hidden or reduced to a minimum. And, to go back to the initial arguments, this experience and effect of space was made possible in the early 20th century by increased mobility, which perhaps for the first time offered women the possibility of free travel.⁷ Freedom is essential to the concept of Christian love – and in the case of Charlotte Wilkins, it is expressed as “wholesomeness.” One’s freedom and wholesomeness in turn, in accordance with this specific meaning of love, call for the same freedom and wholesomeness for others – for expanding the space of others. As Wagoner remarks, “[l]ove is precisely this freedom for our fellow human beings, for the other person. This openness is the result of our relation to God’s absolute transcendence.” (1997: 34)⁸ Charlotte Wilkins behaves in accordance with this idea: she wants to expand the space of Mellersh by removing him from London; at a different point in the narrative, she leaves space for Lady Caroline to enjoy her freedom. During one of their first dinners in the house at San Salvatore, Lady Caroline does not want to join the others and prefers to remain in “her” garden, claiming she has a

⁷ Rather than mobile, women had traditionally been ‘sessile’, “permanently planted, tenaciously fixed, utterly immobile [...] always ‘at home’” (Smith 2001: X).

⁸ Travel functions in a similar way to love, at least from the religiously connoted perspective on tourists as modern pilgrims who experience self-discovery “through a complex and sometimes arduous search for an Absolute Other” (MacCannell 1999: 5).

headache. Rose is rather worried and behaves in a motherly fashion; Mrs Fisher thinks it rude on behalf of Lady Caroline to refuse to join them. Both reactions limit Lady Caroline's freedom and deny her the right to spend time at the place of her choice. Charlotte, on the other hand, is quite certain the headache is a mere excuse that Lady Caroline is using out of politeness. She explains her certainty with the following words: "When I was out there just now I saw inside her." (Von Arnim 2015: 106) It appears that Charlotte's ability to see develops over time: initially she sees them all in Italy, and in Italy she first sees beyond mere natural beauty (her gaze transcends the physical world, which is the reason why to Rose she appears as a saint) and then beyond the boundaries existing between people.⁹ She appears to be able to enter other people's minds in the same way in which she enters various spots, groves, gardens, and sandy beaches around the house. Her ability originates in her lack of possessiveness, the effect of the San Salvatore house. The first morning upon arrival, Charlotte "gave a sigh of contentment, and went on lying there looking round her, taking in everything in her room, her own little room" (Von Arnim 2015: 57). The size of the room or the fact (which she would later learn) that it is one of the most inconvenient rooms in the whole house do not stir her. The following lines express her feelings upon going outside for the first time:

Happy? Poor, ordinary, everyday word. But what could one say, how could one describe it? It was as though she could hardly stay inside herself, it was as though she was too small to hold so much of joy, it was as though she were washed through with light. And how astonishing to feel this sheer bliss, for here she was, not doing and not going to do a single unselfish thing, not going to do a thing she didn't want to do. (Von Arnim 2015: 58)¹⁰

The excerpt shows how Charlotte is merging with the surrounding space ("she could hardly stay inside herself"), which would subsequently enable her to merge with other people's selves. Her very use of the word "unselfish" is curious inasmuch as it reflects the very idea of Christian love. "Selfish" in

⁹ Immediately upon arrival, Lotty says to Rose: "The first thing to happen in this house' [...] 'shall be a kiss.'" (Von Arnim 2015: 55) Thus she erases the boundaries between the two of them in a way that stresses love as a shared and bonding emotion.

¹⁰ At a different point, Charlotte similarly asks, extending her emotions to include other characters as well: "Who could be acquisitive, selfish, in the old rasped London way, in the presence of this bounteous beauty?" (Von Arnim 2015: 117)

this context refers to taking care of one's self, which is the prerequisite for being able to experience love. As Wagoner observes, "to live in the presence of transcendence strongly enhances my sense of individuality, since my sense of self is undetermined by anything other than my relation to God." (1997: 35) Being self-aware or selfish is at the same time, paradoxically, being selfless, as "[t]o stand in a loving relation with another person is to give what I have been given" (Wagoner 1997: 36) – which is exactly what Charlotte intends to give to Mellersh as well as to her three companions.¹¹

The most interesting acceptance of love takes place within Mrs Fisher's mind. She is the one who has the greatest difficulty accepting other people, especially Charlotte. The two women are in many respects complete opposites – of different age and social background, different social and family status, different manners, etc. – which makes accepting otherness all the more difficult. The process with Mrs Fisher also starts with coming to terms with her self: her primary reason for going to Italy is to be allowed to sit in the sun and remember the past,¹² and being in the San Salvatore house, "if she could keep off the others," (Von Arnim 2015: 98) is far cheaper and more agreeable than a hotel. Paradoxically, she soon starts looking for company, first seeking that of Lady Caroline, whom she probably perceives as the woman most similar to herself in status. She goes out into the garden in which Lady Caroline wishes to be alone and attempts to start a conversation (Von Arnim 2015: 109-111). Despite initially thinking of Mellersh's arrival as a repulsive idea, she immediately

¹¹ Wagoner goes on to claim that there is a danger inherent in such an idea of love; namely, that as an act of selfless giving, love can easily become moralism or repressive authoritarianism, and "[n]othing denies the gift of transcendence more than the claim of divine authority." (1997: 44) The narrative bears no evidence for attributing authoritarianism to Charlotte. Throughout it, she simply lets people be and refrains from persuading them into anything. Additionally, Wagoner poses the question of whether such selfless love is even possible without the mediation of God and answers that "Christians would say that this is not possible." (1997: 46) The implications provided by *The Enchanted April* are, as has been touched on previously, that modernity gave a new definition to divinity (relevant also to Christianity or religion in general), which was achieved through contacts with other spaces enabled by travel.

¹² There is a trace of heterotopic quality recognisable in Mrs Fisher's idea. Heterotopia can pertain to "indefinitely accumulating time" as is the case, for example, with museums or libraries "in which time never stops building up" (Foucault 1986: 26). With Mrs Fisher, the very process of remembering is rather similar to the building of a museum or library: she keeps making references to the great people of the Victorian era whom she knew. The fact that she intended to do precisely this at San Salvatore indicates perhaps her semi-awareness of the quality of otherness that the place possesses.

likes him and finally feels almost happy for having someone to talk to. Additionally, during the second week of their stay she becomes more and more restless and unable to sit inside her enclosed private space:

And added to the restlessness, [...] she had a curious sensation, which worried her, of rising sap. [...] Dignity demanded that she should have nothing to do with fresh leaves at her age; and yet there it was, – that feeling that presently, that at any moment now, she might crop out all green. (Von Arnim 2015: 188)

Mrs Fisher's feeling of burgeoning increases and she starts walking more frequently and aimlessly around the top garden of the house, which is relevant because *she is herself becoming a garden*. The garden is "the most important space in [von Arnim's] fiction [...]: it is the space of contemplation, introspection and even transformation or transgression." (Gordić Petković 2020: 160) Significantly, the garden is also one of the most illustrative examples of heterotopia, as has already been mentioned: traditional Oriental gardens, as described by Foucault, were sacred spaces which contained representations of the four parts of the world, with all sorts of plants coming together "in this sort of microcosm": "The garden has been a sort of happy, universalizing heterotopia since the beginnings of antiquity" (Foucault 1986: 25–26). Happiness is stressed, the same positive feeling Lotty has immediately upon arrival, and Mrs Fisher's contemplations about herself becoming a garden anticipate her loving acceptance of other people, finally also including the entirely different Lotty. The feeling of burgeoning is not pertinent only to Mrs Fisher – Mellersh also "ripened like fruit by the beneficent sun of San Salvatore" (Von Arnim 2015: 198) – but in the case of Mrs Fisher it is more striking since it builds up more gradually. Its intensity increases as the narrative draws to a close, for instance: "What Mrs Fisher was thinking was how much surprised they would be if she told them of her very odd and exciting sensation of going to come out all over buds." (Von Arnim 2015: 215) Her process of transforming into a heterotopic garden includes the initially unthinkable acceptance of, and warm feelings for, all the people with whom she shares her space at San Salvatore: "now came the *stranger* Briggs, a *stranger* who at once took to her as no young man had taken to her in her life [...] [w]hat a *strange* creature; what a very *strange* creature [Lotty]" (Von Arnim 2015: 215, 216, emphasis added). While she wonders at her own acceptance of strangers,

it is their warmth and kindness she is attracted to. As Lotty put it, “[t]he great thing is to have lots of love about. I don’t see [...] here, though I did at home, that it matters who loves as long as somebody does.” (Von Arnim 2015: 125) An important aspect of love stressed in *The Enchanted April* is that it can, under the given circumstances, only breed more love. Lotty shares this love with kisses, which she also finally gives to Mrs Fisher, just as she did to Rose upon their arrival.

4. The Other Discourse

The garden in *The Enchanted April*, as has already been mentioned, is a space of “identity-forming introspection” (Gordić Petković 2020: 160) – for all the protagonists, which enables them to face their true selves. Introspection is also the first step in the protagonists’ journey towards love – they first have to look into themselves to be able to look inside the others – and love is based precisely on their ability to observe the world from the point of view of the other, the ability to “handle difference and make it creative” (Badiou 2012: 54). Assuming the other’s point of view is – at least in modernist literary fiction – most frequently achieved through the use of free indirect discourse. This hybrid form “combines verbal tenses and pronouns from indirect discourse with the tone and order of the sentence from direct discourse” (Parezanović 2020),¹³ which can be seen in several of the previously quoted excerpts from *The Enchanted April*. The tone, for instance, is nicely set in the quote which relates Mrs Fisher’s point of view (Von Arnim 2015: 75), where Lady Caroline is referred to several times by her title and first name, while Rose and Lotty are referred to as “the two others” – because Mrs Fisher initially dislikes them. More linguistically oriented characteristics of free indirect discourse include the use of “this” and “here” in another quoted excerpt, alongside rhetorical questions and elliptical sentences (Von Arnim 2015: 58). However, more interesting in the context of analysing space and emotions represented in *The Enchanted April* is the (narrative) space which free indirect discourse creates. As Franco Moretti explains, this type of discourse is a form in which characters “speak of themselves in the third person, as if from the

¹³ More details can be found in Rimmon-Kenan 2005; Nørgaard, Montoro, and Busse 2010; Leskiv 2009; Banfield 2015.

outside” (2007: 82). Charlotte Wilkins appearing to be able to see inside other characters – to enter their minds – makes this interpretation of free indirect discourse quite relevant to the narrative: if she can see inside other characters (as a result of her heightened emotion due to the specific qualities of the surrounding space), then Rose Arbuthnot, Mrs Fisher, and Lady Caroline also, as time goes by, become able to transcend their selves and see themselves from the outside and the others from the inside. Moretti additionally refers to free indirect discourse as a particular “third voice of the *well-socialized individual*” (2007: 82), which implies – in *The Enchanted April*’s narrative – that the frequent use of free indirect discourse signals an increase in the protagonists’ socialisation as they are becoming more comfortable with one another.

Speaking of oneself as if from the outside evokes the symbolism of the mirror image. It might be compared, as regards sensory perception, to seeing oneself from the outside, which is an impossible situation people get closest to when they look at their own reflection in the mirror. The imagery of the mirror certainly brings to mind Foucault’s heterotopia, of which the mirror is a perfect example as it occupies real physical space while also providing an inversion or reflection of another physical space – the one that the person or object in front of the mirror occupies:

Starting from this gaze that is, as it were, directed toward me, from the ground of this virtual space that is on the other side of the glass, I come back toward myself; I begin again to direct my eyes toward myself and to reconstitute myself there where I am. (Foucault 1986: 24)

This is the process which the protagonists of *The Enchanted April* go through as they observe themselves from a different point of view, which enables them to reconstitute themselves and eventually – inevitably – return home with a stronger sense of self and purpose. What the presented (rather philosophical) consideration of free indirect discourse implies is that in a narrative it creates a place which has the same effect that heterotopic spaces possess in physical reality. The effect also includes sharing. Since free indirect discourse cannot be attributed solely to a protagonist or the narrator, it is attributed to no-one, as a mysterious voice whose “net effect is an emotional identification with the hero’s slide into relaxation” (Mansfield 2015: 71). Using Moretti’s term, Charlie Mansfield stresses that the reader is also socialised as the use of free indirect discourse in a

narrative allows for “leaving the consumer with feelings, emotions, and socialisation” (2015: 71) – namely, the reader shares what emotions are felt and expressed by the characters.

To illustrate this effect of sharing (reminiscent of the concept of Christian love) that free indirect discourse as a heterotopic construct possesses, an excerpt looking into Lady Caroline could be of use. In the first passage, the heterotopic setting of the excerpt is established (the garden); in the second, the stress is on freshly discovered emotions; the third is explicit in its use of free indirect discourse:

There had been wonderful stars the evening before, and she had gone out into the top garden after dinner, [...] and, sitting on the wall at the place where the lilies crowded their ghost heads, she had looked out into the gulf of the night, and it had suddenly seemed as if her life had been a noise all about nothing.

She had been intensely surprised. She knew stars and darkness did produce unusual emotions because, in others, she had seen them being produced, but they had not before done it in herself. A noise all about nothing. Could she be quite well? she had wondered. For a long while past she had been aware that her life was a noise, but it had seemed to be very much about something; [...] suppose it was only a noise about nothing?

She had not had a question like that in *her* mind before. It had made *her* feel lonely. *She* wanted to be alone, but not lonely. That was very different; that was something that ached and hurt dreadfully right inside *one*. It was what *one* dreaded most. It was what made *one* go to so many parties; and lately even the parties had seemed once or twice not to be a perfectly certain protection. Was it possible that loneliness had nothing to do with circumstances, but only with the way *one* met them? (Von Arnim 2015: 92–93; emphasis added)

In the final paragraph, readers can see a gradual switch from the personal pronoun and/or possessive adjective which refer to Lady Caroline towards the indefinite *one*. As much as *one* is indefinite, it is perhaps paradoxically also universal; in a similarly paradoxical way, the effect which is achieved is one of both extreme closeness and distancing. It might appear at first glance that the narrative attempts to impart a universal truth using this

pronoun – but this is not the case as readers can immediately see the verbs *ached* and *hurt*, which convey rather personal, individual emotions. As the use of *one* goes on, it becomes even clearer that it refers to Lady Caroline (because of the reference to parties, and more particularly a couple of specific recent occasions). Therefore, at second glance it appears that Lady Caroline has distanced herself from herself only to be able to see herself in a new light. However, this new perspective is also offered to the readers, who are able to participate in Lady Caroline's rediscovery of her self due to the mere fact that she achieves it by observing herself apparently from the outside. The "outside" which is expressed in the form of free indirect discourse thus becomes a space shared with the reader, from which insight into the character(s) is given. This shared space is in addition heterotopic: the view it gives of Lady Caroline is that she is in fact lonely despite being constantly surrounded with people. It reveals that all the noise and intense activity in her life are virtually meaningless. In other words, while being itself imaginary (created by means of narrative representation) and illusory (associated with the almost otherworldly beauty of San Salvatore), this space "exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory" (Foucault 1986: 27).¹⁴ It therefore exposes Lady Caroline's aristocratic home and London parties as a mere illusion of meaningful life and thus allows for her transformation during the month she spends at San Salvatore.

5. Conclusion

The analysis of how each of the four protagonists – women tourists – individually goes through a process of transformation and moves towards socialising and sharing, prior to returning home, could go on. The model is the same despite individual differences. It is precisely through these

¹⁴ The scope of the present paper does not allow for further analysis of other illustrative examples of the use of free indirect discourse in the novel. This is left for future research, which might even apply a quantitative method of determining the frequency of free indirect discourse in the novel, and especially of those examples that are relevant to the presented framework of its interpretation. Critical analysis of such a discourse, as well as of the discourse of the novel in general, might also add valuable insights into the language and discourse strategies used both in the narrative and in the direct speech of the four women, which could and should reflect their respective individual transformations.

differences that *The Enchanted April* presents the initial difficulty of coming to terms with otherness – above all, other people and other spaces. The protagonist with whom the narrative opens, Charlotte Wilkins, is the one who immediately accepts otherness and denies any possibility of othering – deepening the differences. Her “visionary gaze” into space and people extends its influence on Rose, Caroline, and Mrs Fisher, with the effect that the four women form a model for a happy fictional tourist of the 20th century. The first step they take is the encounter with the heterotopic destination, which no longer inspires fear and awe but – due to the fact that it is, with the rise of mass tourism, more available even to travelling women (as well as more necessary because of their strict confinement to home) – pleasure and love. The encounter with these heterotopias reveals that God can be found elsewhere, not merely within the boundaries of religious and other conventions imposed by the society in which they live. The availability of travel additionally reveals a new dimension of the theoretical concept of heterotopia, which is in traditional Foucauldian terms perceived as a place of isolation – heterotopia as a tourist destination is collective and shared. These qualities consequently lead to the sharing of emotions (love), as tourists internalise the beauty of the place and start expressing their emotional response to it more freely and widely. Such sharing implies the works of Christian love, and the mediating influence of divinity is indeed present in contact with spatial otherness as well as in interpersonal contacts. Merging heterotopia with another theoretical/philosophical concept, that of Christian love, creates an image of complete otherness that can be accepted, as the narrative of *The Enchanted April* points out, by means of sharing through vacationing. Additional considerations of free indirect discourse in the novel, one of the typical modernist modes of discourse (i.e. speech and thought) representation, indicate that this particular discourse stands as a zone of otherness itself, not quite common to either the narrator or the protagonists and hence marked as a signifier of difference or strangeness within the text, thus facilitating the process of accepting the difference and strangeness of space and people as well. Dealing with a particular aspect of modernity – travel and mobility – *The Enchanted April* shows the possibility of observing oneself from a different point of view, made possible by the experience of a different spatial setting, and consequently also observing, accepting, and loving other people for whatever they are. What might be tentatively offered by this analysis is a new set of compass points, adapted to modern times, perhaps as relevant

in today's society as in the one presented by modernist fiction: instead of God, Husband, Home, Duty – different Space, loving Emotions, and Discourse which allows for sharing and accepting new perspectives.

References

- Badiou, A. (2012). *In Praise of Love*. London: Serpent's Tail.
- Banfield, A. (2015). *Unspeakable Sentences: Narration and Representation in the Language of Fiction*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Bassnett, S. (2002). Travel Writing and Gender. In: P. Hulme and T. Youngs (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 225–241.
- Buzard, J. (2002). The Grand Tour and After (1660-1840). In: P. Hulme and T. Youngs (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 37–52.
- Dehaene, M., and L. de Cauter (eds.) (2008). *Heterotopia and the City: Public Space in a Postcivil Society*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Foucault, M. (1986). Of Other Spaces. *Diacritics*, 16 (1): 22–27.
- Foucault, M. (1989). *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of Human Sciences*. London: Routledge.
- Gordić Petković, V. (2020). The Enchanted Self: Individual Identity Change in Fiction and Film. *Collection of Papers of the Faculty of Philosophy*, L (3): 157–174. doi:10.5937/zrffp50-28121
- Leitch, V. B., ed. (2001). *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Leskiv, A. (2009). The Literary Phenomenon of Free Indirect Speech. *Seria Filologiczna Studia Anglica Resoviensia*, 6 (60): 51–58.
- Mansfield, C. (2015). *Researching Literary Tourism*. Plymouth: University of Plymouth.
- MacCannell, D. (1999). *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Moretti, F. (2007). *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History*. London: Verso.
- Nørgaard, N., Montoro, R., and B. Busse. (2010). *Key Terms in Stylistics*. London, New York: Continuum International Publishing Group.

- Parezanović, T. (2020). Tourist Writing: Facing and Embracing the Otherness of Space and Narrative. *[sic] – a journal of literature, culture and literary translation*, 10 (2). doi: 10.15291/sic/2.10.lc.1
- Phillips, J., ed. (2006). *Romanticism and Transcendentalism (1800-1860)*. New York: Facts on File.
- Rimmon-Kenan, S. (2005). *Narrative Fiction*. New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.
- Smith, S. (2001). *Moving Lives: 20th Century Women's Travel Writing*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Tuan, Y. (2013). *Landscapes of Fear*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Von Arnim, E. (2015). *The Enchanted April*. London: Vintage Books.
- Wagoner, R. E. (1997). *The Meanings of Love: An Introduction to Philosophy of Love*. Westport, CT and London: Praeger.

Received: 24 July 2023

Accepted for publication: 1 September 2023

Nataša V. Damljanović*

Dr Ružica Rip Secondary Medical School
Sombor, Serbia

KUREISHI'S HYBRID IDENTITIES - *THE BLACK ALBUM* AND *MY SON THE FANATIC*

Abstract

Hanif Kureishi's novel *The Black Album* and the short story *My Son the Fanatic* depict contemporary Britain swamped in a religious explosion of radical Islam. They also illustrate white British hypocrisy and the constant molestation of hybrid immigrants. Due to their skin colour, they regularly suffer humiliation. The hostile behaviour of white Brits affects their maturation, forcing them to act in a different way. The aim of this paper is to analyse these two literary works and their protagonists as the epitome of hybrid identity within the postcolonial Bildungsroman tradition, and to demonstrate that the only viable option for them is the third way.

Keywords: *The Black Album*, *My Son the Fanatic*, hybrid identity, skin colour, the third way.

1. Introduction

The late eighties and the beginning of the nineties were significant years for the subgenre known as the postcolonial Bildungsroman. This was also the period of great expansion of postcolonial literature in general. Literary

* ruza15@hotmail.com

critics were not surprised by the growing interest in the process of the protagonist's self-formation from diverse cultural contexts. Therefore, many postcolonial writers turned to the genre because "[...] its focus on the process and progress provide the useful tools with which to deconstruct imperialism and its underlying ideals" (Mullaney 2010: 31).

While Barbara Harlow refers to the genre as "resistance literature", Mark Stein insists that the genre allows a writer to discuss the process of the protagonist's transformation as well as the existence of novelty. Stein also points out that the main difference between the traditional and postcolonial Bildungsroman is that the latter explores the issue of "[...] finding a voice and a relationship between an individual and a larger group [...]" (2004: 30). He argues that protagonists in postcolonial Bildungsroman novels hardly ever move from the country to London; instead, they are typically born and raised in London.

The issue of positioning oneself within society is quite a complicated process. Christopher Marlowe and Daniel Defoe were the first to write about this problem in English literature and "[...] both found it difficult to find a satisfactory place in the society of their day [...]" (Watt 2001: 131). The process of development and adjustment of the main hero is characterized by predominantly negative and painful experiences, regardless of whether the individual is white, black, mixed-race, or a first or second-generation immigrant. However, Merle Tonnies notes that there is a difference when it comes to blackness and other postcolonial issues, as they involve an additional process of transformation. Moreover, the very same process concerning the person facing multiple forms of marginalisation is even more complex. Hence, it is obvious that "[...] the concept of Bildung has to be transformed [...]" (Tonnies 2013: 52).

Hanif Kureishi is one of the most popular contemporary writers. He has produced significant work in a range of genres. Despite regularly expressing his discomfort with being labeled as a postcolonial writer and calling it a "narrow term" (Hanif Kureishi, 2002, pers.comm., in Yousaf 2002: 16), his writing is strongly rooted in English traditions while also exhibiting many features of the postcolonial Bildungsroman. The most important one relies on Mikhail Bakhtin's theory that the structure of the Bildungsroman can vary depending on the time period in which it is used to represent the emergence of the hero. In distinguishing between historical and cyclical time, he notes the difference in the typical emergence of the hero in the novels which follow one's adolescence, versus those which

“[...] depict man’s path from childhood through youth and maturity to old age [...]” (1986: 22). Bearing in mind Bakhtin’s concept of cyclical time and the fact that some of Kureishi’s novels and short stories explore themes of identity and coming-of-age, this is a significant indication that his works align with the postcolonial Bildungsroman genre. Additionally, Sarah Illott, in her book *New Postcolonial British Genres*, reflects on the emergence of the Gothic Tales of Postcolonial England, which can be related to the postcolonial Bildungsroman. She discusses different post-traumatic experiences of the second and the third generation of immigrants and associates them with the gothic dimension, as their coming-of-age is saturated with racism, bullying, and alienation. Kureishi’s writing also incorporates gothic vocabulary such as trauma, fear, silence, uneasiness, melancholy, haunting, and the uncanny “[...] to reflect contemporary manifestations of fear and trauma associated with the ‘unhomely’ experience of migration and the psychological and material traumas of alienation and racism that causes ethnic minority characters to experience themselves as Others” (Illott 2015: 54).

After achieving great success with the novel *The Buddha of Suburbia*, which reflects the period of soaring optimism, idealism, and serenity, Hanif Kureishi depicts the eighties in Britain in a starkly different manner. His trip to Pakistan opened many new horizons and resolved many issues. There, he witnessed the major expansion of religion and the process of Islamisation that was in full swing. In that very same period in Britain, the tension among young Muslim people was rising on a daily basis. The constant battle between liberalism and fundamentalism became one of the most important themes of his literature, and his focus, at the time, was exclusively on race and ethnicity.

The hybrid protagonists in the novel *The Black Album*, Shahid and Chad, and the protagonist in the short story *My Son the Fanatic*, Ali, confront numerous challenges in order to achieve their coming-of-age. The goal of this paper is to analyse the texts within the tradition of the postcolonial Bildungsroman, focusing specifically on the role and influence of skin colour stereotypes, a stigma that follows them throughout their lives. It also aims to show that the protagonists, who are almost the same but not white, carry the burden of their inheritance. To do so, the paper employs three key psychoanalytic concepts which depict events that disrupt identity and cause trauma: the uncanny, repetition compulsion, and abjection. In this paper, Sigmund Freud’s concepts of the uncanny and

repetition compulsion are closely associated with the emergence of hybrid identity, while Julia Kristeva's abjection is presented as a normal phase of one's maturation. The concepts also depict the fear and discomfort which hybrid people experience when they look in the mirror and see their image. Furthermore, given that their identity is divided between two worlds and two cultures and that their destiny is quite uncertain, "the absence of secure anchors leaves many [...] characters adrift on a storm-filled existential sea [...]" (Moore-Gilbert 2001: 150). Finally, the paper examines the reasons why the protagonists shift the course of their lives towards Islam and how religion becomes the primary driving force in their lives. Why do they embrace fundamentalist ideology so vehemently? Is fundamentalism, for them, a last resort for salvation, or does it drive them even further into extremism? As such, this paper seeks to answer one of the most important questions: How dangerous is it for the protagonists to exclude the otherness in themselves?

2. Hybrid identity – an uncanny story of their lives

Stuart Hall, an influential cultural theorist, distinguishes three different notions of identity: the enlightenment subject, the sociological subject and the post-modern subject. The first two are characterised by the existence of a human person defined as a fully centred, unified individual capable of reasoning and acting. Moreover, when it comes to the sociological subject, the process of identity formation is fulfilled through relations with others. The outside interference, the interaction between self and society, plays an important role. Finally, the post-modern subject has all but a unified and stable identity. The post-modern identity is fragmented and usually consists of multiple identities. Sometimes those are contradictory, but that is what makes a person more versatile and adaptable (Hall 1996).

The uncontrolled influx of immigrants from the former British colonies during the post-war period had a direct impact on every aspect of British society. Britain also became a country with "[...] the highest number of mixed-race relationships anywhere in the occidental world [...]" (Alibhai-Brown 2001: 2). These mixed-race relationships as well as the offspring of second and third-generation immigrants influenced the emergence of a new hybrid identity, which directly deconstructs the concepts of fixity and stability. Thus, "with one black parent and one white, I was the orange

to my father's red and my mother's yellow, not quite either but rather something altogether new" (Varaidzo in Shukla 2016: 12). Individuals of mixed race argue that to be of mixed race means being raceless, being nothing – neither white nor black. Simultaneously, they face rejection by blacks and whites, Muslims and Christians, Pakistanis and the English. It also means to belong nowhere but present. Moreover, the focus is always on skin colour, which can lead to stereotyping and inaccurate assumptions, and potentially create problems. However, the fact that someone is not recognisable consequently means that one does not exist. Freud would probably connect this with the dread of castration. In blinding himself, Oedipus found the most appropriate punishment. In postcolonial Britain, however, society inflicts punishment by limiting the acts and existence of a new identity, while at the same time imposing an inferiority complex. Hybrid people are constantly made to feel unworthy, insignificant, and invisible. In doing so, it may incite a phenomenon known as repetition compulsion, an unconscious urge to relive earlier traumas. According to John Fletcher's book *Freud and the Scene of Trauma*, Freud insists on the "postulate of a compulsion to repeat that proceeds [...] from the very nature of the drives, a compulsion powerful enough to overrule the pleasure principle" (2013: 319). Fletcher also adds that "[...] what is repeated is a highly specific, perceptual, and memorial configuration or gestalt, in which is invested the original affect of fright and a range of painful and distressing emotions that have not been worked through" (2013: 308). Thus, when we discuss hybrid identities, their acts, and their existence, it is entirely about the repetition of the repressed—either the traumatic event or its circumstances.

Furthermore, the idea of a double in any form or degree is highly disturbing. The emergence of hybrid identities is closely related to Freud's concept of the uncanny. It defines phenomena which are simultaneously both familiar and unfamiliar to the ego and "it undoubtedly belongs to all that is terrible – to all that arouses dread and creeping horror [...]" (Freud 1919: 1). The term is also associated with everything that needs to stay hidden and secret, but in the end becomes visible. Recently, the feeling of uneasiness has increased with the visibility of hybrid identity. The plurality and fluidity of identity might be the terms that explain and define it best. Consequently, the ability of hybrid people to adapt and transform themselves depending on the situation that determines the conditions is terrifying. The "strange faces" with a "strange colour" who master the

language perfectly well and who exhibit excellent manners. Thus, their skin colour, like a stigma or a token of a shameful act of their parents, reveals their identity and determines their destiny in advance. What is more, Frantz Fanon in his *Black Skin, White Mask*, discusses the influence of the stereotypes concerning skin colour. He distinguishes between Jews and black people. Fanon argues that “[...] the Jew can be unknown in his Jewishness” (2008: 87) since his skin colour is white. Besides, “[...] their conduct is perpetually overdetermined from the inside” (Sartre, 1946, as cited in Fanon 2008: 87), contrary to black people who are overdetermined from the outside. Consequently, Fanon points out that he is “[...] the slave not of the ‘idea’ that others have of me but of my own appearance” (2008: 87). However, in theoretical psychoanalysis, abjection is a normal phase in one’s social maturation. Julia Kristeva in her *Powers of Horror: Essays on Abjection*, observes that the moment of abjection appears when “[...] the subject, weary of fruitless attempts to identify with something on the outside, finds the impossible within; when it finds that the impossible constitutes its very being” (1982: 5). Kureishi’s hybrid protagonists in both the novel and the short story struggle to assimilate their skin as a part of their sense of self, which is why they feel threatened by it. They all see their inner identity as English. In other words, although they were born in England or “[...] brought up with England as their home, they seem increasingly alien with their mother” (Ilott 2015: 82). They share the same customs, they do not recognise any other culture as their own, and they fail to acknowledge their own otherness. The problem arises the moment when they discover the discrepancy between their expected reflection in the mirror and the image they actually see.

Another thing that makes the lives of hybrid people even more complicated is when Freud’s notion of the uncanny intersects with their place of birth – England. Namely, the country they have known all their life to be their habitat suddenly becomes unknown. Racist narratives suggesting that immigrants, even those born in England or belonging to the third generation of immigrants, should go home makes their existence in England unpleasant and inconvenient. That is why “the experience of being ‘unhomed’ manifests itself differently [...] for immigrants for whom England is the place known as home whilst racist rhetoric insists on their origin being elsewhere” (Ilott 2015: 77).

Although the hybrid identity has not been fully recognised yet, it is widespread and gradually emerging from the shadows. Moreover, when

different races and cultures intersect, a new generation with its own culture and its own hidden signs is created. Peter Brooks in his book *Body Work* discusses Frankenstein's Monster from the Lacanian point of view. He draws a distinction between the Imaginary and the Symbolic Order, with the Imaginary pertaining to the mirror stage and the Symbolic Order being concerned with language. In doing so, Brooks maintains that contrary to the Symbolic Order where the monster can "[...] produce and project his desire in language", in the Imaginary "[...] the monster will never cease to be the 'filthy mass'" (1993: 203). When viewed from Kureishi's perspective, or through the eyes of his hybrid characters, it becomes apparent that the "monsters" of the post-60s era were fortunate to have the language of pop culture to express their desires. Despite the protagonists' inability to change their complexion, this universal form of expression, found in literature, music and visual media, provided a transparent and meaningful means of communication not only for them, but for young people worldwide.

Finally, hybrid people face numerous challenges and discriminatory acts. At present, they must cope with feelings of rejection, solitude, darkness, alienation, dread, and sorrow. The prejudices that loom over their heads constantly bear down on them and their psyche. They always have the impression that they are not good enough, not smart enough, or have some kind of bodily dysfunction. Nevertheless, hybrid people regularly send a strong message that they are here and have no intention of leaving. They are the offspring of colonisation and globalisation. They exist, and their being will undergo major changes in the future. The greedy politics of colonial imperialism has created the monsters, so let them live.

3. Bildung and/or anti-Bildung: desire for authority

As has already been discussed with reference to the Bildungsroman, the final goal of the protagonist is to be accepted by the society he lives in. He undergoes a series of challenging situations, many of which are negative, confronts various obstacles, shows the rebellious nature he possesses throughout the process of maturation and finally assimilates. In other words, the protagonist finds the balance between the social and the private. As for the postcolonial Bildungsroman, a key plot element is the process of Bildung. However, achieving complete integration is impossible since the hero strives for a place in a society which is characterised by

instability and which goes through a constant flux and change. Thus, the novel usually ends either before the protagonist reaches any conclusion related to his identity or his striving meets with failure (Lopez 2001). On the other hand, hybrid identities insist on the fact that “it is the British, the white British, who have to learn that being British isn’t what it was. Now it is a more complex thing, involving new elements” (Kureishi 2011: 34). Consequently, it is not the hybrid individuals who have an identity crisis, but white British people who have yet to acknowledge and accept that the British identity is changing. Therefore, taking into consideration both sides and their different approaches, it is fair to say that in the postcolonial Bildungsroman, a hero needs to reach a compromise. In Kureishi’s literary world it means that “the best the young British-Asian heroes can do is accept their lot in a world driven by hypocrisy, selfishness, racism and class confusion, and, by immersing themselves in the pleasure of consumption, salvage what personal enjoyment they can” (Buchanan 2007: 42). But what happens with those who never get accepted by the society they live in, never get understood, or never find a compromise? In the novel *The Black Album* and the short story *My Son the Fanatic*, Kureishi associates those characters with religion. Shahid, for example, opens Allah’s door naively, whereas Chad, Hat and many other members of Riaz’s group, along with Ali, intentionally open the very same door. Their approaches might be different, but the consequences are the same. After becoming alienated, they usually decide to return to their communities and friends who share the same religious values, and they choose to start living a life solely in accordance with their religion. Through time, most of them begin to live a fundamentalist life instead of a regular one. From society’s point of view, their story does not have a happy ending, or if it does, society will not see it that way.

3.1. *The Black Album*: the power of religion or the power of literature

Shahid, the twenty-year-old protagonist of the novel *The Black Album*, belongs to the second generation of British Pakistanis. His parents came from Pakistan and started to live their immigrants’ dream in Kent. After the death of his father, Shahid moves to London for further education. He enrolls at a college to study literature. At the same time, he strives to distance himself from his family and become more independent, while primarily seeking to come to terms with his identity.

The novel follows Shahid's problematic process of maturation. The psychological maturation and transformation of the boy who would rather make an impact on the world as an artist than as a political, religious or any other kind of activist. One of the reasons for Shahid's great dedication to literature, particularly high literature, is that he truly believes that it will help him find the answer concerning his identity and habitat. "Literature, painting, architecture, psychoanalysis, science [...] and all this has gone hand-in-hand with something significant. That is: critical inquiry into the nature of truth. It talks of proof and demonstration" (Kureishi 1995: 99). Therefore, Shahid's process of coming-of-age is seen through the "[...] terms of intellectual rather than affective choices" (Moore-Gilbert 2001: 111).

From the very beginning of Shahid's stay in London, he experiences solitude and confusion with regard to various matters. Even though he attends a college where the majority of the students are either black or of mixed race, he has some difficulty identifying with them. Shahid's acquaintance with religion starts as a consequence of the forlornness he feels in London. He is not a boy who has been raised in a shallow religious environment. Shahid emphasises many times that his father has taught neither him nor his brother anything about it. What draws him to religion is not necessarily racism, although he was regularly bullied in school, but rather the fact that while walking around the area, he realises that it is all about joining. The mosque and religion erase the borders since "[...] here race and class barriers were suspended. [...] Strangers spoke to one another" (Kureishi 1995: 142). What is more, regardless of whether they come from Pakistan, Iran or any other Muslim country, or whether they are rich or not, they are equally treated.

The painful process of adaptation and loneliness lasts until the moment when he meets Riaz, the leader of the Muslim fundamentalist group who "[...] emphasizes origins at the expense of environment" (Buchanan 2007: 60), and Deedee, a lecturer at his college, a feminist, and the real representative of postmodern ideology and popular culture. She is also known for her drug addiction and preference for pleasure over politics. Both Riaz and Deedee very quickly recognise Shahid's vulnerabilities, innocence, and naivety. Like real predators, they use their powers to catch the prey. In this merciless fight, both of them strive to earn and keep his attention. Therefore, Shahid becomes the victim of his inner conflict. He also faces a dilemma of his life which is painful and potentially tragic. The main question is how to balance between his "[...] individualistic,

knowledge-and-pleasure-seeking urges, and traditional morality and [...] religion” (Buchanan 2007: 68). In other words, how to balance between two streams: the demands of militant Islam and the pleasures and vices of secular life. Since their ideologies are diametrically opposite, and because he finds consolation in both of them, the struggle becomes even more complicated. “[...] When he was with his friends their story compelled him. But when he walked out, like someone leaving a cinema, he found the world to be more subtle and inexplicable” (Kureishi 1995: 133). He experiences the same problem when he spends time with Deedee. The world, steeped in lust, drugs and literature, is not a place to be easily abandoned. Moreover, both sides endeavor to present London to Shahid. They use different perspectives, each depicting London in the manner which underpins their respective ideologies. Riaz, for example, on their first meeting, takes him to an Indian restaurant to meet with other fellow countrymen, while Deedee Osgood takes him to a rave party where they stay all night. She exposes him to the carnival of sex and drugs, a world he has never seen before. Riaz’s secret goal is to reconnect Shahid with his father’s country, whereas Deedee aims to free him from any bonds that suffocate his youth.

For Shahid, religion becomes a significant problem the moment he has to choose between the knowledge offered by literature and the knowledge of a single book – the Quran. Moreover, he gets deeply disappointed upon realizing that the group he belongs to is planning to use violence in order to show their disagreement with the book *The Midnight Children* (the writer presumably alludes to Rushdie’s novel: *The Satanic Verses*) which has raised a great deal of tension in society. Since the debate about this book reveals the worst in everyone, Shahid decides to leave the group for good. “Shahid looked away immediately, with a guilty expression[...]. [...] If anything he felt ashamed. He was someone who couldn’t join in, couldn’t let himself go” (Kureishi 1995: 225).

By the end of the novel, he undergoes a significant shift and rejects everything related to religion. Shahid’s journey finishes when he realises that he needs to find an “alternative belief system that counters the British lack of direction, but nevertheless offers the freedom and subjectivity necessary for the expression of cross cultural hybrid subjectivity” (Upstone 2008: 10). Therefore, the moment Shahid raises his voice and tells Deedee that he “[...] never likes being told what to do” (Kureishi 1995: 160), although he has always been told what to do up to that point, shows that

his process of maturation has come to an end. He has finally overcome the developmental gap, the lack of father's authority or any other authority.

While in Shahid's case education prevails over dogma, things turn differently for Chad. Being a Pakistani child adopted by a white, racist English family, his life trajectory changes drastically. As a child, he was brought to England and lived in an English way. Not only did he feel racism on his skin among his friends, but he also felt it among the members of his foster family. To further complicate matters, he felt the very same resentment among the Pakistani. When he decided to take classes in Urdu, they mostly laughed at him. "In England, white people looked at him as if he were going to steal their car or a handbag, particularly when he dressed like a ragamuffin. But in Pakistan they looked at him even more strangely" (Kureishi 1995: 107). Hence, rejection, humiliation and the feeling of homelessness drive him away from his family, and an accidental meeting with Riaz changes his life. From this moment onwards, he starts calling himself Muhammad Shahabuddin Ali-Sha, and later Chad, and insists that everyone call him by that name. In doing so, he uses the collective identity of Islam as a shield and protects himself from any possibility to be seen as a Paki, as something bad or ugly. "No more Paki. Me a Muslim" (Kureishi 1995: 128). Chad sees Riaz as a life-saver and Islam, the religion, as his identity. What is more, he finally discovers the real purpose of his existence. Religion helps him build self-confidence which drives him further, and he becomes more radical and aggressive.

In the beginning, his acts are quite understandable and even justifiable to some extent, as he shows empathy towards a Bengali family and all the others who were victims of racist attacks in Britain. He organises his friends and does his best to protect those people from the racists. Unfortunately, it does not end there. He becomes obsessed with the fight for his cause and the need to prove his commitment to Riaz and consequently to the fundamental ideology they support. To make matters worse, he starts enjoying his obsession to the point where his actions towards his opponents become violent. "Chad clenched his weapon over the child's head, and waved it about" (Kureishi 1995: 138). The climax of his violence occurs when he organises all the members of the group to go and attack Shahid in Deedee's house. He does that when he discovers that he no longer has control over Shahid. They beat Shahid almost to death. "Chad took hold of Shahid and threw him back against the wall, winding him and smacking his head. [...] "This idiot hates us and hates God!" (Kureishi 1995: 265).

3.2. *My Son the Fanatic*: the power of religion

Ali's commitment to religion in the short story *My Son the Fanatic* is a par excellence example of the anti-Bildung in Kureishi's oeuvre. Apart from dealing with race and ethnicity, this short story also features a father - son scenario. Moreover, the story does not explain the reasons for Ali's commitment to Islam, as it starts when the process of his conversion into a religious fundamentalist has already reached an advanced stage. The reader can only assume.

Ali is a young man who lives with his father Parvez, a taxi driver, a hard-working man, and his mother who has devoted her life to their family. He seems to have embraced the lifestyle of his English peers. Ali is a trained accountant, a vocation that will enable him to have a stable job and a promising future. The father's wish to have a successful son who will live a life like a real Englishman is the realisation of all his dreams. Unfortunately, Parvez's dreams start crumbling down when he realises that his son's behavior has changed. He cannot immediately discover the reason for it, as the actual reason is beyond his wildest imagination. Ali, who used to enjoy creative chaos as a boy, becomes a neat and organised person, to the point that his whole family becomes very proud of him. They do not realise that the apparent changes in his behavior are merely the tip of an iceberg.

The stories shared by the fundamentalists in the mosque, which concern the hard life of their brothers in Pakistan and whose intention is to evoke compassion and a sense of guilt, have a significant impact on Ali. His decision to help them and to sacrifice for Islam brings a new dimension into his life. According to Moore-Gilbert, Ali's decision to convert himself and become an exemplary member of the religious community bears a striking resemblance to Farhat – Hat in *The Black Album* as “[...] both are accountancy students who, disgusted with secular Britain, turn to religion” (2001: 150). Therefore, by entering the vicious circle of radical Islam, Ali goes through the process of rebirth. It is an inseparable part of both the Bildungsroman and the process of self-discovery, typically followed by the shedding of all the things related to the former self. What Ali does first is to eliminate all the people and things that remind him of pleasure and his former westernised life. Namely, “[...] Ali had parted from the English girlfriend [...] his old friends had stopped ringing. [...] He had bought him good suits, all the books he required and a computer. And

now the boy was throwing his possessions out!” (Kureishi 2005: 63). Ali’s life becomes a personification of the room where he lives, as “[...] the room was practically bare. Even the unhappy walls bore marks where Ali’s pictures had been removed” (Kureishi 2005: 63). Therefore, being seduced by radical voices and the purity of fundamentalist Islam makes everything in Ali’s life simple, bare and infertile. His blindness and submission compel him to declare that his life finally has a purpose. However, “for young religious radicals, extreme Islam [...] kept them out of trouble, for a start, and provided some pride. They weren’t drinking, taking drugs, or getting into trouble like their white contemporaries. At the same time, they were able to be rebels” (Kureishi 2011: 104). Thus, religion allows them to be both disobedient and conformist at the same time, which is the key to their commitment. Furthermore, their allegiance to radical Islam masks the violence which will eventually emerge.

Ali’s attitude towards his father is troublesome. Contrary to Chad, it is not primarily about physical violence, but rather psychological violence which occurs in their relationship. Ali even goes as far as to molest and punish his father for the life he leads. According to Sigmund Freud, dreams of killing the father constitute a common stage in male development, although in Ali’s case it happens much later. He does it by seizing the father figure’s authority, unfortunately not for himself, and voluntarily consigning it into Allah’s hands.

Parvez, Ali’s father, is “a complex and often contradictory figure” (Buchanan 2007: 60), like most of Kureishi’s characters. He possesses all the characteristics typical for the hybrid identity. On the one hand, Parvez is a hard-working man who values the liberalism that England generously offers and, above all, he appreciates jazz music. He loves his life and he is grateful to this country. “But I love England. [...] They let you do almost anything here” (Kureishi 2005: 70). On the other hand, he shows a traditional, almost puritanical relationship with both his son and his wife. Although the wife’s name is intentionally not mentioned in this short story, Parvez expects her to respect and obey him. The traditional attitude towards his son is exemplified by his refusal to allow his son to choose his own path. He holds the opinion that the path he chooses for him is the right one even though Ali does not see it that way. Despite his self-proclaimed liberalism, Parvez’s actions suggest otherwise. His attitude towards religion, in general, is ironically explained in a scene from his childhood in Lahore, in which he was forced to attend classes where all

the boys were taught the Quran. “To stop him falling asleep, when he studied, the Maulvis had attached a piece of string to the ceiling and tied it to Parvez’s hair, so that if his head fell forward he would instantly awake. After this indignity Parvez had avoided all religions” (Kureishi 2005: 67).

Kureishi, who associated confusion with the children of second-generation immigrants in his earlier works, now uses and associates it with Ali’s father, Parvez, when he discovers his son’s commitment to religion. In his essay, *The Carnival of Culture*, Kureishi points out that British-born children display certain behavioural patterns. Neither are they more religious nor more politically radical in comparison with their parents. But what they cannot bear is “[...] their parents’ moderation and desire to ‘compromise’ with Britain” (Kureishi 2011: 131). That is why Ali, in one of the quarrels between him and his father, asks him “[...] how can you love something which hates you?” (Kureishi 2005: 69). Moreover, he threatens him with the words that “the law of Islam would rule the world; the skin of the infidel would burn off again and again; [...] If the persecution doesn’t stop there will be jihad” (Kureishi 2005: 69).

The short story concludes with the fight between Ali and his father, Parvez. It is a clash between two different ideologies which they vehemently support. Both of them show a certain level of intolerance and misunderstanding towards the recent lifestyle choices they have made. Ali does not want to accept that his father’s life is led by desire, while Parvez cannot accept that Ali perceives Islam as “[...] a legitimate locus of resistance, communal self-help and solidarity” (Moore-Gilbert 2001: 166). Moreover, the final scene, in which Parvez hits Ali while he is praying, sends a deep and powerful message. It proves, among other things, that the patriarchy, tradition and conservative tendency in parenting still exist regardless of how liberal a person or a society may have become. Above all, it shows the complexity of the process of growth and maturation of hybrid individuals in Britain, particularly those who embrace fundamentalist ideology as their driving force.

4. Conclusion

Kureishi’s two unique literary works, *The Black Album* and the short story *My Son the Fanatic*, offer us complex dramatis personae, Bildungs and plots which allow us to explore these two narratives from a postcolonial

Bildungsroman perspective. One of the characteristics of the genre is that it does not necessarily follow the protagonist's coming-of-age from his early childhood to adolescence, but instead depicts his journey from puberty to maturity. These two literary works, the novel and the short story, portray a situation where the protagonist's Bildung, or coming-of-age, takes an unwanted turn, resulting in an anti-Bildung narrative. They also show how the protagonist becomes the antagonist when radical Islam takes over his life and becomes the essence of his existence. Moreover, they demonstrate how the plot generated by a character, who has undergone religious conversion, can have significant structural and moral implications for a narrative.

The novel *The Black Album* and the short story *My Son the Fanatic* not only depict the issues which the protagonists confront in the process of coming-of-age in their distinctive ways, but they also show that the bond which exists between a father and a son is one of the most important motifs in Kureishi's literature. Once again, it plays an important role, and its failure causes significant problems for both the father and, notably, the son. After moving to Britain, Shahid's father dies. Chad is an abandoned child from Pakistan, adopted by an English family. Ali is the only one whose father is alive. Nevertheless, the father's extramarital relationship with Bettina, one of the "girls of the night", might be viewed as a contributing factor to Ali's feeling of abandonment and his abrupt, and certainly unforeseen, embrace of religion. Therefore, their desire for authority pushes them into an extreme form of Islam. Unlike Shahid, who deals with the same issues but somehow manages to find a compromise, the other characters, particularly the members of Riaz's group such as Chad, Farhat (Hat), and Ali, the protagonist of the short story *My Son the Fanatic*, fail to do the same.

In the end, while fundamentalist ideology may appear to be a possible anchor for an alienated British-Muslim protagonist, as it provides him with a sense of belonging and rootedness, the long-lasting consequences might be disastrous, even fatal. These two literary works demonstrate that "[...] finding a single or primary point of identification is an unnecessary or even dangerous task" (Ilott 2015: 42). In doing so, the otherness gets eradicated or suppressed and can lead to a sense of incompleteness. Furthermore, the protagonist fails in his pursuit of Bildung since the totality between the individual and society is thwarted. It consequently means that the protagonist fails to achieve a compromise, and his life becomes a profound

disillusionment. On the other hand, embracing the fluid and variable nature of personal identity, as well as living in accordance with it, is imperative for the protagonist. Finally, the ultimate goal is to uncover and accept the third way as the only possible way for a hybrid identity that rejects binary categoriations and essentialism.

References

- Alibhai-Brown, Y. (2001). *Mixed Feelings*. London: The Women's Press Ltd.
- Bakhtin, M. (1986). *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, (trans. McGee, W.V.). Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Brooks, P. (1993). *Body Work: Objects of Desire in Modern Narrative*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Buchanan, B. (2007). *Hanif Kureishi*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Fanon, F. (2008). [1952]. *Black Skin White Mask*. (trans. Markmann, C.). New York: Grove.
- Fletcher, J. (2013). *Freud and the Scene of Trauma*. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Freud, S. (1919). The Uncanny. U: *Imago, Bd. V*.
- Hall, S. (1996). Who Needs 'Identity'? In: S. Hall & P. Du Gay (Eds.). *Questions of Cultural Identity*. London: Sage, 1–17.
- Ilott, S. (2015). *New Postcolonial British Genres: Shifting the boundaries*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kristeva, J. (1982). *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (trans. Roudiez, S.L.). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Kureishi, H. (1995). *The Black Album*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Kureishi, H. (2005). *The Word and the Bomb*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Kureishi, H. (2011). *Collected Essays*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Lopez, A. J. (2001). *Posts and Pasts: A theory of postcolonialism*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Moore-Gilbert, B. (2001). *Hanif Kureishi*, Manchester: Manchester University.
- Mullaney, J. (2010). *Postcolonial Literature in Context*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Shukla, N. (2016). *The Good Immigrant*. London: Unbound.
- Stein, M. (2004). *Black British Literature: Novels of Transformation*. Columbus: Ohio University.

- Tonnies, M. (2013). Feminising a Classical Male Plot Model? Black British Women Writers and the 'Bildungsroman'. In: H. Antor and J. Hoydis (eds). *Anglistik: International Journal of English Studies*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter Journals, pp. 51–61.
- Upstone, S. (2008). A Question of Black or White: Returning to Hanif Kureishi's *The Black Album*. *Postcolonial Text*, Vol 4, No 1, pp. 1–24.
- Watt, I. (2001). *The Rise of the Novel*. California: University of California Press.
- Yousaf, N. (2002). *The Buddha of Suburbia: A reader's guide*. New York, London: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Received: 7 May 2022

Accepted for publication: 21 December 2022

Soultana (Tania) Diamanti*
Aristotle University Thessaloniki, Greece
Independent Researcher

TESTIMONIES OF TRAUMA AND POSSIBILITIES OF HEALING IN OCEAN VUONG'S *ON EARTH WE'RE BRIEFLY GORGEOUS* (2019)

Abstract

The present paper explores the concept of trauma and its intergenerational transmission in Ocean Vuong's semi-autobiographical novel *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* (2019). This paper aims to present a study of the Vietnamese American immigrant experience within the context of literary trauma studies and argue for both the transgressive power of trauma and the potential of writing to effect healing. Family becomes the space of the intergenerational transmission of trauma, but also a locus of transformation, with Vuong highlighting the intimacy that also defines the family members' relationships. The potential of strong familial bonds and intimate relationships to counteract a legacy of violence and precarity is explored, alongside generic experimentation undertaken by the author.

Key words: intergenerational trauma, Vietnam War, Vietnamese diaspora, healing

1. Introduction

In his debut novel *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* (2019), Ocean Vuong presents the chronicle of a Vietnamese family that immigrates to America during the Vietnam War. The story sheds light on the great impact of the

* taniadiamanti01@gmail.com

war upon the Vietnamese survivors and the transmission of trauma within the family. Inspired by his own experience of being a Vietnamese American raised by his mother and grandmother, Vuong has created a narrative that does not only focus on the suffering of the family, but also brings to the fore their perseverance and continual attempts at healing. This literary work received numerous positive reviews and resulted in Ocean Vuong winning significant awards, including the American Book Award and the Mark Twain American Voice in Literature Award. Ocean Vuong had already made his presence known in the world of American literature and literary studies through his essays and poetry, particularly through his poetry collection *Night Sky with Exit Wounds* (2016) that won the T.S. Elliot Prize in 2017. The trajectory of his life is proven to be both turbulent and inspiring, with Vuong experiencing immigration from his homeland at the age of two, suffering difficult living conditions in the US, and yet becoming a critically acclaimed and best-selling author. His poetry, as well as his fiction, capture the anxieties of Vietnamese American subjects, especially the troubles of young queer people, and the long-lasting impact of the Vietnam War and the forced immigration on the Vietnamese immigrants' psyche.

In the interview Vuong gave to the acclaimed Vietnamese American writer Viet Thanh Nguyen, which was published by the Los Angeles Review of Books (2019), Ocean Vuong states that through his novel – and particularly through his focus on the history, and the stories of the older generations of refugees – he tries to “preserve that act of survival”, to bring to the spotlight the minority group's resistance and perseverance despite the hardships. The protagonist and narrator of the novel, who goes by his nick-name Little Dog¹, offers his recollections through letters he addresses to his mother. Written in the form of an epistolary novel, *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* articulates traumatic memories and events that marked Little Dog's childhood and adolescence. By addressing the series of letters to his mother, Rose, Little Dog ultimately tries to create a more intimate relationship with her and initiate a process of healing. Through his narrative, Little Dog has the opportunity to reflect upon his grandmother's and mother's trauma. He finds space to voice the effects on his psyche of that accumulation of trauma within the family, but also uses writing as a coping mechanism that can facilitate his healing. As Thanh Nguyen points out in one of his essays on minority discourse, the act of narrating their experiences facilitates minorities to both claim their history and “recover from history” (2006: 32). This essay will explore the

importance of 'recollecting' violent histories in order for survivors to bear witness to trauma and claim visibility, but also the importance of narrative as a means of healing and re-articulating selfhood in the face of adversity.

More precisely, this essay will explore the intergenerational transmission of trauma that transforms home into a space of turbulence but will also go beyond that and will address the possibilities of healing that arise by breaking the silence that conceals trauma. As it will be shown, writing allows Little Dog to unburden himself of traumatic memories that trigger inner turmoil and reflect upon his familial and romantic relationships, acknowledging their role both as a source of suffering and as a trigger for self-empowerment. The construction of that testimonial narrative is a challenging process as the story is rather fragmented and episodic, resembling the way memories are unearthed. Such fragmentation and difficulty in articulating past events are common narrative techniques employed, as Michelle Balaev states, to "embody the psychological 'action' of traumatic memory" (2008: 159). In other words, they reveal the subject's struggle to convey the emotional burden of traumatic memories.

The transformative power of writing lies not only in the creative means one often resorts to in order to communicate traumatic memories buried in the unconscious, but also in the fact that it allows individuals to recognize their own transformation, to become aware of a difference between their past and present self. To externalize one's psychic pain and decide to bear witness to one's trauma instead of suppressing it indicates the individual's willingness to make peace with the past and focus on his mental and psychological well-being. Particularly, writing provides traumatized individuals with a safe space in which they can gradually externalize their pain and confront traumatic memories that trigger inner upheaval. As Marian M. MacCurdy accurately puts it, "[i]t is image that burns itself into our minds whether we want it to or not, and it is image which can free us from a past that will always have a hold on us until we look straight at the images that live behind our eyes" (2000: 190). Therefore, constructing a narrative that addresses traumatic affects and the haunting presence of memories of a traumatic past initiates an intimate process towards healing and, ultimately, "enables us to feel that we have begun to form order from chaos" (MacCurdy 2000: 185). Little Dog resorts to narrative writing and, as will be explicated later in this paper, to experimentations with language to release the emotional and psychic burden of living with unresolved trauma and even more, to gain a sense of control since he is determined

to confront the past and not surrender to it. “Since trauma creates a condition of unreliability in its telling,” argues Meera Atkinson, “it is an act of empowerment for a writer to knowingly work with this unreliability, to bring imagination to bear on the psychic and bodily remnants and traces of trauma in order to produce a literature that offers itself to witnessing and unlying” (2017: 17). Likewise, Little Dog’s narrative, with its nonlinearity, its fragmentations and language experimentations, constitutes a strenuous attempt to speak about the ‘unspeakability’ of trauma. He confesses that although once he would delve into books searching for narratives that would have a cathartic effect on him, that “sentences would save [him]”, he has reached a point where he feels the need to become the author of his own narrative and, as he writes to his mother Rose, he is ready “to tell [her] everything [she’ll] never know” (Vuong 2019: 15). By addressing a traumatic past and its great impact on his psyche through the construction of a personal narrative, Little Dog is placed in a vulnerable position, yet not one that leads to retraumatization but rather one that requires of him to acknowledge his emotional turmoil and bear witness to his life experiences. What should be taken into consideration is the fact that Little Dog reflects upon his past through the perspective of an adult self who recognizes that although trauma permeates a major part of his family’s life, it cannot completely dictate his present and future. It will be argued that through writing, the male narrator contemplates the love and care he has also received from his mother and grandmother, as well as reflecting on the sense of belonging and of being desired he has experienced in his queer romantic relationship. Thereupon, writing functions as a safe space for Little Dog, allowing him to confront the past and simultaneously bring to the spotlight aspects of his life that oppose the bleakness of traumatic events.

The first subsection of this paper will focus on the trauma of Lan and Rose, Little Dog’s grandmother and mother respectively, whose psychological wounds are mainly manifested in the form of PTSD. Their repetitive storytelling about the past and their implication in domestic abuse create an unstable environment for Little Dog’s upbringing and produce the conditions for the perpetuation of trauma. Nevertheless, Little Dog does not assume the role of the victim but uses writing as a means of better understanding the vulnerability and struggles of his loved ones. Particularly, the second subsection of this paper will explore the fundamental role of his familial and romantic relationships in helping him

overcome his struggles. His relationships motivate his writing, for it is through his narrative that he tries to reconnect with his mother, appreciate his grandmother's constant support for the family and reflect upon his complex sexual relationship with a young American man named Trevor. Ultimately, the third subsection of this paper will revolve around the act of writing and the narrative techniques used by the narrator that allow him to gain agency over his own and family's stories and offer him the possibility of healing.

2. Intergenerational Trauma: Haunted by War and Immigration

Rachel Yehuda and Amy Lehrner, whose paper reviews intergenerational trauma theories and the role of epigenetic mechanisms for this multigenerational transmission, state that the idea that predominates in most trauma theories is that descendants of individuals who experienced traumatic events "find themselves grappling with their parents' post-traumatic state" (2018: 243). Yehuda and Lehrner underscore that the conditions faced by later generations can "augment or mitigate offspring effects" (2018: 252) and argue for the need for further research on the role of environmental conditions in transmitting trauma. They also acknowledge the significance of new research that focuses on possible DNA modifications that may trigger the transmission of trauma effects. Additionally, literary scholar and professor Gabriele Schwab insists that "histories of violence can be put in a dialogical relationship with one another" and can reveal "a transferential dynamic" of trauma and the effects of the violence experienced (2010: 29). In Vuong's novel, pain and trauma bequeathed from generation to generation are both signified through literary techniques and through the family's continual struggles and traumatic experiences that place them in a constant state of vulnerability.

Trauma within the family is highlighted from the beginning of the narrative, with a focus placed on Lan, the protagonist's grandmother. As Meera Atkinson argues, trauma "challenges the notion of a distinct psychic past and present" (2017: 5) and such a situation leads the individual to be trapped in a cycle of repetitive traumatic memories, constantly reliving the past. In particular, Lan suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder and schizophrenia, and the narrative demonstrates the consequences of war upon Lan, a war survivor, and its impact on those close to her. Having run

away from her home at the age of seventeen and resorting to prostitution as a way of surviving in war-torn Vietnam (Vuong 2019: 39–40, 46), Lan’s life is defined by precarity². The effects of experiencing war remain engraved in her psyche for her whole life, affecting her mental and psychological state years after her arrival in the US. This becomes evident when she is startled by the sound of the neighbors’ fireworks as they prepare for the celebrations of Independence Day. Lan anxiously orders young Little Dog to stay silent and hide with her under the windowsill to avoid being caught by the mortars (*ibid*, 19). The sound of the fireworks conjures memories of the war buried in Lan’s unconscious. Yet, these memories remain vivid and powerful, making Lan mistake fireworks for bombs and thus evoking a feeling of dislocation. “[T]he mortars will know where we are”, whispers Lan to her grandson who remembers her panicked behavior and that “[s]he went on, in whispered bursts, about the mortars, her hand periodically covering [his] lower face” (*ibid*, 19–20). Lan loses touch with reality for a few moments and surrenders to traumatic memories of the past, reliving the trauma of the Vietnam War. Michelle Balaev paraphrases Cathy Caruth when referring to traumatic experience as “a fixed and timeless photographic negative stored in an unlocatable place of the brain” (2008: 151), underlining how deeply engraved traumatic memories are in one’s psyche and hence stressing their power over the consciousness of the traumatized person. Alongside Lan is Little Dog, who witnesses his grandmother always “dipping in and out of sense” (Vuong 2019: 16), struggling to find a balance between the haunting memories of the past and her current reality. So used is Little Dog to Lan’s fixation with the past and her unpredictable behavior when she is awake that Lan’s peaceful figure while sleeping takes him by surprise and makes him wonder whether he is looking at a “stranger”, since “[o]nly in this twitching quiet did her brain, wild and explosive during waking hours, cool itself into something like calm” (*ibid*, 16). “Trauma as a mode of being”, argues Gabriele Schwab, disrupts one’s sense of time and reality, and “fractures the self” (2010: 42) and as Little Dog witnesses, trauma becomes an intrinsic part of Lan’s life after surviving the war. As he confesses, “wildness is how [he] had always known her” (Vuong 2019: 16).

Lan’s unstable psychological state, induced by her experience of war and adversity, gradually affects Little Dog, who observes and internalizes his grandmother’s pain from a young age. Lan’s storytelling does not only indicate the haunting presence of the past, but also triggers the

transmission of trauma to the younger member of the family, Little Dog. Lan's oral stories, driven both by her need to externalize her pain and her difficulty in controlling traumatic memories, are central to her relationship with her grandson, who does not merely listen to stories about war and evil spirits, but participates in those events with his imagination. He becomes absorbed in those stories, "[mouthing] along with the sentences", imagining his presence next to Lan "as her purple dress swayed in the smoky bar" where she was waiting for a soldier to notice her (Vuong 2019: 22–23). Marianne Hirsch uses the term "postmemory" to refer to the close connection of the younger generation with "the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before" (2012: 50). Hirsch underlines the younger generation's access to the past through creative means and their own "imaginative investment" rather than remembrance (2012: 5). Little Dog's active engagement with his grandmother's stories can be an example of the workings of postmemory. Little Dog actively delves into his grandmother's past and experiences particular events of the past, as if they were his own memories, by empathizing with her, "as if watching a film for the umpteenth time – a movie made by Lan's words and animated by [his] imagination" (Vuong 2019: 22). The past is interwoven with the present not only for Lan but also for Little Dog, who both observes the effects of war on Lan's psyche and is burdened by her tumultuous memories. As Schwab argues, for most people who survived extremely devastating situations "the stories have grown over the open wound like a second skin" (2010: 42), that is, stories about the past become an intrinsic part of the survivors' lives and function as another manifestation of unresolved trauma. Through her storytelling, Lan discloses her traumatization distinctly, often losing touch with reality and dwelling on the past. Particularly, while narrating to Little Dog what led her to become a sex worker for the American troops, she abruptly interrupts the flow of the story by acting out her dialogue with her mother before fleeing her home (ibid, 46–7). With "eyes shut, face lifted toward the ceiling", Lan relives the past (ibid, 46–7). Her loss of control over her narration indicates that traumatic memories dictate her storytelling ability and increase the possibilities of retraumatization. Such narration resembles what Dana Amir calls "the metonymic mode of witnessing", manifested when the traumatized person fails to reflect upon the traumatic event and separate between a past and present identity but rather perpetuates "a living continuum with the traumatic memories" (2019: 11). The boundaries between past and present, here and there,

become blurry in Lan's stories and Little Dog bears witness to her dislocation and suffering. Hence, Little Dog shares in Lan's traumatic experience and is unavoidably affected by his loved one's psychological wounds.

While Lan's role in reinforcing intergenerational trauma can be traced mostly through the workings of postmemory, Little Dog's mother Rose is more directly implicated in the intergenerational reenactment of a cycle of violence. Rose's suffering is not manifested through language but through her violent behavior towards Little Dog that not only illuminates her struggle with mental and psychological health, but also perpetuates trauma within the family. In the first part of the narrative, Little Dog counts the times and ways he was physically abused by his mother. What he remembers of his mother's first aggressive behavior towards his four-year-old self is a tactile sensation, "[a] hand, a flash, a reckoning. [His] mouth a blaze of touch" (Vuong 2019: 5). The list unfolds and Little Dog is confronted with stigmatizing situations such as the time he was hit "with the remote control" and "the box of Legos", "[t]he time with a gallon of milk", and even "[t]he time with the kitchen knife – the one [she] picked up, then put down, shaking, saying quietly, 'Get out. Get out'" (ibid, 5, 6, 9). Thus, he immediately reveals that home was not a safe space for him and indicates Rose's inner psychological disturbance as the trigger that fueled that domestic violence. Surviving the Vietnam War induced Rose's initial trauma, transforming her identity, and leaving an indelible mark on her psyche. Little Dog perceives that from an early age, witnessing, for instance, his mother's distress after he scares her by imitating an American soldier (Vuong 2019: 4). Little Dog realizes that "once [war] enters you it never leaves" (ibid, 4). In addition, the abuse she suffers from her husband (ibid, 115) and the precarious conditions she experiences as a refugee in America contribute to her further traumatization. Rose struggles financially; she works long hours at factories and nail salons, and returns home exhausted, "night after night, plop[s] down on the couch, and fall[s] asleep inside a minute" (ibid, 79). Such struggles seriously affect her mental and psychological state and, as Fatma Eren claims in her essay on Vuong's novel, this chronic presence of trauma "manifests itself in the form of toxic femininity" (2021: 32). Even when Little Dog seeks his mother's comfort after being bullied at school, she hits him and demands of him to "to be a real boy and be strong" or never tell her about such incidents again. He is the one with "a bellyful of English" and should "find a way" to use the language to defend himself (Vuong 2019: 26). As Isabelle Thuy

Pelaud claims, “a deep sense of vulnerability that leads to survival strategies heavy with contradictions” is triggered when people experience psychic pain without any “support from family, community, and nation” (2011: 65), and in Vuong’s narrative Rose is portrayed as a traumatized individual whose inner turmoil disrupts her sense of identity and negatively affects her role as mother. On the one hand, Rose’s aforementioned reaction is hurtful for Little Dog, who experiences violence both from strangers and his own mother. On the other hand, Rose’s anger is indicative of her own disappointment and rage at being marginalized and struggling in America. She cannot bear to face the possibility of her son experiencing a similar situation.

Violence becomes mundane within Little Dog’s family, with Rose being triggered by her son’s slightest misbehavior. She locks him up, for instance, in the basement for wetting his bed, despite his screams and crying (Vuong 2019: 98). Rose channels her frustration and negative emotions against her own offspring and thus perpetuates a cycle of violence. Dana Amir refers to the *Muselmann* mode of witnessing, which is part of the psychotic mode, to demonstrate those cases when trauma inhibits one from both maintaining a “vital contact” to a particular traumatic experience and communicating it through language (2019: 12). “In the *Muselmann* mode”, argues Amir, “trauma operates like an impoverishing, reductive, and sterilizing mechanism”, a condition that engenders a sense of trauma’s continuity, that “it happens now and might go on forever” (2019: 14). Rose is unable to provide a testimony of her trauma and use language to release the burden of traumatic experience; on the contrary, she remains silent and often struggles with explosive outbursts. Her violent behavior discloses her inability to separate her traumatic past from her current situation, placing her in a constant state of turmoil.

Rose’s distress and declining psychological state further transform the family into a turbulent space that defines Little Dog’s youth and adolescence. Witnessing his mother in pain has a great impact on Little Dog’s psyche, who as an adult narrating his story recalls mainly traumatic memories of his formative years living with his mother. Memories of his mother becoming distant, withdrawing into herself, still haunt him as he constructs his narrative. He recalls a particular night when his mother was hiding in the closet, dwelling on her sadness, and ignoring Little Dog’s presence, who eventually returned to his room terrified, pleading for his mother to “come back” (Vuong 2019: 12). Rose’s dissociation and

depressive episodes are symptoms of her trauma that paralyze her. The fact that Little Dog experiences what it looks like for his mother to lose agency over her life causes him emotional distress. As Gabriele Schwab argues, the parents' behavior has such a strong impact on their offspring's psyche that traumatic memories are not transmitted to the younger generation only through language and stories but "body memories and forms of somatic psychic life" further perpetuate the transmission of trauma effects within the family (2010: 51). It is through body language that trauma can be visible. In the above scene of the novel, Little Dog becomes aware of his mother's suffering by paying attention to "[her] steady breathing" and the stillness in the room (Vuong 2019: 12). Despite her usual explosive behavior, this time Rose's body is frozen. On the contrary, Little Dog's body is alert as he starts shaking and calling for his mother despite knowing that she will not respond. The fact that Little Dog is present in moments when Rose's inner turmoil intensifies places him in a vulnerable position. For example, this becomes evident in the scene where, in the middle of the night, Rose is driving manically towards where she remembers her sister's house to be. Rose is worried that her sister Mai would be murdered by her husband. Trauma blurs Rose's consciousness, who years after her sister had moved to another city is filled with traumatic memories of the past that distort her perception of the present. Little Dog is sitting in the backseat of the car confused, thinking that they are detached from the actual world, lost in their own universe, "an everything hurling through the cosmic dark while, in the front seat, the women who raised [him] are losing their minds" (ibid, 68). In Caruth's work on trauma and the belated reenactment of traumatic events, the fact that the victim does not recognize the event of trauma facilitates its belated repetitive re-enactment and guarantees that traumatic events will never cease to affect the individual's life (1996: 7). Rose's inability to distinguish between reality and traumatic memory establishes a cyclical pattern of intergenerational emotional and physical abuse within her household and indelibly brands her son, who internalizes traumatic experience and suffers silently alongside his mother.

3. Care Matters: Relations of Dependency and Love

Although trauma pervades the characters' lives, what is a significant part of the novel is the crucial role of relationships. Notably, it is Little Dog's

relationship with his mother that lays the foundation for his narrative journey towards healing. “I am writing to reach you” (Vuong 2019: 3), states Little Dog at the beginning of the novel, as he addresses his mother, demonstrating that their bond functions as a driving force for his narrative. Despite the fact that Little Dog has difficulty expressing his thoughts in written form – and occasionally declares that he must “begin again” (ibid, 3, 173) – and despite his mother’s lack of knowledge of English, Little Dog resorts to writing letters in English and addressing them to his mother. Through these letters he is determined to communicate both the pain and affection he keeps inside. He shows that his narrative is an act of reconciliation by underlining that his letters are written by Rose’s son, “from inside a body that used to be [hers]” (ibid, 10). Thus, Little Dog underscores the importance of their relationship and his care for his mother despite their past conflicts.

T. R. Johnson conceives of writing as “a material activity of hope”, a practice that can help the traumatized person connect with others by overcoming their feeling of isolation (2000: 88), thereby helping one to communicate their trauma and search for support and understanding in another person. Through his narrative, Little Dog tries to reflect not only upon the suffering, but also upon the love rooted in his relationship with his mother. His narrative testimony functions as an act of care and love toward his mother. Towards the end of the narrative, he reaches the conclusion that “[they] were born from beauty” and advises his mother to remember that, despite the violence they experienced, “that violence, having passed through the fruit, failed to spoil it” (Vuong 2019: 231). That is, Little Dog indicates that they are not defined by trauma, but they have the power to rise above adversity. Yue Gu, exploring the process of narrative therapy and the construction of life narratives, argues that through writing, people engage in a process of healing as they have the chance to assign their own meaning to their experiences (2018: 488). In other words, by weaving a narrative pattern, one gains agency over their life story, for they are in a position to choose from which perspective to look at their life. With the above in mind, one can argue that Little Dog’s writing offers him space to acknowledge the great impact his mother has had on his life: he refuses to dwell only on the consequences of being the recipient of intergenerational violence as a result of trauma, but also acknowledges the deep love and affection that permeates his relationship with his mother.

Little Dog's grandmother is also a prominent figure in his life, portrayed as a caring person who would struggle to keep the family united and protect her grandson from falling prey to emotional and physical abuse by his mother. In his narrative, Little Dog reminisces about those moments when he could find comfort in Lan's company and feel their deep connection. He remembers the time when he was physically abused by his mother and Lan took care of his bruises by rolling a boiled egg on his face, telling him that "[his] bruises are inside it now" and only by eating it will his pain fade, and thus Lan becomes resourceful in her attempt to console young Little Dog (Vuong 2019: 105–06). The fact that this memory emerges spontaneously to Little Dog's mind years later while he is peeling a boiled egg (*ibid.*, 105), indicates the depth to which Lan's caring acts are engraved in his memory years after her death. Despite the turbulence at home and Lan's inability to protect Little Dog from being abused by his mother, Lan's concern and attentiveness would ameliorate his suffering and facilitate the strengthening of their bond. Butler argues that grief reveals the great extent to which people are dependent on their ties with others (2006: 23), indicating that the loss of a loved one leaves a mark upon one's psyche that can affect their life trajectory. In Little Dog's case, his incorporation of his memories of Lan into his narrative contributes to his healing as he recalls her caring acts that helped him persevere through the suffering when he was growing up and that function as a reminder of hope for overcoming trauma. In times of turmoil within the family, Lan is the one consoling Little Dog, trying to explain to him that although his mother is suffering, "[s]he pain", "she sick", she still loves him, repeating again and again that he shouldn't be scared of his mother (Vuong 2019: 122). Lan tries to show to her grandson that despite the pain he experiences, his family is the place where he belongs and is welcome. As a mature narrator exploring his past, Little Dog can conceive of his relationship with his grandmother as vital for his healing and, as Yue Gu claims, writing allows a person to revisit the past and approach it from a different perspective "so that healing and letting-go can take place" (2018: 486). Although complete healing is not attained but is rather a process in which the protagonist engages in, writing about his relationship with Lan allows Little Dog to grieve for his grandmother's loss and articulate both his pain and gratitude for her tenderness. Therefore, mourning the loss of a loved one allows for the release of an excess of emotions and suppressed pain, while grief, as Schwab maintains, also "prepares the ground for a future-oriented integration of the past" (2011:

13); that is, the loss of a person is processed, the pain caused by that loss is expressed and the one who suffered that loss can carry that memory without it haunting and further traumatizing the individual.

Through his narrative, Little Dog conceives of the family's effort to protect each other and persevere, reflecting upon the significance of name-giving. He realizes that their names reveal a truth about their identity and since Lan was the one naming both his mother and him, their names are influenced by her experience of war. For instance, while Lan, as an act of self-empowerment, chooses a name for herself that symbolizes something beautiful, namely, the flower Orchid, Little Dog's image of a bloomed Orchid reminds him of "something torn apart" (Vuong 2019: 39, 41). In naming herself after a flower, Lan creates a juxtaposition with the precarity around her during the Vietnam War. Yet, Little Dog, who witnesses the haunting presence of war on Lan's psyche, makes a connection to trauma and associates the blooming process of the orchid with the fragmentation of the petals and subsequently, with Lan's fragmented consciousness. Little Dog searches for a double meaning hidden in his guardians' names. He rethinks the significance of his mother's name and reinterprets it not merely as Lan's intention to name her daughter after the flower rose, but also as "the past tense of rise" (ibid, 215). His realization that her name conveys a completed action, that she has risen, illuminates her strength and resilience: she does not succumb to the hardships but rises above them. In her critical work on creative writing and healing, poet and professor of English Judith Harris claims that the stories individuals create about themselves contribute to a better understanding of their identity and engender a sense of "change and possibility" that can facilitate one's healing (2003: 8). She underlines the significance of writing and narrative choices not only in contributing to one's representation of oneself, but also in conveying one's emotions (Harris 2003: 8), suggesting that written language and the construction of narratives provides space for reflecting upon one's life. Both Lan and Little Dog need to draw strength to overcome their pain and while Lan's name provides her with hope for her future, Little Dog assigns a specific narrative to his mother – that of a resilient person and not a helpless victim. His own name is also another caring act of Lan. Having experienced the violence of war, Lan reaches the conclusion that to keep something dear to her protected, she has to "name it after something so worthless it might be left untouched – and alive" (Vuong 2019: 18). Lan's chosen nickname for her grandson reflects her concern

about trauma and devastation being perpetuated and affecting the younger generation. By calling her grandson Little Dog, Lan hopes to create “a shield” against the “evil spirits, roaming the land for healthy, beautiful children” (ibid, 18), against the precarious conditions they experience in war-torn Vietnam. Thus, Little Dog’s writings bring to the fore the family’s desire to defy traumatic experiences and persevere.

As Jeffrey T. Gibbons argues, novels that revolve around war trauma shed light on the possibilities and the characters’ endeavors for healing “even in the midst of persistent post-traumatic suffering” (2022: 5). Little Dog’s first sexual relationship is crucial to his journey towards healing, providing him space to self-explore and gain the power to write. His relationship with Trevor, the young man he meets the summer he starts working at the tobacco fields, allows Little Dog to explore his sexuality and reveal this part of his identity to another person. “I was seen”, he writes to his mother, who used to tell him to remain “invisible” in order to avoid any harm (Vuong 2019: 96). The way his mother taught him to use language is gradually being transformed by his need to voice his desire for Trevor. The word “sorry”, which was commonly used by his mother and the other immigrant women at the nail salon as an indication of their subservient role, had entered Little Dog’s vocabulary, i.e. “had become, by then, an extension of [himself]”, and thus the first time he meets Trevor, he greets him with the word “sorry” (ibid, 91, 94). Yet, as he experiences attraction from Trevor, he acquires a sense of liberation that becomes visible in his writing. He notes that it is something more than a bodily desire; it is a desire for everything that characterized Trevor, “the scent, the atmosphere of him, the taste of French fries and peanut butter underneath the salve of his tongue” (ibid, 110–11). Gradually, he is transformed into a young man who explores his sexuality and identity. Trevor’s interest in Little Dog has a great influence on how the latter thinks of himself, helping him conceive of himself as beautiful. For the first time he thinks of the imperfections he notices while looking at himself in the mirror as “something that was wanted, that was sought and found” (ibid, 107). As Harris argues, through writing, one brings past events into “the ephemeral flow of talk and redefinition” (2003: 15), that is, the past can be reinterpreted, and specific experiences acquire a new meaning. Writing about how transformative his relationship with Trevor was, that he could feel colors “[n]ot words— but shades, penumbras” when the two of them were being intimate and could better understand who he was (Vuong 2019: 106), gives Little Dog the

opportunity to recognize that his past was not entirely defined by suffering. Particularly, by reflecting upon their private moments in the barn where they would engage in intercourse and embrace their queer selves, Little Dog acknowledges the importance of having created a space where “[they] weren’t afraid of anybody” and were not trapped in a cage, as he writes, by society’s restrictions placed on gay identities, claiming that “sometimes not seeing the bars is enough” (ibid, 140, 216). Those memories are juxtaposed with the traumatic ones haunting his psyche, and by incorporating them in his narrative, he indicates his endeavor to heal

Nevertheless, he does not romanticize his relationship with Trevor, but in order to heal, he also reflects upon the emotional and verbal abuse he was subjected to by Trevor. Trevor carries his own psychological wounds, living with his alcoholic father who was often abusive towards him and disapproved of Trevor’s friendship with Little Dog whom he would call “China boy” (Vuong 2019: 142). Notably, when Trevor confesses to Little Dog his hate for his father, Little Dog is surprised that “a white boy could hate anything about his life” (ibid, 97). Trevor’s turbulent relationship with his father has a great impact on his psyche and further exacerbates his struggles with exploring and accepting his sexuality without guilt. Little Dog remembers the time when Trevor appeared at his doorstep in distress, begging Little Dog to tell him that “[he isn’t] a faggot” (ibid, 155). Thus, he demonstrates his discomfort and internalized shame for being gay and discloses the pressure placed upon non-heterosexual individuals to conform to the norms. As Christina Slopek rightly points out, his efforts to perform according to ideals of accepted hegemonic masculinity are a form of self-destruction (2021: 748); they magnify his struggle to accept his homosexuality and further keep him oppressed by gender norms. His obsession with heterosexual masculinity also creates tension within his relationship with Little Dog, who is the recipient of homophobic discourse triggered by Trevor’s inner turmoil as he struggles to conceal his gay identity. Trevor finds it “crazy” that Little Dog will always be gay, while he believes that “[he’ll] be good in a few years” (Vuong 2019: 188), suggesting that homosexuality is only a phase he is going through. Even in Little Dog’s presence, he has difficulty claiming his homosexuality. In his essay about gay relationships and masculinity, Matt G. Mutchler claims that a great number of gay men perform their sexuality according to “socially and culturally produced masculinity expectations” (2000: 17). That is, gender norms of masculinity do not only apply to heterosexual men, but also define

to a great extent how one performs queerness. Gender norms are deeply rooted inside Trevor, who adopts aspects of toxic masculinity by belittling Little Dog and questioning his masculinity. Little Dog acknowledges that their relationship echoes power relationships, and yet, he does not delve only into hurtful memories, but revisits all aspects of their relationship, indicating its valuable contribution to his process of healing.

4. Connections between Writing, Articulating Trauma, and Healing

Writing is employed by Little Dog as a healing practice that allows him to articulate his trauma through creative ways, one of them being the use of metaphors. Early in the narrative, Little Dog draws a connection between immigration and precariousness, referring to the migration of monarch butterflies from north to south during the winter. Little Dog underlines that only the young ones will manage to return, that “only the future revisits the past” (Vuong 2019: 8). The monarchs’ journey south resembles Little Dog’s family’s immigration from war-torn Vietnam to America – a movement that, while necessary for their survival, entailed adversity about which Little Dog can provide testimony. Dana Amir argues that testimonies and the creation of narratives facilitate healing by providing “space between ‘ego’ (‘the subject of utterance’) and narrator (‘the subject of enunciation’)” (2019: 4); that is, she finds it crucial for the traumatized individual to bear witness to their trauma, to become the narrator and address his affliction in order for trauma to “create some movement in relation to a hitherto frozen, circular traumatic present” (Amir 2019: 4). As part of the younger generation, Little Dog can attempt to resist the transmission of intergenerational trauma and aim for healing by communicating his pain and not concealing his trauma. He resembles the butterflies that survive immigration and that “turn toward the place in the narrative no one was meant to outlast” (Vuong 2019: 10); that is, he perseveres through the hardships and breaks the silence about the family’s struggles. The presence of this metaphor becomes prevalent in the first part of the narrative and shortly after its last mention, Little Dog reiterates the tragic deaths that occur during the monarch butterflies’ migration and highlights the survivors’ burden of carrying the memory of those they lost, a loss “woven into their genes” (ibid, 12). Similarly, Little Dog carries traumatic memories that are triggered not only by his own forced immigration to

America but also by witnessing the struggles of his family members, who in turn carry their own trauma of surviving war and the strenuous journey of immigration. The symbolic use of language is also representative of what Amir calls the metaphoric mode of witnessing that “struggles against traumatic stagnation” and is characterized by a change in the perspective of the witness, from being the one who experiences a situation to being the one who reflects upon it (2019: 10–11). For instance, the buffaloes that Little Dog saw once on TV with Lan and that kept running toward the cliff, reminded him of a family, each member “just following their loved ones”, as he later tells Trevor (Vuong 2019: 179, 237). Yet, as an adult writing letters to his mother, Little Dog rethinks his observation about the similarity between the herd of buffalo that runs to their death and a family whose members cannot follow their own path. “You can stop”, he writes to his mother (ibid, 182), reminding her of the possibilities for breaking the cycles of trauma and violence that define family history. As the narrator, he keeps a relative distance from what he experienced and witnessed and can reflect through written discourse not only on the family’s past, but also on the possibilities of healing. This shift towards a more optimistic perspective about their future indicates his effort to overcome the paralyzing effects of trauma, which is a process that “never attains closure” (LaCapra 2014: xxiii). Through writing, Little Dog creates a space for constructing a narrative that can function as motivation for engaging in that continual process of resolving trauma, which LaCapra calls “working-through” (2014: xxiii).

Little Dog’s non-linear narration is indicative of both the narrator’s difficulty in articulating his inner turmoil and his attempts at structuring his experience and acquiring a sense of control. That turbulence conveys the strong influence on his consciousness of traumatic memories that shape the narrative and define the unravelling of the story. Towards the last section of the novel, the fragmented form of the narration intensifies, with Little Dog beginning the first paragraph with the memory of a table without elaborating on any details (Vuong 2019: 219). On the contrary, he continues writing about other memories.

I remember the table. I remember the table made of words given to me from your mouth. I remember the room burning. The room was burning because Lan spoke of fire. I remember the fire as it was told to me in the apartment in Hartford, all of us asleep on the hardwood floor, swaddled in blankets from the Salvation

Army. I remember the man from the Salvation Army handing my father a stack of coupons for Kentucky Fried Chicken, which we called Old-Man Chicken (Colonel Sanders's face was plastered on every red bucket). (Vuong 2019: 219)

The narration continues with Little Dog interweaving memories of the family's difficulties when they first arrived in the US, the days he spent in Saigon after Lan's funeral, and mostly memories about his father's abusive behavior. It is only after several pages that Little Dog reveals that it was at the kitchen table that his father had hit his mother for the first time (ibid, 232). The emergence of a traumatic memory triggers the overwhelming emergence of a chain of memories that, on the one hand, interrupt the flow of the narration and, on the other hand, help Little Dog release his emotional burden. For Balaev, the nonlinearity of the plot allows the author to illustrate the character's "mental confusion, chaos, or contemplation as a response to the experience" (2008: 159). In this sense, the narrative's structure can represent the traumatized psyche of the protagonist and reveal his difficulty in creating a coherent narrative out of his fragmented images of the past. Indeed, fragmented pieces of the past emerge unconsciously, and, as Little Dog admits, while he was witnessing a public ceremony of drag performers grieving the loss of a person in the streets of Saigon, "[he] kept hearing, not the song in the drag singer's throat, but the one inside [his] own" (Vuong 2019: 230). His mind evokes auditory memories of Trevor singing his favorite rap song and thus Little Dog momentarily disassociates from the reality around him and is drawn back to a specific moment in time shared with his loved one. Even more, his narration moves back and forth, interlacing the event of the drag performance with a vivid memory of Trevor. Thereupon, memories of a lost one become a psychic possession which renders Little Dog susceptible to the involuntary emergence of memories of the past, further challenging his endeavor to structure his personal narrative. To borrow Caruth's words, narratives of trauma revolve around "an urgent question: Is the trauma the encounter with death, or the ongoing experience of having survived it?" (1996; 7). That is, does surviving a shocking and stigmatizing event lead one to be constantly confronted with manifestations of trauma? Those instances of fragmentation and simultaneous interconnections of different situations and memories in Little Dog's narrative suggest indeed a major impact of traumatic events in his life despite the temporal distance from

the past, magnifying his attempts at structuring linearly any emotionally charged events and experiences.

Yet, writing provides Little Dog with a space to externalize his pain and ameliorate the effects of traumatic memories on his psyche. He reminisces about the time after Lan's death when he couldn't stop thinking about how his mother's eyes reminded him of Trevor's and Lan's, with memories of the two of them emerging in his mind and making him want to address his mother with their names (Vuong 2019: 216–7). His attempt to console his mother intensifies his grief for Lan, which then triggers memories of Trevor. "You're Rose. You're Lan. You're Trevor" (ibid, 217) is Little Dog's response to his mother, albeit one that does not escape from his mouth. Amid his mother's mourning for the loss of Lan, Little Dog experiences an intensified emotional turmoil and at that point, it becomes apparent that the narrative is motivated by Little Dog's emotional struggle to articulate his sorrow for Lan's and Trevor's deaths. Writing can facilitate, as Harris claims, the healing process by "allowing the intensity of feelings to emerge" (2003: 12), by being a space where the individual tries to make sense of their experience by reliving emotionally charged situations, as Little Dog does. Memories of the protagonist's loved ones, dead and alive, are interwoven in the narrative in a similar way they emerge in the character's mind, with nonlinearity better conveying Little Dog's grief and ultimately the challenging process of healing his trauma.

The use of poetic language demonstrates Little Dog's attempts at articulating trauma through a means that can convey the intensity of his psychological and emotional world. Poetic language is not merely employed for aesthetic reasons, but it also offers a way for the character to communicate his experience through a language burdened with emotion. One such instance is when Little Dog considers the abrupt interruption of Rose's education due to the Vietnam War, which resulted in their inadequate knowledge of Vietnamese, thus calling their mother tongue "an orphan", thinking that they "speak only partially in Vietnamese, but entirely in war" (Vuong 2019: 31–2). In other words, he shows that war haunts both their lives and language, and that "[to speak] entirely in war" is to speak of suffering and trauma, revealing that language is affected by the hardships they survived. The language used by Little Dog undergoes a rather expressive and emotional shift when he reflects on moments that still affect him emotionally in the present. Even when he reminisces about the time he and Trevor spent on the roof of the barn watching the sunset,

he cannot help but contemplate the fact that “the sunset, like survival, exists only on the verge of its own disappearing. To be gorgeous, you must first be seen, but to be seen allows you to be hunted” (Vuong 2019: 238). His writing is packed with emotion as he associates the brief presence of a mesmerizing sunset with the relative short span of human life, a truth he is familiarized with after Trevor’s death. Even more, his conclusion that “to be seen” brings one to a precarious condition (ibid, 238) echoes Judith Butler’s arguments about the precarity of human life, about “a vulnerability to the other that is part of bodily life” (*Precarious Life* 2006: 29). Such moving expressions indicate Little Dog’s realization, as a mature narrator revisiting the past, of both the strong ties linking him to Trevor and the need to communicate the pain invoked by all the memories he carries of him and his loved one. It is in written language that he finds his coping mechanism for handling his pain. It is personal writing as Judith Harris maintains that contributes to expressing psychic pain (2003: 11).

Experimentation with language allows Little Dog to externalize his emotions. Particularly, as the narrative unfolds and Little Dog is about to refer to Trevor’s death by drug overdose, Little Dog incorporates free verse in parts of the narration revolving around Trevor, demonstrating his emotional turbulence.

Trevor I like sunflowers best. They go so high.

Trevor with the scar like a comma on his neck, syntax of what next

what next what next.

Imagine going so high and still opening that big.

Trevor loading the shotgun two red shells at a time. (Vuong 2019: 154)

Little Dog reminisces about moments with Trevor, dedicating one separate sentence like a line in a poem for each memory, alternating between remembering specific events and his own descriptions of Trevor. He links his memory of Trevor talking about the sunflowers with memories of his body, of his “hard lean arms” when aiming with the shotgun and “the scar like a comma on his neck, syntax of what next what next what next” (ibid, 154), creating a love poem about Trevor and simultaneously mourning his loss. Words are emotionally charged and with every sentence, Little Dog delves deeper into their relationship, illuminating his intense

feelings for Trevor long after his death. What becomes noticeable in such personal narratives of one's life, argues Harris at the very beginning of her book, is an "interplay between disorder and order, wounding and repair" (2003: 2). This places emphasis on the idea that healing through writing and confessing one's disquieting experiences is not an effortless process. Particularly, as the prosaic form temporarily breaks down in Little Dog's narration, it is the poetic form of the free verse that can capture the flood of emotions. Each testimonial writing includes, according to Dana Amir, a combination of juxtaposing zones such as the ones of "psychic transformation versus zones of saturated thinking" (2019: 16), that is, zones where language either conveys trauma or falters. Little Dog's writing is influenced by his emotions and turbulent psychological state, yet he endeavors to give structure to his emotions and articulate pain through his experimentation with language. As Atkinson concludes, "it is that ghosts come forth to whisper, inaudibly, into the spaces between words and grammar, and phantoms spill their secrets through the embodied affect of the writer" (2017: 111), and hence the past does not remain frozen but is closely linked to the present and requires recognition to cease disrupting the flow of time towards the future.

Through his narrative, Little Dog bears witness to the trauma of his intimate others and creates space for the stories and struggles of the women of his family to become visible. He acknowledges the vulnerable position Lan and Rose occupy in American society as refugee women and becomes familiar with aspects of their lives that had a great impact on their psyches. He remembers the humiliation they experienced at the market as Lan and Rose, not knowing English, used body gestures and sounds to ask for an oxtail, with the men laughing behind the counter and them leaving the store ashamed (Vuong 2019: 30–1). Language is a barrier for the two women and each attempt to communicate through other means magnifies their sense of non-belonging and their retreat to silence. Yet, Little Dog's promise to be the "family's official interpreter" (ibid, 32) facilitates the women's claim for a place in society and through his narrative he further illuminates "the refugees' desire for legibility- to be seen and acknowledged" (Gibbons 2022: 128). His narrative provides him also with space to cope with the knowledge of traumatic events that happened to his loved ones, and especially to contemplate his mother's suffering and perseverance. After Little Dog's confession to his mother of being gay, Rose decides to share a secret: her forced abortion during the

war. Little Dog finds it hard to listen to the details his mother provides of her traumatic experience, thinking that by revealing their secrets, “[they] were cutting one another” (Vuong 2019: 133). That is, he gets traumatized by bearing witness to his mother’s testimony and particularly by the image, induced by Rose’s description of the operation, of the baby being “scraped ... like seeds from a papaya” (ibid, 135). Rose shares her pain with her son, and the latter resorts to writing as his way of both coping with this revelation about his mother’s past and further breaking the silence of the difficulties his mother experienced that shaped her identity.

According to Judith Harris, empathy is at the center of narratives exploring pain. She argues that to represent “intimate pain” through language can be therapeutic for the one engaging in a written testimony, as well as for “the larger groups of family, community, and society” (2003: 8). The suggestion here is that the written narrative is to be read by other individuals who can empathize with the writer’s story. Little Dog’s narrative draws him closer to his family and offers him a new perspective from which to approach his guardians’ unsettling experiences. He immerses himself in their painful experiences, even as he struggles with language in order to give voice to their stories. Thus, Vuong shows that it is through writing that trauma can be articulated, and a process of healing be initiated. By creating a narrative out of his experience of being raised in an unstable domestic environment and of his tumultuous sexual relationship, Little Dog offers a testimony of his struggles and creates a space where he can express his emotional turmoil. What becomes evident in his narrative, and particularly in his attempt to structure memories, is the impossibility of suppressing trauma indefinitely since, as it is argued, “[t]raumatic affect rumbles, spills, bursts forth, erupts, leaks, emits, fumes, whispers, screams, and acts from its restless grave, because at the deepest level it seeks recognition” (Atkinson 2017: 131). Little Dog highlights the haunting presence of the Vietnam War in his family’s lives long after their forced immigration to the US. He sheds light on its grave consequences upon Lan’s and Rose’s psyche and depicts the family as a space of suffering and of intergenerational transmission of trauma. At the same time, Little Dog’s affection for his mother, his grandmother and Trevor permeates his narrative and helps Little Dog recognize their involvement not only in his traumatization but also in his healing. According to Isabelle Thuy Pelaud, “[t]he act of returning to fragmented memories reflects what Derrida calls ‘learning to live with ghosts’” (2011: 64–65) and particularly, it is written language

that Little Dog chooses as a means to “learn to live with ghosts” (ibid, 65); that is, a means of creating possibilities of healing through primarily externalizing his psychological wounds in an attempt to gain agency over the effects of past experience. Through writing, he tries to keep a distance from the past and reflect upon traumatic memories and events that disturb his consciousness, embarking on a process of healing that is constantly challenged by the immensity of the unresolved trauma.

5. Conclusion

This paper has offered a critical exploration of a contemporary work of fiction by a diasporic American writer, Ocean Vuong’s *On Earth We’re Briefly Gorgeous* (2019). The focus of this paper has fallen on the literary representations of trauma, its intergenerational transmission, and the possibility of healing. In particular, emphasis has been placed on the double role of the family, with home being both a space of suffering and possible healing. The paper has also explored the way the novel foregrounds the role of writing in the protagonist’s attempts to claim his vulnerability and heal. Vuong’s novel provides a testimony of family trauma through Little Dog’s narration of his tumultuous life with his Vietnamese refugee mother and grandmother. As argued, Vuong’s narrative creates a space for Little Dog to revisit the past and attempt to communicate his pain, to break the silence about the trauma that permeates the lives of his family, and to embark on a process of healing.

Vuong’s first-person narrator delves into his memories of being brought up by his mother Rose and grandmother Lan, two psychologically wounded women, and seeks a possibility of healing. Surviving the Vietnam War is presented as an extremely traumatizing experience that has left an indelible mark upon Lan’s and Rose’s psyche, affecting their mental and psychological state years after their forced immigration to the US. For Rose, her inner turmoil intensifies due to the abuse she suffers from her husband and the precarious conditions she experiences in America, working in factories and nail salons, and struggling to claim her space. Her inner struggle to suppress trauma leads to her abusive behavior towards her son, Little Dog. Here, home is transformed into a space of violence that further traumatizes Little Dog. As it was argued, writing provides Little Dog with space both to articulate his trauma and engage in a process of healing.

His use of poetic language, metaphors, and nonlinear narration allow him to demonstrate his difficulty of communicating his pain and his desire to release that emotional burden. It is through writing that he acknowledges the pivotal role of his intimate relationships in helping him cope with traumatic experiences. He underlines his deep connection to his mother and conveys the transformative impact his first (homo)sexual relationship with a white, working-class, young man had on him. Incorporating positive aspects of his life into his testimony fosters his process of healing and helps him recognize that he can still find a glimpse of hope despite the painful memories.

Examining the intergenerational transmission of trauma in this novel through the lens of trauma theory contributes to acknowledging the perpetuation of cycles of violence and trauma, and the emergence of possibilities of resistance and healing. The Vietnam War is presented as the origin of a long history of trauma that is interwoven within personal stories of individuals belonging to minority groups within the United States. Creative writing provides authors of Asian descent with the means to claim visibility and expose silenced parts of their history that conceal a violent past. Ocean Vuong's *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* illuminates the interconnection between present struggles of minority groups and legacies of trauma, and the role of writing and storytelling as mediums for accessing the past and reflecting upon the influence of traumatic histories on the trajectory of one's life.

References

- Amir, D. (2019). *Bearing Witness to the Witness: A Psychoanalytic Perspective on Four Modes of Traumatic Testimony*. Routledge.
- Atkinson, M. (2017). *The Poetics of Transgenerational Trauma*. Bloomsbury.
- Balaev, M. (2008). Trends in Literary Trauma Theory. *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal*, 41.2, 149–166. JSTOR. (7 September 2023) <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/44029500>>.
- Butler, J. (2009). *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?*. Verso.
- . (2006). *Precarious Life: The Power of Mourning and Violence*. Verso.
- Caruth, C. (1996). *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Eren, F. (2021). “Fruit of Violence”: The Subaltern Refugee and the Intersection of Oppressions in Ocean Vuong’s *On Earth We’re Briefly Gorgeous*. *Journal of American Studies of Turkey*, 56, 23–44. *DergiPark*. (7 September 2023) <<https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/jast/issue/68346/1066046>>.
- Gibbons, J. T. (2022). *Asian American War Stories: Trauma and Healing in Contemporary Asian American Literature*. Routledge.
- Gu, Y. (2018). Narrative, Life Writing, and Healing: The Therapeutic Functions of Storytelling. *Neohelicon*, 45, 479–489. *Springer*. (20 August 2023) <<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11059-018-0459-4>>.
- Harris, J. (2003). *Signifying Pain: Constructing and Healing the Self through Writing*. State University of New York Press.
- Hirsch, M. (2012). *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust*. Columbia University Press.
- Johnson, T. R. (2000). Writing as Healing and the Rhetorical Tradition: Sorting out Plato, Postmodernism, Writing Pedagogy, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. In: Charles M. Anderson et al. (eds.), *Writing and Healing: Toward an Informed Practice*, National Council of Teachers of English, 85–114.
- LaCapra, D. (2014). Preface to *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, by Dominick LaCapra, ix–xxvii. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- MacCurdy, M. M. (2000). From Trauma to Writing: A Theoretical Model for Practical Use. In: Charles M. Anderson et al. (eds.), *Writing and Healing: Toward an Informed Practice*, National Council of Teachers of English, 158–200.

- Mutchler, M. G. (2000). Seeking Sexual Lives: Gay Youth and Masculinity Tensions. In: Peter Nardi (ed.), *Gay Masculinities*, Sage, 12–43.
- Nguyen, V. T. (2006). Speak of the Dead, Speak of the Viet Nam: The Ethics and Aesthetics of Minority Discourse. *CR: The New Centennial Review*, 6.2, 7–37. *JSTOR*. (4 August 2023) <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/41949520>>.
- Pelaud, I. T. (2011). *This Is All I Choose to Tell: History and Hybridity in Vietnamese American Literature*. Temple University Press.
- Slopek, C. (2021). Queer Masculinities: Gender Roles, the Abject and Bottomhood in Ocean Vuong’s *On Earth We’re Briefly Gorgeous*. *Anglia*, 139.4, 739–757. *De Gruyter*. (10 August 2023) <<https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/ang-2021-0057/html>>.
- Schwab, G. (2010). *Haunting Legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma*. Columbia University Press.
- Vuong, Ocean. (2019). Failing Better: A Conversation with Ocean Vuong. By Viet Thanh Nguyen. *Los Angeles Review of Books*. (6 August 2023) <<https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/failing-better-a-conversation-with-ocean-vuong/>>.
- . (2019). *On Earth We’re Briefly Gorgeous*. Vintage.
- Yehuda, R. and A. Lehrner. (2018). Intergenerational Transmission of Trauma Effects: Putative Role of Epigenetic Mechanisms. *World Psychiatry*, 17.3, 243–257. *Wiley Online Library*. (23 August 2023) <<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/wps.20568>>.

Received: 9 September 2023

Accepted for publication: 3 November 2023

Goran J. Petrović*
University of Belgrade
Faculty of Philology
Belgrade, Serbia

REVERSAL OF ROLES BETWEEN MEN AND MACHINES IN WILFRED OWEN'S POEM "THE LAST LAUGH"

Abstract

The present article examines "The Last Laugh" by Wilfred Owen from the perspective of utopian studies. It explores the fact that, in this poem, the roles of men (soldiers) and machines (WWI mechanical weapons) are reversed compared to what they should be like according to the Baconian view of what a proper relationship between humans and machines should be like in a utopia. The said role reversal is based on the personification of weapons and the passivisation of soldiers. The author of this article argues that "The Last Laugh" victimises the three passivised, dying soldiers it presents and simultaneously makes their deaths seem futile. The latter, nihilistic message is particularly important because it is closely related to the poem's anti-utopian aspect which, basically, boils down to the idea that mankind's machine-making genius does not guarantee the creation of a perfect society but that it may instead only amass the quantity of human suffering.

Keywords: Wilfred Owen, Francis Bacon, utopia, WWI, personification, nihilism, soldiers, mechanical weapons.

* goran.petrovitch@outlook.com

1. Introduction

Utopian thinking is an integral part of humanity. From time immemorial, human beings have dreamed of living in a perfect and flawless society (i.e., utopia) or at least in a society that would be better than the current one. While in the earlier epochs of human civilisation there was a tendency to imagine utopian worlds either as belonging to a long-gone mythical past and being unreachable (e.g., Hesiod's Golden Age or the Bible's Garden of Eden) or as existing elsewhere, on earth or in a transcendental realm, and being reachable through acts of heroism or a highly moral life (e.g., the Isles of the Blessed/Elysium in Graeco-Roman mythology or the Judeo-Christian heavens), from Francis Bacon's early modern period, utopia started to be imagined as a practicable future world, one that would be created on this earth, not owing to divine intervention, but by human beings themselves and through the application of science and technology (Đergović-Joksimović, 2009: 29–36, 48–53, 89–92, 140–141).

In the following centuries, science did indeed prove to be a major society-changing factor and, at least in the beginning, the changes effected by science looked like a sure sign that Bacon's utopian prophecies – most notably advanced in his book *The New Atlantis* (1627), “the founding document of technological utopianism” (Craig 2019: ch. 3) – would come true and that technologisation would turn the earth into a utopian, blissfully happy and peaceful, garden of the human species. Spurred by an apparently incessant series of novel, ever more advanced scientific discoveries, the rise of liberalism, and the relatively peaceful life in the world during the so-called epoch of *Pax Britannica*, the number of advocates of Baconian technological utopianism particularly rose during the 19th century, with the Englishman Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) being, perhaps, the most prolific and famous among them. Following in the footsteps of his 17th-century compatriot, who devised a microcosmic¹ technological utopia governed by a highly moral political elite (moral in Christian terms), Spencer predicted a future in which the militant type of society, still not gone in the late 19th century, would entirely give way to the industrial type of society, characterised by world peace, intense economic activity, and, in general, mankind's full enjoyment of the fruits of its high scientific and technological prowess (Dawkins, 2015: 1–2; Miller, 2000: 502–503).

However, these optimistic hopes were turned to ashes because, in 1914, the year that saw the outbreak of World War One, the first mechanised war in history, it became clear that science could be used for evil purposes as well, not only as a means of ennobling the world and bettering the human condition (Đergović-Joksimović, 2009: 141). As the twentieth century went on, the number of ways in which science could be abused only increased, so much so that by the early twenty-first century it looked as though science would lead the world to a dystopian hell rather than a utopian paradise, and it seemed that Baconian faith in technological progress needed to be redefined.

So, given that the scientific secular concept of utopianism has turned out to be as impracticable as the earlier, Graeco-Roman and Judeo-Christian, transcendental utopian concepts, there can be little doubt that 1914 represents an important historical milestone, a moment that ultimately showed that, for an honest and objective-minded intellectual, there was no longer to be much space for utopian thinking. In other words, it would be possible to say that World War One ushered in a new era of philosophical thinking, an era that would be predominantly marked by existential nihilism, a notion which had already been created in the second half of the 19th century, in the works of Nietzsche and based on the second law of thermodynamics and the Darwinian and Freudian insight into man's beastly and egotistic nature, but which only now, in the 1914–1918 period, gained widespread popularity.

One of the most significant voices of World War One, a great historical milestone, was that of Wilfred Owen (1893–1918), a British poet-soldier who witnessed firsthand all the atrocities of the world's first global armed conflict and used his bleak experiences from the Western Front to create a nihilistic but extremely valuable poetic opus. Owen's anti-war poetry challenged his country's official attitude that World War One was an apocalyptic battle between good (Britain) and evil (Germany) and that there was a higher purpose to it (the decisive triumph of the "just" British side over the "unjust" German one) (Karsten 2012: 7, 23). His poems, rife with irony and compassion, victimised the young soldiers fighting in the war and vilified the politicians who had started it and kept it going from the safety and comfort of their lavish palaces and ministerial cabinets, and, perhaps even more importantly, Owen's works revealed the futility of a corrupt civilisation in which the life of a common modest human being had no value at all (Petrović, 2020: 58–59). The worthlessness of a common

human life was certainly best seen in the crazy indiscriminate carnage of history's first mechanised war, one that was carried out by machine-guns, huge artillery pieces, poison gas, airplanes and tanks, state-of-the-art weapons of mass destruction at the time, and in the form of static trench warfare, with tens of thousands of men regularly dying for the conquest of just several hundred yards of enemy-controlled territory. It is interesting to note that, according to H. G. Wells, "[m]ore lives were wasted by the British generals alone on the opening day of what is known as the Somme offensive of July 1916, than in the whole French Revolution from start to finish" (Wells 1931: 919). It is precisely this mindless wasting of British youth that Owen raged at in his overall poetic oeuvre, and, specifically, in "The Last Laugh" (1918), the poem that I will be analysing here. In my analysis, I will strive to show how the poem reverses the typical roles of men (soldiers) and machines (weapons), with the former being presented as passive targets of the personified latter, rather than vice versa, with human beings as animate users and masters of inanimate machines, which would have certainly been considered proper by Bacon's Bensalemites from *The New Atlantis* and, if we take the Bensalemites as exponents of Bacon's own beliefs, also by Bacon himself.² I will argue that this role reversal essentially victimises the young British soldiers and subtly criticises various members of British society who spent the entire war at home, expressing patriotism only in verbal terms. Even more importantly, I will argue that the overarching message of this poetic text is existential nihilism. Finally, I will argue that "The Last Laugh" suggests that Bacon's dream of creating a scientific utopia, where machines would be loyal servants to men and their chief tools for attaining undiluted happiness, would, if not forever then at least for a very long while, remain only that – a dream and nothing more.

2. Reversal of Roles Between Men and Machines in "The Last Laugh"

"The Last Laugh"

'Oh, Jesus Christ, I'm hit', he said; and died,
Whether he vainly cursed or prayed indeed,
The Bullets chirped – In vain, vain, vain!

Machine-guns chuckled – Tut-tut, tut-tut!
And the Big Gun guffawed.

Another sighed – ‘Oh, Mother, – mother, – Dad!’
Then smiled at nothing, childlike, being dead.
And the lofty Shrapnel Cloud
Leisurely gestured – Fool!
And the splinters spat, and tittered.

‘My Love!’ – one moaned. Love-languid seemed his mood,
Till slowly lowered his whole face kissed the mud.
And the Bayonet’s long teeth grinned;
Rabbles of Shells hooted and groaned;
And the Gas hissed. (Owen, 1994: 55)

As one can see, “The Last Laugh” consists of three stanzas, three different pictures showing three different soldiers in the moment of their dying on the frontline. In each of the stanzas there are two different parts – one, initial, made up of the first two lines, depicting the death of a soldier, and the subsequent one, made up of the latter three lines, depicting the behaviour of the weapons killing the soldier(s). Each of the depicted soldiers utters a different thought at the moment of death, while the different weapons killing them, being clearly personified and given the attributes of either human beings or at least (predatory) beasts (Simcox 2001), speak in unanimity. They either laugh in the face of the dying soldiers and mock them (stanza 1) or taunt them on account of the alleged futility of their participation in war (“in vain, vain, vain” from the first stanza; “fool” from the second stanza) or maliciously grin and hiss at them (stanza 3). The reaction of the personified weapons is that of arrogant laughter, self-satisfied criticism or aggressive threat-making – in one word, that of malicious triumphant joy over the killing of the unfortunate soldiers. The names of all the weapons – whether fire arms or cold weapons – are capitalised, which only adds to their animate qualities.

On the other hand, the last words of the soldiers, who are obviously shown as powerlessly meeting their end, are related to religion (the first soldier exclaims: “Oh, Jesus Christ, I’m hit”), parents (the second soldier’s “Oh, Mother, – mother, – Dad”), or a sexual partner, that is, wife or girlfriend (the third soldier’s “My Love!”). They are obviously mentioning

the ones they hold dearest at the moment of their demise, perhaps even calling them for help in their most critical hour, but no help ever comes and they all die in a humiliating manner, ridiculed by their steel executioners who are not only literally made of steel but, being personified, also have hearts of steel, cold and merciless. The image of the slain soldiers is, altogether, extremely pitiable because they die without being given any respect and their deaths are presented as purposeless. This is, no doubt, related to Wilfred Owen's personal view of the Great War, as of a war in which innocent young people went to fight and sacrifice themselves not for the salvation of the world and the fulfilment of God's will, as it was insisted by the media in both Britain and Germany (both sides famously believed that God was on their side) (Karsten 2012: 9–23; Sharp 2012), but for the interests of their respective leaderships who started the war and, though having others fight it for them, stubbornly refused to put an end to it because they were not ready to give up even the slightest portion of their colonialist wealth, insisting on nothing less than total victory and the enemy's unconditional surrender.³ So, the poem's three images clearly convey a twofold message, the message of victimisation on the one hand and the message of nihilism on the other.

³ It is interesting to note that, initially, Owen was guided by the idea that he should, just like so many of his peers and compatriots, enlist and fight for the salvation of Western civilisation and the whole world, which, as the British media and clergy insisted, was gravely threatened by German militarism (Bouyssou 2021: paras. 11–12). Although, in the early years of the war, before his first enlistment, Owen had qualms about whether he should serve his country as a poet away from the frontline or as a soldier in the trenches, he eventually opted for the latter but ended up being both a poet and a soldier because, in the end, his experience in the trenches inspired him to create a poetic oeuvre of sheer excellence (Bouyssou 2021: para. 11). However, what happened later, during the first part of Owen's service on the Western Front in 1917, is that he became "a conscientious objector" and a spirited critic of the war, but his newly acquired strong anti-war stance would not stop him from returning to the frontline in 1918 to help his fellow soldiers, with whom he frankly empathised, and to speak on behalf of them in a way that they themselves were not able to (Bouyssou 2021: paras. 17, 28, 29). So, between 1915 and 1918, Wilfred Owen experienced a change in his attitude to war, from a man willing to aid the British war effort to a "conscientious objector" returning to the frontline solely for the purpose of helping his suffering comrades and being their champion, and this is very aptly summarised by Ronald Bouyssou (2021: para. 28): "In 1915, Wilfred Owen had longed to be a saviour of Western civilisation and a redeemer of mankind; in 1918 his second enlistment was dictated by humane values only". This change in Owen's attitude to war was paralleled by a change of his attitude to religion, as will be explained in one of the subsequent footnotes.

As far as victimisation is concerned, all the three soldiers presented in “The Last Laugh” are seen in a wretched, hopeless state, and their role is unmistakably the role of victims. The first soldier mentions Christ in the hour of his doom (apparently, the metaphysical figure that he holds particularly dear), probably expecting help from God, but that help never arrives, making the soldier an obvious victim of the chirping bullets and chuckling machine-guns. The second soldier calls his mother and father in the hour of dying, but neither of the two appear on the battlefield to save him – there are only derisive shouts and insolent giggling on the part of the shrapnels tearing the flesh of the British soldiers to pieces. This soldier is shown as dying with a childlike smile on his face, a manner of death that does not only emphasise the soldier’s youth but also his pure ethical goodness, Christ-like innocence, which is a motif that also appears in some other poems of Owen’s, such as “Arms and the Boy”, “Has Your Soul Sipped”, and “At a Calvary near the Ancre”.⁴ So, this young man, too, is a victim of the mighty weapons that have killed him. The third soldier dies with the memory of his wife or girlfriend in his mind and he is shown as kissing the mud with his whole face. This scene, coupled with the evil beastly grinning of the bayonets, the owl-like hooting, and viperine hissing of the poison gas in the background, represents perhaps the most victimising situation of all of the three in the poem. In other words, the atmosphere is hellishly eerie (including both visual and auditory aspects) and we see the dying soldier slowly falling and immersing his lips and face

⁴ The poems “Arms and the Boy” and “Has Your Soul Sipped” contain the same element of a childlike soldier, explicitly referred to as a boy, being about to die or actually dying a martyr’s death on the field of battle. In both poems, emphasis is laid on the soldier’s innocence – for example, in “Has Your Soul Sipped”, the murdered soldier is described like this: “Though from his throat / The life-tide leaps / There was no threat / On his lips” (Owen 1994: 9). In “A Calvary near the Ancre” the battlefield is referred to as Golgotha, and a clear distinction is made between the priests there who are described as being on the side of “the Beast” (i.e., the Devil) and the soldiers who are described as those “who love the greater love” and “lay down their life” rather than hate (Owen 1994: 23). According to Roland Bouyssou (2021: para. 24), “it is a commonplace for war poets to identify the soldier on the battlefield with Christ on Golgotha”, which is exactly what Wilfred Owen did, clearly casting a shadow of blame on all those who glorified the war (the politicians, priests, and pro-war writers in Britain) and exalting the soldiers, whom he often gave a saintly aura of childlike or Christ-like immaculateness (speaking of the connection between childlike and Christ-like immaculateness, one should call to mind the following message of Christ from the Gospel: “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven”) (Matthew 18:3).

in the dirty mud while thinking of his wife or girlfriend whom he used to kiss before the war. The scene is symbolic, it merges the happy past and the horrifying present through the symbol of love and kissing and blatantly reveals the nastiness of mechanised war. Again, as in the case of the previous two unnamed soldiers, this one is also terribly unfortunate, a victim of the heartless weapons of mass destruction from World War One.

Although it is obvious that the three soldiers are victims of the personified mechanical weapons, based on the aforesaid, it would be also possible to argue that the poem does not only criticise the leaving of young, innocent soldiers at the mercy of immensely powerful and destructive weapons, against which they will have little to no chance of surviving, but that it also criticises all the members of the British society that Owen's protagonists (and, in fact, real comrades on the frontline) mention in their last words. What I mean to say is that it would be possible to understand the tragic soldiers' last exclamations as not only mere references to what, for them, has been of greatest value throughout their lives but also as desperate pleas for help or even very subtle critiques of those they have loved the most and from whom, possibly, they have not received the same amount of love in return (the soldiers' feeling of abandonment by all those who idly sit in Britain, unaware of the horrors of the warfare in northern France). This possible semantic aspect of "The Last Laugh" is most clearly observable in the case of the first soldier who shouts the name of Christ with, as Owen tells us, an undecided state of mind in the sense that it is not quite clear whether the shot man curses the Son of God for being gravely wounded or prays to Him for survival against all odds. The scene expresses existential nihilism because it shows a soldier who, above anything else, wants to live but receives no help from the deity that he has probably believed in all his life, and so the poem may be interpreted as reflecting Owen's newly found secularism (if not atheism) and apotheosis of soldierly martyrdom, ideas that he acquired as a result of his exposure to the horrors of the Western Front's trench warfare and that he expressed in his other poems as well.⁵

⁵ Already in 1913, when he left Dunsden (where he had worked as a lay assistant to the local vicar), Wilfred Owen "broke away from the Church" and started to seek God outside of it, but it wasn't until May 1917, after he had finished his first part of military service on the Western Front, that he found the kind of faith that he felt was right for him (Bouyssou 2021: para. 17). It was not in the Church, to which his mother had affiliated him as a child, but in a secularised version of Christianity, in pacifism, passivity, and sacrifice for one's neighbour (Bouyssou 2021: paras. 2, 17, 24). Owen's faith, thus,

In the second and third stanzas one may also see an implicit criticism, a criticism of the soldiers' family members, and I base this interpretation on bringing this poem into close connection with "The Dead-Beat", a poem that Owen wrote just a few months earlier than "The Last Laugh", and in which a mentally deranged dying soldier is shown as being hateful of his unfaithful wife and his wealthy uncle back home because they have used and are using his deployment on the frontline to engage in different kinds of war profiteerism (his wife betrays him by finding a richer husband even before his actual death, and his uncle "smiles ministerially" because he knows he will have many soldiers, or scapegoats, like his nephew to send to the frontline and, by means of them, win the war and keep his reputation and budget constantly growing) (Owen 1994: 31; Petrović 2020: 55). It is also possible to bring "The Last Laugh" into connection with "The Fathers" by Siegfried Sassoon, a poem in which this great friend and poetic tutor of Owen's ironically ridiculed the, at that time not uncommon, custom of British fathers to be overjoyed at sending one or more of their sons to the hellish battlegrounds of Flanders and northern France, thinking that their children were going on an easy chivalric adventure where they would certainly defeat "the Huns" and even have a lot of fun while doing so (Sassoon 1919: 55). The Great War, as it turned out, was everything but a chivalric adventurous undertaking, because this war involved an entirely new form of warfare, with both cavalry and infantry charges becoming crazy runs to almost certain death with, at most times little to no results achieved, and this was due to the enormous firing speed and destructive

lost all metaphysical layers, such as the belief in resurrection and divine miracles, and became centred merely on practical Christian virtues – his God became "a secular Christ, the icon of brotherhood, compassion and love" (Bouyssou 2021: para. 24). It was the selfless soldier, sacrificing himself not only for his comrades on the field of battle but also for all the insufficiently grateful British civilians across the English Channel, that became the embodiment of Owen's new faith (Bouyssou 2021: para. 24). The apotheosis of soldiers as martyrs is present in a large number of Owen's poems – for instance, "Greater Love", "Apologia pro Poemate Meo", "At a Calvary near the Ancre", and "Has Your Soul Sipped". Perhaps the finest example of this can be found in, again, "Has Your Soul Sipped", where the sight of a young dying soldier, with a boyish smile on his face, is described as "[a] strange sweetness / [a]ll fancy surpassing / [p]ast all supposing" and exalted as the most sublime aesthetic experience on earth (Owen 1994: 8). This sublime, almost religious, experience can furthermore be aptly brought into connection with Owen's initial verses from "Apologia pro Poemate Meo" – namely, "I, too, saw God through mud – / The mud that cracked on cheeks when wretches smiled" (the wretches are, of course, the suffering soldiers) (Owen 1994: 18).

capabilities of newly developed machine-guns, howitzers and artillery weapons. The Western Front was almost literally a huge graveyard – “a titan’s grave”, as Owen himself called it in his “Imperial Elegy” (Owen 1994: 83) – on which the soldiers, in addition to being mowed down by bullets and torn to pieces by shells, were also dying of the poison gas, and where there were also hundreds of thousands of shell-shock cases, cases of a war-caused psycho-somatic illness that would later on become known as the post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Harvie 2014; Llewellyn & Thompson 2017). So, there was no glory in fighting on the Western Front, but only humiliating death as in a slaughterhouse, with trenches full of rats and unceasing massive explosions making one’s body uncontrollably shake and twitch even long after returning home or leaving the frontline (Harvie 2014; Llewellyn & Thompson 2017). In general, WWI frontlines, and especially the Western Front, were a hell on earth, both mentally and physically, where men died wretchedly and in anonymity rather than gallantly and with songs of glory sung around them, and, as a result, it is no wonder that Owen saw the horrors endured by myriads of young soldiers as unjustifiable by any kind of political cause, no matter how truly or just rhetorically noble. It is from this sentiment that Owen’s existential nihilism is derived.

The nihilistic message of “The Last Laugh” is evident from the reproachful words and gestures with which the personified weapons react to the suffering of the dying soldiers. The weapons, judging by the sounds that they produce at the sight of the crying soldiers, are in a jubilant mood – they are celebrating the downfall of their passive, helpless targets. They are in no way touched by the death cries and agonies of their victims, but rather ridicule the soldiers, calling them fools for taking part in the war and referring to their war effort as being in vain. Their loud mockery of the dying soldiers is similar to a dissonant orchestral performance with all kinds of different notes produced – from bird-like chirping to human-like guffawing – an orchestral performance that is not characterised by good taste, primarily because of the fact that jubilant tones are quite inappropriate as a musical accompaniment to someone’s death.

In the context of utopianism, this cacophony reveals one simple truth – that World War One essentially brought about an unthinkable perversion in the form of the fact that in it millions of human beings (i.e., soldiers) were mere cannon fodder for the mighty mechanical weapons that both sides were using. There are actually few other poems in the history of

literature that bring home this awful truth about World War One as aptly as “The Last Laugh”, and Owen’s skilful use of personification for mechanical weapons to show the ease with which these tools of destruction annihilated the soldiers is to be given much credit for this. In other words, Owen makes his weapons look like half-human, half-animal beings, like mythological monsters, simultaneously endowed with destructive power and (evil) intelligence, while his soldiers look like helpless victims calling for God, who will never appear to save them (the implicit absence, or at least disinterestedness, of God (the Church’s God),⁶ who does nothing whether one prays to Him or curses Him is a very strong nihilistic element in the poem). The weapons, so to speak, are more alive than the soldiers, which clearly goes against the usual, normal relationship between machines and humans, because one normally imagines machines as inanimate servants of human beings, not as animate killers thereof. The usual roles of machines as servants and men as masters are here reversed, and with devastating consequences for humanity. In other words, instead of seeing machines obediently carrying out the orders of men and making their lives better, we see them as a scourge of humanity, as blood-thirsty takers of human lives. The machines here have the initiative and they seem to be the aggressive masters of the situation, whereas the humans assume the role of passive targets or, conditionally speaking, servants (they serve as “kicking bags” for the personified murderous weapons). Actually, the relationship between machines and men in “The Last Laugh” may be understood as one that belongs to a hunt setting, where there is a hunt going on with weapons (machines) hunting down soldiers, and not for food as the term ‘cannon fodder’ would imply, but for sheer fun, because the wicked minds of those

⁶ It is not quite possible to conclusively discern, based on Owen’s overall poetic oeuvre, whether he entirely negated the existence of the Church’s, the clergy’s metaphysical God, or whether he just thought that the metaphysical God was not a beneficent creator, but rather an aloof one, disinterested in the suffering of human beings, even moral ones. Sometimes, as in “The Last Laugh” or in “Futility”, where the sun, not God, is viewed as the supreme holder of life-giving power, God seems to be absent altogether, but in other poems, the impression is that God exists but is not interested in the ongoing gruesome human affairs (e.g., in “Greater Love” God is explicitly referred to as seeming “not to care” about the dying soldiers on the battlefield) (Owen 1994: 45, 53). In one poem entitled “Soldier’s Dream”, God or, more accurately God the Father is even portrayed as a war-loving deity, an evil god who repairs the rifles, pistols and big guns that his peace-loving son Jesus previously disabled wishing to bring about the reconciliation of the two confronted sides on the front (Owen 1994: 69).

personified machine-like monsters enjoy taking the lives of those who have by no means harmed them.

Interestingly, this same motif is present in “Arms and the Boy”, another poem of Owen’s that has already been mentioned earlier in this article. In this poem, a certain unidentified third party (the identified two parties are the poet as the speaker and the soldier as the one spoken about), probably a representative of the British military authorities, is ironically invited by the poet to let “the boy”, that is, the soldier, take and stroke different types of weapons used in World War One (a bayonet, bullets, cartridges), all of which are personified and given a menacing appearance (Owen 1994: 41). The poem ends in a stanza that, with its compassionate tone, inserts a powerful tone of victimisation into this ironic work of art:

For his [the boy’s] teeth seem for laughing round an apple.
There lurk no claws behind his fingers supple;
And God will grow no talons at his heels,
Nor antlers through the thickness of his curls (Owen 1994: 41).

Obviously, the intention is not only to criticise the military authorities for their insensitivity to the boy who is about to be sacrificed but also to make the reader empathise with the young soldier who is to be thrown into the hell of modern warfare despite his childlike innocence and the softness and fragility of his heart and physique. The boy is made to look passive and less animate than the personified weapons that are described as mad and eager to kill young men, and the last stanza clearly alludes to a hunt setting, as the boy is described as not being a game animal with either claws (a bear, for instance), talons (a game bird, such as a pheasant) or antlers (a deer) to be hunted by the personified bullets and bayonets. As in “The Last Laugh”, so here, there is a reversal of roles between men and machines, to the detriment of the former, but “The Last Laugh” turns out to be richer in meaning than “Arms and the Boy” because it contains both nihilistic and victimising elements, as opposed to the latter poem which, as it seems, conveys only the message of victimisation. Another superior quality of “The Last Laugh”, compared to “Arms and the Boy”, is the fact that its ideas are not conveyed indirectly, through someone’s speech or descriptions, but rather directly, through painfully vivid pictures and shrieks that make the reader truly feel all the pain and humiliation of the suffering soldiers as though he or she were there, on the very field of battle, in person.

In relation to the eagerness and enjoyment of certain aggressive beings or personified objects in killing or contemplating the killing of other, passive beings, there is one more poem that needs to be mentioned because it contains a similar scene of wanton infliction and futile experiencing of pain. The poem that I am referring to is “The Conqueror Worm” by Edgar Allan Poe, which uses the metaphorical domain of theatre to present human life as being nothing else but purposeless suffering with someone or something (in this case, the Conqueror Worm as a metaphor for mortality) always drawing pleasure from human death agony (Poe 2004: 942–943). This, essentially Darwinian idea,⁷ is what binds Poe and Owen. Owen, in other words, is as convincing as his American fellow poet and predecessor in depicting the suffering of men (in this case, WWI soldiers) as both excruciating and futile (nihilistic), and he also presents the suffering of men as affording great pleasure to those deliberately killing them. The only difference is that Poe uses an abstract, religious and rather general context to convey a nihilistic message of human life’s futility (i.e., the context of angels sitting in a theatre and watching a play that shows some kind of heavenly actors or “mimes”, which are a metaphor for humanity, being eaten by a crawling “conquering worm”) (Poe 2004: 942–943), whereas Owen does so using the concrete example of WWI soldiers being mown down by unforgiving, extremely lethal, barrages of fire.

Speaking of nihilism as the chief semantic layer of “The Last Laugh”, and of victimisation as another very important semantic layer thereof, one should not forget to pay some attention to the very title of this poem, because it is symbolical and suggestive of both of these meanings. First, it would be possible to view this title as stemming from the idiom “the man who has the last laugh”, which has the meaning of winning in the end in spite of being on the verge of defeat and ridiculed at first (Dalli, n.d.). In the context of this idiom, the phrase “The Last Laugh” in the title may, as argued by Dalli (n.d.), refer to the fact that the boisterous laughter of the personified guns is the last laugh, or, more accurately, that it is the personified weapons that have the last laugh, that are victorious in the

⁷ Although he never openly stated that there is no God, Charles Darwin argued that the immense misery (i.e., pain and suffering) of various life forms in nature makes the belief in “a beneficent and omnipotent God” hardly defensible from a purely logical, scientific point of view (Darwin 1911: 105). The idea that suffering is the main characteristic of this world is easily comparable to how the French expert on English WWI poetry Roland Bouyssou (2021: para. 22) described Owen’s overall opus as “concerned with a doomed humanity under the sway of Evil and Death”.

end. This interpretation would rely on the nihilistic aspect of the poem, an aspect that could not escape Owen's critical eye, given that the Western Front's everyday massacres of thousands of soldiers from both sides of No Man's Land literally gave the impression of this war having been started so that the weapons might test their own lethality against the flesh of European youth, and one did not have to be a genius to see this and the absurdity of a war in which a weapon was virtually worth as much as or even more than a human being. However, ingeniousness certainly was required for writing wonderful poetry, in terms of both form and content, which is exactly the reason why not so many participants of WWI managed to turn their frontline experience into sublime poetry, a thing that Wilfred Owen, a man of poetic genius, did accomplish beyond any doubt.

The manner in which the title "The Last Laugh" conveys the message of victimisation is closely related to the way in which the second soldier from this poem dies on the battlefield, smiling at nothing, in a childlike manner. It is easy to see the contrast between the monstrous, evil laughter of the victorious guns and the innocent last laugh of the victimised defeated soldier, just as it is not very difficult to conclude that of the two semantic, by no means non-complementary, elements of this poem – namely, nihilism and victimisation – it is the former that strikes the reader as more powerful. Certainly, one of the reasons for this is also the fact that the referred to soldier from the second stanza smiles "at nothing" at the moment of his dying, which, in itself, clearly intensifies the nihilistic atmosphere of the poem created by the weapons' monstrous laughter and shouting of the phrase "in vain" (it is not only the personified weapons that see the soldiers' death as futile but this second soldier also seems to implicitly admit this by his act of smiling at nothing).

In conclusion, the unnatural domination of steel weapons (inanimate machines) over living human beings in "The Last Laugh", together with its image of unchivalrous death in the form of a soldier kissing the mud instead of his beloved female partner, essentially points to the erroneous nature of Baconian technological utopianism as an idea that was central in Western civilisation over the course of the 19th century and in the early 1900s. The three pictures from this poem reveal the absurdity of mechanised warfare, the godlessness of the world, and, most importantly, the falsity of the belief in technological progress, the idea that the machines would help man create a utopia on earth. This work of Owen's, through its use of the reversal of social roles between men (soldiers) and machines (mechanical

weapons), challenges the idea that science is solely a positive factor in human lives and shows what it looks like when technology, instead of being a subservient helper, turns into an aggressive master, a very vicious and murderous one. The fact that “The Last Laugh” does not futuristically foresee the detrimental impact of science on human life, as did some authors who wrote anti-technology works before World War One,⁸ but rather uses vivid images and imaginative language to depict what was already happening on the battlefields of the Western Front from 1914 to 1918, makes this poetic text all the grimmer and more realistic.

3. Conclusion

“The Last Laugh”, as a poem that depicts the death of three British WWI soldiers at the hands of personified weapons of mass destruction, is one of many bleak war poems by Wilfred Owen. It conveys two messages – a message of victimisation and, more importantly for this article, a message of nihilism – and both of these messages stem from the fact that, in this poem, the roles of men and machines are reversed. Instead of machines obediently serving their human masters and creators, as would be expected, “The Last Laugh” shows World War One’s mechanical weapons, that is, machines, annihilating passive and helpless soldiers, that is, human beings, which, in itself, is an unnatural perversion. The three dying soldiers are victimised not only in the sense of being mercilessly slain by personified weapons of mass destruction (machine-guns, gun shells with the poison gas, etc.) but also in the sense of being shown as, in the hour of their death, remembering God and their dearest ones and calling them to help, which, of course, does not happen. Their abandonment on the frontline and their tragic loneliness in a war that they are not even fighting for themselves but for their political leaders furthermore creates an impression of futility, because the personified murderous weapons are shown as boisterously ridiculing the soldiers’ self-sacrifice, as even jubilantly and unchivalrously celebrating

⁸ Perhaps the 19th century’s most noteworthy authors of fiction who pointed to the possibility of science and technology negatively impacting human society are Samuel Butler, the author of *Erewhon* (1872), William Morris, who authored *News from Nowhere* (1890), and, of course, H. G. Wells, who wrote a whole array of dystopian novels, such as *The Time Machine* (1895), *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896), *The Invisible Man* (1897), *When the Sleeper Wakes* (1899), etc.

their victory over a far weaker adversary. In this way, the soldiers' deaths are presented as purposeless, and, in the poetic imagery of Wilfred Owen, World War One emerges as an artistic embodiment of a Darwinian world in which there is only suffering, without any kind of teleological purpose in the form of attaining either a worldly utopia or a transcendental one. Such bleak imagery from "The Last Laugh", a poem whose very title is suggestive of its twofold message, derives directly from Owen's personal mindset from the days of his service on the frontline. The most important element of this poem from the perspective of literary interpretation, is the fact that it can be viewed in the context of utopian studies. In this sense, the reversed relationship between humans and machines compared to what is considered proper by technological utopians in this respect creates the impression of the ultimate impracticability of Baconian technological utopianism. "The Last Laugh" essentially tells us that the path of constant mechanisation and technological progress does not guarantee the creation of a utopian world, because the machines can easily turn into destroyers of their human creators, instead of being humanity's chief helpers, as it was envisaged by Bacon in the 17th century and all the other technologically and industrially minded thinkers following in his footsteps, such as Herbert Spencer. "The Last Laugh", therefore, is to be read as a true Frankensteinian, anti-utopian text. It is a poem that engages with big philosophical ideas (i.e., the relationship between man and the machine, and 19th-century mankind's firm belief in a machine-based utopia) and one that warns mankind against creating monstrous mechanical weaponry, which is a warning that resonates particularly well today, in the time of the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian armed conflict, with growing tensions between the United States and Russia making the possibility of nuclear warfare more realistic than at any other moment over the past sixty years, ever since the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962.

References

- Bouyssou, R. (2021). Wilfred Owen: A War Poet's Progress in France from Bagnères-de-Bigorre to Ors. *Arts of War and Peace*. (30 May 2021). <<https://artswarandpeace.univ-paris-diderot.fr/2021/05/30/wilfred-owen-a-war-poets-progress-in-france/>>.

- Craig, T. (2019). On Technological Utopianism. *Voegelin View*. (4 June 2019). <<https://voegelinview.com/on-technological-utopianism/>>.
- Dalli, E. (n.d.). The Last Laugh by Wilfred Owen. *Poem Analysis*. <<https://poemanalysis.com/wilfred-owen/the-last-laugh/>>.
- Darwin, C. (1911). C. Darwin to Asa Gray, May 22, 1860. In: F. Darwin (ed.), *The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin: Including an Autobiographical Chapter*, Vol. II, New York/London: D. Appleton and Company, 104–106. <<https://archive.org/details/lifeandlettersc05darwgoog/mode/2up?ref=ol&view=theater>>.
- Dawkins, P. (2015). Francis Bacon's New Atlantis. *Francis Bacon Research Trust*. <https://www.fbrt.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Francis_Bacons_New_Atlantis.pdf>.
- Dergović-Joksimović, Z. (2009). *Utopija: Alternativna istorija*. Beograd: Geopoetika.
- Harvie, Ch. (2014). Basket Case. *World War I Centenary: Continuations and Beginnings*. (8 September 2014) <<http://ww1centenary.oucs.ox.ac.uk/body-and-mind/basket-case/>>.
- Karsten, B. (2012). The Church of Craiglockhart: Wilfred Owen's and Siegfried Sassoon's Critique and Use of Religion in their World War I Poetry. *Masters Theses*. 38. <<https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/theses/38>>.
- Llewellyn, J., Thompson, S. (2017). Trench Warfare. *Alpha History*. (31 August 2017) <<https://alphahistory.com/worldwar1/trench-warfare/>>.
- Miller, W. L. (2000). Herbert Spencer's Optimum Development Path. In: J. Offer (ed.), *Herbert Spencer: Critical Assessments*, Vol. II, London/New York: Routledge.
- Owen, W. (1994). *The War Poems of Wilfred Owen*. Edited and Introduced by John Stallworthy. London: Chatto & Windus. <<https://archive.org/details/warpoemsofwilfre0000owen/page/n4/mode/1up?view=theater>>.
- Petrović, G. (2020). Political, Moral, and Existential Nihilism in Wilfred Owen's "The Dead-Beat". In: *Anali Filološkog fakulteta*, Vol. 32 No. 2, 47–62. <<https://doi.org/10.18485/analiff.2020.32.2.3>>.
- Poe, E. A. (2004). *The Collected Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*. Ware, Hertfordshire, UK: Wordsworth Editions.
- Sassoon, S. (1919). *The War Poems of Siegfried Sassoon*. London: William Heinemann. <<https://archive.org/details/warpoemsofsiegfr00sassarich/page/94/mode/1up?ref=ol&view=theater>>.

- Sharp, E. (2012). Gott Mit Uns. *World War I Centenary: Continuations and Beginnings*. (18 June 2012) <<http://ww1centenary.oucs.ox.ac.uk/religion/gott-mit-uns/>>.
- Simcox, K. (2001). Poetry Critique: The Last Laugh. *Wilfred Owen Association*. <<http://www.wilfredowen.org.uk/poetry/the-last-laugh>>.
- Schwartz, D. (2014). Why Bacon's Utopia is not a Dystopia: Technological and Ethical Progress in The New Atlantis. *University of North Georgia Libraries*. (2 March 2014). <<https://ir.ung.edu/work/sc/8f34ed85-e7f2-4e5a-97bb-b6871343a6a0/reader/9f6227ba-ef25-406f-bdc5-b24da0497858>>.
- Wells, H. G. (1931). *The New and Revised Outline of History Being a Plain History of Life and Mankind*. Garden City/New York: Garden City Publishing Co., Inc. <<https://archive.org/details/newrevisedoutlin00well/page/n6/mode/1up?view=theater>>.

Received: 17 March 2023

Accepted for publication: 16 June 2023

Khalid Chaouch*

Sultan Moulay Slimane University, Beni Mellal, Morocco

MAY SINCLAIR AND HER ILLUSTRATORS: THE LIMITS OF CO-AUTHORSHIP

Abstract

Before the advent of visual media, illustrations were striving to show in images what the written text intended to tell in words. In addition to their semiotic function as highlighting devices for particular contexts and characters' attitudes in the work of fiction, illustrations exude aesthetic feelings and states of mind which may at times even interfere with the meaning of the illustrated text. The present paper intends to negotiate the effects of the novelist/illustrator interactions on the readers' reception of the works of May Sinclair, especially in the context of the representation of gender relations. The topic of collaboration will mainly be analysed within Sinclair's text, as this interaction is itself the subject matter in some of her major works.

Key words: May Sinclair, illustrations, painting, co-authorship, gender representation

1. Introduction

In the absence of modern photography and film, paintings and illustrations played the role of rendering visual images of what the written text was supposed to convey. Thanks to their artistically appealing quality and their visual and imagery impacts on the readers, these illustrations largely

* K.CHAOUCH@usms.ma

contributed to presenting situations and contexts and to bringing about the desired effects of both the writer and the illustrator. This could not have been possible without the contribution of editors and publishers, who insisted on accompanying the text with the adequate appealing illustrations. The latter part of the 19th century in particular witnessed the flourishing of the art of illustration (Doyle 2018: 292). Fiction works teemed with illustrations in the forms of both colour paintings and sketches. In addition to their functional role as supporting devices for the semantic purport of the fictional text, illustrations conveyed aesthetic feelings, states of mind, airs and contexts that might freeze, deepen, or even alter part of the meaning of the illustrated text. On the other hand, due to their visual nature and semiotic features, the sum of illustrations might also interfere with the aesthetic and narrative components of the work of fiction to the extent that the artist illustrator may claim a certain kind of “co-authorship” of the novelist’s masterpiece.

As a 19th and early 20th-centuries novelist, May Sinclair’s earlier works of fiction abound in illustrations. Although she was forgotten for a while, her novels still captivate a renewed and wider readership, especially among feminist discourses. But the early illustrated editions had some additional effects. Instead of elaborating on the interplay between Sinclair’s text and its illustrations, this paper rather intends to question the effects of this text-image collaboration between the novelist and the illustrator on the reader and on their reception of the work of Sinclair. A special focus is laid on Sinclair’s literary characters’ expressed consciousness of the illustrator’s possible interference in her illustrated work of fiction, especially within the context of the early and seminal representation of gender relations. The paradigm of collaboration will also be analysed within Sinclair’s text, as it is the subject matter in some of her major works.

As the importance of illustrations is gauged and measured by the degree of attention conferred to them by May Sinclair herself and by the anticipated reception of her implied readers, the scope of analysis will be focused on the early illustrations, mainly those made during the writing activity of this prolific novelist. This strategy presupposes limiting oneself to the earlier editions of the creative works that bore illustrations, identifying their illustrators, and approaching the illustrations within the context of their respective texts. The supposed connection between the two modes of representation, the text and the illustration, is to be considered for the sake of gauging the degree of harmony and agreement, on the one hand, or discord and distortion, on the other.

Where applicable, an analysis of the delicate relation between the illustration, as a set of artistic and aesthetic techniques deployed by the illustrator, and its textual context, will also be helpful in offering more evidence on the possible co-authorship between the two authors. Referring to late Victorian Britain as being “awash in illustrated literature,” Richard J. Hill rightly assumes that the “illustration of texts heavily influenced the interpretations of those texts by children and adults alike” (Hill 2017: 13). The impact of illustrations on the reception of novels is also noted by Julia Thomas, who asserts that the presence of illustrations in these works impacts how the novels are read and can even modify and shape the texts themselves (Thomas 2016: 617).

The status of the illustrator himself is also to be analysed as a subject matter within the very works of fiction of our novelist. The illustrator’s role and his either revealing or rivalling power are to be addressed as there is a set of creative contexts in which the novelist approaches this point in unprecedented detail. Nothing is arbitrary in the suggestion of one of Sinclair’s female characters, Mrs. Fanny Waddington, to have a female illustrator, Barbara Madden, for the work of a male creator, Mr. Horatio Byshe Waddington (Sinclair 1921: 160).

2. May Sinclair in the Age of Illustration

The art of illustration claimed to be the only visual form of entertainment that could go hand in hand with the text. As a visual form of entertainment, the illustrated written book strove to offer something more exciting and more tantalizing beside the bare typographical characters (Chaouch 2010: 47) in order to ensure to this literary and prosaic medium a more entertaining and thus more captivating shape. In this sense, the illustration has what Laura Mulvey says on “the possibility, in cinema, of shifting the emphasis of the look” (1999: 843); this perfectly applies to the art of illustrations, which was the only visual rendering of the literary text. Each illustration not only shifts “the emphasis of the look” but it also freezes the reader’s imagination, thus confining it to a visual frame in which the choice of and focus on particular details, scenes and emotions are exclusively decided and managed by the illustrator. More recently, a “renewed interest in book illustration [...] comes not only from researchers but also from publishers who are beginning to recognize as both relevant and remarkable the complementary presence of images” (Ionescu 2, quoted from Leroy 2016: 166).

A number of May Sinclair's novels were illustrated by a set of talented contemporary illustrators. The amount of illustrations that accompanied the early editions of the novels under consideration and the particularity that this mode of visual representation acquired in the context of European and American readership at the time most probably reveal the importance of the role of the illustrations in helping to make sense in a different way.

Most of the illustrated works of May Sinclair fall within the very period known as the "Golden Age of Illustration" (Doyle 2018: 292). It is also important to note that one of her books under study in this paper, *The Creators*, was first published – serially – in the *Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*, a fact that classifies this novel under the literary and entertaining works that were more prone to being illustrated, which had become a need for the author as well as for her readers. In his assessment of the rising need to illustrations in this period, Richard J. Hill notes that:

[t]he end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth saw the ever increasing proliferation of illustrated literature that directly prefigured and influenced the cinematic age. It is essential, therefore, to understand how the authors themselves wanted their work illustrated, and, if possible, to glean how they themselves might visualize their own characters and settings. (2017: 13)

Operating in the absence of the subsequent forms of visual media, the early illustrators, those contemporary with May Sinclair in particular, offered more authentic and more collaborative illustrations to the texts of her novels. Their contemporariness offered the possibility of not only collaboration but also rivalry between both "authors". As a novelist belonging to this golden age of illustration, May Sinclair herself was certainly more conscious of the selective and altering potential of painters and illustrators.

3. Sinclair's Illustrators and Potential Co-authors: Collaboration or Rivalry

The different illustrations and drawings that are interspersed in the novels of May Sinclair have, to different degrees, undeniably contributed to shaping and moulding the meanings of each novel and its reception as well. These works of art had a seminal effect under the brushes of the early

illustrators in setting the tone of Sinclair's novels to the extent that these texts are still re-edited with them or, at least, with other illustrations that are more susceptible to evoke that exceptional and unique turn-of-the-century mood. Each illustration was in itself a certain *visual* reading and an artistic reinterpretation of the text, all manoeuvred by a talented illustrator whose artistic style, semiotic intervention and aesthetic peregrinations might—at any moment—have the edge on the purely semantic message of the literary text. In such a case, the interplay between the literary meaning and the visual significance may result in a latent competition between the author and the artist/illustrator. The professional status of the latter and the degree of his artistic competence might very well be decisive elements in either increasing or lowering the quality of the novel, a fact which is similar to the relationship between a play, as a dramatic text, and the variety of its multiple performances on the stage.

The choice of the illustrations and of their disposition in each novel shows that there was a certain degree of collaboration between May Sinclair and her illustrators about the number and the kind of illustrations created to adorn her texts. This is a fact that is corroborated by some of Sinclair's own declarations about this process of collaboration that in some instances times may turn to rivalry. A neat case in point is her work with the famous American illustrator, Arthur Ignatius Keller (1866-1924), who was an exceptional figure in the art of illustration. On his deep application to his work and his way of handling the texts to be illustrated, one of his contemporaries, Walter H. Dower, the art editor for *The Ladies Home Journal*, makes this significant account:

He actually lived his stories. How else could he make us feel the courage or coolness, hate or weakness of his men as they charged across the page or slumped in a corner, the peacefulness and dignity of his old ladies, the provocative beauty and charm of his young women? (Matz 1998)

The use of the possessive pronoun “his” in this context is a highly revealing point. Old ladies and young women of the stories become *his* own through the process of artistic appropriation. It is difficult for a novelist like May Sinclair not to be appealed by the status of such a painter so deeply involved in his art and concerned with fashioning *her* “characters”, who become *his* own. One of the most important and rare assumptions on her own illustrators is, in fact, recorded about her collaboration with Arthur Keller

himself, whom she plainly dubs her “hated rival”. In her detailed notes on the editorial procedures of Sinclair’s novel, *The Creators*, Lyn Pykett elaborates on the psychological state of the novelist and the pressing effect of the tiring process of the first serialisation of the novel in *The Century Magazine*. It is within this context that Pykett’s words show the kind of attitude the novelist had towards some of her illustrators:

She found the writing process constrained by the editor’s space limitations for particular instalments and by deadlines. The deadlines were even tighter than she had anticipated because the *Century* wanted each instalment to be illustrated, and Sinclair had to provide a copy for Keller, the illustrator, whom she described as ‘my hated rival [...] set upon me to hound & harry me from chapter to chapter’ (quoted in Raitt, 126) [...] Perhaps unsurprisingly, the stresses of this mode of literary production led to illness (possibly a mild mental breakdown) and Sinclair was admitted to a nursing home for a three-week period in June 1909. (Pykett 2004: xxix)

Though Sinclair’s breakdown was certainly brought about by the whole mode of literary production here, especially the cutting process made by the editor, her own words on the illustrator in particular, who was no other than Arthur Keller, reveals the state of an angry author being annoyed by her competitor; but her own funny metaphor and vigorous terms of “hated rival”, “hound” and “harry” clearly suggest the dynamic image of the novelist being hurried by the illustrator, as though by a hunting dog, on a dual race to complete the shared masterpiece.

This idea of rivalry over literary and artistic creation is also one of the subjects of May Sinclair’s novels themselves, which shows her awareness and concern about authorship being at stake when it comes to the usurping effect of the illustrators. Does this explain the absence of illustrations from some of her novels? The answer to this question will probably be more evident after analysing her attitudes to illustrators not only as artistic translators, captors and decorators of her text and captivators of her readers, but also as characters and subject matters in a number of her novels.

May Sinclair’s unquestionable consciousness of the particular status of her illustrators is clear from what she plainly says both in some of her non-fiction essays and in the views of literary characters in some of her

works of fiction. In this regard, a very pertinent passage from her novel, *Mr. Waddington of Wyck* (1921), discusses the dangers and stakes of “hiring” a competent illustrator for a piece of work of one’s own and the possible claims to both authorship and fame between the two creators: the author of the literary work embedded in the typographical text, on the one hand, and the author of the illustration, on the other:

Mr. Waddington’s *Ramblings through the Cotswolds* were to be profusely illustrated. The question was: photographs or original drawings? And he had decided, after much consideration, on photographs taken by Pyecraft’s man. For a book of such capital importance the work of an inferior or obscure illustrator was not to be thought of for an instant. (Sinclair 1921: 159)

This evidently presupposes a careful consideration of the choice of the right photographer or illustrator and the set of criteria to be taken into account before opting for him as long as Mr. Waddington’s work is not to be illustrated by any artist. From the outset, Mr. Waddington excludes the illustrator who is “inferior”, that is at the level of artistic skills, and “obscure”, at the level of fame. So he has to be both a reliable, competent and professional artist, on the one hand, and a well-known and established one, on the other. According to the novel’s narrator, however, this poses the problem of co-authorship for any literary author if the illustrator is a “distinguished artist”; the succeeding sentences in the same passage clearly show this concern:

But there were grave disadvantages in employing a distinguished artist. It would entail not only heavy expenses, but a disastrous rivalry. The illustrations, so far from drawing attention to the text and fixing it firmly there, would inevitably distract it. And the artist’s celebrated name would have to figure conspicuously, in exact proportion to his celebrity, on the title page and in all the reviews and advertisements where, properly speaking, Horatio Bysshe Waddington should stand alone. It was even possible, as Fanny very intelligently pointed out, that a sufficiently distinguished illustrator might succeed in capturing the enthusiasm of the critics to the utter extinction of the author, who might consider himself lucky if he was mentioned at all. (Sinclair 1921: 159–160)

This quotation summarises, in fact, Sinclair's main concerns on the possible "rivalry" between the novelist and the illustrator over the authorship of the illustrated work. In the context of this novel, the fictional narrator even assumes that this contention would certainly be more favourable to the "distinguished illustrator", whose celebrated name would loom so big that it would certainly lead to the "extinction" of the author. This proves once again that May Sinclair's narrator was undoubtedly conscious of the importance of the pictorial narrative to be read side by side with the textual narrative and the possible diversion that the former may create at the cost of the latter.

In this passage, as it is the case in Sinclair's novels at large, the subtle choice of characters' names is also highly revealing and betrays Sinclair's possible allusion to the great figures of the 19th century. Isn't the fictional author's full name, Horatio Bysshe Waddington, an onomastic combination that is reminiscent of both names of the famous Roman poet – Horace – and the great Romantic one – Percy Bysshe Shelley –? It is as though the yoked fames of both august celebrities might be outrageously outweighed by the celebrity and lustre of the "distinguished illustrator" who "might succeed in capturing the enthusiasm of the critics."

The assumptions and prophecies voiced by Fanny, one of the fictional characters, about the possible "extinction" or eclipse of the author by the artist's celebrated name, which "would have to figure conspicuously [...] on the title page and in all the reviews and advertisements" (Sinclair 1921: 159), have most ironically come true, a century later, with the newly online marketed versions of some novels of May Sinclair herself.

We can say that potential co-authorship may amount to marketing standards too. Suzanne Raitt claims that, among Sinclair's most notable achievements, was her active participation "in many of the most significant movements and events of her day: the 'commercialization' of the book trade" (2000: 10) in particular. Her concerns with matters of "fame and the literary market place" (77) can be additional illuminating elements to explain the novelist's concerns about the possible threat of illustrators as co-authors.

4. Sinclair on the male status of illustrators

Men have certainly controlled the brush throughout most of the history of Western painting, in general, and literary works illustrations, in particular. When considering the presence of illustrators in the Sinclairian text, we

find an undeniable feminist touch that is in line with the novelist's handling of similar situations of male-female interactions and attitudes in other contexts. In addition to the illustrators' presence in her text as producers of the pictorial accompaniments of the narrative, their male status is also felt within the text itself in a number of her narratives. In her exertions to respond, to transcend, then to extricate herself from the "shadow of his language" (Battersby 2020: 102), that is the language of male novelists (Joyce), philosophers (Spinoza and Schopenhauer), poets (Shelley) and psychoanalysts (Freud and Jung) (107, 111, 115), May Sinclair had yet – has still – to escape the "net" of the illustrator and the "shadow" of his illustrations; this is, in fact, an allusion to the 'net' metaphor so brilliantly elaborated by Christine Battersby in her paper, "In the Shadow of His Language': May Sinclair's Portrait of the Artist as a Daughter" (112, 117).

In this regard, the previously mentioned passages from *Mr. Waddington of Wyck* (1921) and the succeeding related dialogues tackle a further, but no less important, issue at stake and bear an undeniable feminist touch. In this novel, Fanny suggests her husband's book could be illustrated by Barbara Madden, a female illustrator this time. It seems as though May Sinclair is trying once again to imagine the illustrator as female; she had already deployed, in *Mary Olivier: A Life* (1919), all her "courageous and creative use of theory to reimagine the artist as *female* [*sic*]" (Battersby 2020: 120). Unfortunately, in the novel, the arguments previously advanced by the wife, Fanny, on the importance of a reliable illustrator – instead of a professional photographer as her husband is planning to hire one – was not in Fanny's favour, as the narrative goes on:

Fanny had shown rather less intelligence in using this argument to support her suggestion that Barbara Madden should illustrate the book. She had more than once come upon the child, sitting on a camp-stool above Mrs. Levitt's house, making a sketch of the steep street, all cream white and pink and grey, opening out on to the many-coloured fields and the blue eastern air. And she had conceived a preposterous admiration for Barbara Madden's work. (Sinclair 1921: 160)

Consequently, Fanny's suggestion is faced with a vehement refusal on the part of Mr. Waddington, whose reaction shows once again the interplay between the issues of co-authorship and feminism at such an early phase. That is, Sinclair can be considered among the precursors in addressing

the topic of the reception of female authors and illustrators by their male counterparts. Fanny's proposal, "It'll be an enchanting book if she illustrates it, Horatio," is faced with the stressed answer of the male author: "If [sic] she illustrates it!" (Sinclair 1921: 160). The underlined conjunction evokes the impossibility of admitting the idea of the book being illustrated by this young woman. His further reactions and assumptions throw more light on the undeclared reasons of his refusal:

But when he tried to show Fanny the absurdity of the idea – Horatio Byshe Waddington illustrated by Barbara Madden – she laughed in his face and told him he was a conceited old thing. To which he replied, with dignified self-restraint, that he was writing a serious and important book. It would be foolish to pretend that it was not serious and important. He hoped he had no overweening opinion of its merits, but one must preserve some sense of proportion and propriety – some sanity.

'Poor little Barbara!'

'It isn't poor little Barbara's book, my dear.'

'No,' said Fanny. 'It isn't.' (Sinclair 1921: 160-161)

Mr. Waddington's insistence that he is writing 'a serious and important book' is further emphasised by his claim of the writing craft, which is proper to him, not to Barbara: 'It isn't poor little Barbara's book, my dear' (161). This shows once again Waddington's claim to authorship and his firm objection to the interference of this potential illustrator, a female one in this case, with the sanctum of his authorship.

It is noteworthy to mention that May Sinclair herself had no female illustrator for her own novels. In the first analysis, this could be explained historically by the scarcity of "distinguished" female illustrators that would compete with their male counterparts. But in the last analysis – the Sinclairian one – this might be the result of such disregarding of these female illustrators, from the outset, by their contemporary authors, as exemplified here by Horatio Byshe Waddington.

Another instance of the particular handling the status of illustrators within the Sinclairian text is found at the very beginning of her novel, *The Creators* (1910), which opens ironically enough with the novelist's prosaic description of an illustrated portrait of the main female figure of the novel, Jane Holland, being portrayed by a fictional illustrator, R. A. Gisborne.

The readers never see this fictional illustration as an accompaniment to the text, but the whole portraiture is textually rendered by the narrator to the minutest detail on the very first page of the novel. When we read the narrator's account on this ekphrasis, we get it finding faults with both the way the female character is mis-portrayed by the male illustrator and the egoism of the latter as he was badly selective in his representation, according to the narrator. The latter argues: "It was no longer she who presided at the feast, but her portrait by Gisborne, R.A. He had given most of his attention to the portrait. Gisborne, R.A., was a solemn egoist, and his picture represented, not Jane Holland, but Gisborne's limited idea of her" (Sinclair 1910: 3). The last sentence is of extreme importance as it alludes to the idea of the subjective representation that could be applied by the illustrator, any illustrator. The narrator then justifies this artistic and representational assessment by juxtaposing two prosaic portraits: first, the argued one, which is badly made by Gisborne, and the alternative one, made by the narrator as a more authentic and pertinent rendering of this female figure:

It was a sombre face, broadened and foreshortened by the heavy, leaning brows. A face with a straight-drawn mouth and eyes prophetic of tragedy, a face in which her genius brooded, downcast, flameless, and dumb. He [the illustrator] had got all her features, her long black eyebrows, her large, deep-set eyes, flattened queerly by the level eyebrows, her nose, a trifle too long in the bridge, too wide in the nostril, and her mouth which could look straight enough when her will was dominant. He had got her hair, the darkness and the mass of it. Tanqueray, in his abominable way, had said that Gisborne had put his best work into that, and when Gisborne resented it he had told him that it was immortality enough for anyone to have painted Jane Holland's hair. (Sinclair 1910: 3)

Before moving to the second portrait, the one made by the narrator, it is worth mentioning that the first detailed portrait not only recreates the illustrator's distorting touches, highlighted by the extreme adverbs of 'queerly' and repeated 'too', but it also reveals the complicity between the two males, the painter (Gisborne) and the male genius (Tanqueray), in making fun and getting pleasure out of this distorted picture of Jane, whose first name leaves no doubt as to her female representativeness. The result

of the distorted image is that the portrait has become a source of annoyance to Jane by the two men: “When Tanqueray wanted to annoy Jane he told her that she looked like her portrait by Gisborne, R.A.” (Sinclair 1910: 4).

Then after the narrator’s assessment of this portrait as it was effectively fashioned by the painter, she suggests the kind of portrait that Gisborne ought to have painted. Once again, the narrator evokes the minute details that the painter should have included in his work of art for a more authentic rendering not only of Jane’s physical appearance but also of her moral character; the stress on the physical details that would highlight the powerful sides of this lady is undeniable:

If Jane had had the face that Gisborne gave her, she would never have had any charm for Tanqueray. For what Gisborne had tried to get was that oppressive effect of genius, heavily looming. Not a hint had he caught of her high levity, of her look when the bright devil of comedy possessed her, not a flash of her fiery quality, of her eyes’ sudden gold, and the ways of her delicate, her brilliant mouth, its fine, deliberate sweep, its darting tilt, like wings lifted for flight. (Sinclair 1910: 4)

Granted, these two textual portraits – the distorted one and its alternative – drawn by the narrator at the opening pages of the novel were not illustrated by the real illustrator of this novel, Arthur Ignatius Keller (1866-1924); he most probably avoided illustrating the two juxtaposed portraits for fear of finding himself within the ‘net’ of the same criticised male club of the fictional painter, Gisborne, and the male genius, Tanqueray. Nevertheless, it seems he got the full message of the narrator on Jane’s hair, in particular, and fashioned it so brilliantly in many of the illustrations interspersed in this narrative (Sinclair 1910: 107, 349, 433, 494).

Moving to an earlier novel that bears the same concerns of female representation and which may also affect the way it has been illustrated from the early editions to the present ones, we find other examples of illustrating the female main figure of the novel. In Sinclair’s novel, *The Tysons: Mr. and Mrs. Nevill Tyson* (1908), which is “a clever character study of an exceptional man and woman, whose union inevitably leads to tragedy” (Cooper 1912: 252), we are supposed to see the portraits of both prominent characters, the wife and the husband. However, in this earliest edition of the novel, the one supervised by May Sinclair herself, we find only the portrait of Mrs. Tyson in an exceptional frontispiece illustration (Sinclair 1908:

Frontispiece) that shows both the physical beauty, the excessive make-up and decorative splendour, and the undeniable and explicit pride of this exceptional female character. Taking into consideration the main context of the novel, centred around the difficult marital relationships between these two great, idiosyncratic minds, the only presence of her portrait and the absence of his own may very well be justified by the amount of importance given to the female characters over the male ones at this early phase of the novelist's career. In this novel in particular, May Sinclair's concern is with the reasons and processes of the disintegration of this marital relationship. But her focus is undeniably on the female character as the main character backdrop against which the other partner, Mr. Nevill Tyson, is scrutinised. This character analysis was duly reflected in the unique illustration of this novel at the frontispiece of the novel. This illustration, designed by another contemporary of Sinclair, the talented illustrator, Malcolm A. Strauss (1883-1936), most probably under the eyes of the novelist, is highly pertinent and meaningful as regards the nature and significance of the most adequate visual message to accompany and support the text of this particular novel. The choice of this illustrator and painter, Strauss, was most probably due to his being "known for his depictions of women in the manner of Charles Dana Gibson and Paul Helleu" (Kiernan).

However, in subsequent editions, more particularly in modern ones, and in the absence of the novelist's control, the illustrations accompanying the title page of this novel are devoid of that pre-eminence of the presence of the female image in this work. This proves once again that, contrary to current illustrations, the early ones were designed under the supervision, or at least the consent, of the novelist and that the early, talented illustrators were contributors in shaping and conveying the meaning of novel.

5. Conclusion

When reading May Sinclair's novels, namely editions containing the works of art done by the talented illustrators of the turn of the century, such as Arthur Ignatius Keller, Clarence Coles Philips, Malcolm A. Strauss, and John Wolcott Adams, we come to see the far-reaching effects of the early illustrations on the timeless readers of May Sinclair's novels and the ongoing reception of her works. There is a latent but undeniable issue of co-authorship being disputed – even in a posthumous sense – between the

novelist and her illustrators as long as each of them offers an aspect of the novel to be appreciated so that both the novelist's text and the artist's illustrations are supposed to make up the final woven fabric of the literary work.

The delicate collaboration between the novelist's masterpiece and the illustrator's works of art has been gaining more and more space in academic scholarship, to the extent that Julia Thomas rightly talks about the emergence of a new discipline called 'illustration studies' (2016: 617). The aim of this paper was not to exacerbate an undeclared 'dispute' over authorship between May Sinclair and her illustrators, but rather to problematise the possible rivalry between the two creators, with the fear of the novelist's name being possibly dimmed, or even eclipsed, by that of the illustrator.

New online editions of May Sinclair's novels are issued with cover page illustrations that show once again the predilection of modern audiences for classically illustrated works, especially when it comes to reading the novels of this particular novelist, being accompanied with paintings from the Golden Age of Illustration. However, in many cases, the marketing strategies are not always in favour of the novelist's name as the cover page illustrations chosen by Internet-based enterprises to accompany her novels are generally inspired by a superficial reading of the title, not on the idea or spirit of the literary masterpiece as a whole. Many of such misplaced illustrations are famous classical paintings of countesses, earls, or historical figures with little or no relevance to the chosen novel. Their choice is mainly dictated by the fact that the tableaus were made by artists belonging to the Golden Age of Illustration.

References

- Battersby, C. (2020). 'In the Shadow of His Language': May Sinclair's Portrait of the Artist as a Daughter. *New Comparison. A Journal of Comparative and General Literary Studies*, n° 33–34, 102–120.
- Chaouch, K. (2010). Early Illustrators of *The Arabian Nights* and the Making of Exoticism. *Middle Ground, Journal of Literary and Cultural Encounters*, 04, 47-80.
- Cooper, F. T. (1912). *Some English Storytellers. A Book of the Younger Novelists*. New York: Henry Holt.

- Doyle, S. (ed) (2018). *History of Illustration*. New York: Bloomsbury.
- Hill, R. J. (2017). *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Pictorial Text. A Case Study in the Victorian Illustrated Novel*. London: Routledge.
- Kiernan, Matthew X. Malcolm Strauss. (08 August 2023) <[flickr.com/photos/mateox/albums/72157650952552300](https://www.flickr.com/photos/mateox/albums/72157650952552300)>.
- Leroy, M. (2016). "The Golden Age(s) of British Illustration." *Studies in Literature and Culture*, vol. 14, 165–180.
- Matz, S. H. (1998). Arthur Ignatius Keller (1866–1924). The Cragmoor Historical Society. (28 May 2021) <americanartarchives.com/keller.htm>.
- Mulvey, L. (1999). "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema". *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*. Eds. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen. New York: Oxford UP, 833–844.
- Pykett, L. (ed.) (2004). "Introduction", *The Creators* by May Sinclair. Birmingham: The University of Birmingham Press, ix–xxxi.
- Raitt, S. (2000). *May Sinclair: A Modern Victorian*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Sinclair, M. (1921). *Mr. Waddington of Wyck*. New York: Macmillan.
- Sinclair, M. (1910). *The Creators*. New York: The Century.
- Sinclair, M. (1908). *The Tysons. Mr. and Mrs. Nevill Tyson*. Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons.
- Thomas, J. (2016). Illustrations and the Victorian Novel, *The Oxford Handbook of Victorian Literary Culture*. Oxford: Oxford Handbooks (Online edition), 617–636.

Received: 8 August 2023

Accepted for publication: 26 August 2023

Stefan Č. Čizmar*
University of Novi Sad
Faculty of Philosophy
Novi Sad, Serbia

“ATROCIOUS LUSTS”: THE VAMPIRE AND TRANSGRESSIVE SEXUALITY IN POLIDORI, LE FANU, AND RICE

Abstract

Gothic literature has always tackled various anxieties present in contemporary culture. One such theme the Gothic deals with is the anxiety related to changing social norms regarding sexuality, gender roles, and the family. This paper aims to summarise how the Gothic deals with transgressive sexuality and changing gender roles. The works discussed are selected based on their historical and cultural importance. “The Vampyre” is the first prominent English vampire story, and it also explores the titular vampire’s sexual voraciousness. “Carmilla” is the first prominent Gothic story which thematises lesbianism, while *Interview with the Vampire* is the first to embrace homosexuality. They are analysed and compared to uncover how the representation of transgressive sexuality in the genre has changed over time.

Key words: the Gothic, transgression, sexuality, vampirism, *Interview with the Vampire*, “Carmilla”, “The Vampyre”

* stefan.cizmar@yahoo.com

1. Introduction

The Gothic is a genre that has enjoyed popularity for a few centuries due to its ability to tap into the socially conditioned fears and anxieties of its audience and displace them onto fantastical, supernatural narratives where those fears and anxieties might find a resolution and thus provide the readers with a confirmation of their worldview. The vampire is one of, if not the most common figures onto which fears and anxieties of a given era have been projected. Primarily, the vampire exists as a means of dealing with mortality and accepting death. These revenants are typically troubled creatures in a constant state of agony, even if they seem to enjoy life's pleasures like Rice's infamous Lestat. Thus, they provide a very negative image of immortality, making death at least somewhat palatable. This was particularly important in the context of the nineteenth century, when faith and the belief in an afterlife were shaken by scientific progress, creating a crisis of faith and a desperate need to confirm religious beliefs or at least find solace. Furthermore, the vampire's return from the dead may signify that there indeed is an afterlife one can return from, confirming the traditional Christian view. Apart from death, the vampire can become a useful metaphor for any pervading anxiety. This might be a xenophobic fear of foreigners and foreign influences like in *Dracula* (1897), a fear of the invasion on the private sphere, which can also be noticed in the same novel, as well as "Carmilla" (1872), anxieties about corrupting influence that comes from within the community, like in newer vampire media such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997), or other anxieties such as the spread of disease, alcohol and drug addiction, moral decay, and particularly, non-normative sexuality.

Therefore, the vampire has always been a transgressive figure, most often portrayed as the antithesis of conventional norms of behaviour. They rise at dusk, consume blood for nourishment instead of eating food, have a disregard for human life, and are most often imbued with a voracious sexual appetite that mirrors the one they have for blood. However, these transgressive traits are typically not utilised as a means to subvert the dominant, bourgeois, order or to provide a critical perspective, like in contemporary transgressive literature. More often than not, the Gothic utilises transgressive images precisely to assert the dominance of the current dominant order. In vampire literature, the vampire is an existential threat not just to the lives of the characters, but also to their entire way of life,

and must be eliminated. The reader is invited to sympathise and identify with the victims and vampire hunters, who are on a quest to eliminate the threat and restore the order subverted by the vampiric menace. Of course, there are nuances to this model, as the paper will discuss in detail, but vampire fiction that invites one to identify with the vampire is relatively rare and appears much later in literary history.

The threat of transgressive sexuality and changing gender norms is something that permeates almost all representations of vampires in Gothic literature, from the earliest incarnations such as John William Polidori's "The Vampyre" (1819) to contemporary media such as Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* (2005) and its subsequent film adaptations. As Punter and Byron say, "Throughout the nineteenth century, the vampire functions to police the boundaries between 'normal' and 'deviant' sexuality, with the narrative voice firmly positioned on the side of the 'normal'" (Punter & Byron: 1995, 269–270). The "deviant" sexuality represented in these novels can be either heterosexual but falling outside the norm, such as premarital, extra-marital, or promiscuous sex, or it can be homosexual. Homosexual desire is often at least implicitly present in Gothic literature, especially if it deals with vampirism. As Sedgwick states, "the Gothic was the first novelistic form in England to have close, relatively visible links to male homosexuality, at a time when styles of homosexuality, and even its visibility and distinctness, were markers of division and tension between classes as much as between genders" (Sedgwick: 1985, 91). Homosexual desire is sometimes implicit as part of a vampire's general voraciousness, such as in *Dracula*, but is sometimes even openly thematised as a source of fear and anxiety, which can be seen in "Carmilla". However, this desire is typically seen as dangerous, and deviant, and it expresses a deeply-rooted homophobia that needs to be expelled by a male heterosexual hero. It wasn't until the publication of Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* (1976) that readers got to encounter sympathetically portrayed vampires who express transgressive, homosexual desire. However, even after the publication of this and the subsequent novels in the *Vampire Chronicles* series, there was little place in mainstream Gothic fiction for non-normative sexuality, and the major media in the genre seems to have returned to an insistence on heterosexual, patriarchal, modes of sexuality, such as in the aforementioned *Twilight* series or *The Vampire Diaries* (1991).

Therefore, this paper seeks to examine the relationship which the Gothic genre has with transgressive sexuality. Transgressive sexuality is

understood here as any sexual behaviour which falls outside of the scope of heteronormative and patriarchal modes, such as homosexuality, bisexuality, non-monogamy, or extra-marital sex. Apart from this topic, some attention is given to the representation of gender norms in the selected texts, as the discussion of sexuality is almost inseparable from the discussion of gender. In addition to that, familial and parent/child relationships are also discussed where appropriate and related to the main topic. The texts selected for discussion here are “The Vampyre”, “Carmilla”, and *Interview with the Vampire*. “The Vampyre” is relevant because it is the first seminal piece of vampire fiction in Anglophone literature and also possesses a great emphasis on the titular vampire’s sexual behaviour. “Carmilla” is an even more relevant piece of literature, as it is one of the most important pieces of Gothic fiction that focus on lesbian desire, and it also leaves some room for identification with the lesbianism presented. *Interview with the Vampire* is relevant not only because of its immeasurable influence on the presentation of the vampire in literature and popular culture, but also because it is the first seminal Gothic work that invites the reader to sympathise with the vampire along with his homosexual desire. Essentially, the paper analyses how these texts deal with transgressions against what Gayle Rubin calls, the sex/gender system, which she defines as “a set of arrangements by which the raw material of human sex and procreation is shaped by human, social intervention and satisfied in a conventional manner, no matter how bizarre some of the conventions may be” (Rubin: 1975, 165).

In addition to the concept of the sex/gender system outlined in Rubin’s seminal essay “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the ‘Political Economy’ of Sex” (1975), the paper also draws on the idea of homosocial relationships discussed in Eva Sedgwick Kosofsky’s book *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985). The paper also borrows some crucial insights from David Punter and Glennys Byron, in particular, Punter’s book *Literature of Terror: The Gothic Tradition* (2013), and their co-authored study *The Gothic* (2004).

2. Moral decay in “The Vampyre”

John William Polidori’s (1795–1821) short story “The Vampyre” might be one of the most influential pieces of vampire fiction, not just in English literature, but in general, especially pertaining to the pop cultural

understanding of the vampire. While it was not the first story in European literature to deal with the subject of vampirism, it cemented the image of the vampire as a sleek monster of aristocratic origins who uses his charm to ensnare his victims, toying with them before destroying them both physically and mentally. Polidori's vampire is essentially a parody of Lord Byron, for whom Polidori had briefly worked before writing the story, and it introduced a few changes to the vampire, which were subsequently copied by other authors to a greater or lesser extent. His vampire is "not only a conscious vampire, but a perfectly willing one" (Scherf & Macdonald: 2008, 13), as opposed to a reanimated corpse driven by a compulsion. He is also an aristocrat, enjoying typical aristocratic vices such as gambling, and also travels a lot, as opposed to haunting a specific location (*Ibid*: 13–14). Most importantly for this discussion, Lord Strongmore¹ is a vampire with a strong sexual appetite who employs his seductive capabilities and charisma to infiltrate high-class society and corrupt it from within. This is a significant change compared to the vampires of folklore, especially the ones from South Slavic countries, from where the vampire myth spread to Western Europe. The folkloric vampire can also be strongly sexual, but "his sexuality is obsessive—indeed, in Yugoslavia, when he is not sucking blood, he is apt to wear out his widow with his attentions, so that she too pines away, much like his other victims" (Barber 1988: 9). The sexuality of a folklore vampire lacks the predetermination and conscious predatory aspect possessed by Lord Strongmore and most subsequent vampires.

Lord Strongmore's transgressive sexuality is firmly tied to his general love of vice and flaunting social conventions. While he is a transgressive character, his transgressive characteristics are utilised to harness the nineteenth-century fear of moral decay and societal degradation. Unlike some later vampires, such as Dracula, who are the ethnic other and thus represent a threat of a foreign invasion, Lord Strongmore is not a foreigner, but a representative of the aristocracy, which was increasingly being seen as "ethereal, decorative, and otiose in relation to the vigorous and productive values of the middle class" (Sedgwick 1985: 93). Thus, he is a fitting threat for the bourgeois class and its conservative morals. At the very onset of the narrative, he is shown as a threat to the virtue of both wives and daughters, all the more insidious for not conducting his affairs openly. The narrator says that "such was the caution with which he spoke to the virtuous wife and innocent daughter, that few knew he ever addressed himself to females" (Polidori 2008: 40), which poses a double

threat. On the one hand, he takes pleasure in taking advantage of women and engaging in illicit sexual affairs, but on the other hand, the fact that few knew that he engaged with women may also point towards an implicit fear of homosexuality. However, he is not only dangerous because he seeks out victims — his victims seem to seek him out, too; “many of the female hunters after notoriety attempted to win his attentions, and gain, at least, some marks of what they might term affection” (Polidori 2008: 39). This suggests that moral decay doesn’t just come from without, it also comes from within, it is invited, and Lord Strongmore is simply its agent. This is also true for his non-sexual victims, who fall prey to him because of their internal weakness and vice. Therefore, when Strongmore crosses social boundaries, “he does so with the collaboration of his victims” (Punter 2013: 103).

Even his relationship with Aubrey is marked by his implicit collaboration which stems from his naive idealism and passivity. Despite being a victim, Aubrey is not described in a particularly flattering way; “He had, hence, that high romantic feeling of honour and candour, which daily ruins so many milliners’ apprentices” and “He thought, in fine, that the dreams of poets were the realities of life” (Polidori 2008: 40). His naivety allows him to be drawn by Lord Strongmore’s seductive magnetism without noticing his corrupting influence before it was too late. This causes him to assume a passive role in their relationship, as opposed to a more dominant, more traditionally masculine one, further allowing Lord Strongmore to position himself as his guide and mentor, abusing their homosocial (Sedgwick 1985:1) relationship. Strongmore’s approach towards Aubrey is not, at least explicitly, marked by erotic desire. Instead, their bond is more similar to that of mentor and student. However, Strongmore perverts this homosocial bond by using it to prey on women in Aubrey’s life, particularly his sister. In another example of the breaking of conventional bourgeois morality and his predatoriness, Strongmore ignores the conventions of the “exchange of women between men” (Rubin 1975: 171) and goes straight for Aubrey’s sister without heeding his wishes and demands.

However, Lord Strongmore’s and Aubrey’s relationship might point towards an implicit homophobic anxiety. While Strongmore doesn’t pursue Aubrey sexually like he does his female victims, his character is based on Lord Byron, who was infamous for his sexual escapades, which included relationships with men and boys. For example, in 1816, Caroline Lamb claimed that Byron had “confessed that from his boyhood he had been

in the practice of unnatural crime—that Rushton was one of those whom he had corrupted—by whom he had been attended as a page [...] He mentioned 3 [*sic!*] schoolfellows whom he had thus perverted” (Marchand 1976: 230). If Strongmore is understood as a parodic representation of Byron, then his character can be understood as imbued with implicit homoerotic tendencies, despite their not being shown explicitly. Furthermore, homosexuality was until relatively recently often described as “unspeakable” and “unmentionable” (Sedgwick 1985: 94), and there is always something unspeakable about Strongmore for Aubrey, until “His incoherence at last became so great, that he was confined to his chamber” (p. 56). While it would be an overstatement to read their relationship as an explicitly homosexual one, some passages can be seen as participating in an implicit homosexual panic, which is part of a general moral anxiety. However, the blueprint for a seductive and sexually transgressive vampire set in “The Vampyre” served to inspire future generations of Gothic writers who would make explicit many of the implicit and subdued elements of the story.

3. The ambiguous lesbianism of “Carmilla”

“Carmilla” by Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu (1814–1873) expands on the themes present implicitly and explicitly in “The Vampyre” and other early vampire stories and sets the tone for the vampire stories to come in the following decades and the following century. Despite being less prominent in popular culture than *Dracula* or *The Vampire Chronicles*, it has always garnered much attention in critical circles due to its thematisation of lesbian sexuality, as well as class and ethnic tension in Sheridan’s Ireland, even though those anxieties are projected onto Austria. The novella’s approach to sexuality is particularly interesting due to its focus on a homosocial/homosexual relationship between two women and its somewhat ambiguous representation of the issue. Its relative explicitness also makes it unique in its time period, when authors tended to describe sexuality in oblique terms rather than discuss it openly, especially when it came to homoerotic desire. It’s also poignant that the novella is narrated by Laura, Carmilla’s victim, and the reader is privy to her innermost thoughts and transgressive desires, which is not often the case in the Gothic, where transgressive desires are typically mediated by and filtered through the lens of a narrator who doesn’t experience them.

Laura doesn't shy away from sharing her infatuation with Carmilla from the very start of the novel, she says that she "felt rather unaccountably towards the beautiful stranger. I did feel, as she said, 'drawn towards her,' but there was also something of repulsion. In this ambiguous feeling, however, the sense of attraction immensely prevailed" (Le Fanu 2007: 19) and reminds the reader that "I told you that I was charmed with her in most particulars" (Le Fanu 2007: 21). Such descriptions are "The traditional combination of a vampire's simultaneous magnetism and repulsiveness" (Costello-Sullivan 2013: xviii), but as the novella progresses, the magnetism seems to triumph over the repulsiveness.

William Veeder states that the novella deals with "The question posed frequently by conservative Victorians—Do women have passion?" (Veeder 1980: 198). The answer in the novella is an emphatic "Yes!", but whether this is seen as a positive or negative thing is ambiguous, as it "Expresses a hysterical fear of sexually and domestically powerful women or operates as a sympathetic study of women stereotyped as dangerous by Victorian culture" (Killeen 2013: 99–100). Both readings have had their proponents in critical circles. For example, Renee Fox claims that "Female homoeroticism in *Carmilla* stands not as a sign of sexual perversity within a binary system, but as a figuration of Irish class politics that precludes binary oppositions" (Fox 2013: 112), and Elizabeth Signorotti takes an even more optimistic stance, describing the novel as "Le Fanu's narrative of female empowerment" (Signorotti 1996: 608). On the other hand, Robert Tracy states that "Le Fanu deliberately heightened this [sexual] anxiety by introducing a kind of sex he would have considered illicit in order to emphasize the unnatural in his supernatural tale" (Tracy 1998: 66). Considering Le Fanu's conservative Anglo-Irish background and the period when the novella was written, it seems more likely that he used homoeroticism as an addition to Carmilla's unnaturalness and the threat that she poses to the established order, both in terms of the safety of Laura and her family, but also in terms of the sex/gender system of the 19th century, which strictly insisted on heterosexuality, strong paternal authority, and female submissiveness. However, unlike in many other vampire stories, this process is not straightforward, and the representations of Laura and Carmilla are rather ambiguous.

On the one hand, Laura's first-person account may invite readers to sympathise with her, especially when it comes to modern readers. Laura's voice is the dominant one in the narrative, and "Le Fanu refrains from heavy-handed moralizing, leaving open the possibility that Laura's and

Carmilla's vampiric relationship is sexually liberating and for them highly desirable" (Signorotti 1996: 611). However, while the lack of explicit judgement and moralising may allow space for reading the story as one of sexual liberation, it does not mean that the moralising is not implicit and aimed at Laura as well as Carmilla. Laura, unlike many female victims of vampire attacks, is not a passive victim and recipient of the vampire's passion. She is an active and willing participant in the seduction who at times makes advances (although not explicitly sexual) at Carmilla. She actively seeks to get closer to Carmilla and learn more about her, saying that "Once or twice, indeed, I did attack her more directly" (Le Fanu 2007: 22). Therefore, the threat to the dominant order comes not just from outside, from Carmilla, but also from the inside, from Laura, who "mirrors her desire" (Fox 2013: 115), so the horror of the story may be said to come from anxiety caused by women gaining sexual and domestic power and independence. The novella "depicts a society where men increasingly become relegated to powerless positions while women assume aggressive roles" (Signorotti 1996: 611). However, this breakdown of male power and Laura's "Alienation from male authority" (Veeder 1998: 203) are not necessarily presented as something desirable, but rather as a cause for alarm and a source of anxiety and fear.

The ending of the novella retains the ambiguity that pervades the rest of it. On the one hand, the ending is a fairly conventional one. A group of men assemble to employ the "extreme phallic corrective" (Signorotti 1996: 624); they stake Carmilla's body, cut off her head, burn her body, and spread the ashes over a river, ensuring that she will not return. The threat of the vampire is gone, and with it the threat of homoeroticism and female empowerment. The sex/gender system of the bourgeois family is at least seemingly restored, as Laura comments: "The disappearance of Carmilla was followed by the discontinuance of my nightly sufferings" (Le Fanu 2007: 80). However, Laura's narrative does not abruptly end after the staking of Carmilla. At the very end, she says

It was long before the terror of recent events subsided; and to this hour the image of Carmilla returns to memory with ambiguous alternations—sometimes the playful, languid, beautiful girl; sometimes the writhing fiend I saw in the ruined church; and often from a reverie I have started, fancying I have heard the light step of Carmilla at the drawing room door. (Le Fanu 2007: 85)

It is telling that even after being assured of Carmilla's being a vampire, Laura still remembers her, at least partly, as beautiful and attractive. This, coupled with the briefness of her mention of Laura's extermination, may point towards the idea that the sex/gender system has not been fully restored, and instead, the homoerotic desire that Laura has for Carmilla has only been suppressed, but not extinguished, which makes the vampire hunters' efforts futile. However, Laura's continuing thoughts about Carmilla can also simply be a result of trauma and an attempt to resolve it, rather than a sign of her affection. Furthermore, even if Laura is understood as being still somewhat infatuated with Carmilla, this was not necessarily meant as a positive development; it can also be seen as a sign that the threat of subversion is always present on the inside, which can further be seen as an additional sign of paranoia over female empowerment. However, the novella surely leaves an unusual amount of space for sympathy and identification with the transgressive characters in the story, allowing for a range of varying and even contradictory readings. It also marked a possible change in the direction of the representation of transgressive sexuality in Gothic fiction, which was expanded on by certain 20th-century authors, such as Anne Rice.

4. The subversiveness of *Interview with the Vampire*

The first seminal Gothic novelist whose fiction embraced homoeroticism unambiguously, along with the subversive potential of the vampire was Anne Rice (1941–2021). This twist may stem from Rice's personal support for gay rights (O'Connor 2005), but also from the growing acceptance of homosexuality in the public sphere. While the gay liberation movement still had a long way ahead of it, its efforts following the Stonewall Riots had made some progress, and homosexuality was increasingly becoming less of a taboo, especially compared to the repressive 19th century in which the two previously mentioned stories are set. Additionally, fantastic stories, such as Gothic horror in general, provide a convenient site for discussing taboos, and even more importantly, for identifying with them. The projection of a taboo behaviour such as homosexuality onto mythical creatures such as vampires can make it more palatable for the general audience, while allowing the LGB reader to identify with a sexually transgressive character in an oblique manner, "feel[ing] safe enjoying the alternative male/male

relations that the producers [authors] develop in this space" (Schopp 1997: 239). Furthermore, Rice uses homoeroticism to gain greater literary freedom for herself, claiming that using a heterosexual couple would lead to the novel being perceived as just another romance, while a homosexual relationship allowed her to "deal with the real essence of dominance and submission" (Riley 1996: 49). Rice also parodies the bourgeois family through the triangle between Lestat, Louis, and Claudia, going so far as to parody even the process of conception itself. Additionally, the world she created in the first three instalments of *The Vampire Chronicles* is profoundly atheistic, with a complete lack of a godhead and characters wandering aimlessly, unable to find meaning, which is in stark opposition to a lot of vampire fiction, which includes at least some amount of religious moralising and typically serves to confirm religious doctrine. Rice thus "turned the vampire paradigm on its head" (Benefiel 2004: 261) by subverting some of the most common Gothic tropes. The following discussion will focus on *Interview with the Vampire*, as the prime example of Rice's subversion of the Gothic and harnessing its transgressive potential.

While *Interview with the Vampire* is not graphic in its descriptions of sexuality, it is charged with a great deal of homoeroticism from the very beginning. Louis comments, "I refused to look at him, to be spellbound by the sheer beauty of his appearance" (Rice 2002: 14), and later on, "He was no more human to me than a biblical angel" (Rice 2002: 17). Typically, in a vampire story, transgressive desire exists between the vampire and their victim, where the victim is a more or less a passive recipient. While such a relationship also exists here at the beginning, most of the homoerotic desire described in the novel is shared between two vampires, with occasional displays of desire between vampire and victim. This change of dynamics helps to neutralise or at least reduce the effect of horror that typically accompanies transgressive sexuality in the Gothic. The vampire is no longer an alien intruder who infects the victim with transgressive desires, but rather an object of fascination, affinity, and magnetic attraction which is not perceived as revolting by the recipient. *Interview with the Vampire* shares this combination of attraction and repulsiveness with "Carmilla", but unlike the novella, the narrative stands firmly on the side of the magnetism, especially when it comes to the sexual component. While Louis finds Lestat morally detestable, the attraction he feels is undeniable. Neutralising the shock coming from facing such a transgression by placing homoeroticism between two more or less equal sides, Rice naturalises homosexual desire,

turning it into an inherent part of the vampire instead of a threat and a source of horror. This effect is enhanced by the fact that the story is a confessional narrative from the perspective of the vampire Louis, which invites sympathy for a type of character that typically invites disgust and repulsion. In “Carmilla”, the narrative can also be said to invite sympathy for Laura and her desire for Carmilla, but the story is still shrouded in ambiguity, while the titular vampire is clearly described as a threat. On the other hand, *Interview with the Vampire* is perfectly unambiguous in its representations of homoeroticism and invites the reader to side with the vampires.

However, the homoeroticism exhibited in the novel does not lead to physical love; it always remains on the level of fascination, adoration, and desire. Louis even disdains physical love, saying, “it was the pale shadow of killing” (Rice 2002: 207). This might be partly due to the constraints of the time, as graphic descriptions of (homo)sexual activity would have probably impeded the mainstream success of the novel. However, erotic desire seems to, at least in Louis’ case, counteract the death drive and provide an escape from the misery of both human and vampire existence, and may be seen as an extreme expression of a yearning for companionship. This is particularly obvious in Louis’ relationship with Armand, whom he instantly sees as an object of desire and a potential partner, with whom he can escape damnation and abject loneliness.

Rice also makes “the nuclear family of vampires a major theme in her novel” (Benefiel 2004: 263), which is uncommon for a vampire novel, where the vampire typically “threat[ens] the security of the bourgeois family” (Punter & Byron 2004: 269). Even in cases where we see vampires forming something vaguely similar to a family, it’s seen as a perversion that must be destroyed to preserve the nuclear family. Instead, Rice uses the vampire family to parody the nuclear family, traditional gender roles, and even the natural process of reproduction. Louis specifically compares the process of being turned into a vampire to breastfeeding, saying that he experienced “for the first time since infancy the special pleasure of sucking nourishment, the body focused with the mind upon one vital source” (Rice 2002: 20). This parodies and even profanes motherhood and conception. Not only is mother’s milk replaced with blood, but the role of the mother is here taken by Lestat, despite his being male, which turns the natural process and traditional roles upside-down. Lestat exhibits his motherly urge again, before the creation of the vampire Claudia, saying,

"I am like a mother [...] I want a child!" (Rice 2002: 88). In both cases, Lestat acts as a single mother, able to procreate and nurture offspring, without a mate. However, gender roles in the novel are in constant flux, and both Lestat and Louis refer to themselves as Claudia's fathers, with Louis emphasising that "She's our daughter" (Rice 2002: 92). Thus, Lestat returns to a male role, but their family is still in transgression of the typical norms of the family, as it's not just a family of vampires, but also one formed by a homosexual couple. In addition to this, the border between parent and lover is also occasionally blurred, with Louis describing himself and Claudia as "Father and Daughter. Lover and Lover" (Rice 2002: 100), and often using rather sensuous terms when talking about her. However, the boundary is never fully broken, as Louis more consistently describes himself as her father and his behaviour towards her is generally fatherly, complete with a crisis during which Claudia demands her own coffin, in a parody of parent-adolescent child relationship. In this regard, *Interview with the Vampire* is again similar to "Carmilla", where the vampire can be said to become a motherly figure to Laura at certain points, in addition to being her ancestor. However, the incestuous implications in "Carmilla" are most likely an addition to Carmilla's otherworldliness, while in *Interview with the Vampire*, they are a means of parody and subversion. With its treatment of sexuality and the family, *Interview with the Vampire* turns the bourgeois sex/gender system on its head, as love and desire between men is normalised and naturalised, gender roles within the family are subverted, and even the biological functions of men and women in the process of reproduction are inverted, at least symbolically.

5. Conclusion

This paper has tried to describe and examine the general tendencies in the use of the vampire for discussing transgressive sexuality and the transgressive in general in Gothic fiction. The works discussed in the paper are chosen due to their impact on Gothic horror, as well as their overall influence on the genre as a whole. This allows for the creation of a broad outline of how the Gothic treats transgressive sexuality and the breaking of the sex/gender system. Of course, the analysis here focuses only on a small part of the whole corpus of vampire fiction, and there are undoubtedly nuances and details that do not fit neatly into this outline.

However, it can be safely said that the Gothic has the general tendency to present transgressive sexuality and the breaking of social norms in general as a threat to the dominant order. This, typically, isn't done to question or challenge the order, but rather to uphold it and get rid of its anxieties and fears at least in fiction. In other words, what is usually under scrutiny in Gothic fiction is the transgressive figure of the vampire with its taboo-breaking, and not the established social order. The Gothic typically defends the values of the author's milieu rather than challenge them. "The Vampyre" can be seen as a castigation of the decadent aristocracy from the viewpoint of the bourgeoisie. Lord Strongmore is sexually voracious and has a love of corruption, and the fear of such desire and behaviour is harnessed to tell a cautionary moral tale. "Carmilla" is more explicit with its thematisation of homosexual desire and points towards anxiety about female sexuality and empowerment. However, it leaves some space for identification and sympathy with Laura and her transgressive desire for Carmilla. *Interview with the Vampire* is one of the rare cases in which the subversive potential of the vampire is used for subversion. The narrative invites the reader to sympathise with the vampire protagonist Louis, along with his homoerotic desire for Lestat and Armand. The novel also skilfully employs the vampire to create a parody of the patriarchal family and heteronormative gender roles. However, the conservative strain remains ever present in most Gothic literature.

References

- Barber, P. (1988). *Vampires, Burial, and Death: Folklore and Reality*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Benefiel, R. C. (2004). The Gothic Perversion of the Nuclear Family in Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire*. *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 38, 2(2004), 261–273.
- Costello-Sullivan, K. (2013). Introduction. In: Costello-Sullivan, K. (Ed), *Carmilla: A Critical Edition*. New York: Syracuse University Press, xvii–xxvi.
- Fox, R. (2013). *Carmilla and the Politics of Indistinguishability*. In: Costello-Sullivan, K. (ed), *Carmilla: A Critical Edition*. New York: Syracuse University Press, 110–121.

- Killeen, J. (2013). An Irish Carmilla? In: Costello-Sullivan, K. (ed), *Carmilla: A Critical Edition*. New York: Syracuse University Press, 99–109.
- Le Fanu, J. S. (2007). *Carmilla*. New York, Dodo Press.
- Marchand, L. A. (1976). *Byron: A Portrait*. London: Futura Publications Ltd.
- O'Connor, A. (2005). Twists of Faith. *The Los Angeles Times*. (26 December 2005) <<https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2005-dec-26-et-ricerice26-story.html>> .
- Polidori, J. W. (2008). The Vampyre. In: Scherf, K. and Macdonald, D.L. (eds), *The Vampyre and Ernestus Brechtold*, Peterborough: Broadview Press, 39–59.
- Punter, D. (2013). *The Literature of Terror: The Gothic Tradition*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Punter, D. and Byron, G. (2004). *The Gothic*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Riley, Michael. (1996). *Conversations with Anne Rice*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Rubin, Gayle. (1975). The Traffic in Women: Notes on the "Political Economy" of Sex. In: Reiter, R. R. (ed.), *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 157–210.
- Sedgwick, E. K. (1985). *Between Men: English Literature and Homosocial Desire*. New York: Columbia University Press
- Scherf, K. and Macdonald, D. L. (2008). Introduction. In: Scherf, K. and Macdonald, D.L. (Eds), *The Vampyre and Ernestus Brechtold*, Peterborough: Broadview Press, 9–31.
- Schopp, A. (1997). Cruising the Alternatives: Homoeroticism and the Contemporary Vampire. *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 30, 4(1997), 231–243.
- Signorotti, E. (1996). Repossessing the Body: Transgressive desires in 'Carmilla' and *Dracula*. *Criticism*, 38, 4(1996), 607–632.
- Tracy, R. (1998). Sheridan Le Fanu and the Unmentionable. In: *The Unappeasable Host: Studies in Irish Identities*. Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 57–72. *The Internet Archive*. (24 May 2023) <<https://archive.org/details/unappeasablehost0000trac>> .

Received: 15 August 2023

Accepted for publication: 23 September 2023

Aleksandra V. Vukelić*

University of Belgrade
Faculty of Philology
Belgrade, Serbia

ZENIA AS A CANADIAN MONSTER IN MARGARET ATWOOD'S *THE ROBBER BRIDE*

Abstract

This paper examines the character of Zenia in *The Robber Bride* by Margaret Atwood, focusing on the elements of the novel that are characteristic of Canadian literature. These motifs, which include the split attitude towards nature, the double position of the colonizer and the colonized, victimhood and the treatment of otherness, as well as a sense of inferiority in relation to both Europe and the United States, are examined in an attempt to shed light on the way Atwood uses them to construct Zenia as a fantastically powerful adversary to her three protagonists. Bearing in mind that Atwood has argued that the perceived dullness of Canada might be only a disguise, this paper aims to demonstrate how *The Robber Bride's* monstrous Zenia brings those hidden hauntings to the forefront.

Key words: Canadian literature, Margaret Atwood, nature, victimhood, otherness

1. Introduction

Margaret Atwood's 1993 novel *The Robber Bride* relates the story of Tony, Charis and Roz, three friends brought together by their encounters with the fatal, glamorous and charismatic "other woman" Zenia, whose devastating

* aleksandra.vukelic@fil.bg.ac.rs

machinations and brutal assaults wreak havoc on their lives. Atwood's Zenia is "impossibly, fantastically bad" (Moore 1993); she is a usurper and a maneater whose seductive powers and manipulation tactics reach such fantastic proportions that no one can escape her clutches unscathed.

All three protagonists meet Zenia in their college days, but her thieving, deceiving and blackmailing ways follow them over the next three decades. Strikingly beautiful and irresistibly charming, Zenia first crosses paths with Tony, a shy history student secretly in love with her best friend, Zenia's boyfriend West. Zenia repays Tony's friendship and admiration with blackmail and extortion, threatening to ruin her academic career by revealing that Tony has written a paper for her, after which she vanishes without a trace. Years later, Tony and West are married, but Zenia returns and reclaims West like "a suitcase left at the train station" (Atwood 1994: 217), only to abandon him again and let Tony pick up the pieces. Next, Zenia targets Charis, a New Ager obsessed with spiritual health, convincing her that she is suffering from cancer and that she has been a victim of West's abuse. Charis lets her in her home, which she shares with Billy, her Vietnam draft-dodger boyfriend, and attempts to nurse her back to health with vegetable juices and meditation. Predictably, Zenia turns on her, seduces Billy and takes him away. Finally, she returns yet again, and this time she befriends Roz: although "forewarned" and "forearmed" (Atwood 1994: 426), Roz is moved and taken in when Zenia claims that Roz's father saved her as a baby during World War II. As readers have by now come to expect, Zenia ends up stealing away Mitch, Roz's chronically unfaithful husband, and then disappears with a generous sum of their money.

Dazzling, deceitful and devilish, Zenia is "presented as a cultural stereotype – as the other woman who undermines the bond between women through her sexual rivalry and competition" (Bouson 1995: 158). The text, however, continually suggests that Zenia is not entirely "other," insofar as she is the protagonists' double. Interpretations of the novel have almost unanimously cast Zenia in the role of a shadow self, the three women's personal monster summoned and possibly even created by their own inner duality, repressed and split-off parts and unrecognized impulses. Coral Ann Howells (1996: 83) points out that Zenia is linked to the protagonists' "dark twins" or hidden alternate selves, while Hilde Staels (2010: 41) states that Zenia is "the main characters' *Doppelgänger* or double." In a New York Times interview, Atwood herself has described

Zenia as “a shadow” similar to those found in Hoffman’s *Doppelgänger* tales (as cited in Wyatt 1998: 38).

However, Zenia is not only a dark shadow self, but also a composite figure assembled from elements of various mythical and literary figures. As Howells (1996: 81) suggests, she is a Gothic “demonic woman” whom Atwood has fashioned by “reassembling parts of old legends and fairy tales” in a feat worthy of Dr. Frankenstein. The very title of the novel points to Zenia’s role of the bloodthirsty Robber Bride in a revised Grimm fairytale where women play all the characters. She is also portrayed as an undead *Vampira* who descends on her victims “with her bared incisors” (Atwood 1994: 228). The novel suggests that Zenia has plenty of other faces too: she is a contemporary incarnation of Jezebel, as well as the Byzantine empress Theophano and Dame Giraude who are featured in Tony’s historical anecdotes. Furthermore, Atwood has stated that Zenia’s literary origins can be traced back to a long line of female rebels and villainesses which, among others, includes Lilith, Lady Macbeth and Becky Sharp (Terkel 1993).

Interweaving the threads of history, myth and fantasy in the figure of Zenia, Atwood creates a character who “seems to be real but [...] has a double existence for she belongs to two different fictional discourses, that of realism and of fantasy” and who “exists both as a character in the realistic fiction and also as the projection of three women’s imaginations” (Howells 1996: 81). Potts (1999: 283) postulates that Atwood, taking inspiration from the “old world” and reworking its myths, introduces a supernatural and fantastic dimension into the novel’s Canadian setting, traditionally viewed as dull, ghostless and devoid of magic.

While this perceived lack of ghosts¹ has long haunted Canadian literature, various interpretations have, in fact, linked Zenia’s uncanny powers with certain figures of the Canadian imagination. In her role of the archetypal trickster, the amoral messenger of gods who disrupts the status quo and sets events in motion (Staels 2010), Zenia may be related to certain Native legends in which, as Atwood points out, the trickster is often female or ambiguously gendered (Terkel 1993). What is more, Zenia has been analysed in light of another Canadian myth – that of the Wendigo, a monster with a heart of ice, whom Atwood takes as an example that affirms the existence of the supernatural in Canada (Atwood 1991). Isla J. Duncan (1999) discusses the role of the cannibalistic Wendigo in the portrayal of Zenia as a man-eater; given that this creature may be seen as “a fragment

of the protagonist's psyche, a sliver of his inner life made visible" (Atwood 1991: 74), this author arrives at yet another reading of Zenia as a double, but this time interconnected with characteristically Canadian motifs.

Building on the notion that these elements of the Canadian imagination form part of Zenia, as well as on the idea that nation and belonging are of considerable significance for this novel (Rao 2006), this paper will attempt to go further and examine how certain mainstays of Canadian literature have shaped the figure of the monstrous Robber Bride. We postulate that Zenia may be seen as a Canadian monster, as the depiction of this sinister antagonist has a distinctively Canadian flavor. Zenia will first be discussed as a manifestation of the split attitude towards nature, which is seen as a place that can both bring spiritual healing and drive one insane. It will then be examined how the figure of Zenia highlights the Canadian position as both colonizers and the colonized, allowing Atwood to examine the way otherness is perceived and treated in Canada. Finally, the paper will look at the way Zenia abuses the Canadian identification with victims and sense of inferiority in order to dazzle and deceive the protagonists. This analysis aims to offer new insights into how Zenia, as Howells remarks, survives as "a powerful force [...] in 1990s Toronto" (Howells 1996: 80) and demonstrate how this amalgamation of various monsters, ghosts, myths and legends is made relevant in a contemporary Canadian context.

2. Theoretical Background

In the attempt to situate Zenia within the context of Canadian literature, some of its key concepts and concerns should first be clarified. We might therefore ask, as Atwood (2012: 3) puts it – "What is Canadian about Canadian literature?" This is a question that she famously poses in her 1972 work *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*, in which she posits that Canada has its own distinctive literature that merits consideration and is not the same as British or American. This proposition, which might today seem self-evident, was not always universally acknowledged: *Survival* was met with "the ire of many who could not tolerate the belief that there was a literature in Canada" (Staines 2006: 19).

Atwood perceives this anxiety about the (non-)existence of Canadian literature as characteristic of the country's colonial mentality, an attitude which assumes that history, culture and literature are things that happen

somewhere else, while whatever is written in Canada is merely “a second-rate copy of *real* literature” (Atwood 2006: xvii). Identifying Canada as a cultural and economic colony and therefore a “collective victim,” she goes on to define victimhood and survival as the key themes of its literature, or its “persistent cultural obsession[s]” (2006: 31, xx). As Atwood suggests, there is a “superabundance of victims” in Canlit: “Stick a pin in Canadian literature at random, and nine times out of ten you will hit a victim”; consequently, she articulates her theory of the four Basic Victim Positions² as a perspective from which this literature “makes a surprising amount of sense” (Atwood 2012: 36–37).

But if Canadians are habitually portrayed as victims in the country’s literature, who – or what – are their tormentors? Apart from being the victims of colonial mentality and colonial power dynamics – in relation to both Britain and the United States, as a neo-colonial power which increasingly threatens its cultural survival (Atwood 2021: 27) – Canada and Canadian literary heroes seem to be continually victimized by their own landscape. In *Survival*, Atwood begins her analysis of the Canadian victim complex by examining the figure of Nature the Monster. As she explains, the eighteenth-century “cult of the sublime” and nineteenth-century depictions of nature as “a kind Mother or Nurse” turn out to be untenable when settlers are faced with the challenges of life in the bush, giving way to “a double-minded attitude towards Canada” and its wilderness (Atwood 2012: 46–47). Atwood illustrates this by quoting a paragraph from Susana Moodie’s *Roughing It in the Bush* with its abrupt shift in the author’s tone:

The aspect of Nature ever did, and I hope ever will, continue: “To shoot marvelous strength into my heart.” As long as we remain true to the Divine Mother, so long will she remain faithful to her suffering children.

At the time my love for Canada was a feeling very nearly allied to that which the condemned criminal entertains for his cell – his only hope of escape being through the portals of the grave. (Moodie, as cited in Atwood 2012: 47)

Atwood returns to her examination of this split attitude in *Stranger Things*, where she elaborates on the image of an “evil” Nature seen as “a frigid but sparkling fin-de-siecle femme fatale, who entices and hypnotizes male

protagonists and leads them to their doom” (Atwood 1991: 3). This image, paradoxically counteracted by visions of nature as a place of pilgrimage where one goes in search of salvation, “not as where you go to die but as where you go to renew life” (Atwood 1991: 9), gives rise to what Northrop Frye famously defines as the Canadian “garrison mentality”. “Small and isolated communities,” he writes, “confronted with a huge, unthinking, menacing, and formidable physical setting [...] are bound to develop what we may provisionally call a garrison mentality” (Frye 2003: 350–351). Such a mentality is marked by “an impulse to build fortifications both literally, against the encroaching wilderness, and figuratively, against the unknown” (Hammil 2007: 63–64), as well as by an appreciation of stability and established norms. Therefore Frye views garrisons as sterile environments “in which nothing original can grow” (Frye 2003: 351). The element of this influential concept that Atwood builds on, opening her *Survival* chapter on nature by quoting Frye, concerns the relationship with nature that forms part of garrison mentality:

I have long been impressed in Canadian poetry by a tone of deep terror in regard to nature [...]. It is not a terror of the dangers or discomforts or even the mysteries of nature, but a terror of the soul at something that these things manifest. The human mind has nothing but human and moral values to cling to if it is to preserve its integrity or even its sanity, yet the vast unconsciousness of nature in front of it seems an unanswerable denial of those values. (Frye 2003: 350)

Sugars (2014: 20–21) observes that Frye has correctly placed the Gothic image of a vast unexplored landscape, which one enters as if being “silently swallowed,” at the root of Gothic sensibility in Canadian writing. But what is at the source of this terror in regard to nature? Frye (2003: 366) believes it to be the “riddle of unconsciousness” with its “massive indifference” and “moral silence” that stretch out before the explorer. But while Canadians might be tormented by this monstrous and haunting nature, that is not to say that encounters with it are avoided in the country’s literature. Interestingly, Sugars (2014) points out that Canadian literature in fact actively seeks different forms of hauntings – which might explain the irresistible appeal of the seductive but deadly nature to which Atwood refers. As Sugars explains, Canadian texts often “exhibit a desire for Gothic infusion” which reflects Canadian White settlers’ need to become “fixed in the landscape,”

confirming its sense of place and belonging through encountering a form of haunting (Sugars 2014: 178). If we shift our gaze back to the Canadian anxieties about the (non-)existence of their own distinct literature and culture, we may conclude that these hauntings might be so appealing precisely because they dispel doubts that the country is “too new” (Sugars 2014: 60), or too “unspoiled, uncorrupted [...] or dull” (Atwood 2012: 10) to have any hidden stories of its own to reveal.

Going back to the sources of the terror in regard to nature in Frye's writings, it is important to note that Sugars (2014) offers a different interpretation of its causes. She points out that Frye's individual whose values nature negates is in fact a colonizer “confronted with his inarticulate illegitimacy with regard to the space he inhabits”; what is at the root of this terror is therefore a “repressed sensation that one does not, in effect, belong there” (Sugars 2014: 24). As Atwood suggests, the travelers' impression that nature has remained mute and “withheld all revelation” may actually be a reflection of their inability to perceive any revelation that doesn't arrive on their terms (Atwood 2012: 51). Viewed in this context, it seems that even the Canadian lack of ghosts is not so much a lack as it is a deliberate silencing of the ones that have always inhabited its wilderness, while the hauntings the Canadian landscape brings to the fore might have to do with the colonizers' sense of displacement and preoccupation with not belonging. Defying the romantic vision of a return to nature as a return to oneself, wilderness ultimately confronts the Canadian settler with otherness.

This highlights the fact that White Canadians, from whose literary tradition Atwood speaks, occupy a dual position in relation to colonialism – if, on the one hand, they are victims – of the British Empire, of the United States, of Nature the Monster – on the other hand they must also contend with the fact that they are colonizers and victimizers as well. This is something that Atwood is well aware of: in her own words, “[w]e sometimes forget, in our obsession with colonialism and imperialism, that Canada itself has been guilty of these stances towards others, both inside the country and outside it” (as cited in Staines 2006: 22). A postcolonial rethinking of Canadianness entails a redefinition of the “traditional colonial concepts of a dominantly British Canada” so as to “include the heterogeneous histories of its citizens” (Howells 2003: 90), emphasizing hybridity, reinventions and transformations. More space has therefore been given to voices that challenge “the narrative of Canada as a generous

land open to immigrants” and foreground “the divisions within Canadian society, the existence of a ‘we’ and a ‘them’” (Rao 2006: 108), questioning the treatment of otherness in Canada.

In this context, Atwood remains a “troublesome figure” in the canon of post-colonial writers, as she is, in Fiona Tolan’s words, “uncompromisingly white, middle-class, university-educated, indeed ‘waspish’” (2007: 202). It might, after all, as Hutcheon (1989) suggests, make more sense to refer to the Indigenous Peoples when discussing postcolonial literature in Canada. Nevertheless, Howells (2003: 90) indicates that Atwood’s work read through a postcolonial lens has an important role in “deconstruct[ing] myths of White European Canadian authenticity,” revealing their gaps and hidden histories of otherness that these myths are built on.

Dangerous wilderness and stifling garrisons, a search for ghosts and a denial of them, colonial inferiority and victimhood on the one hand and the role of a colonizer on the other: those seem to be some of the dualities that have shaped Canadian literature, which Atwood aims to place “on a level with other literatures of the world” (Staines 2006: 25). With these tensions in mind, we now proceed to investigate how the persistent themes of Canadian literature take shape in the character of Zenia as she exposes the ghosts that secretly haunt the novel’s heroines.

3. Zenia, a Force of Nature

In the lives of Tony, Charis and Roz, Zenia appears as an advisor with more experience under her belt than they could dream of, a worldly-wise friend from whom they can learn; Perrakis (1997) even suggests that their relationships with Zenia allows them to reexamine and reform their ways of relating to parental figures. When Zenia’s malice and trickery are unveiled, however, this congenial aspect of hers is transformed into that of a monstrous destructive force. Such an ambivalent *femme fatale* figure is not uncommon in Canadian literature, where nature, as it has already been pointed out, is often personified as a woman who is simultaneously maternal and fickle, capable of both seduction and entrapment.

Untamed and unrestrained, the hypnotizing Zenia is linked with images of wilderness throughout the novel. In Charis’s story (“Weasel Nights”), a parallel is implied between the vampiric Zenia, who flees from Charis’s home leaving behind chickens with slit throats, and weasels that

attack her grandmother's farm at night: "Karen imagined them, long thin animals like snakes, cold and silent, slithering in through walls, their mouths open, their sharp fangs ready, their eyes shining and vicious. [...] They don't kill to eat, she said. They kill for the pleasure of it" (Atwood 1994: 290). Roz envisions Zenia as the Robber Bride "lurking in her mansion in the dark forest"; returning home upon seeing her again, she feels "as if she's been away from it for a long time. Wandering lost in the dark wood with its twisted trees, enchanted" (Atwood 1994: 352, 473). The fatal Zenia, who shines "like the moon" (Atwood 1994: 149), is evidently associated with seductive and mindlessly cruel nature. It should, however, be noted that nature is not always external, but often closely related to the body and sexuality; as Hutcheon indicates, an interesting transformation of traditionally male wilderness novel occurs in Canadian writing when female characters are made to "cope with the wilderness that is both inside and outside them – that both of physical nature and of their human/sexual nature as women" (Hutcheon 1988: 132). This aspect of nature is doubtless essential to Zenia's power and appeal: "She was raw, [...] she was raw sex, whereas Tony herself was only the cooked variety. Parboiled to get the dangerous wildness out" (Atwood 1994: 487).

As opposed to the wild, homeless and homewrecking Zenia, the three friends are depicted as focused on separating themselves from the outside world with all sorts of shells and walls, which is a tendency reflected above all in the way they relate to their homes. Rao (2006: 103) argues that the protagonists, who all struggle with a sense of alienation from their families and communities, seek refuge and belonging in the safety of their home, with its "implications of stability and security".

Tony, for instance, is proud of her "solid house, reassuring; a fort, a bastion, a keep"; she lives inside a "beetle-like little armoured carapace" in a "turreted fortress" (Atwood 1994: 21, 153, 470). Charis, unsure "where the edges of her body [end] and the rest of the world [begins]," is repeatedly seen struggling to regain control over her personal space: "*My body, mine*" (Atwood 1994: 73, 79). With Tony and Roz's help, she exorcises fragments of Billy and Zenia's presence from her island house: "Here she is, back at her house, her fragile but steady house, her house that is still standing" (Atwood 1994: 341). Roz experiences regular "redecorating frenzies" and keeps making over her home, which, as Potts (1999: 289) remarks, points to her struggles – and her need – to define where she belongs and what home is for her. She is bound to her house by

her maternal and marital role: Mitch “likes the image of Roz with an apron and a watering can, just as he likes the image of Roz with an apron and a frying pan”; Roz concludes that “[t]he constant is the apron, the Good Housekeeping guarantee that Roz will always be home whenever Mitch chooses to get back there” (Atwood 1994: 429). She wants her children to “know this is a safe house, [to] know she’s there, planted solidly” (Atwood 1994: 363). Roz’s homemaking role is emphasized by her desire to keep the outside world at an arm’s length: “The worst thing about swimming pools as far as Roz is concerned is that they are one step too close to the great outdoors” (Atwood 1994: 429). She is often troubled by images of the wilderness invading her home; she imagines, for instance, that “there are sharks” swimming in her bathtub (Atwood 1994: 126).

If the wandering Zenia is a personification of the wilderness on the one hand, Tony, Charis and Roz’s attitude towards their homes could, on the other, be linked with the Canadian garrison mentality. The three women seek shelter in the safety of their homes, holding on to their stable identities and defending their boundaries. Yet if nothing new can grow in barricaded garrisons, as Frye suggests, the interventions of the seductive and destructive Zenia may actually be necessary. “*No! No! On! On!*” (Atwood 1994: 218), Tony therefore finds herself thinking as she contemplates Zenia’s rampage. Before they meet Zenia, the three women’s attitude does not allow for growth or change; in fact, they all find themselves in unsatisfactory relationships, troubled by their childhood memories and traumas that they are only able to repress and not resolve. This impasse is, however, broken when they begin to identify with Zenia and her rebelliousness, boldness, unfettered sexuality and ability to reshape and refashion the world and herself as she pleases. While disturbing their boundaries, the homewrecking Zenia “makes [them] over and fundamentally changes [their] relationship with the events of the past” (McWilliams 2016: 96), allowing them to identify with “a figure of adult female sexuality” (Wyatt 1998: 49) and access new modes of relating to those around them while “imaginatively recreating their relationships with the (m)other” (Perrakis 1997: 166).

Yet if stepping outside of the safe boundaries of a garrison can be transformative, it could also lead the protagonists to their doom. In her constant shapeshifting transformations and reinventions, Zenia remains as vast, amoral and impenetrable as Nature the Monster, swallowing and driving mad those who answer the seductive call of the wild. Eternally indeterminate, shadowy and vague, she is able to become anyone – but

she is also no one, as she has no fixed identity. Interestingly, Zenia has no surname, home, or definitive place and time of birth – for Wyatt (1998: 42), she is not even a subject. When faced with Zenia, the protagonists feel invaded by her overpowering presence; nevertheless, just like settlers exploring the Canadian landscape, they also fear terror at being faced with a vast nothingness. They repeatedly voice their anxieties in regard to the potentially “empty” essence of Zenia, who, as Charis fears, may be “soulless” and only an “empty shell;” there might be “nothing behind the two-dimensional image” of Zenia “but a thin layer of mercury” (Atwood 1994: 508, 553). The protagonists’ identities are therefore in danger of being drained and taken over by a soulless vampiric thief as they all identify and merge with Zenia. Tony “looks at her [...] and sees her own reflection,” Charis “thinks about being Zenia”; in a dream, “Zenia’s edges dissolve like a watercolour in the rain and Charis merges into her,” while Roz “would like to be Zenia” (Atwood 1994: 197, 317, 479, 473). Perrakis observes that in identifying with Zenia, Tony “risks having her inner world invaded and appropriated by a powerful (m)other” (Perrakis 1997: 158).

While these depictions of Zenia’s emptiness link her with the maddening silent expanse of Nature the Monster, they are also related to the image of Zenia as a double that many interpretations point to. In fact, what is terrifying in nature might be akin to what is terrifying about Zenia as a second self. The image of a self being swallowed and absorbed, a self who disintegrates when faced with an inscrutable shadowy figure, is typical of the literature of doubles and second selves. The existence of a double, a being who remains half-hidden and whose motivation is impossible to grasp, implies that “identity is a false category” and threatens to shatter it: if two people are identical, then “neither has a unique, well defined identity of his own” (Slethaug 1993: 5). Eran Dorfman (2020: 71) postulates that certain forms of the double originate from “a timeless and impersonal environment” revealed to one during sleepless nights as an “endless, yet empty existence,” calling into question the world of clear forms and stable identities – much like Frye’s terrifying nature in whose vast unconsciousness travelers lose themselves.

Nevertheless, as numerous studies dealing with doubles indicate, this seemingly destructive being often plays an inwardly constructive role in the life of the protagonist and therefore needs to be approached and accounted for (Rosenfield 1963, Keppler 1972, Dorfman 2020); it is Keppler’s proposition that every story of a second self is “a story of

shaping” the protagonist, “a *Bildungsroman*” (Keppler 1972: 195). As well as Canadian nature, the double is an ambivalent figure; yet while nature in Canadian literature has been typically cast as either “good” or “evil,” either a kind mother or a fickle tormentor, the double can be both things at once. While this creature who is both *I* and not-*I* threatens to erase the protagonists’ subjectivity by demolishing the walls meant to separate the self from the outside world, the destruction it creates might offer the protagonists a chance to reexamine and rebuild their identities.

Similarly, Zenia drives each of the three friends to the edge of madness and death: after her attacks, “devastated” Tony finds and contemplates using the gun her father committed suicide with, Charis hears a voice telling her “that she might as well give up,” and Roz swallows a handful of sleeping pills “out of simple irritation of being awake” (Atwood 1994: 218–219, 333, 464). Nevertheless, as Zenia points out during their final confrontations, it may well be true that she “never had anything against [them] personally” and that they, in fact, are “better off” after her interventions (Atwood 1994: 494, 526). What is more, when we meet the same characters again, in the short story “I Dream of Zenia with the Bright Red Teeth” that appeared in Atwood’s collection *Stone Mattress*, they all appear to be leading peaceful and contented lives, and even Zenia reappears in a much more benevolent form. It seems that the outcome of their battles with Zenia is indeed similar to what Rosenfield (1963: 333) describes in her account of literary doubles:

In so far as the hero does return from the underworld of his being and is able to use his new knowledge [...] The Double novel reveals not a disintegration of the personality but a reintegration, a recognition of the necessary balance between order and freedom.

By interweaving the figure of the double with the Canadian tensions between the safety of the garrison and the call of the wilderness, Atwood manages to create a character who is able to play both paradoxical roles of Canadian nature at once. Almost driving the heroines to madness and destruction, Zenia ultimately guides them towards the freeing possibility of transformation. As Tony thinks about Zenia in the final chapter of the novel, she wonders: “Are we in any way like her?” (Atwood 1994: 564). This question, however, no longer suggests the threat of being annihilated and swallowed by her unbounded, omnipotent and indecipherable presence;

instead, it points to an examination of the three women's identities that has allowed them to seek freedom outside the walls of the garrison, without getting lost in the wilderness.

4. *Xeno, Xenophobic, Xenia: The Other as a Scapegoat and a Victim*

As the protagonists' second self, Zenia stands at the threshold of otherness: she is a mirror reflection on the one hand and a hostile stranger who demolishes their homes and identities on the other. An orphan with no identifiable homeland and an eternal outsider with no friends, family, or any other ties that bind her to the community, Zenia – who continually presents herself as a member of an oppressed and minority group – can be seen as the embodiment of difference and foreignness. No one knows where Zenia comes from, yet Tony imagines it to be “someplace long ago and distant in space, [...] someplace bruised, and very tangled” where “something ordinary but horrifying is taking place” (Atwood 1994: 3). Her foreignness is encoded even in her name – when Tony attempts to trace its meaning, among its possible roots she finds the following: “*Xenia*, a Russian word for hospitable, a Greek one pertaining to the action of a foreign pollen upon the fruit [...]; *Xeno*, Greek, a stranger, as in *xenophobic*” (Atwood 1994: 553). As she shatters the three women's homes and identities that once provided “an illusion of coherence and stability based on the exclusion of specific histories [...], the repression of differences even within oneself” (Rao 2006: 106), Zenia puts to the test their ability to confront otherness that comes both from within and without.

According to Tolan (2007), who analyzes *The Robber Bride* through a postcolonial lens, Zenia is at the same time a double (i.e., a repressed and split off part of themselves) and an other. This author argues that “[i]n colonial discourse, the imposition of the image of the self onto the other becomes compulsive” (Tolan 2007: 217); therefore, the three women all project their own image onto Zenia, an unknowable foreigner. But while Zenia is a master of mimicry – after all, “even her most superficial disguises were total” (Atwood 1994: 42), it is a mimicry that is fickle and treacherous, as it “prompts anxiety because she refuses to reflect a stable image back to the self” (Tolan 2007: 219). It therefore turns out that among the many borders that Zenia crosses is the one between sameness and difference: she is a second self who allows the protagonists to identify with her, yet she

retains the power to look back and reject the passive role of a reflection. This character consequently provides a way “to challenge Canada on some of its assumptions of racial innocence by examining the way in which the First World self responds to the presence of the other” (Tolan 2007: 200). As it turns out, this response is shown to abound in dualities: the position of Canada is simultaneously that of privilege and oppression, and the identification with the victim is counteracted by xenophobic scapegoating.

As a perpetual outsider, Zenia is the one who does and says all that society deems forbidden and unthinkable. “So much for propriety” (Atwood 1994: 114), thinks Roz as she witnesses her defiant outbursts. These forbidden acts, however, are secretly desired: while the heroines fear and despise her, they must also admit that they want “[t]o cheer Zenia on, even to encourage her [...]. To participate in her daring, her contempt for almost everything, her rapacity and lawlessness” (Atwood 1994: 218). This is made even more explicit in “I Dream of Zenia with the Bright Red Teeth,” where Charis concludes that “[m]aybe Zenia was [...] acting out stuff that they didn’t have the strength to act out by themselves” (Atwood 2015: 169). Nevertheless, once she enacts these hidden fantasies, Zenia becomes the target of collective rage: as the women’s secret admiration gives way to envy and hatred, Zenia is no longer seen as a secret ally, but as a usurper. She is also the target of anger that ought to have been directed at the men who betrayed and abandoned the protagonists, but whom all three infantilize and absolve of guilt. “You used him,” shouts Roz at Zenia after Mitch’s suicide, “You’re responsible for his death;” “West has been hypnotized,” Tony claims, “it’s Zenia talking, from the inside of his head;” Charis is convinced that Zenia “sold Billy,” took him away and mercilessly killed her chickens, even though it turns out that Billy did all these things himself – and with gusto, if we are to believe Zenia’s side of the story (Atwood 1994: 527, 217, 342).

Consequently, as Potts suggests, Zenia becomes a scapegoat onto which the community projects its collective conflicts and hidden impulses. Relying on René Girard’s *Violence and the Sacred*, which examines sacrificial rites in different societies, this author explains that the group chooses to target the outsider when it needs to release pent-up anger that might otherwise destroy the community from within, as the death of an outcast with no links to the community will not lead to further escalation of violence (Potts 1999: 286–288). The protagonists, however, remain unaware that they have turned Zenia into a scapegoat: “Because the three friends have so

thoroughly accepted their victim status as women and as Canadians, they fail to see themselves as potential victimizers” (Potts 1999: 292).

As, according to Atwood, it might often happen in Canada, in focusing on their own powerlessness and victimization the protagonists disregard the injury they inflict on others. Thus, while the three women occasionally seem to glimpse that there is something, as Charis suggests, that they should “ask [...] forgiveness” for in regard to their relationship with Zenia (Atwood 1994: 533), this realization is never allowed to come entirely to the surface. In her role of the community’s scapegoat, Zenia is therefore a figure who calls into question the Canadian readiness to hold themselves accountable for their treatment of otherness and difference.

Perhaps, however, Zenia must become a scapegoat because she refuses to passively accept the only other option that may be offered to her as an outsider – that of a victim. Instead, she consciously appropriates the mask of a victim and masterfully manipulates it in yet another act of mimicry. As Charis, Roz and Tony’s childhoods are marked by abuse, neglect, powerlessness or humiliation, they are accustomed to the position of the victim and therefore quick to identify with Zenia’s concocted histories of suffering and oppression, befriending her and extending their compassion and hospitality. Upon encountering Zenia, each of the three women looks back on her past and reconstructs the memories of their own trauma: Tony’s relationship with her disengaged mother who ends up abandoning her, and her father’s suicide, Charis’s physical abuse at the hands of her mother, followed by horrifying sexual abuse when she is adopted by her uncle, and Roz’s status of a “displaced person” torn between two communities, her mother’s Irish Catholic and her father’s Jewish one. But as Bouson (1995: 157) observes, “[i]f the psychoanalytic paradigm is put to serious use in *The Robber Bride*’s reconstruction of the histories of Roz, Tony, and Charis, it is openly parodied in Zenia’s sensational stories about her childhood and adult life,” stories that she uses to justify and explain away her destructive behavior.

However, what seems to be parodied in Zenia’s stories is not only the discourse of psychoanalysis, but also the status of victim narratives in Canadian literature. Bearing in mind the prominence of victims in Canadian storytelling, it should come as no surprise that Charis, Roz and Tony identify with her as yet another victim; in Canada, with its “superabundance of victims,” Zenia and her outrageous stories of suffering and hardship are perhaps more at home than they would be elsewhere in the world. Where

Zenia unexpectedly switches the plot on the protagonists, however, is in revealing that she has actively constructed this role and turned it to her own advantage, instead of having it imposed upon her. If in the context of seduction the “Zenias of this world have studied the situation,” and instead of letting themselves “be moulded into male fantasies, they’ve done it themselves” (Atwood 1994: 471–472), it appears that Zenia has done the same with victim roles in a Canadian setting.

The fact that Zenia’s victimhood is only a mask therefore implies that she has the power to take it off, but once she does that, she is transformed into a monstrous force that is all otherness, a pure manifestation of repressed and unacknowledged impulses. That is the face of Zenia, both feared and scapegoated, that is eventually expelled from the text as the heroines are granted their happy ending. While the three women do not succumb to their murderous impulses in regard to Zenia, it is implied that they are somehow responsible for her death – an inexplicable accident, murder or suicide, which suddenly grants them their greatest wish: to be rid of their wicked rival, their own rejected mirror image.

Does such an ending suggest the three friends’ ultimate inability to deal with otherness, both within and without, and an unwillingness to acknowledge their own complicity in its destruction? Does this outcome imply that Canada is equally incapable of accepting those who are seen as outsiders, and that the issues they raise are therefore made to conveniently disappear as if by magic? Having said goodbye to Zenia, the three women gather to tell stories of their battles with her: “That’s what they will do, increasingly in their lives: tell stories. Tonight their stories will be about Zenia” (Atwood 1994: 564). We may, this resolution seems to suggest, attempt to banish our repressed ghosts, but their stories continue to haunt us and demand to be reckoned with. If the protagonists were unable to confront Zenia directly, what remains to be seen is whether they can confront her through storytelling. The stories of Zenia, it is implied, will have to be stories of hybridity and constant reinventions, of otherness hidden behind the ostensible unity of personal and national identities – just like many other stories that contemporary Canada aims to articulate.

5. Such Things Don’t Happen Here: Manipulating the Canadian Sense of Inferiority

Demonstrating the split position of Canadians as both colonizers and colonized, in addition to underscoring the complexities of their stance towards otherness, the protagonists' reaction to Zenia also reveals a sense of inferiority that Atwood identifies as part of colonial mentality. As Potts (1999: 290) points out, Zenia deceives all three women by "playing on their sense that there is nothing inherently terrifying, fascinating, or even notable about where they come from." Zenia, after all, is a paradoxical creature: she is not only an exotic and otherized stranger who "with a wave of her hand [...] invokes deserts, date palms, mystic knowledge," but also has European roots and is familiar with "a higher, a deeper culture" of Europe, as well as "the States, where the big folks play" (Atwood 1994: 215). Manipulative and beguiling, she uses this knowledge to captivate the three friends, play on their insecurities and catch them by surprise.

In Tony's case, the sense of inferiority that Zenia takes advantage of stems from her relationship with her cold and uncaring mother, who unwillingly gave up her life in England to move to Canada. She shows nothing but contempt for her new home and "this narrow-minded provincial city, in this too-large, too-small, too-cold, too-hot country that she hates with a strange, entrapped, and baffled fury. *Don't talk like that!* she hisses at Tony. She means the accent" (Atwood 1994: 171). Tony's deeply ingrained feeling that her homeland is a second-rate place makes her susceptible to the charms of Zenia, whose life story abounds in anecdotes that take place in Europe, that continent of tumultuous history and momentous battles that Tony is fascinated by; as a Canadian, Tony believes that "real" life can only be found elsewhere. She is therefore easily taken in by Zenia's dazzling adventures, which make her own story seem "minor, grey, suburban; a sedate parochial anecdote; a footnote. Whereas Zenia's life sparkles – no, it glares, in the lurid although uncertain light cast by large and portentous world events" (Atwood 1994: 196–197).

Zenia's next victim, Charis, believes that Canada is a peaceful, mundane place where nothing extraordinary could happen and no monsters could be lurking from the shadows. Her understanding of her homeland is marked, as Potts (1999: 290) suggests, by "a false sense of security that blinds her to encroaching doom." "Things like that might happen in the United States," she muses while considering Billy's potential arrest, but "not in this country, familiar to her and drab, undramatic and flat." On the other hand, she perceives the States, where Billy is from, as "[s]trange, and more dangerous [...] – and maybe because of that, superior. The things that

happen there are said to matter in the world. Unlike the things that happen here” (Atwood 1994: 248–249). Charis’s perception of Canada as a safe, lackluster and unmagical place appears to make her oblivious to Zenia’s uncanny doings and fantastic abductions that are taking place right before her eyes.

Finally, Roz, whose ancestry and social position perhaps best illustrate the dual Canadian position of simultaneous oppression and privilege, feels inferior to “waspish” Mitch, who “had roots on his roots,” due to her immigrant background:

Mitch has always been able to make her feel as if she were just off the boat [...]. Which boat? There are many boats in her ancestral past, as far as she can tell. Everyone she’s descended from got kicked out of somewhere else, for being too poor or too politically uncouth or for having the wrong profile or accent or hair colour. (Atwood 1994: 364)

As it turns out, Zenia deceives Roz by offering her an escape from this feeling of inferiority with a fabricated story that promises to untangle her roots and justify the actions of her “cunning father, her father the fixer, her father the crook” (Atwood 1994: 426), granting her a backstory she can be proud of. While playing on those insecurities and at the same time impressing Roz with her stories of “the wide world, wider than Toronto; the deep world, deeper than the small pond where Roz is such a large and sheltered frog” (Atwood 1994: 438), Zenia convinces her to let her guard down and then mercilessly abuses her trust.

Manipulating the three friends’ view of their homeland as an inferior place where no monsters can reside, where one must always seek excitement and validation in someone else’s stories, it seems that the undead Zenia, ironically, confirms Earle Birney’s famous thoughts on the lack of ghosts that haunts Canada. The protagonists are continually haunted by Zenia’s presence in part because they wrongly believe that they live in a place where no such monsters could reside. What makes the irony even greater is the fact that Zenia is – alongside many other things she embodies – also an incarnation of the obsessive preoccupations that haunt precisely that place, outwardly so drab and seemingly devoid of magic. In *The Robber Bride*, Atwood therefore provides a striking response to the entrenched belief that Canada is “a dull place, devoid of romantic interest

and rhetorical excesses, with not enough blood spilled on the soil to make it fertile, and above all, ghostless” (Atwood, as cited in Potts 1999: 283).

If, as Atwood suggests in *Survival*, Canadians continue to look at “here” as nothing but an inferior version of what happens “there,” then they “render invisible” what actually exists on their soil and end up destined to “look at a thing without really seeing it, or look at it and mistake it for something else” (Atwood 2012: 12). While advocating for the recognition of Canadian literature, in *The Robber Bride* she also seems to illustrate what happens when Canadians believe that they have no stories of their own to tell, or that they are nothing but footnotes. Much to their detriment, they allow themselves to be dazzled and seduced by someone else’s stories, obediently playing the roles they are assigned. Failing to recognize where they are, they risk getting lost in the snares of diabolical Robber Brides that lurk in dark forests. Ghosts and monsters, the story of Zenia therefore seems to affirm, may very well be found in Canada, and if they are ever to be defeated, what needs to be exorcised first is the belief in the lack of ghosts – the haunting fixation on one’s own inferiority and illegitimacy.

6. Conclusion: A Haunting Found, a Map Redrawn

“Boringness, in anglophone Canadian literature and sometimes even in its life, is often a disguise concealing dark doings in the cellar,” writes Margaret Atwood (1991: 54). In creating the character of Zenia – wild, excessive and nightmarish, but certainly never boring – Atwood seems to have shed light on those dark cellars, revealing what creatures that haunt Canada might be made of. While for Tony, Charis and Roz Zenia might be their “own monster” (Atwood 1994: 113) as she plays on their personal secrets, repressed desires and hidden anxieties, she is also a monster who embodies the unresolved tensions and persistent challenges that keep resurfacing in Canadian literature and demand to be addressed. A relentless force of nature that invades the protagonists’ homes, an oppressed other who refuses to be silenced, a dazzling messenger from places both dangerous and exhilarating, a scapegoat and a victim who uses victimhood to her own advantage, Atwood’s Zenia not only affirms the presence of ghosts in Canada, but also weaves distinctly Canadian elements into a familiar literary tapestry of “old world” antagonists – Gothic monsters, *Doppelgängers*, and phantoms.

If Canadian literature, as Sugars (2014) suggests, actively seeks its ghosts and hauntings so as to achieve substantiation, it seems that the war with the gothic figure of Zenia has certainly helped it achieve this goal. As the novel draws to a close, in one of its final scenes we see Tony spread out a map of Toronto over her map of thirteenth-century Europe. No longer seen as dull, insignificant and inferior, the city where she fought her battles with Zenia finally seems to be placed on the same level as the portentous battlefields of the old world. Living on in the minds and memories of the three women whose lives and homes she used to rob and raid, the ravishing and ravaging Zenia also lives on as a remarkable female monster that puts Canadian literary preoccupations on a larger literary map.

References

- Atwood, M. (1991). *Strange Things: The Malevolent North in Canadian Literature (Clarendon Lectures in English Literature, 1991)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Atwood, M. (1994). *The Robber Bride*. London: Virago Press.
- Atwood, M. (2012). *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*. Toronto: House of Anansi Press.
- Atwood, M. (2015). *Stone Mattress*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Bouson, J. B. (1995). Slipping sideways into the dreams of women: The female dream work of power feminism in Margaret Atwood's *The Robber Bride*. *Lit: Literature Interpretation Theory*, 6(3–4), 149–166.
- Dorfman, E. (2020). *Double Trouble: The Doppelgänger from Romanticism to Postmodernism*. New York: Routledge.
- Duncan, I. J. (1999). The Wendigo Myth in *The Robber Bride*. *British Journal of Canadian Studies*, XIV(1), 73–84.
- Frye, N. (2003). *Northrop Frye on Canada. Volume 12* (J. O'Grady and D. Staines, eds.). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Hammill, F. (2007). *Canadian Literature*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Howells, C. A. (1996). *Margaret Atwood*. New York: Macmillan Education.
- Howells, C. A. (2003). *The Robber Bride; or, Who Is a True Canadian?*. In: S. Wilson (ed.), *Margaret Atwood's Textual Assassinations: Recent Poetry and Fiction*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 88–101.

- Hutcheon, L. (1988). *The Canadian Postmodern: A Study of Contemporary English-Canadian Fiction*. Toronto, New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hutcheon, L. (1989). 'Circling the Downspout of Empire': Post-Colonialism and Postmodernism. *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, 20(4), 149–75.
- Keppler, C. (1972). *The Literature of the Second Self*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- McWilliams, E. (2016). *Margaret Atwood and the Female Bildungsroman*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Moore, L. (1993, Oct 31). Every Wife's Nightmare. *The New York Times*. (28 Aug 2023) <<https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/books/98/09/20/specials/moore-atwood.html?scp=39&sq=Cat%2527s%2520Eye&st=cse>>
- Perrakis, P. S. (1997). Atwood's "The Robber Bride": The Vampire as Intersubjective Catalyst. *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal*, 30(3), 151–168.
- Potts, D. L. (1999). "The Old Maps Are Dissolving": Intertextuality and Identity in Atwood's *The Robber Bride*. *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 18(2), 281–298.
- Rao, E. (2006). Home and Nation in Margaret Atwood's Later Fiction. In: C. A. Howells (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Margaret Atwood*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 100–113.
- Rosenfield, C. (1963). The Conscious and Unconscious Use of the Double. *Daedalus*, 92, 326–344.
- Slethaug, G. E. (1993). *The Play of the Double in Postmodern American Fiction*. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Staels, H. (2010). Parodic Border Crossings in *The Robber Bride*. In: J. B. Bouson (ed.), *Margaret Atwood: The Robber Bride, The Blind Assassin, Oryx and Crake*. London: Continuum, 36–49.
- Staines, D. (2006). Margaret Atwood in her Canadian context. In: C. A. Howells (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Margaret Atwood*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 12–27.
- Sugars, C. (2014). *Canadian Gothic: Literature, History and the Spectre of Self-Invention*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press.
- Terkel, S. (1993, Dec 7). *Radio interview with Margaret Atwood on The Robber Bride*. Broadcast WFMT-FM, Chicago. (28 Aug 2023) <<https://>>

studsterkel.wfmt.com/programs/discussing-margaret-atwoods-book-robber-bride>

Tolan, F. (2007). *Margaret Atwood: Feminism and Fiction*. Amsterdam–New York: Rodopi.

Wyatt, J. (1998). I Want to Be You: Envy, the Lacanian Double, and Feminist Community in Margaret Atwood's *The Robber Bride*. *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 17(1), 37–64.

Received: 13 September 2023

Accepted for publication: 12 October 2023

Bojana Vujin*

University of Novi Sad
Faculty of Philosophy
Serbia

IN FAERY LANDS FORLORN: THE FANTASTIC NARRATIVE POETRY OF QUEEN'S EARLY LYRICS

Abstract

Popular music lyrics and mainstream poetry share many similarities. They can both be analysed as poetry, using traditional theoretical tools of such interpretation. The paper focuses on early narrative songs by the band Queen, which all feature fantastic characters and seem to share the same setting. They can be interpreted as parts of the same story that takes place in Freddie Mercury's imaginary land of Rhye. This paper argues that the songs in question can be understood and analysed as narrative poetry, with the focus on narrative elements such as story, storytelling, narrative formulae, dynamic motion, or narrative intensity (Kenner). Furthermore, importance will be placed on the songs' intertextual elements, since they help place the songs within the larger literary canon and reinforce their status as poetry. Since music and lyrics create meaning together, special attention will, whenever necessary, also be given to the musical element of the songs.

Key words: fantasy, lyrics, narrative poetry, popular music, Queen, rock poetry

* bojana.vujin@ff.uns.ac.rs

1. Introduction: Reading Rock Poetry

Poetry reading is a liminal action, suspended between reason, knowledge, and emotion. Thorough explorations of poetry usually attempt to negotiate the shaky ground between the murky world of authors' intentions and the slightly less murky, though no less subjective, reflections of readers' inner and outer worlds, all the while trying to juggle theoretical concepts including, but not limited to, poetic genre, tone, style, language and imagery, as well as allusions to other literary works and any intertextual relations that might develop from there. Sometimes, it can be a sound strategy to try and forget about these notions, and use a more emotional method. Other times, it might be best to at least start with theory, and allow associations to form from there. In this paper, I will follow the latter approach, because the subject of my exploration is seemingly different from traditional written poetry, and a familiar starting point will serve as a grounding force in this enterprise.

It may seem redundant to vindicate the right of rock lyrics to be called poetry in the 21st century, when many studies have been written on the subject of popular music (see e.g. Frith, Straw and Street 2001, Eckstein 2010, or Shuker 2001); universities across the globe offer programmes in reading popular music, and even traditionalists have grudgingly recognised the legitimacy of lyrics as a poetic form, as evidenced by Bob Dylan's Nobel Prize. However, in spite of these advances in popular music studies, lyrics are still frequently ignored as a poetic form (Dylan is an exception, rather than a rule), and even when their poetic worth is acknowledged, there is still a gap between their acknowledgement as poetry in academia and their actual poetic analyses. The abovementioned studies mostly agree that the textual element of popular songs is a crucial part of the form, and some even call lyrics "the single most consistent element of pop songs" (Moore 2003: 42); nevertheless, they gloss over the actual literary analysis, as if the lyrics' acknowledgment as poetry is enough for them to be categorised as such, and focus instead mostly on sociological or cultural angle of text analysis. Some of these theorists, like Eckstein, even categorically state that "lyrics are not poetry" (2010: 23), while others, like Moore, say that they are only "*like* poetry" (2003: 42; emphasis original). Contrary to this, my view is that lyrics can absolutely be called poetry and analysed as such, which will be proven in the course of this article. Ironically, early research into popular music was dominated by textual analysis, "largely because

such an approach was grounded in a familiar research methodology” (Shuker 2001: 141), but even such analyses usually treated lyrics in too simple a matter, with the emphasis placed more on their sociological and cultural context, and less on their literary and poetic value. The result was that, even though lyrics have always been recognised as an important poetic element of popular songs, they have “persistently fallen through the nets of academic fishing” (Eckstein 2010: 14). Even the authors like Shuker (2001), who examine songs through textual analysis, mostly focus on the meaning and cultural context of lyrics, and do not pay much attention to their quintessentially poetic elements, such as rhyme scheme, figures of speech, or intertextual allusions. In light of that, the best way to build upon these studies and show that popular music lyrics are indeed poetry is to treat them as such – in other words, to analyse them as written poetry through a hermeneutic approach.¹

To this end, similarities between poetry and lyrics need to be addressed. Firstly, poetry has always been a communal event, rather than solitary pursuit, as the long established orphic tradition indicates. The ivory tower version of poetry, with a scholar-poet painstakingly depositing his (and it is almost always *his*, as this version of the poet is usually male, privileged in terms of class, race, occupation, and age) impressively vast knowledge into meticulous verses may be an admirable academic endeavour, but hardly ever encourages that part of poetic reading that appeals to the emotional. However, even the cerebral High Modernists like T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound recognized the undeniable connection between poetry and music, as can be seen in the *Four Quartets* and *The Cantos*, respectively. Poets whose influence is felt more strongly in contemporary poetry include precisely those authors who readily acknowledged the connection, like William Carlos Williams or Walt Whitman. That brings us to the second point: the concept of poetry is inseparable from the concept of music. This is evidenced in the works of scops, troubadours, Romantic balladeers, and all other poets who modelled themselves on the bardic tradition – from Whitman, to the “Chicago school” of poetry, to Allen Ginsberg and his Beats in the fifties, and even beyond, to today’s versions of performative lyricism, like slam. Poetry has always been linked to the idea of performance (see Oliver 1989; Gräbner and Casas 2011).

It is, therefore, inevitable to think of textual content set to music as poetry. It might be a specific kind of poetry, granted, but it is poetry nonetheless. It might have its own particular rules, and sometimes (even

often), the lyrical element is secondary to the musical one, but traditional, written poetry has its idiosyncrasies too – sometimes, typography is part of the meaning, like in the works of e. e. cummings, sometimes, there is a musical element there as well, like with Anne Carson’s “tangoes” in *The Beauty of the Husband* (2001), and many a time, sound is more important than meaning, like in Hart Crane’s “Voyages” (1926) or Dr. Seuss’s children’s verses. The best way of approaching the analysis of popular music lyrics, then, is to use the exact same tools one would use when analysing mainstream poetry – to think of the tone, atmosphere, figures of speech, thematic elements, while paying special attention to the sound of the verses; both the sound of the words themselves, as in traditional poetry, and the sound of the melody, which contributes to the overall effect. This theoretical approach is closely linked with literary hermeneutics, whose starting point is that texts have meanings, and that those meanings are established not only by the authors, but by the readers and interpreters as well. Hermeneutics, which has “gain[ed] new energy from the ‘against theory’ movement” (Szondi 1995: xi), can thus be seen as the art of interpretation which places the text itself in the centre of analysis, and is both “practical and genre-specific” (Szondi 1995: xv). This is the approach I will use in my analysis of Queen’s early fantasy lyrics. The praxis of this hermeneutic reading will be traditional literary analysis through close reading, while the genre explored will be that of narrative poetry.

Why Queen? Usually, poetic analyses of popular lyrics centre on the authors who style themselves on the balladeer tradition, like Bob Dylan or Leonard Cohen (cf. Frith, Straw and Street 2001). In their works, music itself is usually not particularly ambitious in terms of composition; production, even when elaborate, is made to sound as simple as possible, and the vocal quality is rather modest; all for the lyrical content to take centre-stage. Queen, on the other hand, are more famous for their grandiose musical compositions, lavish production style that deliberately calls attention to itself, and lead singer Freddie Mercury’s impressive vocal range, while the textual element is a less important part of the whole. These two types of rock music are merely different versions of what theorist Keir Keightley calls “authenticity”, dubbing the first style “Romantic authenticity”, and the second “Modernist” (see Frith, Straw and Street 2001: 109–142). According to Keightley, Romantic authenticity tends to be found in folk, blues, country, and rock’n’roll styles of popular music, which emphasise “natural” sounds

by hiding musical technology, and which appeal to a sense of community via sincerity, directness, and continuity with natural roots. Modernist authenticity, on the other hand, tends to be found in classical, art music, soul and pop styles, which celebrate technology and experimentation, pride themselves on “shocking” sounds, emphasise their avant-garde elitism, and adopt stances such as irony, sarcasm or obliqueness. “Many rock fans,” Keightley states, “will reject those performers or genres who highlight Modernist authenticity as being somehow ‘artificial’, while other fans might dismiss Romantic rock as being simplistic or compromised by its populism.” (Frith, Straw and Street 2001: 137) However, the two styles are simply different modes of expression, with neither being qualitatively better than the other. Still, most studies of popular lyrics tend to focus on those poet-singers who create in the style of Romantic authenticity; therefore, it is more challenging to concentrate on a band like Queen whose sensibility is undoubtedly Modernist, and to analyse precisely those texts which are usually seen as somehow less prominent than the musical element in the overall compositions.

In this article, I will focus on a particular set of Queen’s early songs², which tell a story of a fantasy land inhabited by fairies, kings, queens, and ogres. I will illustrate how this mythical world functions as poetry, in particular, narrative poetry, and establish how the individual songs might function as a consistent narrative whole. The performative elements discussed will therefore be strictly narratively important – while an analysis into Queen’s musical performance and Mercury’s androgynous image would be an undoubtedly relevant, even central, part of a sociological study of the band, it would be completely superfluous here, as my goal is to show that Queen’s early fantasy lyrics can be seen as narrative poetry, and not to delve into the performance studies analysis of glam rock and its queer undertones as politics of identity, or into a study of theatricality and sexuality.³ For the same reason, I will not be widening the scope of analysis into the songs created much later in Queen’s career – while there may be some similarities between their early songs and some of their later works,⁴

⁴ For example, the Mercury-penned poem from the *Innuendo* (1991) album, “I’m Going Slightly Mad” may seem to share some elements with the band’s early lyrics, but those comparisons are tentative and present only when the analysis is widened to include visual media (i.e. the music video for the song in question), while ignoring poetic and textual elements, as can be evidenced by Lesley-Ann Jones’ view of Mercury’s appearance in the video as a “crazed lord Byron” (Jones 1998: 411) – this comparison is entirely superficial, as nothing in the song (music, lyrics, or video) suggests any connection to

those similarities do not extend to the actual subject-matter of the lyrics, and thus there is no reason to extend the analysis to include them.

2. Narrative Poetry and Popular Music

Narrative poetry is not a genre usually associated with popular music. The majority of popular music lyrics could be classified as love poetry, or, as Paul McCartney called them in his famous eponymous song, “silly love songs”. This might be a reflection of the old adage that one should write about familiar things, and, as love is familiar to everyone, it is no wonder that it is the most palpable inspiration behind so many popular songs. It is consequently the easiest way for the poet-singer to establish common ground with the audience. Love poetry, whether taking the form of poems or songs, is the most popular poetic genre, as anyone who has ever read poetry or listened to popular music can confirm. It is not, however, the only kind of poetry that spills over into the rock text – there are many other genres that lyricists often explore, though they form a significantly smaller percentage of popular music. These other genres include, among others, reflexive poetry, socially engaged poetry, descriptive poetry, and narrative poetry.

Narrative poetry could be defined as storytelling in verse which centres upon an action – a story or an event whose main feature is dynamic motion; or in other words, poetry which can clearly show how an idea moves through the poem. Hugh Kenner (1966: 124) says that “nothing holds the attention like a story, as Homer’s listeners knew, and nothing is harder than to tell one without waste motion.” History of narrative poetry is linked to oral tradition, which may in turn link it to popular lyrics: even though music records are, of course, available to buy, most listeners are casual, because they only hear certain songs on the radio, see them on the television or the Internet, particularly in today’s world of Spotify and YouTube, and thus never possess a copy of an album; not to mention that physical records have all but disappeared, barring the re-emergence of

the poetic elements of Romanticism. It could instead be argued that “I’m Going Slightly Mad” has elements of pseudo-Aestheticist comedy of manners, as the text is inspired by Noel Coward. This goes to show that visual elements do not play a big role in the construction of the *poetic* meaning of songs, and, as such, will not be given space in this article, since they are largely irrelevant to its topic.

vinyl among collectors. We could, therefore, conclude that popular lyrics reach their audiences in a way similar to the spread of traditional oral poetry. Still, there is some difference there, not least the fact that, even though popular lyrics are written specifically to be performed, they still do not spring into life at the moment of that performance,⁵ but are instead thought out beforehand, like traditional written poetry, and only later is the element of performance added; therefore, the only true similarity between traditional oral poetry and popular songs is in the way they reach their audiences. Furthermore, traditionally speaking, narrative poetry includes both the epic and its many subgenres (heroic, religious, comic, etc.), and the shorter epic forms. There are also some hybrid forms, like the ballad, which is both lyric and epic, or literary poetic genres like verse novels or Romanticist “conversation poems”. What all of these forms have in common is the presence of a story, characters, formulaic expressions, fixed composition, and dynamic action. This shows that rock songs very rarely belong to true narrative poetry, given that, taking into account the traditional division into the three basic literary genres, rock songs could be said to have certain elements of the epic (e.g. a plot), as well as the dramatic form (since they are both written down *and* performed), but they are still mostly classified as belonging to the lyric form – according to their style, content and thematic approach. Still, these divisions do not need to be taken so rigidly – it can thus be said that there are popular songs whose main goal is not to express reflexions or emotions, but to tell a story, retell an event, or describe an imaginary character. Such songs, strictly speaking, most often contain only *some* features of narrative poetry (by using some of its formulae or simply alluding to the nature of narrative). Nevertheless, I will treat them as narrative poetry, because they have what Kenner (1966: 126) calls “narrative intensity”, given that the reader/listener is “able to imagine more than the writer can describe”, and because they have “the

⁵ Even though it seems that the traditional oral poems are handed down generation to generation, with the bards knowing them completely by heart, they are actually always composed at the moment of performance, based on a given formula: the bard is familiar with the basic story and plot, as well as with the usual poetic formulae, such as fixed stylistic features, models of versification, or common expressions and phrases. This is known as the Oral-Formulaic Theory, and was developed in the 1920s by the folklorists Parry and Lord, who conducted extensive studies of Serbian epic poetry, which was, at the time, one of the few surviving pseudo-Homeric styles of composition that could be observed, recorded and studied ethnographically (see Preminger and Brogan 1993).

combination, found in the best ballads, of high emotional potential and economical narrative” (Kenner 1966: 131).

When it comes to Queen, narrative poems are not as numerous in their oeuvre as the ones dealing with love. Still, at the very beginning of their career (see footnote 2), they created a number of narrative songs which can be said to inhabit an entire little fairy-tale-like world. It is this world that will be explored in the remainder of the paper.

3. Once Upon a Time, in the Land of Rhye

Queen’s narrative phase starts at the very beginning, with their debut album *Queen* (1973), reaches its peak with the second album, *Queen II* (1974), and concludes with the third album, *Sheer Heart Attack* (1974). Even though these albums contain some other narrative poems, such as “Killer Queen”, the songs that immediately draw the listener’s attention are an entire group of compositions, mostly Mercury’s, which seem to share a setting, an imaginary fantasy world which could be called “Rhye” – the name is taken from Queen’s first top-ten hit, “Seven Seas of Rhye”.

The first song that speaks of this world is called “My Fairy King” – it was penned by Mercury and can be found on the album *Queen*. Its opening lines set the scene:

In the land where horses born with eagle wings
And honey bees have lost their stings
They’re singing forever
Lions den with fallow deer
And rivers made from wines so clear
Flow on and on forever
Dragons fly like sparrows through the air
And baby lambs where Samson dares
To go on on on on on⁶

⁶ All lyrics are taken from the official album jackets, i.e. CD booklets (see References for detail). For reasons of space and clarity (as the quotes are numerous), I will not be including referential identifications with each quote; instead, the reader can presume that they all came from the jackets of the exact album editions included in the reference list at the end of the paper. As each song is introduced in the analysis, the album it belongs to is also mentioned, which leaves no room for error with regard to the location of the lyrics.

Several interesting textual allusions can be noticed here, from the Bible (Samson), to fairy tales (“rivers made from wines”). However, the most important intertextual element is Robert Browning’s famous poem “The Pied Piper of Hamelin”, based on the eponymous legend and published as part of his collection *Dramatic Lyrics* (1842). In the poem, the town of Hamelin is plagued by rats, and its rulers are unable to deal with the threat, until a wandering piper offers his services, for a price. He uses his music to lure the rats into a river, but, when he requests his payment, the corrupt town authorities renege on the deal. The piper then enacts his revenge: he starts playing his music again, this time enchanting the town’s children, luring them to a portal through which they disappear, never to be seen again. Only one boy, whose disability prevented him from arriving to the portal in time, remains in the town, forever telling stories of the wondrous land the Piper’s music described. Mercury’s lyrics quote this description from the poem (in Browning 1961: 147):

And their dogs outran our fallow deer,
And honey-bees have lost their stings,
And horses were born with eagles’ wings

Even this quote is enough to create the image of the realm “My Fairy King” talks about: the boy from “The Pied Piper of Hamelin” spends the rest of his life longing for the wonderland the Piper promised him. The first few verses of Mercury’s song describe the atmosphere of a fairy land, and then they switch to describing the titular Fairy King, in two voices, as if only one was not enough to portray his power (“he rules the air and turns the tides, he guides the winds”), his insightfulness (“My Fairy King can see things that are not there for you and me”), and righteousness (“My Fairy King can do right and nothing wrong”). This utopia cannot last, but not because of inner turmoil – danger instead comes from the outside, and some “men [come] to savage in the night, to run like thieves and to kill like knives, to take away the power from the magic hand, to bring about the ruin to the promised land.” Frequent musical changes in the song contribute to its dynamic motion, and indicate different events in the story: thus, the description of the land is the lightest part of the song, sung in falsetto, whereas the second part, the one that describes the marauders, is more lively, and the vocal is in the regular register. Here, Mercury sings of the destruction of the fairy land (“they turn milk to sour”), of the people’s suffering (“fire burnin’ in hell with the cry of screaming pain”), of praying

in vain (“son of heaven set me free and let me go”), of pleas for help (“seasons fly, no helping hand”), and the poverty that takes over the kingdom (“teeth don’t shine like pearls for poor man’s eyes”). The last stanza, which is again slow and sung in falsetto, speaks of the Fairy King’s ruination:

Someone **someone** just **drained** the **colour** from **my** wings
Broken **my** fairy circle ring
And **shamed** the king in all his pride
Changed the winds and **wronged** the tides
Mother Mercury, look what they’ve **done** to **me**
I **cannot** run, I **cannot** hide

As the above lyrics show, the poem is quite mellifluous – there is a lot of rhyme (indicated via different types of underlining) and alliteration (the sounds /d/, /k/ and /m/, shown in bold), while the verbs have been carefully chosen to express the suffering of the king and his people (“drained”, “broken”, “shamed”, “wronged”). Another interesting point is that the song suddenly switches from third to first person narration, which, together with the seeming blurring of the line between the speaker and the author (“mother Mercury”), might mean that Mercury (who legally changed his name from Farrokh Bulsara to Freddie Mercury after he wrote this song) uses the metaphor of the destruction of the Fairy King to speak about some traumatic personal experience (“look what they’ve done to me”). The song “My Fairy King” is an effective introduction into Mercury’s fantasy world, with many elements of narrative poetry (characters, story, elements of the fantastic, narrative formulae), and with an intertextual connection to another, canonical narrative poem. In this way, links are established both between Mercury’s lyrics and traditional poetry, and between rock music and the narrative poetry genre.

The abovementioned fantasy world takes centre-stage on the band’s second album, *Queen II*, from its very concept (it did not have sides A and B, but a white side, which “belonged to” guitarist Brian May, and a black side, which “belonged to” Freddie Mercury), to the songs that explore it in great detail. The author of the majority of the songs is, again, Mercury, though May’s “White Queen (As It Began)” could also fit the overall atmosphere, particularly because it serves as a contrast to Mercury’s “The March of the Black Queen” and contributes to the overarching theme of the album, which is the fight between good and evil, the contrast between light and

dark. This song, which also contains elements of love poetry, starts with a vague description of the White Queen (“so sad her eyes, smiling dark eyes”), and then it moves onto narration:

On such a breathless night as this
Upon my brow the lightest kiss
I walked alone
And all around the air did sway
My lady soon will stir this way
In sorrow known
The White Queen walks and the night grows pale
Stars of lovingness in her hair
Needing – unheard
Pleading – one word
So sad my eyes
She cannot see

Almost as if he is telling ghost stories around the fire, the speaker tells his audience that what he is describing happened on a night “just like this one”. This sets the atmosphere, inviting the listeners to participate in an almost Gothic story. The queen is never directly described, but her quiet presence, and the colour white, provide the tale with a note of mystery, even horror (“the White Queen walks and the night grows pale”), evoking Wilkie Collins’ *The Woman in White* (1859). The speaker calls her “the mother of the willow green”, which is a loaded image, since the willow is often used as a symbol of death and mourning, and can in particular be linked with forlorn lovers, especially maidens who die without love or children, as evidenced in Shakespeare, since Ophelia’s drowning in *Hamlet* begins with a willow, and Desdemona sings a song about a willow before she is murdered by her husband in *Othello* (see Ferber 1999: 233–234). The symbolism of the mourning maiden can also indicate Virgin Mary, and the beginning of the song, where the speaker calls the White Queen “my lady”, as well as its ending, where he addresses her as a divine being (“my goddess hear my darkest fear, I speak too late, it’s for evermore that I wait”) seem to support this interpretation. The power of the song is in its vagueness – we do not find out who the White Queen is, what the speaker’s darkest fear is, or what it is that he will spend eternity waiting for; we do not even know whose beginning and end the poem is about (“so sad it ends

as it began”). The melody is soft and gentle, and the narrative dynamic motion of the song is achieved by varying line lengths and playful rhyme.

Mercury’s song “The March of the Black Queen”, which, according to him, actually gave rise to the whole idea “of having white and black sides – reflecting white and black moods” (Brooks and Lupton 2008: 68) is contrasted to May’s “White Queen” – in terms of imagery, lyrics, and music. With regard to melody, the song is extremely complicated, polyrhythmic, and the vocals (both the lead vocals and the overdubbed choral accompaniment) cover a large range and include lots of different registers, which clearly indicates that this song is a musical precursor to the inimitable “Bohemian Rhapsody”, recorded shortly thereafter for the band’s fourth album, *A Night at the Opera* (1975). When it comes to the lyrical content of the “Black Queen”, it is more associative than truly narrative, though the central idea of the Black Queen as an evil, threatening figure (“I’m lord of all darkness, I’m Queen of the night”) is quite easy to discern. Hell and heaven feature in the song, though neither is a particularly comforting option (“you’ve never seen nothing like it, no, never in your life, like going up to heaven and then coming back alive” vs. “dance with the devil in beat with the band, to hell with all you, hand-in-hand”). Still, the images are simply piled up, with no identifiable connection, and the ominousness of the Black Queen is spoiled by some comical lines (“fi-fo the Black Queen tattoos all her pies, she boils and she bakes and she never dots her i’s”). Compared with May’s White Queen, Mercury’s Black Queen seems ridiculous and over-the-top; nevertheless, it is possible that his inspiration in creating the character was the Red Queen from Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* (1865), which might explain her cartoonish portrayal. As a caricature, she fits in well with other extravagantly hyperbolic characters from the land of Rhye, like the ogres from “Ogre Battle” or the nameless speaker from “Seven Seas of Rhye”.

May’s other contribution to the fantasy theme on *Queen II* can be found in the song “Some Day One Day”, where he is also the lead vocalist. The idea that what the audience is privy to might be a fairy tale can be found in the following lines:

Funny how pages turn
And hold us in between
A misty castle waits for you
And you shall be a queen

The mythical, fairy-tale like atmosphere is achieved formally, through the use of the traditional ballad stanza, and content-wise, through the introduction of the idea that we might be imprisoned inside a book (“pages turn and hold us in between”; note the use of the communal *us*, which again indicates the narrative component of the song, though the storyteller’s identification with his audience), and the imagery of “a misty castle”, and a queen – which is not merely an auto-allusion to the songs about the White Queen and her black counterpart, but also to the name of the album, and the band itself, which intensifies the almost hermetic unity between the author and the text.

Despite frequent “Disneyfication”, fairy tales are not light-hearted stories, at least in their original iteration, when they were told by adults to adults, and served to bind preliterate societies together, as any communal narratives, including early narrative poetry, usually do. As such, the atmosphere of fairy tales is often nightmarish, and that is precisely the case with the song called “Ogre Battle”, a composition by Mercury, also to be found on *Queen II*, whose heavy metal sound depicts the scene of a battle even before any lyrics are heard. This song is the one that most faithfully follows the conventions of narrative poetry, not only due to its theme (i.e. battle), but also because it uses certain narrative formulae – it starts with the phrase “once upon a time”, and ends with the statement that “ogre battle lives for evermore”. We can also see the connection with the song “My Fairy King”, because at the beginning of “Ogre Battle”, the speaker mentions that “the piper is gone and the soup is cold on the table”, which places “Ogre Battle” into the same world that the other songs belong to, in exactly the way narrative poetry usually works: by alluding to certain ideas and events that the audience is already familiar with. An added narrative element can be found in the Russian doll structure: we are listening to a tale within a tale, as the speaker only relates something that he heard second-hand (“now once upon a time an old man told me a fable”), while the notion that the central story is “a fable” only intensifies the tone of oral storytelling. Some phrases from the song resemble legends or folk superstitions (“if the black crow flies to find a new destination, that is the sign”), and the invitation issued to the audience to come and witness the events from the story (“come tonight, come to the ogre sight, come to ogre-battle-fight”) lends directness to the action, and adds to the narrative performativity of the song. One of the central stanzas describes one of the titular ogres:

He gives a great big cry
And he can swallow up the ocean
With a mighty tongue he catches flies
The palm of his hand incredible size
One great big eye
Has a focus in your direction

This description of the ogre owes a lot to myths and legends, and inserting listeners into the story (“one great big eye has a focus in *your* direction”) allows them to be participants in the action. What is peculiar is that the battle is never actually described – after its beginning is announced (“now the battle is on”) and the ogres’ battle positions are related (“the ogre-men are still inside the two-way mirror mountain, gotta keep down out of sight, you can’t see in but they can see out”), we are merely told that they are “running up behind and they’re coming all about”, and the text then gives way before music, which serves to describe the battle itself; fittingly, it is composed in the aggressively fast and heavy thrash metal style and features inarticulate vocalisation. The speaker then tells the listeners that the battle is over, but not for good (“ogre-men are going home, and the great big fight is over, bugle blow the trumpet cry, ogre-battle lives for evermore”), while reminding them that they can witness the battle again (“you can come along, come to ogre battle”). Whether that means that the ogres will never stop fighting, or, more fittingly to the genre of narrative poetry, that the story we are being told will ensure that the battle lasts forever in our minds, is left for the listener to decide.

“The Fairy Feller’s Master Stroke”, another song composed by Mercury for the *Queen II* album, has a slightly different focus. It describes a painting by the Victorian artist Richard Dadd, created in the notorious Bethlem Royal Hospital in London (commonly known as Bedlam), where Dadd was incarcerated after a psychotic break that ended in murder (he stabbed his father to death, apparently following the instructions of the Egyptian god Osiris). The painting is both one of the finest examples of the Victorian fairy art, and nothing at all like it – as Neil Gaiman (2016: 447) points out, Dadd’s fairy paintings before his madness were “quite pretty, and perfectly ordinary: forgettable chocolate-box-cover concoctions of fairy scenes from Shakespeare” that had “[n]othing special or magical about them. Nothing that would make them last. Nothing true.” The painting shows a scene from a mythical fairy land, with innumerable miniature

figures, and the central personage is the titular Fairy Feller, who is trying to cut a chestnut in half with an axe, so as to build a new carriage for Queen Mab. Apart from the Shakespearean characters, like Queen Mab, Oberon and Titania, all the other characters are the products of the artist's tortured imagination – they include a dragonfly trumpeter, a good apothecary man, an arch-magician, a pedagogue, a nymph in yellow, and many others. Dadd worked on the painting for years, so obsessively that the many layers of paint made it noticeably three-dimensional, trying to put his vision on canvas “with an intensity and single-mindedness that is, quite simply, scary” (Gaiman 2016: 447). He also explained his notion (or delusion) in a long, incoherent poem he called “Elimination of a Picture & its Subject – called The Fairy Feller's Master Stroke”. Mercury, who studied art and graphic design, frequently came to the Tate Gallery in order to admire the painting (Blake 2010: 131–132). As a result, he wrote the song in which he tried to explain what he saw in the painting, using Dadd's own text for the characters' names (e.g. “tatterdemalion and a junketer, there's a thief and a dragonfly trumpeter”). The song, thus, transforms visual content into something musical/lyrical, and turns a painting into a narrative. The melody is extremely fast, even frenetic, and it is mostly sung in falsetto, which all creates an atmosphere of urgency and even persecution, letting the listener experience Dadd's disjointed state of mind. Even though, strictly speaking, “The Fairy Feller's Master Stroke” is not part of Mercury's own fantasy songs, it still fits excellently into the mythological world of Rhye (it may have even inspired it) and the artistic concept of *Queen II*. Dadd's painting served as an inspiration to many authors, from Angela Carter to Terry Pratchett, and it is fitting to place Mercury in that group as well, once again proving that the boundaries between the worlds of popular music lyrics and purely literary genres are porous and blurred.

“The Fairy Feller's Master Stroke” shares its Victorian influence with “My Fairy King”. Neither is, however, particularly deeply indebted to it, as the primary focus of the influence is a mostly superficial intertextual interplay between Mercury, Browning and Dadd, and not a deep re-examination of Victorian legacy or an attempt to recontextualise Victorian genres, as is the case with some other musicians, like The Beatles.⁷ This is another illustration of Queen's Modernist authenticity – certain lyrical elements are simply light-hearted allusions or an artistic pose, rather than social examinations of cultural legacy. The listener is invited to partake in

⁷ For more on this, see Vujin 2016.

the recreation of the Victorian aesthetic, without any scrutiny or critique of the past. The Victorian era is thus used merely as a backdrop for an aestheticist fantasy narrative.

Finally, we arrive at the song that introduces the term “Rhye” – “Seven Seas of Rhye”, Mercury’s composition which appeared as a short instrumental on Queen’s debut album. As a longer song, this time accompanied by lyrics, it closes the *Queen II* album and emphasises its mythical theme. The very title indicates a fantastic realm beyond “seven seas”. The song is spoken by an otherworldly being (“I descend upon your earth from the skies”), whose power is limitless (“I’ll defy the laws of nature and come out alive”), and who demands servility from “Lords and Lady preachers”, “peers and privy counsellors” and “shady senators”. If they fail to comply with his demands, he will punish them (“I will destroy any man who dares abuse my trust”). What he asks is for the Land of Rhye to be returned to him (“bring before me what is mine, the seven seas of Rhye”), and he promises those who obey him that he will “take [them] to the seven seas of Rhye”. Much remains unsaid – we do not know who the speaker is, or what (or where) the titular Rhye and its seven seas are; still, this vagueness allows the audience to imagine more than they have been told, which, according to Kenner, is one of the features of narrative poetry. The song ends with a snippet of old music-hall number, “I Do Like to Be Beside the Seaside”, which might be a nod in the audience’s direction not to take the megalomaniacal statement by the song’s speaker too seriously, with the band once again eschewing social commentary and pointing to their Modernist authenticity.

At last, the song “Lily of the Valley”, from Queen’s third album *Sheer Heart Attack*, can be understood as an epilogue to the grandiose mythological theme of the band’s early career. The song is more introspective than narrative (May believes that the lyrics are about Mercury’s sexuality – see Thomas 1999). The speaker does not tell a story, but instead confides in the audience that he is looking for some answers, which fail to arrive (“I lie in wait with open eyes, I carry on through stormy skies”), which leads him to despair, illustrated by the allusion to Shakespeare’s *Richard III* (“I follow every course, my kingdom for a horse”). The connection with the worlds of fantasy and ancient past is achieved through allusion as well, via mythological (“Neptune of the seas”) and historical (“Serpent of the Nile”) figures, and the last stanza undoubtedly alludes to the song “Seven Seas of Rhye”:

Messenger from Seven Seas has flown
To tell the King of Rhye he's lost his throne
Wars will never cease
Is there time enough for peace
But the lily of the valley doesn't know

Here, the speaker is counting on the audience to already know the story of the seven seas of Rhye and its king, which is an interesting conundrum when one considers the fictional timeline: does "Lily of the Valley" describe the events that happened before those in "Seven Seas of Rhye", which is why the nameless speaker (might he be the king?) demands his land back, or is it another, new loss, which happened after the loss of his kingdom? Does he have any connection with My Fairy King from the eponymous song? What wars is he referencing, and is the fact that they will never cease connected to the never-ending battles between the ogres from "Ogre Battle"? These questions are numerous, but, as always in poetry, there are no definitive answers.

As can be seen from these songs, Queen weave a cyclical fantasy narrative that tells the story of a mythical land and its fantastic dwellers. The lyrics of the songs keep alluding to one another, thus creating a reciprocal connection, similar to how individual poems in collections of poetry function as a whole. By using elements such as dynamic motion, characters, plots, performative address, or poetic formulae, these songs prove that they can be considered narrative poetry, while the strictly poetic elements, like rhyme, stanzaic structure or figures of speech, cement their status as poetry which can be analysed in the same way as traditional written poetry.

Later on in their career, Queen abandoned such ambitious storytelling, concentrating instead on "silly love songs". They would return to narrative poetry from time to time, but never again would they attempt to create an entire world for their stories, nor would they so fully embrace the genre of fantasy to explore their creative imagination. Instead of being regrettable, that is a heartening notion – for one thing, it allowed them to progress and turn to other wells of inspiration as poets and musicians. For another, it let the early world of Rhye remain a unique, special part of their overall work, which can still "live for evermore" whenever one gives it a listen.

4. Conclusion

“Lyrics are not poetry,” states Lars Eckstein in his study of popular lyrics, “and their study therefore requires a different set of analytical tools from that which is conventionally applied to poetry” (Eckstein 2010: 23). This view can, of course, be argued against. As was stated in the introductory part of this article, there are more similarities than differences between poetry and lyrics, and therefore, lyrics can indeed be analysed using the exact same analytical tools as those used for traditional poetic analysis. In this case, song lyrics were analysed as traditional narrative poetry, and the songs chosen for this endeavour were likened to poems in a traditional collection – they share the same poetic, generic and thematic elements, and the narrative they weave together can be seen as a single poetic entity.

Even though it is not as prevalent as the exploration of love, storytelling still has its place in rock poetry. Neither is fantasy storytelling a strange occurrence there, however unusual it might seem at first glance. Queen are certainly not unique in this respect, as anyone who has ever listened to Led Zeppelin and their Middle Earth-inspired songs can verify. It bears noticing that, when it comes to fantasy narratives, it is metal bands, such as Iron Maiden, who tend to gravitate towards such content (see Weinstein 2000). It is no wonder, then, that Queen’s own fantasy narrative remains confined to their earliest phase, when they were still a heavy metal band, before they turned firmly in the direction of mellower genres.

The world of Rhye and its inhabitants has a special place in Queen’s oeuvre. It is the only time that they tried to tell a whole story across several albums and songs, without outside prompting.⁸ In order to better understand this compelling imaginary world, special attention was given to intertextual elements of the individual songs – this helped place them within a larger poetic context, thus reaffirming their status as poetry. Given the deliberately vague nature of the songs, it was sometimes difficult to position them confidently within Mercury’s overarching narrative. It is,

⁸ Any other such occasions were connected to outside circumstances – like with the album *A Kind of Magic* (1986), which does tell a story, but that story is based on the film *Highlander*, since the album served as the soundtrack for it; or with the album *Made in Heaven* (1995), which is a posthumous tribute to Mercury, and weaves a story of life, death, and rebirth, in an attempt to make the best out of a harrowing situation. Moreover, these later narratives do not span several albums.

however, precisely this vagueness, the negative capability contained in them that inspired the analysis – just like the melody of Keats's nightingale, these songs tell the stories of “faery lands forlorn”, influencing new generations of listeners, readers and theorists alike, many decades after their initial release. That is a true testament to their fantastic allure.

References

- Auslander, P. (2006). *Performing Glam: Rock: Gender and Theatricality in Popular Music*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- Blake, M. (2010). *Is This The Real Life? The Untold Story of Queen*. London: Aurum Press.
- Brooks, G. and S. Lupton (eds.) (2008). *Freddie Mercury: His Life In His Own Words*. London: Omnibus Press.
- Browning, R. (1961). *The Poems and Plays of Robert Browning*. New York: The Modern Library.
- Gräbner, C. and A. Casas (eds.) (2011). *Performing Poetry: Body, Place and Rhythm in the Poetry Performance*. New York: Rodopi.
- Eckstein, L. (2010). *Reading Song Lyrics*. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi.
- Ferber, M. (1999). *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Frith, S., W. Straw and J. Street (eds.). (2001). *The Cambridge Companion to Pop and Rock*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gaiman, N. (2016). *The View from the Cheap Seats: Selected Nonfiction*. New York: William Morrow.
- Jones, L.-A. (1998). *Freddie Mercury: The Definitive Biography*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.
- Kenner, H. (1966). *The Art Of Poetry*. New York, Chicago, San Francisco and Toronto: Holt, Rineheart and Winston.
- Moore, A. (ed.) (2003). *Analyzing Popular Music*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Oliver, D. (1989). *Poetry and Narrative in Performance*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Preminger, A. and T. V. F. Brogan. (eds.) (1993). *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Queen (1994). *Queen*. (CD. Digital Master Series.) London: Parlophone.
- Queen (1994). *Queen II*. (CD. Digital Master Series.) London: Parlophone.

- Queen (1993). *Sheer Heart Attack*. (CD. Digital Master Series.) London: Parlophone.
- Reynolds, S. (2016). *Shock and Awe: Glam Rock and its Legacy*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Shuker, R. (2001). *Understanding Popular Music* (2nd edition). London and New York: Routledge.
- Sutcliffe, P. (2015). *Queen: The Ultimate Illustrated History of the Crowned Kings of Rock (Revised and Updated Edition)*. Minneapolis: Voyager Press.
- Szondi, P. (1995). *Introduction to Literary Hermeneutics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Thomas, D. (1999). Their Britannic Majestic Request. *Mojo*, Issue 69, August 1999, 72–89.
- Vujin, B. (2014). Besmislene ljubavne pesmice: kako pristupiti pop i rok poeziji? *Godišnjak Filozofskog fakulteta u Novom Sadu*, knjiga XXXIX–2, 2014, 61–74.
- Vujin, B. (2016). Nasleđe viktorijanskog nonsensa u tekstovima Bitlsa. In: Bošković, D. and Č. Nikolić (eds.). *Srpski jezik, književnost i umetnost, knjiga 2, Rock’N’Roll*. Kragujevac: Filološko-Umetnički Fakultet, 2016, 375–384.
- Vujin, B. (2023). Transparent Closets, Transgressive Sounds: Queen, Camp and Queer Transgression. In: Luburić-Cvijanović, A., V. Krombholz and B. Vujin. (2023). *Out of Bounds: Transgressivity in Poetry, Drama and Fiction*. Novi Sad: Filozofski fakultet, 55–72. E-book available at: <<https://digitalna.ff.uns.ac.rs/sites/default/files/db/books/978-86-6065-792-5.pdf>>
- Weinstein, D. (2000). *Heavy Metal: The Music and Its Culture (Revised Edition)*. Boston: Da Capo Press.

Received: 6 October 2021

Accepted for publication: 14 October 2023

Vera Nikolić*

University of Belgrade
Faculty of Philology

PROCESS AND PRODUCT, TRANSFER AND ADAPTATION PROPER: THE ESSENTIALS OF TEXT-TO-SCREEN ADAPTATION

Abstract

Understanding the development of adaptation studies and the restrictions, requirements, and possibilities of literature-to-film adaptations enables an effective engagement with adaptations of narrative literature into film. An overview of the disparate approaches to defining adaptations, of Robert Stam's reevaluation of adaptations on the basis of 'intertextual dialogism', and of Linda Hutcheon's layered understanding of adaptations as processes and products sets up the essential framework for understanding text-to-screen adaptations. The demands for transfer and adaptation proper within adaptations of literary texts to films, and the similarities and differences between cinematic and literary codes complement the essential framework for effectively evaluating text-to-screen adaptations.

Key words: film adaptation, intertextual dialogism, adaptation as process, adaptation as product, adaptation reception, transfer, adaptation proper, novel-to-film adaptation, text-to-screen adaptation

1. Introduction

A close understanding of the theories underpinning adaptation studies, the similarities and differences between film and literature, the possibility of the direct transfer of elements of source novels and the demands of

* nikolic.veran@gmail.com

adaptation proper, are some of the crucial elements supporting the thorough observation, analysis and evaluation of film adaptations of novels and short stories. Adaptations hold a continuous cultural presence (Hutcheon 2006: 2) and the act of adapting is comparable to the process of telling stories, as: "[a]dapters [...] use the same tools that storytellers have always used: they actualize or concretize ideas; they make simplifying selections, but also amplify and extrapolate; they make analogies; they critique or show their respect, and so on. But the stories they relate are taken from elsewhere, not invented anew" (Hutcheon 2006: 3). Hutcheon asserts that adaptations constitute "repetition, but repetition without replication" (Hutcheon 2006: 7) and that: "[w]e retell – and show again and interact anew with – stories over and over; in the process, they change with each repetition, and yet they are recognizably the same" (Hutcheon 2006: 177).

Initial adaptation analyses took a bimodal approach that identified adaptations as films based on novel, plays or short stories (Leitch 2012: 89–90). The assessment of adaptations further developed through the rejection of fidelity-based criticism that was rooted in the bimodal approach and the evaluation of the extent of film adaptations' similarity to their original texts (Leitch 2012: 89, 103), instead pivoting towards the perception of adaptations as instances of "intertextual dialogism" (Tripković-Samardžić 2016: 116). This approach to adaptation enables the acknowledgement of the supplemental character of adaptation, namely that "adaptation doesn't simply counterfeit (and reduce) but adds to the original narrative a battery of codes, both cultural and cinematic" (Cartmell and Whelehan 2007: 5). Adaptation as process and product also encompasses the conscious recognition of the audience of an adaptation as an adaptation in instances of familiarity with a source text, while film adaptations also necessitate the transition from telling to showing, and the act of transcoding a literary text demands extensive alterations (Hutcheon 2006: 6, 7, 21, 34, 36). Adaptations of literary texts call for the direct transfer of elements of the source text, such as its story, but also for the "adaptation proper" of functions that are inseparable from the literary form of the source (McFarlane 2007: 19–20).

Rejecting fidelity criticism, approaching adaptation studies on the basis of intertextual dialogism, considering adaptations as processes and products, developing a more detailed understanding of the interrelationship, and the similarities and differences between film and literature, strengthens the understanding of and engagement with film adaptations of literary texts.

2. An Overview of Theoretical Approaches to Adaptation

The varied approaches to adaptation attempt to establish a clear definition of the term, although the issue of establishing a precise range of what the term adaptation encompasses is recognized by Thomas Leitch (2012: 89). Instead of engaging with the question of what adaptations are, Leitch asserts that other questions are more relevant to adaptation studies, including where the line lies between „adaptations proper and improper“ (2012: 89), why the line is drawn in a specific place, and whether there is relevance in posing this question in the first place, while his interrogation is based on the axiom that adaptation is a subcategory of intertextuality, and he subsequently notes nine different approaches to adaptations (Leitch 2012: 87–103). Namely, the nine different approaches to adaptation studies that Leitch highlights are:

1. Adaptations are exclusively films based on novels or short stories (Leitch 2012: 89–90);
2. Adaptations are solely intermedial and include the transfer of narrative elements from one medium to another through intermedial, intramedial, or transmedial transfers (Leitch, 2012: 91–92);
3. Adaptations are “counter-ekphrases“ (a terminological inversion of the narrow definition of ekphrasis as a literary representation of visual arts) (Leitch 2012: 92–93);
4. Adaptations are texts that the audience intentionally recognizes as adaptations, per the definition of Linda Hutcheon (Leitch 2012: 94);
5. Adaptations are a form of hypertextuality, one of the multiple transtextual modes, per the definition of Gérard Genette (Leitch 2012: 96);
6. Adaptations are translations, per the definition of Linda Costanzo Cahir (Leitch 2012: 97);
7. Adaptations are performances that utilize the text that they are based on as a “performance text” or a “recipe for a new creation“ (Leitch 2012: 99);
8. Adaptations are central instances of intertextual practice, a viewpoint that indicates the hybrid nature of adaptations, which is opposed to the last approach (Leitch 2012: 100);
9. Adaptations are specific instances of intertextuality, but not central ones (Leitch 2012: 102).

These wide-ranging perspectives on adaptations have had varying influences on the fidelity discourse in adaptations. While the fundamental “dualistic, bimedial” (Leitch 2012: 90) approach to adaptations, which notes that adaptations are solely films based on novels, plays or short stories, simplifies the observation of adaptations by only considering textual transpositions in the page-to-screen direction, it excludes media other than films from adaptations (Leitch 2012: 89–90). This approach proves further deficient in identifying novels as words, and films as images, failing to recognize that both novels and films are amalgamations since novels are dependent on images that are implicated or inscribed while films depend on words that are written and spoken. Finally, the approach of binary opposition to adaptations as literature presented on screen conserves the fidelity discourse in adaptation, leading to the point of view that the novel undergoing adaptation holds a place of superiority in relation to the adapted film (Leitch 2012: 90). A stance opposing the dualistic approach, as seen in Linda Hutcheon’s viewpoint on adaptations, asserts that adaptations are texts whose status as an adaptation depends on the audience’s acceptance of the intentional invitation to interpret these texts as adaptations, in the process liberating adaptations from fidelity concerns (Leitch 2012: 94–95).

The hierarchy imposed by the evaluation of literary texts also influences the application of the faithfulness criterion and the subsequent evaluation of film adaptations. Namely, film adaptations of prestigious texts “at the top of the canon” are expected to maintain high degrees of faithfulness towards a source text (Cartmell 1999: 27). However, films based on texts, which are not ascribed a similar literary value, do not face critical evaluation from the standpoint of the same faithfulness criterion, nor is close attention given to their status as an adaptation (Cartmell 1999: 27). In opposition to traditional expectations that adaptations should maintain faithfulness, Deborah Cartmell suggests a more open approach to adaptations, highlighting that: “Instead of worrying about whether a film is ‘faithful’ to the original literary text (founded in a logocentric belief that there is a single meaning), we read adaptations for their generation of a plurality of meanings” (1999: 28).

Terms that aided Robert Stam’s re-definition of adaptations as instances of “intertextual dialogism” and in turn directed adaptation studies away from fidelity criticism, include dialogism, intertextuality and hypertextuality (Tripković-Samardžić 2016: 309). The term “intertextuality” first arose

in Julia Kristeva's translation of the term "dialogism" coined by Mikhail Bakhtin, while dialogism refers to the essential link of each utterance to another utterance, which is defined as every "complex of signs", such as a poem or film (Stam 2000: 201). As Stam points out, dialogism shows that "every text forms an intersection of textual surfaces" (Stam 2000: 201). According to Stam, intertextual dialogism refers to "the infinite and open-ended possibilities generated by all the discursive practices of a culture, the entire matrix of communicative utterances within which the artistic text is situated, and which reach the text not only through recognizable influences but also through a subtle process of dissemination" (Stam 2000: 202). Intertextuality is an active process in which the artist functions as an active agent coordinating prior texts (Stam 2000: 203), and as a concept indicates "the importance of all additional texts and the dialogic reaction of the reader/viewer, which is not considered within fidelity criticism" (Tripković-Samardžić 2016: 120).

In addition to these terms, Stam introduces Gérard Genette's terminology, providing a more comprehensive scope than Bakhtin's and Kristeva's, namely Genette's definition of literary "transtextuality", which defines textual interrelatedness as "all that which puts one text in relation, whether manifest or secret, with other texts", and includes five modes of transtextual relations (Stam 2000: 207). The fifth form of transtextuality, hypertextuality, refers to the relation of one text, a "hypertext", to a preceding text, a "hypotext" (Stam 2000: 209), which "the former transforms, modifies, elaborates or extends" (Stam 2000: 209). Hypertextuality, the relationship between one text to another text, which Genette subdivides into "transformation and imitation", provides an additional theoretical framework for observing adaptations (Leitch 2012: 96–97) and indicates "the relation between filmic adaptations and their source novels, now seen as hypertexts derived from pre-existing hypotexts, transformed by operations of selection, amplification, concretization, and actualization" (Stam 2000: 209). Previous film adaptations of a source text can even be considered a part of the renewed film adaptation's hypotext (Stam 2000: 209).

3. Outlining Adaptations: Process, Product and Reception

Hutcheon states that adaptations are multi-layered works whose "overt relationship to another work or works" is announced (2006: 6). Their

autonomy notwithstanding, interpreting an “adaptation as an adaptation” (2006: 6), also allows for the recognition of adaptations as texts created in relation to other texts, indicating adaptations’ intrinsic textual plurality (2006: 6–7). Hutcheon further provides a detailed delineation of the concept of adaptation, which firstly defines an adaptation as „a formal entity or product... an announced and extensive transposition of a particular work or works” (2006: 7). Due to a difference in an adaptation’s medium in comparison to its source text’s medium, adaptations often involve “transmutation or transcoding”, and can be viewed as „translations in the form of intersemiotic transpositions from one sign system (for example, words) to another (for example, images)” (Hutcheon 2006: 16). Besides adaptations existing as products, the act of adaptation simultaneously functions as “a process of creation”, relying on “(re-)interpretation and then (re-)creation” (Hutcheon 2006: 8). While the motivations of artists who adapt texts diverge and can encompass the desire to surpass prior texts in an economic or artistic sense, to pay tribute to, or oppose them aesthetically or politically, no matter the adapters’ intentions, adaptation always entails a dual process of interpretation and new creation. Instead of solely replicating the source text, the adapter can utilize the original text as a set of diegetic and narrative instructions in the interpretation (Hutcheon 2006: 20, 84). Additionally, the recognition of “adaptation as adaptation” is also crucial since the reader or viewer experiences an adaptation as “a kind of intertextuality if the receiver is acquainted with the adapted text”, which makes adaptation an „ongoing dialogical process [...] in which we compare the work we already know with the one we are experiencing“ (Hutcheon 2006: 21). The immediate and overt connection to other recognizable texts makes the engagement of the audience with an adaptation an extended act, differentiating it from other passing intertextual parallels between works (Hutcheon 2006: 21). The complexity of certain media, including film, makes adaptation a collective process. Besides the involvement of a screenplay writer, director, cinematographer, set designer and composer, who may assume the role of adapters by utilizing and referencing the source text in varying degrees, the adapter’s role is also assumed by an actor. Namely, actors primarily construct their performance from the screenplay, but often note that they found a deeper understanding of characters in the source text. Film editors who subsequently construct a film and the structure of its sounds and images also participate in the act of adaptation (Hutcheon

2006: 80–82). The motivations behind the act of creating adaptations, which are often criticized for their lack of faithfulness, are also manifold, as Hutcheon highlights that the intentions of adapters can include the possibility of economic gains (in spite of certain limitations posed by intellectual property laws), the possibility of gaining cultural prestige in the case of adaptations based on acclaimed or significant texts, as well as personal or political motives, such as paying homage to the source text or conversely criticizing the source text culturally, politically, historically, or socially (2006: 85–94). Hutcheon recognizes the significance of authors' intentions and their direct effect on the process and product of adaptation, since adapters' intentions leave overt traces in an adaptation. The multifaceted contexts of creation and interpretation constituting the process of adaptation become visible in the final product of adaptation within the style and tone of the final product of the adaptation and the known extratextual intent of the final product (2006: 106–109). Understanding an author's intents affects the audience's interpretation of the adaptation's meaning. Hutcheon also reflects on the relevance of the audience's participation in the adaptation, as an audience member's engagement with the adapted text offers the pleasure of repetition, interspersed with difference (2006: 109, 114). Besides the comfort of engaging with familiar texts, an adaptation's audience also experiences intertextual pleasure in their recognition of the "interplay of works" (Hutcheon 2006: 117). However, the ultimate success of adaptations lies in their autonomy and availability to audiences that are familiar with the original and those that are not, audiences that have or do not have previous knowledge of a text (Hutcheon 2006: 121).

The joint element of an adaptation is the story, which undergoes transpositions regardless of the medium or genre, and adaptations seek to establish the equivalence of a story's different elements, which involve "themes, events, world, characters, motivations, points of view, consequences, contexts, symbols, imagery" (Hutcheon 2006: 10). Namely, Hutcheon points out that themes are the most easily transferable elements across different media, genres and contexts, that the transfer of characters and their psychological development enables the engagement of the audience's imagination, that the different story units can be transferred across media, that pacing, point of view, focalization and story time can all be altered (2006: 10–11).

Hutcheon defines three modes of engaging with stories across media ("the material means of expression of an adaptation" (2006: 34)) –

showing, telling and interacting (2006: 12). In the telling mode, such as narrative literature, the reader's involvement with the story occurs in the imagination, which is instructed by the text's words, beyond the limits of sounds or images, with a certain level of control over the pace and volume of reading. In contrast to the telling mode, showing engages the text's receiver in a story that is constantly moving forward in a process of directly perceiving visual, gestural, aural elements (Hutcheon 2006: 23).

As a medium, film integrates multiple forms of expression, including photography, music, phonetic sound, dance, architecture, painting and theatre, while transposing a novel into a film is seen as the most complex form of transitioning into a different mode of engagement, which necessitates the reduction of story length and a simplification of a story's complexity (Hutcheon 2006: 35–36). With regard to the requirements of this transposition, Hutcheon states that: "In the move from telling to showing, a performance adaptation must dramatize: description, narration, and represented thoughts must be transcoded into speech, actions, sounds, and visual images", adding that conflicts need to be shown visually and aurally (2006: 40). In the process of transcoding literary texts, films use "indexical and iconic signs" (specific people, places and objects), as opposed to literature's use of "symbolic and conventional signs" (2006: 43). Within the story transfer, film holds the possibility for the point of view to be presented in a myriad of cinematic methods: the use of camera angles, focal length, *mise-en-scène*, acting, costume design, as well as music and voice-over narration (Hutcheon 2006: 54–55). By deconstructing the clichés that often accompany evaluations of transitions from one mode of telling to another, Hutcheon questions the biased notion that telling is the best mode for representing interior states, while showing is the best mode for representing the exterior world. Despite critical assertions that film represents exterior action effectively but fails to represent the inner worlds of characters (Hutcheon 2006: 56–57), i.e. that it cannot show "interior monologues and analyses of inner states" (Hutcheon 2006: 57), which are found in narrative literature, Hutcheon indicates that film finds ways to establish cinematic equivalents to interior events and thoughts (2006: 58). The close-up, which can be utilized so that "external appearances are made to mirror inner truths" (Hutcheon 2006: 58), presents a visual equivalent for showing interior states (Hutcheon 2006: 58). Additionally, film's visual capacities are able to create externalized equivalents of subjectivity through the use of "slow motion, rapid cutting,

distortional lenses (fish-eye, telephoto), lighting, or the use of various kinds of film stocks“ (Hutcheon 2006: 59). The inner states of characters can be communicated to the audience through sound, which is separate from the image, regardless of whether characters’ states are shown on the screen, as music deepens inner states through its ability to provide direction to emotions shown on screen, resulting in a stronger connection of the viewer to the film (Hutcheon 2006: 41, 59, 60). The different modes of engagement also require a different “mental act” from the audience (Hutcheon 2006: 130). Telling calls for conceptualization, for the reader to visualize the story based on the written letters, while showing requires “perceptual decoding abilities”, in the process of giving meaning to the perceived sounds and images (Hutcheon 2006: 130).

Finally, Hutcheon concludes that a story’s different versions are not secondary to their original story, that they are “lovingly ripped off“ (2006: 169). Hutcheon provides a general definition of an adaptation as an “extended, deliberate, announced revisitiation of a particular work of art” (2006: 170), while the “continuum model” that Hutcheon establishes, recognizes the reinventive character of adaptations as “(re-) interpretations and (re-)creations” (2006: 172). Adaptations offer the following possibility: “[t]o repeat without copying, to embed difference in similarity, to be at once both self and Other”, in turn obstructing concepts of “priority and authority” within texts (Hutcheon 2006: 174).

4. The Transfer and Adaptation Proper of Novels to Films

Adaptation is the central relationship between film and literature within cinema that has occupied film theorists, critics, as well as the audience, even though it is not the sole relationship between literature and film (McFarlane 2007: 15). Brian McFarlane’s distinction between film and literature notes that faithfulness is not a useful or appropriate criterion for examining the adaptation of literature into film (2007: 15). Faithfulness is ultimately ascertained on the basis of subjective interpretation, as each viewer examines the adapted text for “one’s own vision of the literary text” (McFarlane 2007: 15). McFarlane also dispels the notion that watching films is a less engaging act than reading narrative literature, since it involves perceiving different levels of meaning, including *mise-en-scène*, editing and sound (McFarlane 2007: 16). In addition to rejecting this notion,

McFarlane negates that some forms of literary works are more suitable to adaptation than others, and that some texts cannot be adapted at all (McFarlane, 2007: 16), stating that film can establish “narrative voice” (2007: 17), and possesses an inherent capacity to move through space and time. While literature yields its artistic value, its “subtlety and complexity” (McFarlane 2007: 18), from deft word use, film produces its own subtlety and complexity with *mise-en-scène*, montage and sound (McFarlane 2007: 18). The practice of adapting literary texts into films exists in a wider and mutually influential relationship between literature and film. Sergei Eisenstein claimed that the characteristics of the Victorian novel directly influenced film, and Kamilla Elliot provides a summary of this claim:

[t]he Victorian novel’s attention to visual detail, empirical psychology, atmospheric close-ups, alternating omniscient and character viewpoints, and shifts from one group of characters to another, all shaped Western film techniques, which in turn influenced and shaped film art more generally (2004: 4).

Aside from literature’s influence on film, film has also had a marked influence on literature as “modern novels were shaped by cinematic techniques, like ellipsis, temporal discontinuity, fragmented vision, crosscutting, and multiple viewpoints” (Elliot 2004: 4). Novels, in contrast to plays, short stories and poems, are the most common types of texts that are adapted (McFarlane 2007: 18–19). Novels and films share a use of narrative, a “series of events, sequentially and/or consequentially connected” (McFarlane 2007: 19), and that encompasses a permanent group of characters, while they diverge most in terms of narration, the means with which the narrative is presented to the reader or viewer (McFarlane 2007: 19). Namely, the novel is comprised of functions that are subject to direct transfer, as they are not dependent on the literary text, such as events, in addition to being comprised of functions inextricably linked to literature, such as characterization and atmosphere, which call for “adaptation proper” (McFarlane 2007: 19–20). Elements that are most susceptible to transfer exist on the deeper levels of a narrative, such as events unveiling the involvement of characters or prompted by it, psychoanalytic patterns and “character functions” defined by Vladimir Propp (McFarlane 2007: 20). As per McFarlane, films and novels also share a “potent sense of diegesis” (2007: 20), which makes the world unravelling beyond the page or screen realistic, due to a close engagement with a novel’s words or

film's codes (visual, linguistic, non-linguistic, cultural) (McFarlane 2007: 20). Both novels and films hold the capacity to present dimensions of place and time, while achieving this in different ways. Most novels are narrated in the past tense, while present tense narration is rarely utilized. Conversely, film is always progressing in the present tense and a direct cinematic equivalent of the grammatical past does not exist. The use of flashback techniques (transitioning to a close-up, connecting shots with a dissolve, or playing sound from a different time during a shot transition), can intimate a change in the past, without the use of a direct counterpart to a change in tense, past or future. A change in temporality can be indicated in the juxtaposition of sounds and images, by playing sounds of present events over shots of previous events, by playing sounds of events from the past over shots of present events, or by playing sounds of current events over shots of events set in the future. Film also successfully utilizes *mise-en-scène* to indicate changes in time (years, centuries). In terms of space, novels and films share a "mobility" in the representation of place. In novels, one narrative thread can be interrupted, so that a different or opposing narrative thread in a different place can continue, while film possesses an equal efficiency in presenting changes of place (McFarlane 2007: 21–23). McFarlane adds that novels and films are directed towards "revealing "lives" in a fullness perhaps denied" to other art forms (2007: 23). Novels achieve this revelation through what their characters say about themselves, what other characters say about them, as well as presenting what authors reveal within the prose (McFarlane 2007: 23). Film's revelation does not occur through an equivalent of the independent word, or signifier, which could indicate different meanings for different readers, and it is the film's image, sound, movement and editing that elicit a "complex response" from the viewer (McFarlane 2007: 23–24).

The process of adapting novels, as opposed to short stories or plays, requires for whole parts of novels to be shortened or removed, as well as minor plots and characters, in order to direct the focus of the adaptation to the main plot (McFarlane 2007: 24). However, film is not solely a product of the adapted novel but also reflects other texts and influences, and the novel is "only one element of the film's intertextuality" (McFarlane 2007: 26–27). The intertextual effect of the adaptation also relies on viewers' familiarity with the source text, which may or may not influence their impression of the adaptation (McFarlane 2007: 27). Additionally, the process of engaging with an adaptation can be inverted, and if a viewer

first views an adapted film and only subsequently reads the source text, the impression of the adapted film will influence the reading of the source text. This influence of the adapted text on the source text also extends to readers who are returning to a source text that they first read, subsequently viewed its film adaptation and then ultimately read the source text again following the viewing of the film adaptation (McFarlane, 2007: 27).

On the basis that the narrative is the main transferrable element in the adaptation process, McFarlane distinguishes between functions of the narrative that can be transferred and those functions that require “adaptation proper”, basing this distinction on Roland Barthes’s theory of narrative functions and their grouping into distributional and integrational functions (1996: 13). Namely, distributional functions, i.e. “functions proper”, are “actions and events [...] strung together linearly throughout the text” (McFarlane 1996: 13), which are further divided into “cardinal functions”, key points of the narrative that result in “alternative consequences to the development of the story” (McFarlane 1996: 13) thus creating the essential story structure, and “catalyzers”, smaller events, which complement the cardinal functions and situate them in a specific reality (McFarlane 1996: 14). Cardinal functions and catalyzers are “directly transferrable” (McFarlane 1996: 14) elements as they signify the “story content (actions and happenings)” (McFarlane 1996: 14), which can be presented with language or a combination of sound and images. Their exclusion or alteration is often the central cause of an audience perceiving that the original text’s faithfulness was betrayed, while a recognition of faithfulness rests upon the mutual transfer of cardinal functions and catalyzers (McFarlane 1996: 14). Cardinal functions also entail functions occurring prior to the start of the plot. When transferring the story of the novel into a film, some cardinal functions can be invented to complete the story, they can be shown directly even if they are only implied in the novel, they can be set in an earlier or later place in the story, while changes to certain cardinal functions can entirely alter a film adaptation’s meaning (McFarlane 1996: 48–49). In contrast to cardinal functions, integrative functions, i.e. “indices”, which involve “psychological information relating to characters, data regarding their identity, notations of atmosphere and representations of place” (McFarlane 1996: 13), are not fully subject to direct transfer (McFarlane 1996: 14). Indices are subdivided into “indices proper”, relating to characters and atmosphere (McFarlane, 1996: 14), and “informants”, such as characters’ names, ages and occupations, and the details concerning surroundings (McFarlane 1996: 14). Informants can be directly

transferred, but indices proper require adaptation proper. Cardinal functions and catalyzers comprise the formal content of a story independently of the form in which the story is realized (novel or film), while informants provide specificity to the formal content (McFarlane 1996: 14–15).

Film's extensive narrational capacities are described by Christian Metz in the following way: "Film tells us continuous stories; it "says" things that could be conveyed also in the language of words; yet it says them differently. There is a reason for the possibility as well as for the necessity of adaptations" (1974: 44, as cited in McFarlane 1996: 12). David Bordwell further describes film narration stating that: "All materials of a film function narrationally – not only the camera, but speech, gesture, written language, music, color, optical processes, lighting, costume, even offscreen space and offscreen sound" (1985: 20, as cited in McFarlane 1996: 17). Within adaptation and the transfer of narration, *mise-en-scène*, blocking, cinematography or other film techniques, are not direct or identical equivalents to omniscient narration (McFarlane 1996: 17). Nevertheless, through the control of *mise-en-scène*, montage and editing, film can adapt certain functions of narrational prose, and while words that are spoken by characters can be directly transferred without any alteration, the "knowledge about characters, periods, places" (McFarlane 1996: 18), which narrational prose possesses, undergoes adaptation proper through film's narrational functions (McFarlane 1996: 18). Additionally, descriptive functions of narrative prose such as descriptions of "places, objects, activities" can be adapted in film, as film possesses a descriptive ability that is equal to literature (McFarlane 1996: 18). Seymour Chatman also recognizes film's descriptive abilities, noting that description does not solely refer to the "discrete, discontinuous, heterogeneous citation of details characteristic of literature" (Chatman 1990: 40), and that film also entails a capacity for description, which is tacit and not explicit (Chatman 1990: 38). Visual representation is much more common in film than verbal, and refers to the choice of certain actors, costumes, set design, lighting, as well as camera angles and framing (Chatman 1990: 38). As Chatman stresses "the very cinematic projection of images entails Description" (Chatman 1990: 40) and film "cannot help describing" (Chatman 1990: 40). While cinematic description does not offer the precision of literary description, its tacit description is intrinsically rich, arising from the heterogeneity of visual details contained in an image (Chatman 1990: 39–40). Brian Gallagher also compares film and literary images stating that "the film image is both more

immediate and more restricted than the literary image“ (1978: 159) as “[f]ilm works directly with physical reality, reproducing its visual and auditory components with a startlingly mimetic accuracy” (Gallagher 1978: 159). Literature, which is permanently distanced from what it signifies in the signification process, can directly suggest or explain what the image it is creating means. Conversely, film must use indirect ways of indicating the meaning behind the images that it consists of, through camera movement and editing (Gallagher 1978: 160–161). Still, the partial limitations of the cinematic image in terms of direct commentary, is surpassed by the intensity of the effect that the cinematic image has on viewers, and this is described by Peter Brook in the following way: “When the image is there in all its power, at the precise moment when it is being received, one can neither think, nor feel, nor imagine anything else” (Brook 1987: 190, as cited in Hutcheon, 2006: 131).

Characterization and psychological action are more difficult to adapt, as film does not possess the same immediately available interpretation of action that is available to the omniscient narrator within a novel. In spite of film’s overall lack of direct interpretation within its discourse, film is characterized by a continuous omniscience as it is always showing more than the characters know. The processes of film narration reside in camera angles, framing, the establishment of relations between shots, as opposed to literary narration, which relies on the person and tense of narration (McFarlane 1996: 18, 20). Therefore, narration requires adaptation proper within the adaptation of a novel into a film and is not transferrable, while the narrative is transferable as it does not rely on the semiotic system presenting it, indicating that the means for adaptation proper in novel to film adaptations are enabled by film’s ability to establish cinematic counterparts of narrational commentary through the “manipulation of space, through its use of camera angle, focus, distance from its object, through the quality of its lighting, and through its editing procedures” (McFarlane 1996: 20, 61). Finally, according to Chatman, the novel and film share the existence of the implied author, a text’s “inscribed principle of invention and intent” (Chatman 1990: 83), who produces the narrator and everything that occurs in the narrative (Chatman 1978: 148). The implied author serves readers and viewers as a “source of instruction about how to read the text and how to account for the selection and ordering of its components” (Chatman 1990: 83–84).

Besides the differences between distributional and integrational functions, which vary in their transferability, the transfer of the novel into the film is also affected by the difference between the story (“basic succession of events”) and the plot (the way that the story is orchestrated) (McFarlane 1996: 23). A novel and film can share the story, while diverging in their use of plot and the “plot strategies which alter sequence, highlight different emphases” of a story (McFarlane 1996: 23). While the plot/story distinction can affect the transfer of the novel into a film, adaptation proper is shaped by the various similarities and differences between novels and films and how they are received (McFarlane 1996: 26). Importantly, novels function conceptually, as words hold a “high symbolic function” (McFarlane 1996: 27), and films function perceptually, as the film sign entails “high iconicity” (McFarlane 1996: 27). Based on the filmmaker’s choice, adaptation can aim to visually represent the key verbal signs pertaining to people and places (McFarlane 1996: 27). An additional difference involves the way films and novels unfold. Despite a surface-level similarity between film’s relentless progression, as films unfold frame by frame, and literature’s linearity, as novels are read word by word, film opposes literary linearity and is characterized by its “spatiality” (McFarlane 1996: 27). The film’s frame is a unit that is rarely registered individually in the way that a single word is and consists of more visual information (as well as verbal and aural) at any given moment than one word, offering the film a “spatial impact” that is not available to the novel (McFarlane 1996: 27, 29). Finally, the “novel’s metalanguage” (McFarlane 1996: 29) can partially be replaced with *mise-en-scène*, although a film’s story does not require telling since it is presented, and narrational voice is replaced by film’s immediacy (McFarlane 1996: 26, 29).

5. Conclusion

Understanding the essential concepts underpinning adaptation studies, the specific constraints and possibilities of adapting narrative literature into film, as well as the practical perspective on adaptation, offers a foundation for understanding, analyzing and appreciating film adaptations. Adaptations on the whole can be approached from a myriad of theoretical viewpoints, originating from the dualistic viewpoint, as well as the recognition of adaptations as intermedial transfers, counter-ekphrases,

translations, performances, or examples of intertextual practice. The development of these diverging approaches has assisted the rejection of the fidelity discourse, has engendered the recognition of adaptations as instances of intertextual dialogism, highlighting the importance and diversity of relations between text, and has brought about the observation of film adaptations as hypertexts altering and extending previous hypotexts. The development and multiplicity of approaches recognizing the variety of textual connections has also enabled a more open investigation of the possibilities and contributions of adaptations.

The varied exploration of adaptations has also contributed to the recognition of adaptations as products, or announced transpositions of certain texts, and processes comprising of re-interpretation and re-creation influenced by different intentions, subsequently complemented by an audience's awareness of the adaptation's direct link to its preceding text, resulting in the pleasure of repeated stories, the joint element of adaptations and source texts, as well as a strong understanding of the extensive changes necessitated by film adaptations of narrative literature. This understanding reveals the essential characteristics of film adaptations of novels, from the creation of film adaptations to the audience's engagement with them.

The observation of film adaptations also extends to the textual possibilities of transfer and adaptation proper. The potential for narrative literature to undergo film adaptation is not limited as film is able to establish narrative perspective using techniques that are different from literary ones, as films and literature share narratives, and diverge in narration. A novel's content, which includes actions, events, and key points of the narrative, is subject to direct transfer from a novel to a film, as these elements do not hinge on the mode of showing or telling. A novel's elements which are not subject to direct transfer and require adaptation proper concern characters and descriptions of atmosphere and places. The story and plot can also be directly transferred or changed in their transfer to a film. Film and literature also possess key similarities and differences affecting the process of adaptations and their reception. They can both represent space and time in their different semiotic systems, they share a mobility in space, while diverging in how they convey time and tense, and can both utilize descriptive representation in different ways. Finally, novels function conceptually and films function perceptually, a key difference in a novel's telling and film's showing. Understanding the necessities of transfer and adaptation proper, as well as the similarities and differences between novels and films, promotes a thorough understanding of the

requirements of film adaptation, as well as the susceptibility of a novel and its components towards the process of film adaptation.

References

- Cartmell, D. (1999). Introduction. In D. Cartmell and I. Whelehan (eds.), *Adaptations: from text to screen, screen to text*, New York: Routledge, 23–28.
- Cartmell, D. and I. Whelehan (2007). Introduction – Literature on screen: a synoptic view. In D. Cartmell and I. Whelehan (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Literature on Screen*, Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1–12.
- Chatman, S. B. (1978). *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.
- Chatman, S. (1990). *Coming to Terms: The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.
- Elliott, K. L. (2004). Novels, Films, and the Word/Image Wars. In R. Stam and A. Raengo (eds.), *A Companion to Literature and Film*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1–22.
- Gallagher, B. (1978). Film Imagery, Literary Imagery: Some Distinctions. *College Literature*, 5(3), 157–173.
- Hutcheon, L. (2006). *A Theory of Adaptation*. New York/London: Routledge.
- Leitch, T. (2012). Adaptation and Intertextuality, or, What isn't an adaptation, and What does it matter?. In D. Cartmell (ed.), *A Companion to Literature, Film, and Adaptation*, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 87–104.
- McFarlane, B. (2007). Reading Film and Literature. In D. Cartmell and I. Whelehan (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Literature on Screen*, Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 15–28.
- McFarlane, B. (1996). *Novel to Film: An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Stam, R. (2000). *Film Theory: An Introduction*. Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell.
- Tripković-Samardžić, V. (2016). *Američka drama na filmu: Tenesi Vilijams*. [Doctoral dissertation, University of Belgrade].

Received: 8 September 2023

Accepted for publication: 20 November 2023

Contributors

Khalid Chaouch, PhD from Toulouse-Jean Jaurès University in France (1995), is a professor at the College of Arts and Humanities in Sultan Moulay Slimane University, Beni Mellal, Morocco. He teaches ‘Classical Drama,’ ‘Film Analysis,’ and ‘Morocco and the Anglo-American World.’ He is the author of ‘The Dramatic Evolution of American Playwright Clifford Odets (1906-1963)’ (Villeneuve d’Ascq: Septentrion, 1998), ‘Humble Odysseys’ (Najah, Mohammedia, 2002), and ‘Muffled Rhythms’ (Nadir Print, Beni Mellal, 2010). He has contributed to national and international journals with papers on travel writing, cross-cultural issues, film analysis, and illustration studies.

Stefan Čizmar is a PhD student at the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad. His current research focuses primarily on masculinity in transgressive literature and its relationship with class, sexuality, and capitalism. His master’s thesis focused on class, gender, and sexuality in Angela Carter’s novels, and he is generally interested in exploring these themes in literature, film, and TV series.

Kasparas Gaižauskas earned his bachelor’s degree from the Vilnius University Institute of Foreign languages in 2021. He currently teaches English and Spanish in a middle school and conducts linguistic research.

Cinzia Giglioni is an Associate Professor at the Department of Political Sciences, University of Rome “La Sapienza”. Her research interests range from second language acquisition to discourse analysis, especially in the context of LSP research. She has presented papers at several international conferences and symposia, and has published the results of her research in journals and edited volumes.

Nataša V. Damljanović is a teacher of English in a secondary school. She earned her PhD from the Faculty of Philology at the University of Belgrade. The title of her PhD thesis is *Space Identity in the Novels of Hanif Kureishi*. Her areas of interest include Anglo-American literature of the 20th century, postcolonial literature in English, and literary and cultural theory

Aurelija Daukšaitė-Kolpakovienė is a lecturer at Vytautas Magnus University in Lithuania. She holds a doctorate in philology and has been teaching English and various study subjects in English since 2009. Her research interests include EFL, ESP, TEFL, and other related areas. She has presented her research on these topics at various international conferences and in publications in Lithuania and abroad.

Soultana (Tania) Diamanti holds an MA in English and American Studies from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. She is an EFL teacher and scholar and is currently participating in the “Campus Narratives” project organized by the Laboratory of Narrative Research of the School of English (AUPh). Her interests concern trauma narratives, memory studies, and the immigrant experience in contemporary Anglophone literature.

Desislava Dimitrova has a Ph.D. in Modern Bulgarian Morphology and is an Assistant Professor at Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv. Dimitrova speaks Greek and also does research in Greek linguistics. She has several publications dealing with important issues in general morphology, lexical semantics, aspectology (compositional vs verbal aspect), the aspecto-temporal and nominal-determination domains – on Bulgarian, Greek, English and (recently) Georgian data.

Krasimir Kabakčiev, Dr.Sc., is the Deputy Director of the Arts, Humanities, and Education Division of Atiner (Athens Institute for Education and Research). He is the author of a theoretical model of compositional aspect, revealing the so-called inverse relationship of markers of temporal boundedness in verbs and nouns, and other universal and cross-language regularities related to the aspecto-temporal, modal, and nominal-determination domains.

Danijela Ljubojević, Ph.D., is a research associate at the Institute for Educational Research in Belgrade, Serbia. Her main area of research is the methodology of English Language Teaching (ELT) and English language learning. She has held the position of advisor to the Ministry of Education, Belgrade School District since 2017.

Melina Nikolić graduated from the Faculty of Philology at the University of Belgrade, where she also received her master’s degree and defended her doctoral dissertation. She is an associate professor of English linguistics at the Faculty of Foreign Languages at Alfa BK University. Her research

interests lie in the areas of critical discourse analysis, pragmatics and language teaching.

Vera Nikolić is a professional editor. Her academic work focuses on adaptation studies and novel to film adaptations. In 2021, she published her first paper, “Mapping Memory and Desire in *The English Patient*: A Postmodern Novel’s Adaptation to Film”. She holds a BA and MA in the English language, literature and culture from the Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade

Tijana Parezanović holds a PhD in literary studies from the University of Belgrade. As an associate professor of English studies at Alfa BK University in Belgrade, she teaches courses in British literature, translation and narrative studies. Her research interests also include new literatures in English, new media writing, and literary cartography.

Ellen Patat, PhD, holds a research grant at Sapienza Università di Roma (Italy), Department of Political Sciences. Her research focuses on the creation and the delivery of an online English language course that draws the best from both the traditional blended learning modality and the classic e-learning. Her main areas of interest are Language Teaching, EAP and ESP, and Translation Studies.

Goran Petrović, PhD, is a research associate employed at the Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade, Serbia. He has published over a dozen of papers so far in various journals, Serbian as well as foreign ones. His main areas of interest are utopian and SF literature, and English literature of the late 19th and early 20th century.

Svetozar Poštić is an associate professor at the Vilnius University Faculty of Philology in Lithuania, where he teaches courses in English language, literature and culture. He is the author of four monographs in Serbian and one in English.

Sofija Stefanović earned her BA in English from the Faculty of Philology (Belgrade University), with a 9.67/10 GPA, where she obtained her Master’s (with a 10/10 GPA and the thesis *The Language of Advertising: Stylistic Analysis of Food Commercials*). During her PhD studies, she taught at the department for five years, and now works at the Faculty of Transport and Traffic Engineering.

Nenad Tomović is an Associate Professor of English at the Faculty of Philology – University of Belgrade, where he teaches several applied linguistics and translation courses. His areas of professional interest include applied linguistics and language teaching, translation and languages in contact. His works include *Applied Linguistics and English Language Teaching* (monograph), *English is Fun* (co-author, textbook series), *Take a Chance* (co-author, textbook series) and numerous scientific papers.

Bojana Vujin teaches English and American literature at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Novi Sad. Her interests include poetry, children's literature and popular culture, and she has published extensively on these topics. She is a literary translator, the author of *Lolita on Stage: Vladimir Nabokov's Dramatic Works* and co-author of *Out of Bounds: Transgressivity in Poetry, Drama and Fiction*.

Radojka Vukčević is a Professor of American Literature in the English Department at the Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade. She has published and edited several books on American literature, including titles such as 'Faulkner and Myth,' 'In the Shadow of Myth,' 'A History of American Literature,' 'Perspectives on American Literature,' 'Literary Criticism NOW,' 'Testimony; America Through Conversations.' Additionally, she has authored numerous academic papers and several books of translations. Radojka serves on the Editorial Boards of several literary journals and is a member of various domestic and international professional associations. Her current fields of interest include tendencies in the history of American Literature and culture, as well as American literary criticism.

Aleksandra Vukelić is a language instructor at the English Department of the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade, Serbia. She holds an MA in English language, literature and culture, and is currently writing her PhD thesis on doubles in Margaret Atwood's novels. Her interests include postmodern literature, Canadian literature, the female Bildungsroman, and literary translation.

CIP - Каталогизacija y publikaciji
Народна библиотека Србије, Београд

811.111+82

BELGRADE English Language & Literature Studies

/ editor-in-chief Aleksandra V. Jovanović. - Vol. 1 (2009)- . -
Belgrade : Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade, 2009-
(Belgrade : Čigoja štampa). - 24 cm

Godišnje. - Drugo izdanje na drugom medijumu: Belgrade English
Language & Literature Studies (Online) = ISSN 1821-4827
ISSN 1821-3138 = Belgrade English Language & Literature Studies
COBISS.SR-ID 170838540

