

The ESSE Messenger



In this Issue:

Articles by ESSE Doctoral Symposium
Participants

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Foreword

The mission of the European Society for English Studies (ESSE) is to contribute to the development and improvement of society by promoting the study and understanding of English languages and linguistics, literatures in English, and the cultures of English-speaking peoples. It seeks to achieve these aims by providing a meeting point for students and scholars in the form of a federation of the associations that pursue the same goals within their specific national contexts in Europe. Founded in 1990, ESSE has achieved its goals through the organization of biennial conferences at a range of locations that reflect its geographical and cultural diversity, the fostering of international research networks, the award of prizes, grants and bursaries, the publication of the journal *EJES* (Routledge), the provision of a website (www.essenglish.org) with calls for papers and announcements of vacancies, and last but not least the dissemination of the present publication, the *ESSE Messenger*. Originally a booklet that was distributed to well over 7,000 Anglicists across Europe, it is now circulated online in pdf format, and no less avidly read. Under the visionary leadership of a series of editors, a publication that was originally conceived as a newsletter grew into a lively forum for the discussion of the urgent concerns of the ESSE community. The Editor whose last issue this is, Prof. Adrian Radu, had the inspired idea of separating the informative and the debating functions of *The Messenger* into two online strands, known as the Blog and the Journal.

One of the perennial concerns of the Board of ESSE, which brings together representatives of each of the member associations, is how the Society can improve its service to its members. A theme that began to emerge in the Board's deliberations throughout the first decade of this century was how we could help young scholars from across the continent to develop their research in such a way that, no matter what their background, their voice would be heard loud and clear in the field. In the Board's view, the major challenge faced by PhD candidates at the time was methodological, in the sense that despite asking valid questions and bringing enormous ambition and intelligence to bear, they were often held back by an inability to organize their work in a manner that would ensure reliable results. It was therefore decided that ESSE would try to help by experimenting with 'doctoral sessions', as they were then known, to be organized by Prof. Liliane Louvel at the 2012 ESSE Conference in Istanbul.

One major purpose of those sessions was to provide postgraduate students from all over Europe with a unique opportunity to meet and to compare notes. The great majority were working in relative isolation, unaware of each other's existence and interacting only with their supervisor and fellow researchers at their home location. Simply being together and interacting informally at the ESSE

Conference showed the participants that, for all their cultural and academic differences, they were in reality very much in the same boat and could profit immensely from an ongoing exchange of experiences. As for the sessions themselves, they were divided into four subdisciplinary strands, each led by two convenors, whose task was to react to each participant's presentation and to stimulate discussion in the group. The aim was for the student participants to focus not so much on the details of their research as on the general approach taken to the subject and, reflecting the Board's concerns, the methodology applied. The convenors of the various sessions were highly experienced research leaders who could draw on their skills and knowledge to assess the reliability and validity of the postgraduates' work and advise them on how to reach the very highest international standards. Since the sessions in Istanbul were a great success, the Board decided to institute this kind of facility at all future ESSE Conferences. In 2014, when it came to preparing the event for the next Conference, to be held in Košice, I was invited to take over the organization of the doctoral sessions from Prof. Louvel, who had in the interim had been voted the new President of ESSE.

The 2014 doctoral sessions were fascinating. The students had been expressly invited to resist the temptation to give a regular conference paper and instead to reflect in their presentation on how well their project was going and to focus on the difficulties they were encountering. Those who 'dared' to do this found the experience particularly rewarding: the challenges faced by a young linguist from 1,000 km away were ultimately not very different from those that were being confronted by a PhD student in literary studies. The interest in the sessions was so great that after another success in Galway in 2016, the Board decided that they should be held every year and should be renamed the ESSE Doctoral Symposium. This is the flag under which this event now flies, and it has continued as an annual event, integrated in conference years into the ESSE Conference and coinciding in other years with the ESSE Board Meeting. Even the pandemic could not suppress the momentum, with the Doctoral Symposium being held online in 2020 and 2021, and as I write these words, we are preparing the return to an on-site symposium, to be part of the 2022 ESSE Conference in Mainz. Although some details have changed, the basic format of the Symposium remains the same: a combination of social events, with plenty of opportunities to interact and form lasting connections, and, as the core activity, the sessions themselves, now divided into three strands, Literatures in English, English Language & Linguistics, and Cultural & Area Studies.¹ As the organizer of the Doctoral Symposium, I have witnessed and taken part in all the recent events. My distinct impression is that the quality of the work being done across the various strands has improved rapidly over the years and that the participants are ever more competent and confident, as well as being remarkably skilled in debate and in oral presentation. It is very encouraging to observe this upward trend in our discipline, which I also see reflected in the notable quality of the articles in this issue of *The Messenger*.

The current issue arose from an initiative of Prof. Radu's, who suggested to me that the presentations from the Doctoral Symposium could usefully find their way into the pages of *The Messenger's* Journal. I was very enthusiastic about this

¹ All necessary details can be found here: ESSE Doctoral Symposium for 2022 (<https://essenglish.org/doctoral-symposium/>).

idea, as were the participants to whom I mentioned this opportunity, but it was clear that symposium presentations, with their focus on problems and challenges, were different in nature from the kind of article that would be relevant for the Journal. So the plan was hatched to approach all past participants in the Doctoral Symposium, inviting them to submit an academic article flowing from their PhD research. The result lies before you: ten fascinating and enthusiastically written articles that reflect the entire spectrum of ESSE's fields of interest, literary, cultural and linguistic. We see young researchers boldly engaging with the complex thought of established scholars and contesting it through confrontation with data, wherever that data is drawn from. We see them taking on philosophical and theoretical ideas from past and present and showing an awareness of historical contexts and developments, as well as dimensions of place, gender and the postcolonial. And we see them using the scientific method to generate results that will contribute to combating social ills, to improving the quality of translations and to laying bare the techniques employed in the media. Fantasy, nonsense, the sublime, many such concepts and categories pass in review in this sumptuous issue. In various articles, the divide between literary and linguistic or discourse-analytical methods is specifically called into question, generating hopes for a future in which English Studies is a more integrated discipline, but a warning note is sounded, too, about what is lost if the humanities are dehumanized.

The ten authors reflect the stimulating diversity that has characterized the Doctoral Symposia. For all their many differences, English Studies has brought them together, enabling conversations that otherwise might not have taken place. It is to the enormous credit of Adrian Radu that he has provided them with a platform from which to speak to the entire discipline.

Professor J. Lachlan Mackenzie (CELGA-ILTEC, Portugal)
Organizer of the ESSE Doctoral Symposium

Leave Neverland, Fall down the Rabbit Hole

Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* [1]

Tuğçe Alkış

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Abstract: Philip Pullman's multi-layered contemporary children's fantasy fiction, *His Dark Materials*, embraces profound subjects while discussing the misconceptions of childhood. His well-known trilogy, which focuses on Lyra's adventurous journeys through the alternative worlds, employs fantasy in order to examine the problems and concerns of the contemporary world and to subvert the canonized and idealized associations with childhood innocence. The aim of this study is to discuss how Pullman's trilogy reconceptualises the dichotomy between the innocence of childhood and the maturity of adulthood and how fantasy enables us to interpret real life issues from a refreshed vantage point.

Keywords: *His Dark Materials*, children's fantasy fiction, childhood innocence, alternative worlds

Introduction

Contemporary children's fantasy fiction provides new lenses for its dual audience to refresh their worldviews. With regard to our postmodern world, it goes beyond the boundaries of the fixed definitions and explanations, reformulating its own conventions and themes. In this respect, contemporary children's fantasy demands new and broader viewpoints for its main themes like childhood innocence because "[t]he horizons of contemporary children's literature are much wider, and the world of childhood is no longer secluded and protected" (Nikolajeva 139). Today, it surpasses the romanticised aspects of childhood innocence, and discusses the popular and controversial subject: the conflict between innocence and experience.

The innocence and experience theme is at the heart of children's literature. This is mostly due to the canonized conceptualisation that innocence is the etiquette of childhood while experience is the signifier of adulthood. Therefore, the growing-up process has been associated with moving away from pureness and walking into the corrupted world. These stereotypical oppositions are constructed as the basic premises of the differences between child and adult. For a long time, children's literature has been assigned the duty of protecting children from the harms and chaos of the adult world. Thus, most children's books, like A. A. Milne's *Winnie the Pooh*, try to leave a chaotic and catastrophic world behind, for the tranquillity of childhood innocence in the fantastic worlds. The intense emphasis on the idealization and the nostalgia of childhood has also limited most children's stories to following Peter Pan's motto, *never grow up*. However, the ready-made and iconic classifications of childhood innocence are inadequate in representing children, both in real life and in fiction. This is why, as Katherine Dodou says, "contemporary fiction seeks to problematize the image of the innocent child as a

symbol of vulnerability, guiltlessness, and lack of knowledge” (240). Contemporary children’s fantasy accepts childhood as a transitory phase rather than an everlasting process. Thus, it liberates the notion of childhood from fixed representations.

Positioning childhood in the ivory tower of sacredness causes misassumptions on the notion of childhood. As Peter Hunt points out, “[i]n privileging childhood as this sort of ‘other’, we misrepresent and belittle what we are; more significantly, we belittle childhood and allow ourselves to ignore our actual knowledge of real children” (13-14). Confining children into the idealized stereotypes of angelic figures restricts their freedom to discover and comprehend the multiplicity and the profoundness of both real life and themselves. In contemporary children’s fantasy, “children have been released from [this kind of] iconography” (Ang 166) because it challenges “a sentimental notion of childhood, where happy [children] inhabit a trouble-free country and the sun is always shining” (Griswold 31). While distorting this “saccharine notion” (31) of childhood, the aim of contemporary children’s fantasy is not to create fearful places to enter. On the contrary, it enables children to recognize the difficulties and dilemmas they have already experienced in their daily lives. Through the alternative worlds of fantasy, children get the opportunity to empathise with the child protagonists in dealing with the serious problems and concerns. These challenging alternative worlds shatter the illusion that childhood is a trouble-free space, full of never-ending joy, which is shielded from the harshness of real world issues.

Contemporary children’s fantasy fiction empowers its child protagonists without encapsulating them in iconized and idealized childhood innocence. The road to the discovery of the world and the self is reinforced by the limitless alternatives and opportunities of fantasy. Fantasy provides a refreshed vantage point for children who have already been born into the chaotic and catastrophic realities of our world. As Jack Zipes explains, “fantasy enables us to gain distance from our own world and its conventions ironically so that we can become better acquainted with our own world and perhaps change it, after experiencing the other world” (189). Likewise, the experiences of the child protagonists in the alternative worlds of fantasy enable them to confront their fears and anxieties about growing up or entering the world of adults. Furthermore, the challenges and difficulties of the fantastic worlds empower the child protagonists to feel more courageous and take responsibility for themselves and their worlds. In this respect, fantasy functions as “a tool confronting rather than evading reality” (Gilead 84) for both child protagonists and the reader because it is “the frame that guarantees our access to reality, our ‘sense of reality’” (Žižek 122).

In our contemporary world, fantasy operates as one of the most significant methods for mirroring the realities of the world because “we exist in a postmodern world that is inescapably drawn to fantasy. In part, this is because the nature of contemporary life has itself become fantastical” (Falconer 76). In the hyperreality of our world, we cannot rely on certainties; instead, we live among ambiguities and ambivalences. The subversive power of fantasy enables children to adapt themselves into these complexities and dilemmas. Furthermore, the “global, intuitional language of fantasy” (Le Guin 44) offers new possibilities for comprehending real life issues. While contemporary fantasy fiction encourages both the child protagonists and the reader to discover the ambivalences of real life

issues, it also challenges the idealizations and misconceptions about childhood, giving a voice to them so they can express their individuality and discover their self-expression. In this respect, this study aims to show how children's fantasy fiction subverts the fixed definitions and idealizations of childhood innocence and how fantasy enables children to comprehend real life issues through the alternative worlds. This study focuses on Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* to interpret the concerns and problems of our world in relation to the theme of innocence and experience.

Reformulating the Notion of Innocence and Experience through Fantasy

The sentimentalised and privileged status of childhood over adulthood creates extreme dichotomies between childhood innocence and adulthood experience. Contemporary children's fantasy fiction criticizes most of the conventions of previous periods, like the extreme idealization of childhood as a time of sacredness and unquestionable pureness. Like most contemporary children's fantasy novels, *His Dark Materials* subverts the never-grow-up story of Neverland and follows Tolkien's idea that "[c]hildren are meant to grow up, not to become Peter Pans" (45). Therefore, the eleven-year-old female protagonist, Lyra, curiously delves into the challenging adventures as a road to maturation, experience and wisdom. Her quest for self-discovery, beyond sterilized and protected places, distorts the idea of confining children to domesticity and passivity for protection. While Pullman liberates his protagonist both to discover her sense of self and gain awareness and experience in the alternative worlds, he also profoundly touches on essential real-life issues like child abuse, environmental problems and the misuse of power and knowledge. He never undermines the children's capacity to discover new possibilities and to enhance their worldviews. Instead, he tries to show that childhood is not a phase of everlasting journey and growing up can be a difficult but necessary path for children to follow in order to create a better future for themselves. Therefore, Pullman centres his story on "Lyra's world-changing regenerative 'fall'" (Oram 419), which urges the necessity of leaving childhood behind and entering the world of experience.

The trilogy starts in Lyra's alternative world which has unfamiliar and extraordinary elements but closely examines real life issues. Lyra's Oxford depicts real life problems, like child abuse in the Station, Bolvangar and the misuse of power by such corrupted institutions as the church, The Magisterium. Pullman's trilogy tells an alternative Fall story in which he discusses the innocence and experience theme. This metaphoric Fall symbolizes gaining wisdom and experience instead of death, damnation and original sin. Pullman reformulates Milton's *Paradise Lost* and introduces Lyra as the new Eve. Thus, Lyra is destined to cause the Fall again with the male child protagonist, Will. Pullman reconceptualises the story of Fall as the revival of freethinking, consciousness and "as the actual beginning of true human freedom" (Glanzer 167). Moreover, this concept of the Fall is based on "Kleist's optimistic view - sometimes called 'the fortunate fall'" (Lenz 125). In this way, Pullman constructs a rivalry between the representations of the Fall as a chance and the Fall as damnation. In the trilogy,

the church accepts the Fall as the source of original sin and an assassin, Father Gomez, is assigned to kill Lyra since she is considered a betrayer by the church. The members of the church think that “How much better for [them] all if there had been a Father Gomez in the garden of Eden! [People] would have never left paradise” (Pullman, *His Dark Materials* 706). The devout aim of the church is to prevent the revival of awareness and consciousness by even killing a child.

In Lyra’s world, the Oblation Board of the church does not hesitate to endanger children’s lives in the name of protecting the world from another damnation. In the Experimental Station, Bolvangar, children become the victims of pseudo-scientific experiments, searching for Dust, which is believed to be “the physical evidence for original sin” (314) by the Magisterium. However, Dust refers to the “particles of consciousness” (428), which indicates a threat for the authority of the church. The Dust is unattractive to children until they gain sexual awareness in adolescence which refers to the revival of individuation and self-awareness, and a road from inexperience to maturity. The rebelliousness of adolescence jeopardizes both the control and the authority of the church. In Lyra’s world, each person has a daemon which “is a visual representation of one’s inner essence, personality, or emotions” (Greenwell 103). In the experiments of Bolvangar, children are severed from their daemons before they become adolescents; before they become attracted to Dust. The daemon is an essential part of self, thus severing a daemon from his/her person can seriously endanger both lives. As Santiago Colás says, “[d]estroying the invisible bond that links daemon to human, intercision reduces the human to something like an automaton and the daemon to an equally unlively” (52) creature.

The Oblation Board of the church manipulates the children’s inexperienced presence under the pretense of saving them from damnation and corruption. The daemons of the severed children are kept “[i]n a series of glass cases [...] [and] ghostlike forms of cats, or birds, or rats, or other creatures, each [is] bewildered and frightened and as pale as smoke” (222). The cruel imprisonments of the daemons reveal the devout purpose of the Oblation Board to restrain children from their authenticity and freedom. They disregard how much their actions harm the children. Children suffer after losing their connection with their daemons; and this pain and depression can cause their death. For example, Lyra encounters a little boy who cannot endure the pain and the depression of being detached from his daemon. He tries to lessen his pain by “clutch[ing] a piece of fish to him [...] that [is] all he [has], a piece of dried fish” (183). He is like “[a] human being with no daemon [...] like someone without a face, [...] something unnatural and uncanny that belong[s] to the world of night-ghosts, not the waking world of sense” (184). This incident clearly exemplifies the extreme cruelty of sacrificing children in order to prevent the spread of Dust. Pullman shows how such corrupted institutions are afraid of losing their absolute authority and panopticon control of people. Dust, the symbol of consciousness and wisdom, threatens the omnipotent power of the church in Lyra’s world. For this reason, the members of the Oblation Board want to stop Lyra from regenerating the Fall, which will enable the spread of Dust. While Pullman emphasizes that “[w]ithout consciousness, [Dust], the universe will lose the capacity for freedom necessary for human existence” (Oram 422-423), he equally depicts child abuse in institutions which try to legitimize their practices for the sake of trouble-free and

sterilized lives, distanced from the damned corruption. The head of the Oblation Board, Mrs Coulter, explains and justifies their practices and experiments by saying that “the doctors do it for the children’s own good[.] [...] Dust is something bad, something wrong, something evil and wicked. Grown-ups and their dæmons are infected with Dust so deeply that it’s too late for them. They can’t be helped” (240). This belief is very similar to the Puritan belief that children are “young souls to be saved, or, more probably, damned” (Townsend 6). Therefore, children should be protected from evilness and wickedness of the corrupted adult world. In this respect, the members of the Oblation Board stick to the belief that they are protecting children, that “a quick operation on children means they’re safe from it. Dust just won’t stick to them ever again. They’re safe and happy” (240). This depicted pseudo-happiness of children actually ensures the redemption of the church; preventing the church from losing its control by creating the puppets to follow its orders and regulations. If children are infected by Dust, they can work to increase awareness and consciousness for people. For that reason, the members of the Oblation Board actually try to eliminate any risks that could endanger their authority and lessen the power of their ideas.

In order to maintain control, Bolvangar also runs like a boarding school and uses manipulations to cover their ill-practices. Children are kept busy with activities created to make them feel safe and ensure that children will have trouble-free lives. However, Bolvangar is actually the centre of cruelty and danger. With their manipulations, they seek to diminish the children into submissive and docile bodies that follow all their regulations without question. For example, Mrs Coulter tries to convince Lyra that their practices are for the sake of their happiness and safety by saying, “at the age we call puberty, [...] dæmons bring all sorts of troublesome thoughts and feelings[.] [...] A quick little operation before that, and you’re never troubled again. And your dæmon stays with you, [...] like a wonderful pet, if you like (241). However, entering puberty is not dangerous for children but it is threatening for those in power. In this respect, Pullman utilizes Bolvangar to highlight the exploitation of childhood immaturity and the misconception of childhood innocence as submissiveness and passivity. Lyra’s fantastic world reveals the abuse and the misuse of power under the cover of good intentions and creating a happy land for children.

While Pullman shows how childhood innocence has been misinterpreted and manipulated, he also points out that childhood is not exempt from guilt and children are inclined towards evil and cruelty. In their journey to the alternative world Cittagazze, Lyra and Will encounter some cruel children who have sticks in their hands and are throwing stones at a cat. In Cittagazze, the children are all alone in this threatening city because it has been haunted by “soul-eaters” (Lenz 141), Spectres, which only attack adults. They emerge as a result of the adults’ selfish mistakes and thus Cittagazze has descended into a wasteland. “It [is] like a playground the size of a city, with not a teacher in sight; it [is] a world of children” (588). The children, in their abandonment and loneliness, are haunted by cruelty and hatred. These children are very similar to William Golding’s schoolboys in *Lord of the Flies*. In the absence of adult guidance, they turn into savages like Golding’s schoolboys who are driven into cruelty and violence. Similar to Golding, Pullman portrays human nature as both evil and good; and he highlights that children are not exempt from the innate inclination for evil in

human nature. When Lyra sees the cruelty of children in Cittagazze, she is so surprised. However, that incident is so normal for Will, who is familiar with the cruel side of children. In Will's world, children dislike his mother because of her actions, resulting from her mental health problems. Will explains that "They [torment] her just like those kids" (572) who torment the cat in Cittagazze. For that reason, Will has "never trusted children any more than grown-ups. They're just as keen to do bad things" (573). Here Pullman distorts the idealization of childhood as a pure and guilt-free phase. As Sarah K. Cantrell points out:

[C]hildhood is no less complicated nor less ethically questionable than adulthood. That children of Cittagazze resort to barbarity [...] indicates the limitations of the adult/child binary Pullman's narrative so frequently interrogates. Readers who approach fantasy seeking to return to childlike naïveté or who ignore the cruelty of which all humans of all ages are capable will be sorely disillusioned (314-315).

Pullman employs both the subversive and reformulating power of fantasy to discuss the different connotations of childhood innocence and the constructed dichotomy between innocence and experience. He shows us that fantasy actually distorts the illusions of idealizations instead of creating illusions to deceive us. Therefore, Pullman encourages both his child protagonists and the reader to follow the labyrinths of the alternative worlds in order to comprehend the complexities of the real world.

Lyra, as a rebellious and courageous girl, is willing to follow the rabbit hole to learn more both about herself and the world. Pullman empowers Lyra, as the new Eve, to fall down the fruitfulness of experience and wisdom. Lyra's and Will's last journey is to the world mulefa. In this world, they "repeat the original decision of Adam and Eve to seek full understanding and consciousness" (Tucker 90), becoming aware of their feelings for each other. Dr Mary Malone, a physicist who searches on dark matter or Dust, plays the role of the serpent for children. As the serpent, she is responsible for guiding Will and Lyra to leave the Neverland of childhood behind and follow the serpent to enter adulthood. Pullman's choice of using a scientist to be the serpent of awareness and temptation reveals his aim to recreate or reformulate his version of the Fall story, which indicates "a refusal to lament the loss of innocence" (Pullman, Introduction 10). The mulefa world is Pullman's version of Eden and in this world, the Fall story refers to "wakefulness" (834) and to the revival of consciousness:

[T]he snake said What do you know? What do you remember? What do you see ahead?" And she said, "Nothing, nothing, nothing. So the snake said Put your foot through the hole in the seed-pod where I was playing, and you will become wise. So she put a foot in where the snake had been. And the oil entered her foot and made her see more clearly than before, and the first thing she saw was the sraf (834-835).

In this version, Eve's fall is not the cause of the expulsion from the Garden of Eden but it is the celebration of gaining consciousness and knowledge. The serpent plays its role not as a devil but as a guide to direct Eve to the sraf or Dust in the mulefa world. As Rebekah Fitzsimmons says, this "is the beginning of history and memory, a coming into self-consciousness and awareness" (222). Pullman deconstructs the Christian version of the Fall as damnation. He emphasizes that "The story of Adam and Eve seems to [him] the fundamental myth of why we are

as we are.” (Pullman, “The Writing of Stories” 36). Therefore, the Fall is not only significant for Lyra’s and Will’s self-awareness and authenticity but it also means the awakening of the shared consciousness for all humanity.

Pullman makes both the new Eve and the new Adam responsible for making the universe better. Their love for each other functions as a remedy for fixing the results of people’s exploitations. For example; the mulefa “have taken care of the world. [...] [However,] the trees began to sicken [...] and some of them died” (842). When the new Eve and the new Adam become aware of their love, their fall enables “[t]he terrible flood of Dust in the sky [to stop] flowing” (1045) and in this way, the harmony of nature flourishes again in the mulefa world. This metaphoric Fall symbolizes love, wisdom and consciousness and “lead[s]/[t]o happier life, knowledge of good and evil” (Milton 226). Lyra and Will, who are not children anymore, are ready to “establish a new order based on truth, honesty and love” (Tucker 90). Therefore, Pullman makes his protagonists return to their homes, leaving behind the Eden-like mulefa world. After Lyra’s and Will’s “heightened consciousnesses promise a richer and more rewarding perception of” (Greenwell 116) the universe, they realize that they have to establish a hopeful future for both themselves and for their own worlds. As Geoff Robson states, “They are [...] given the hard choice of leaving their new found happiness and returning to their separate worlds, to build the Republic of Heaven. Their love for each other must be sacrificed to a greater love for humanity” (89). The Republic of Heaven represents hope and new order for all humanity. While Pullman empowers his protagonists to reformulate the Fall story as a chance for maturation, wisdom and consciousness, he also employs his alternative worlds to highlight the serious real life problems and the necessity for taking responsibility for the future of our world.

Conclusion

Contemporary children’s fantasy fiction takes children with their complexities and ambivalences and it challenges the canonized and idealized conventions of childhood innocence. Similarly, Phillip Pullman’s trilogy reacts against the idealizations of childhood innocence, which imprison the individuality and the freedom of the children into glass coffins. He emphasizes that children cannot discover their sense of self and cannot enhance their perspectives about the world unless they follow the path to maturation. He believes that “if we are going to do any good in the world, we have to leave childhood behind.” (Pullman, Introduction 10) In this respect, he constructs his metaphorical Fall story in order to both criticise the idealization of childhood innocence as sacredness and to emphasize the necessity of growing up.

In *His Dark Materials*, Pullman employs the alternative worlds to enable both Lyra and the reader to explore and question the problems and concerns of their worlds. Moreover, the challenging and difficult adventures of these fantastic worlds pave the way to gain self-awareness, consciousness and wisdom. He celebrates the growing-up process because the idealized Neverland actually diminishes children into passivity and subservience. Therefore, he centres his

story on a fantastic journey; a departure from the inexperienced phase of life to mature self-awareness.

Note

[1] This article is based on my unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, "Alternative Representations of Reality in Contemporary Children's Fantasy Fiction: Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*".

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"Free, equal lords of the triumphed world"

Cornelius Tacitus and George Buchanan in Ben Jonson's *Sejanus His Fall*

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Abstract: The argument of this paper is centred on early modern Tacitism and emergent political theory in Ben Jonson's England and his play *Sejanus His Fall*. Early modern political theory displayed a shift from a Christian humanist framework to what has been termed as Tacitean politics. In this paper, I will be discussing how Ben Jonson's *Sejanus His Fall* comments on current political affairs via contemporary Tacitism and particularly George Buchanan's political theory, especially his oeuvre *De Jure Regni Apud Scotos; A Dialogue Concerning the Rights of the Crown in Scotland*. Jonsonian scholarship has successfully discussed Ben Jonson's sources and focused mainly on the famous Flemish influence of Justus Lipsius's Tacitism but has overlooked George Buchanan's thought and his importance in the drama of Ben Jonson and his play *Sejanus His Fall*.

Key words: Sejanus, Tacitism, Buchanan, political philosophy, early modern politics, James I

The argument of this paper is centred on early modern Tacitism and emergent political theory in Ben Jonson's England and his play *Sejanus His Fall*. Early modern political theory displayed a shift from a Christian humanist framework to what later came to be known as Tacitean politics. Tacitean politics, being part of a changing political landscape, broke with the traditional political framework that relied mostly on a Ciceronian/Aristotelean paradigm along with a Christian background. Therefore, in what follows, I will be discussing how Ben Jonson's *Sejanus His Fall* comments on current political affairs via contemporary Tacitism and particularly George Buchanan's political theory, especially his oeuvre *De Jure Regni Apud Scotos; A Dialogue Concerning the Rights of the Crown in Scotland*.¹ My primary goal in this paper is to address the centrality of George Buchanan to Ben Jonson's reading of Jacobean politics—that has been dismissed. Jonsonian scholarship has successfully discussed Ben Jonson's sources and focused mainly on the famous Flemish influence of Justus Lipsius's Tacitism. The radical theories of George Buchanan have been overlooked. All the scholarly attention has been

¹ It is worth noting at the start of the paper that George Buchanan has been classified as one of the most radical political theorists of his time, especially in light of the political convulsion taking place in Scotland and England. His name came to be associated mostly with notions of Tyrannicide and regicide after his rebellion against Mary Queen of Scots. His political theory, however, was a popular one, calling for equity and justice, popular sovereignty. His theory came as a reaction to the permanent contemporary call for obeying tyrants and not rebelling against at any cost—including theorists like the Italian Francesco Guicciardini and the French Jean Bodin, who relied on the works of Cornelius Tacitus and fashioned themselves as Tacitists.

paid to the Flemish source of Ben Jonson's plays, *viz.* Justus Lipsius. Therefore, in this paper, I will be discussing the Scottish source of Ben Jonson's play and his importance in the understanding of his texts.

The political thought of late sixteenth and early seventeenth century continental Europe displayed an unprecedented revival of classical theories of the state, and particularly Greco-Roman political philosophies. The revival of classics was not merely part of the Renaissance project that sought to bring back the spectres of the ancients, or part of an antiquarian quest or an appreciation of ancient history. Rather, or most probably, a stifling dissatisfaction with the contemporary political affairs brought back the ghosts of the ancients including *inter alia* Cornelius Tacitus, Cicero, Seneca, and Livy.

Ancient philosophies started filtering through early modern political theories. History of the state, the city republics, and 'Roman monarchy' became familiar to contemporaries, students, courtiers, political philosophers, and commoners alike. Translations of ancient texts to different languages and the different editions provided an outline of their importance to contemporaries.² Political philosophy was the subject of contemporary drama as I will be showing later in this paper.

An extensive body of political literature negotiating contemporary politics started to emerge. Elizabethan *fin-de-siècle* and early Jacobean political theory departed from the earlier humanist Christian tradition that initially relied on the works and translations of Cicero. Cornelius Tacitus became the protagonist of early modern political philosophy, and hence the emergence of early modern Tacitism. Before the rise of Tacitism, the works of Cicero were the main guides of princes and political theorists. Ciceronian politics is chiefly based on equity and the rule of law. Ciceronian political theory, in this regard, is based on the notion of natural law:

As Cicero has taught us... law is the rational norm of human life. Though we say that law is a human creation, in fact true law comes from nature and as such its origin is ultimately divine. No human law can be called a true law if it violates the highest norm of equity, which is *the precept of eternal reason*. The task of political reason is that of introducing measure, proportion and justice into the human world - a task accomplished through law, which is the arrangement and the rule of political reason (*poliricae rationis institutio atque preceptio*). (Origins, Viroli 5)

Politics was, then, understood as the art of *preserving* the state without eclipsing the pursuit of virtues, justice, and equity. The Ciceronian tradition, or in other

² See Peter Burke's article "Tacitism, Scepticism, and Reason of State" where he talks about Tacitus and his importance: "The statistics of editions, translations, and commentaries provide a mere outline of his influence" (488). Andras Kiséry, also, comments, in *Hamlet's Moment*, on how politics and the political shift to Tacitism, to which reason of state is a central concept, became discussed not only in courts and private spheres, rather, it became a topic of discussion to nobles and commoners alike, signalling a transition in the understanding and practice of politics *per se*. Everyone became involved "in the culture of news, as a setting for an often raucous and scandalous discussion of the secrets of politics, of the reason of state" (13) in 'coffeehouses' and taverns.

words, the Christian humanist discourse can be merely defined as ‘ruling’ or governing “*selon raison et selon justice*.”³ It relies on a repertoire of maxims that ensure liberty and freedom of the subjects, as they have always been in the city republics. The rise of Tacitism, however, marked a shift from the Ciceronian traditional framework that started waning with the earlier Elizabethan republicanism and ended with Jacobean politics.

The transition from the Christian humanist discourse of politics to Tacitism can be read as an articulation of responses to the question of the contemporary context. In the age of absolute monarchs, Tacitism as an alternative to the Ciceronian traditional framework becomes, in fact, urgent and essential.⁴

Tacitism and Early Modern Political Thought

Early modern Tacitism does not merely refer to the works of Cornelius Tacitus. The majority of early modern political body of literature that emerged on how to rule and how to preserve a state can be grouped under the rubric term or concept Tacitism, or rather described as Tacitean. Early modern political thought, in the light of contemporary absolutism and monarchy, turned to the Tacitean alternative. Similarly, to early modern Tacitists, Tacitus’ writings are initially hard to classify:

The political opinions of Cornelius Tacitus are not easy to discern. As the greatest modern authority has remarked, ‘Tacitus gives little away’... His ironic manner reveals a contempt for flattery and other forms of servility and also a certain impatience with theory but leaves ambiguous his attitude to the Roman monarchy. Although he obviously disliked what went with it, Tacitus may well have regarded the institution as the lesser evil. As a result of his ambiguity he could be claimed as an ally by both the opponents and the supporters of monarchy in early modern Europe, the ‘red’ and the ‘black’ Tacitists, as they were called in an essay published in Italy not long after the First World War. (Burke 484)

Although many early modern theorists use Tacitean philosophy as a defence of authority, including Francesco Guicciardini or Jean Bodin, Tacitus’ theory was mainly used as an anti-absolutism argument, particularly onstage as I will be showing later. Francesco Guicciardini argues, or rather advises⁵ in his *Maxims and Reflections*: “If You want to know what the thoughts of tyrants are, read in Cornelius Tacitus the last conversations of the dying Augustus with Tiberius” and

³ Proverbial reference to ruling or governing *according to reason and justice*.

⁴ See Richard Tuck’s *Government and Philosophy* (1993). In “The Beginnings of Tacitism,” Tuck introduces the revival of Tacitism in early modern Europe (39). In fact, in the general continental context of tyranny and absolutism and English context with the fear and anxiety from the rule of James I, Ciceronian politics are no longer adequate. Reviving the works of Tacitus in this context become understanding and emergent. Drama has appropriated these topics and has equally become a topic of studying early modern political thought.

⁵ The generic term *advice for rulers* or *mirror for princes* (also the German *Furstenpiegel*) refers to books written and collected to rulers as ‘guidebooks’ on how to rule. See Herbert Grabes’ *The mutable glass: mirror-imagery in titles and texts of the Middle Ages and English Renaissance* (1982).

that Tacitus "teaches those who live under tyrants how to live and act prudently; just as he teaches tyrants ways to secure their tyranny" (44; 45). Other theorists, however, rejected it all at once and considered Tacitism as a political degeneration, as did Botero:

Among the things that I have observed, I have been greatly astonished to find reason of state a constant subject of discussion and to hear the opinions of Niccolò Machiavelli and Cornelius Tacitus frequently quoted: the former for his precepts relating to the rule and governments of peoples, the latter for his live description of the arts employed by the Emperor Tiberius in acquiring and retaining the imperial title of Rome... I was amazed that so impious an author and so wicked a tyrant should be held in such esteem that they are thought to provide ideal examples of the methods by which states be governed and administered; and I was moved to indignation rather amazement to find that this barbarous mode of government had won such acceptance. (Botero xiii)

In addition to the moderate voice of the Italian Giovanni Botero, master of *Raison d'État*,⁶ other theorists went more radical in spelling out the *vox populi*, including most importantly George Buchanan, who contrary to Tacitists, called for rebellion to the extent of tyrannicide, as I will be showing later in this paper. George Buchanan invested in the stage as well and wrote Tacitean plays including *Jephthes* and *Baptistes*. Buchanan's theories were, also, negotiated onstage as I will be showing in this paper.

In this regard, all these political views were articulated and negotiated onstage. Early modern plays brought to the stage figures like Tiberius, Sejanus, Caligula, Caesar, Nero, and the world's most famous tyrants.⁷ The text under

⁶ *Raison d'État* or Reason of State can be defined as *the preservation of the state*. Political philosophers writing on the theory include Niccolò Machiavelli, Justus Lipsius, Francesco Guicciardini, Jean Bodin, and George Buchanan. However, they did not write on Reason of State *ex nihilo*. They relied on writings of classical authors including mainly Cornelius Tacitus, inspiring, hence, the rise of early modern Tacitism. Reason of state can be defined as the means rulers employ so as to preserve the state, to put it in a very neutral way. The state, in this regard, becomes the highest of all goods.

For a thorough understanding of the concept the following texts can be checked: Ernest H. Kantorowicz's "Mysteries of State: An Absolutist Concept and Its Late Mediaeval Origins," Peter Burke's "Tacitism, Scepticism, and Reason of State," Yves Charles Zarka's *Raison et déraison d'État : Théoriciens et théories de la Raison d'État aux xvi^e et xvii^e siècles*, Maurizio Viroli's *From Politics to Reason of State: the Acquisition and Transformation of the Language of Politics 1250-1600*, Richard Tuck's *Philosophy and Government*, and many others. The following volumes can, also, be checked : Botero's *Della Ragion di Stato* (1589), Machiavelli (*The Prince* 1532), Francesco Guicciardini (*Ricordi* 1530), Jean Bodin (*Six Books of the Commonwealth* 1576), and Justus Lipsius (*Politica : Six Books of Politics or Political Instruction* 1589).

⁷ Burke talks about the central themes of early modern drama and particularly tragedies by saying that "It was this sense of the political relevance of Tacitus to an age of powerful favourites, absolute monarchs and civil wars which accounts for the growing interest in his writings in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries" and that "Both Jonson and Lohenstein acknowledged their debts in their notes, Lohenstein citing Tacitus more than 200 times altogether, while Jonson referred to him 59 times in the notes to the first act of *Sejanus*. It is scarcely an exaggeration to claim that the true subject of these plays is reason of state, a phrase which Jonson was one of the first Englishmen to use" (488).

study, Ben Jonson's *Sejanus His Fall*, hereafter *Sejanus*, retells the history of the world's most famous tyrants.

Before moving further, it is necessary to briefly define Tacitism. As mentioned earlier in the paper, Tacitism does not refer to the works of Cornelius Tacitus *per se*, but rather an early modern intellectual fashion. Ferenc Hörcher says:

The term Tacitism does not relate to the historical figure of a Roman author with that name, but refers to an early modern, late humanist intellectual "fashion", which had such a dominant influence, and the name of the concrete author was only used here as a label, as an argument of authority. . . this term referred to that political literature which appeared in the period after the Renaissance, "in which the forbidden name of Machiavelli was replaced by that of Tacitus, who was not at all problemless, but who was regarded acceptable according to contemporary court standards." (196)

Works of Cornelius Tacitus have been translated and widely circulated in early modern continental Europe, paving the way for the new political thought to be shaped. Peter Burke argues, in this regard, that the "interest in Tacitus as a political writer spread rapidly in the later sixteenth century. Between 1580 and 1700, more than 100 authors wrote commentaries on Tacitus, and the majority of these commentaries were political ones" (484).

The emergence of Tacitism can be read as part of the more general political context. Writings on the state became vogueish. The transition to Tacitism marked, also, a departure from the looming moralism of the Ciceronian political discourse. The new body of political literature on the state, ways to rule, and secrets of the state, or rather *arcana imperii*, freed itself from the ethical aspect that used to be dominant in political thought and praxis, to embrace instead new political dogmas including, for instance, the *uso dictum*, constancy, and prudence.

Early modern political theorists did not only rely on the works of the ancients, but rather developed their own early modern political episteme. Early modern drama, tragedies and Histories, in particular, directed their attention to the emerging political thought. It would be scarcely an exaggeration to claim the central theme of the plays, and particularly the play under study, *Sejanus*, is negotiating contemporary political thought. Ben Jonson, an ardent history reader, chooses history's most famous tyrants, and Tacitus' most celebrated tyrants in his *Annals* by contemporaries, as characters for his plays—Tiberius, Nero, Caligula, and Sejanus. Scholarly attention has been mainly paid to Ben Jonson's major sources, *viz.* Tacitus and Justus Lipsius. In the following part, I will be reading the play in the light of George Buchanan's political theory that has been generally dismissed as marginal.

However, I would like to address the importance of Ben Jonson's play in particular. Choosing the most famous character in early modern and Tacitist political thought, Tiberius in particular and Sejanus, Caligula, and Nero, should not go unnoticed.

Tacitism and the Loss of Liberties

The play opens with the Sabinus and Silius morning the loss of liberties, setting, therefore, the Tacitean tone to the play:

We, that (within these foreshore years) were born
Free, equal lords of the triumphed world,
And knew no masters, but affections,
To which betraying our first liberties,
We since then became slaves to one man's lusts;
And now to many. Every minist'ring spy
That will accuse and swear is lord of you,
Of me, of all, our fortunes, and our lives.
Our looks are called to question, and our words,
How innocent soever, are made crimes;
We shall not shortly dare to tell our dreams,
Or think, but t'will be trason. (I. 1. 59-69)

Sabinus and Silius lament not only the loss of liberties, but also the claustrophobic ambience in court. The play opens with its characters describing the transition from the "lost liberties" in the republic to a present of tyranny, hypocrisy, spies, sycophants, and flatterers. The two characters, therefore, reject the Tacitean narrative that advises against rebellion against tyranny or tyrants and absolutism. Francesco Guicciardini, a Tacitist, also, advises subjects to read Tacitus and to behave in accordance to the tyrant's wishes in his *Ricordi*: "Cornelius Tacitus teaches those who live under tyrants how to live and act prudently; just as he teaches tyrants ways to secure their tyranny" (45). He adds:

The tyrant will make every effort to discover your views and to know whether you are content with his government. He will observe your movements, he will pump those who talk with you, he will discuss various things with you, proposing questions and asking your opinion. If you want to hide your thoughts, you must guard yourself with great care against the means he uses. You must not use terms that might arouse suspicion; you must watch what you say even to your close friends... If you are a man of rank who lives under a bloody and bestial tyrant, there is little good advice anyone can give you except to go into exile. But if the tyrant behaves decently, either out of prudence or necessity, or because of the circumstances of his position, you should strive to be highly respected and to be thought courageous but of a quiet nature, not anxious to change things unless forced. In that case, the tyrant will treat you gently and try not to give you any cause to think of making innovations. But he would not do that if he thought you were restless. In that case, knowing you would not keep still no matter what he did, he would be forced to look for an occasion to extinguish you. (115-116)

Sabinus and Silius seem to ignore the Tacitean dictum—of prudence and that of not opposing a tyrant. The play, therefore, opens with a political dialogue par excellence that criticizes a contemporary political trend/argument, that of not opposing tyrants and obeying them. The setting is already introduced as stifling and claustrophobic. Characters cannot freely express their political opinions, which aligns with Guicciardini's maxims on how to live under a tyrant. Arruntius, on the other hand, joins them and goes further by blaming himself and the other subjects for submitting to the tyrant's grip:

Times? The men,
 The men are not the same: 'tis we are base,
 Poor, and degenerate from th'exalted strain
 Of our great fathers. Where is now the soul
 Of god-like Cato?—he, that durst be good
 When Caesar durst be evil; and had power,
 As not to live his slave, to die his master. (I. 1. 87-92)

After Sabinus and Silius spell out their dissatisfaction with the current political affairs, Arruntius joins them and action starts to take place. The first act provides its readers/audience with the transition that took place in contemporary political thought, which the characters describe as a *degeneration*; from liberty to slavery; from the republic to the tyranny of one person; from a celebrated political moralism to utility; briefly from a Ciceronian to a Tacitean political framework. Read in its contemporary context, this transition or 'degeneration' can be understood in two ways. The degeneration can first refer to the very similar degeneration that took place in early modern England and continental Europe in general. Similar to the Roman past, early modern politics departed from its earlier traditional Christian framework adopted mainly by the quattrocento humanists to rather submit to a different political reality that necessitated breaking with political moralism and espousing a Tacitean framework. Whether it is a degeneration or a progressive transition is debatable.⁸

Sabinus, Silius, Arruntis, and Cordus, whose *Annals* in reference to Tacitus were burnt,⁹ in this regard, can be read as the voice of contemporaries who were dissatisfied with the current political affairs and regard it as a degeneration. Their opinions reverberate with contemporary ones including Botero who "have been greatly astonished to find... the opinions of Niccolô Machiavelli and Cornelius Tacitus frequently quoted... and I was moved to indignation rather amazement to find that this barbarous mode of government had won such acceptance" (Botero xiii). However, the characters evoke the more radical views of George Buchanan as I will be showing in the next part.

⁸ See Maurizio Viroli who problematizes the transition in light of the emergent political discourse of reason of state in his article "The Origin and Meaning of Reason of State" by saying: "If we go back to the question that I raised at the outset of this paper, namely why political philosophers constructed and put into use the locution 'ragione di state', we can answer that they did it because they needed a new concept of reason apt to excuse derogations from moral and civil law imposed by the necessity to preserve or expand states understood as dominions... It marked the beginnings of what has been aptly called 'the politics of the moderns' as opposed to 'the politics of the ancients', that is the view that politics is simply the art of pursuing, securing, expanding power, not, as the ancients and their naive humanist followers seemed (or pretended) to believe, the art of founding and preserving a republic. Whether the transition from the former to the latter conception of politics should be regarded as an intellectual progress or as a decay is a highly contested matter, but it cannot be denied that the transition, did indeed take place; and it began when those two words, reason and state were put together" (Viroli 73).

⁹ It can also be a reference to contemporary censorship. Dramatists always used a medium to negotiate contemporary politics, including the setting of the play.

George Buchanan and the Loss of Liberties

The characters' opinion on the current political affairs strongly reverberate with George Buchanan's political theory, particularly in his *De Jure Regni Apud Scotos; A Dialogue Concerning the Rights of the Crown in Scotland*. Buchanan comments on the legitimacy of the law and the king's power:

B.—The law then is paramount to the king, and serves to direct and moderate his passions and actions.

M.—That is a concession already made.

B.—Is not then the voice of the people and of the law the same?

M.—The same.

B.—Which is the more powerful, the people or the law?

M.—The whole people, I imagine.

B.—Why do you entertain that idea?

M.—Because the people is the parent, or at least the author of the law, and has the power of its enactment or repeal at pleasure. (67-68)

Similarly, Silius comments on the use of law under tyrants as a mere "form" (III. 250).

Ben Jonson starts the play with drawing parallels between the past and the present. Tacitus' portrayals of tyrants appealed to those who opposed James I's absolutism, including Ben Jonson who chooses Tiberius as a central character for his play. A parallel between Tiberius and James I is not surprising. Jacobeans feared the would-be-tyrant James I, and, hence, tyranny has been the subject of early modern theatre. As Peter Burke claims, for a better understanding of early modern politics and political thought, or rather "for the colouring" as he puts, one can turn to the dramas (488). Ben Jonson stages a play of history's most famous tyrant and displays political violence to the contemporary audience. The play shows that tyranny ends up by ending itself. The more violent it is, the more violent the tyrant's end would be. The mob's destruction of Sejanus' statue, despite the horrors that occurred throughout the play, presents a radical voice, similar to that of George Buchanan where he calls for tyrannicide:

Therefore, when you take refuge under the shelter of the obedience supposed to be due to all tyrants, because God, by his prophet, commanded his own people to obey a single tyrant, your ears will immediately ring with an opposite cant, that all tyrants ought to be slain by their own subjects, because Ahab was, by divine command, murdered by the general of his own forces. Therefore I advise you either to provide from Scripture some stronger bulwark for your tyrants, or to set it aside for the present, and to return to the schools of philosophers. (58)

At the start of the play, the characters express their dissatisfaction with the current political affairs as well as the emergent political thought they describe as decadent. The characters, and therefore the play, do allude to a lost republican past. The reference to Cato's death and Brutus throughout the play points to the corruption of present times under James I. Silius' last words before stabbing himself are the following:

The coward and the valiant man must fall;
Only the cause, and manner how, discerns them,
Which then are gladdest, when they cost us dearest.

Romans, if any be here in this Senate,
Would know to mock Tiberius' tyranny,
Look upon Silius, and so learn to die. (I. 334-339)

Silius, a stoic republican, in his imitation of Cato, invites Romans, if there be any, not to succumb to the tyrannies of the time. Before his death, he launches a diatribe on law under tyrants, evoking both the Ciceronian subtext and Buchanan's reflections on the law:

Silius.
What am I? speak.
Varro.
An enemy to the state.
Silius.
Because I am an enemy to thee,
And such corrupted ministers o' the state,
That here art made a present instrument
To gratify it with thine own disgrace. (III.234-237)

And,

I not know
Minion Sejanus hates me: and that all,
This boast of law, and law, is but a form,
A net of Vulcan's filing, a mere engine,
To take that life by a pretext of justice,
Which you pursue in malice. (III. 243-248)

Silius' commentary on the law as a tool used by tyrants only to further preserve their rule reverberates with Buchanan's criticism of the law. Ben Jonson, through Silius, almost quotes Buchanan verbatim when he depicts the law as "mere cobwebs, which entangle flies, and leave a free passage to large insects" (72). His death evokes a stoic subtext. Silius is portrayed as a noble Roman who accepts his verdict. His last words are a criticism of Tacitism and Tacitean politics that seek only the preservation of the state, tyranny, or one's rule at the expense of its subjects and their freedom. The law in such cases becomes a tool for tyranny. In voicing the theories of George Buchanan, both Silius and the play offer a reading of the law and its use in contemporary politics and contemporary political thought.

Early modern political philosophy pervades the play, particularly the radical theories opposing tyranny and corruption. In this paper, I have mainly addressed Ben Jonson's Scottish source that has been dismissed in Jonsonian scholarship. George Buchanan's political theories are key in reading the play in its Jacobean context. Silius, Sabinus, and Arruntius voice the more radical Tacitean theories spelled out by Buchanan. Their thoughts and acts are the driving force in the play, as they lead to the rebellion against the tyranny of Sejanus and, by way of a political allegory, that of James I.

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From “violence against women” to “violence against women and girls”

The reconceptualisation of violence against women in United-Nations discourse

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Abstract. The aim of this paper is to discuss the reconceptualisation of violence against women in the United-Nations discourse on violence against women between 1996 and 2019. The paper relies on a corpus-based approach to discourse analysis and argues that the term “violence against women and girls” became the United-Nations’ preferred term to discuss the issue of violence against women in their press releases because of a shift in the feminist theorisation of the concept of “violence against women” and the influence of the geopolitical context of the 2000’s and beginning of the 2010’s.

Keywords: discourse analysis, international, United-Nations, violence against women, corpus analysis, textometry, diachrony

Introduction

Nowadays, violence against women is recognised as a social problem that requires the intervention of states as well as international organisations. Yet, it has not always been the case: violence against women used to be considered as a private matter, and it is only in the 1970’s that the public spotlight was turned on this issue thanks to feminist movements (Delage, 2017: 6-7). Official international institutions like the United-Nations or the World Health Organisation began to consider violence against women as a violation of human rights in the 1990’s. The concept of violence against women was defined for the first time by the United-Nations in 1993, when violence against women was declared an area of concern for the organisation. In 1995, on the occasion of the Beijing Conference on Women, a milestone in the history of violence against women, the first plan of action to deal with this issue around the world was set by the organisation. Since then, the organisation has published a plethora of texts on this specific issue. In these texts, the aim of the United-Nations is to draw the attention of national and international actors on the issue of violence against women, to provide reliable information on this issue, and to propose concrete solutions to combat it.

This research project aims to determine how United-Nations discourse on violence against women has changed since the Beijing Conference, and to understand what these changes mean. The United-Nations is chosen because of the status, power and legitimacy of this international organ and because of the crucial role it has played both in the definition and in the fight against violence against women.

In this paper, we will first define corpora and discuss their use in discourse analysis, before describing the diachronic corpus designed for the present study and the method used to analyse it. In the following section, the results extracted from the corpus will be presented. Finally, the obtained results will be discussed and related to the history of feminist movements that theorised violence against women and to the history of the organisation.

Corpus-based approaches to discourse analysis

Nowadays, a great amount of research in discourse studies relies on corpora. Coming from a Latin word meaning “body”, a corpus can be defined as a large body of language “designed for a particular research project” (Baker, 2006: 147). Corpus linguistics techniques were developed in the 1990’s at the University of Birmingham, when they served to assist the building of grammars and dictionaries. The development of computerised corpora has made it possible to analyse a large amount of linguistic data, and to offer analysts the high degree of objectivity they were looking for (Stubbs, 1994: 202-218; Hardt Mautner, 1995: 3; Baker et al, 2008: 277) and the possibility to reveal phenomena otherwise undetectable (Sinclair, 1991: 100; Partington et al., 2013: 11). Thanks to Partington’s research in the 2000’s, the school of Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies was founded at the University of Bologna, and many discourse analysts made use of corpora to better understand discourse, especially those interested in political discourse, because of the importance of language in politics (Partington, 2013: 1-2).

Over the past few years, several discourse analysis research projects on violence against women made use of computerised corpora, for instance Sanchez’s works on online forum posts on intimate-partner violence or Busso et al.’s study of the representation of gender-based violence in an Italian media corpus (Sanchez, 2017, 2018; Busso et al., 2020).

Corpora can be explored using different softwares. In France, it is as early as in the 1970’s that André Salem, Pierre Lafon, Maurice Tournier, and Serge Heiden began to develop tools designed to analyse large amounts of linguistic data from a diachronic perspective, which resulted in the creation of Lexico 3 and Lexico 5. These tools make it possible to observe the evolution of the lexis used in a corpus overtime using statistical methods (Leblanc, 2017: 33-35). This approach called lexicometry was later declined as textometry, with the development of advanced corpus exploration tools like TXM (Heiden et al., 2010), which is used in this study.

Corpus and method

A 611 718-word corpus was built to conduct the present study. It is made up of 253 press releases dealing with the theme of violence against women. They were published between 1996 and 2019 and collected from the United-Nations and UN Women’s official websites using the advanced research option of the United-

Nations website and a script written specifically to extract them from the websites. Text selection was realised in two steps. First, texts were selected whenever their titles contained both the words “violence” and “women”. This was followed by a second step to make sure that texts dealing with violence against women which did not contain both the words “violence” and “women” in their titles were not left out. In order to collect such texts, a term tree of violence against women was built using United-Nations terminological resources. This term tree is presented in Figure 1. The sources used to build this tree are listed in Appendix 1. All the terms that appear on this term tree were used as keywords to look for additional texts to add to the corpus on the United-Nations and UN Women’s official websites. Despite the unicity of their source, the collected texts are not uniform in structure and length: press releases thus vary from 200 to 14 800 words, with a mean of 2500 words per text. The corpus is organised in such a way that texts can be separated according to their year of publication.

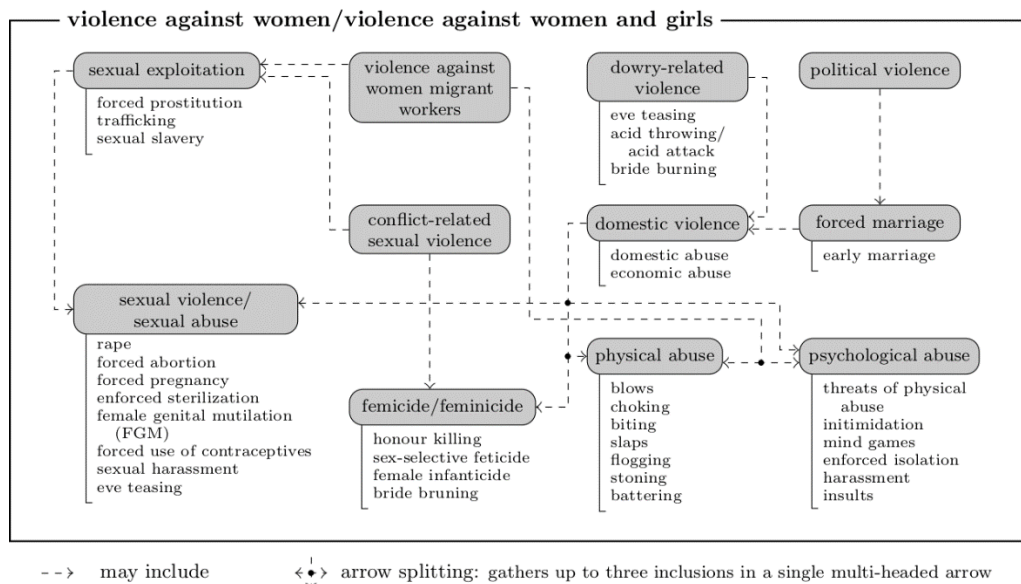


Figure 1: Term tree of violence against women

This corpus was analysed using TXM, an open source textual corpus analysis software (Heiden et al., 2010). TXM has different functions: a concordancer, several tools for performing statistical analyses, and a tool for multidimensional analysis called Correspondance Analysis (CA). CA is a method that enables one to produce a graphical representation of a dataset that highlights the oppositions and correlations in the data. In our case, the dataset is made up of all the words in our corpus and their distribution across the different parts of our corpus. To conduct this study, our corpus was divided into 24 parts, according to the year of publication of the texts, ranging from 1996 to 2019.

The apparent imbalance between the different parts of the corpus due to the United-Nations’ and UN Women’s not publishing the same number of texts every year is corrected by the TXM’s statistical computations in such a way that they do not impact the results.

The correspondence analysis carried out on our corpus yielded a scatter plot on which two kinds of points are represented: on one hand, the words and, on the other hand the parts of our corpus. A list of words which appeared to be more specific to some parts of our corpus than the others was inferred from the positions of the points on the plot. This is how we were able to determine that some words were very frequently used at a certain period of time in our texts.

Then, the immediate contexts of these words were observed using TXM’s concordancer tool. Eventually, influential historical texts outside the corpus were used to contextualise our observations and see how the changes observed in the conceptualisation of violence against women have historical foundations.

Results

The correspondence analysis results suggest that the first 14 parts of our corpus, which are made up of texts published between 1996 and 2009, are very different from the other 10 parts, which correspond to the texts published between 2010 and 2019 in terms of the lexis that is used in these parts. This is illustrated in Figure 2, where the points corresponding to the 1996 to 2009 parts of our corpus are very far from the cluster of points that represents the 2010 to 2019 parts.

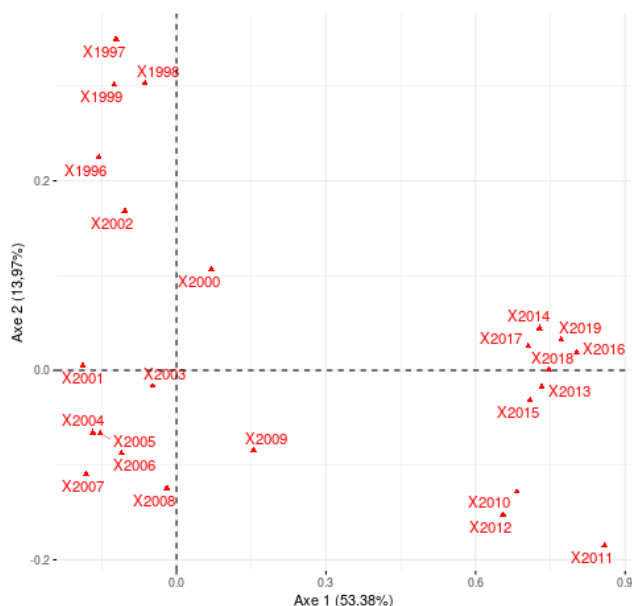


Figure 2: Graphical representation of the correspondence analysis

What is more, the correspondence analysis revealed that some words were more specific to the texts published between 2010 and 2019 than to the texts published before 2010. Although around twenty words were identified, only two of these words will be discussed in this paper: “against” and “girls”. These two words were chosen because observing their contexts led to the same observation: in the

2010's, a new term seems to appear to designate violence against women, possibly because violence against women was reconceptualised. These words, along with their frequencies and specificity scores are presented in Table 1 below. The specificity score is an indicator of how specific a word is in the part of the corpus for which the score is computed: a positive value is associated with a high degree of specificity, while a negative value indicates a lower degree, that is, that the word is not used as frequently as in other parts of the corpus.

Word	Raw frequency 1996-2009	Raw frequency 2010-2019	Specificity score 1996-2009	Specificity score 2010-2019
against	2506	779	[-33,1 ; 10,3]	[0,7 ; 20,0]
girls	720	660	[-11,7 ; -0,3]	[0,9 ; 48,8]

Table 1: Frequencies and specificity scores of the words “against” and “girls”

The specificity scores computed for “against” and “girls” show that they are used more frequently in texts published between 2010 and 2019. Besides, the observation of the immediate contexts of these words highlights the fact that they are used in various kinds of contexts before 2010 whereas they are used to form the term “violence against women and girls” in most contexts after 2010. A selection of these contexts is presented in the concordance extracts for “against” and “girls” in Tables 2 and 3.

Date of publication	Context
1996-01-26	on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.
1998-03-02	the problem of violence against women migrant workers
2000-06-05	uncompromising war on physical violence against women and the invasion of their bodies
2002-11-11	elimination of all forms of violence against women
2006-05-18	to pass laws to eradicate violence against women since 1998
2009-02-23	Europe concluded a two-year campaign to stop violence against women.
2010-11-18	The word is spreading: violence against women and girls has no place in any society
2013-05-23	part of the UN-Women COMMIT to end violence against women and girls initiative.
2016-11-21	there is global recognition that violence against women and girls is a human rights violation
2019-11-25	Violence against women and girls is a global pandemic.

Table 2: Concordance extract for “against”

Date of publication	Context
1997-01-21	It was known that girls mature more rapidly than boys

1998-01-08	cultural accessible service for all migrant women and girls who were victims of gender-based violence
1999-03-08	to create a world that is safe for women and girls
2000-03-06	In such countries, the girls suffered the double burden of having been raped and then bringing unwanted babies into the world.
2002-10-11	Those acts aimed at protecting women and girls form [sic] bias, prejudice and all forms of violence or discrimination.
2003-10-15	laws and regulations designed to protect the rights of women and girls and to punish perpetrators of violence against women and girls .
2007-03-09	it would call on States to develop standards for data collection on violence against girls
2010-11-18	to take responsibility for eradicating violence against women and girls .
2011-11-23	We want people everywhere to speak up; to say “No ” to violence against women and girls .
2013-03-05	some 99 countries have national statistics showing the prevalence of violence against women and girls .
2016-12-08	prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls
2017-02-14	an advocate to end violence against women and girls
2019-06-26	investment in eradicating violence against women and girls worldwide
2019-09-26	exposed the magnitude of violence against women and girls and how often it is normalized
2019-09-26	law enforcement in ending violence against women and girls in private and public spaces

Table 3: Concordance extract for “girls”

The progression tool provided by TXM makes it possible to confirm that there is a significant progression in the use of the sequence of words “violence against women and girls” in the corpus. This progression is represented in Figure 3 below. The corpus being chronologically ordered, this graphical representation illustrates how “violence against women and girls” became a popular term in the second half of the time period under study.

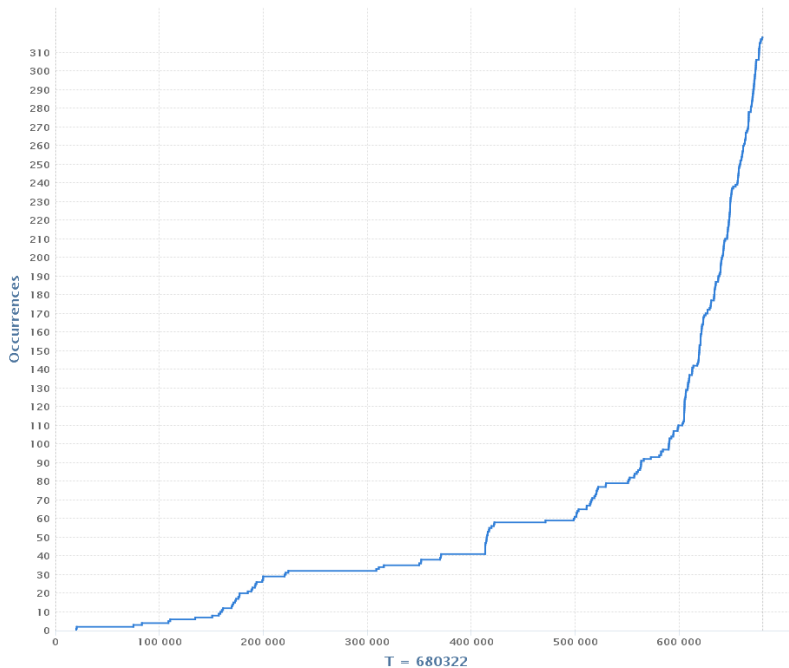


Figure 3: Progression chart of the sequence “violence against women and girls”

When a new term appears, various concurrent expressions that express similar concepts can be found in corpora (Dury & Drouin, 2009 : 36). We did find such expressions in our corpus. They are listed in Table 3.

Expression	frequency
<i>violence against women and girls</i>	318
violence against girls	16
girls who experience violence	5
violence and discrimination against women and girls	4
violence against women and trafficking in women and girls	3
girls experiencing abuse in their lifetime, violence	2
girls subjected to violence	2
girls were persistently subjected to all kinds of violence	2
girls who had survived violence	2
violence, of which the principal victims were women and girls	2
violence and sexual abuse against girls	1

Table 4: Concurrent expressions to “violence against women and girls” and their frequencies

Figure 4 represents the progression of the sequence of words “violence against women and girls” in red and the progress of the concurrent expressions that designate the same concept in our corpus in blue. This confirms that the term

“violence against women and girls” became the preferred way of expressing the idea that girls also experience forms of violence similar to those experienced by women because they are girls at the end of the time period under study.

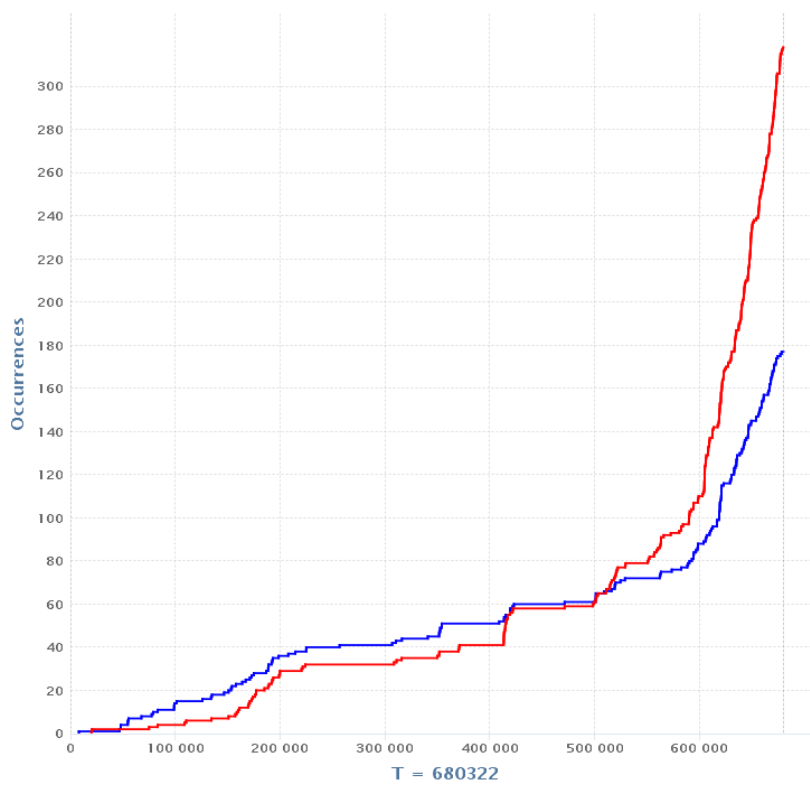


Figure 4: Progression chart of concurrent expressions to
“violence against women and girls”

Discussion

The results presented in the previous section suggest that the term “violence against women and girls” emerged in 2010 and that it has been increasingly preferred over “violence against women” since then. In this section, the hypothesis that the term “violence against women” was progressively replaced by “violence against women and girls” is presented as the consequence of a reconceptualisation of violence against women around 2010.

Reconceptualisation is intended here as a change in a concept due to a change in its theorisation (Valette, 2003: 2). In the case of violence against women, such changes mainly arise as the consequences of evolutions in feminist theories, and reflect the propagation of these ideas on the sociopolitical stage through key actors such as the United-Nations. Hence, it is likely that linguistic evidence of reconceptualisation will occur in United-Nations discourse, since the

organisation relies on the publication of texts such as press releases to express and defend their positions on violence against women.

Further evidence of the reconceptualisation of this concept is likely to be found in United-Nations official statements published at the time when corresponding linguistic evidence is observable in the corpus under study. The hypothesis introduced above may thus be validated by a study of various texts from the United-Nations other than press releases if explicit statements of the assumed reconceptualisation are found. More precisely, our corpus-based observations suggest that the replacement of “violence against women” by “violence against women and girls” started around 2010, meaning that the hypothetic reconceptualisation occurred during the 2009-2010 period: the correlation between the linguistic observations made here and explicit references to the situation of girls around the world at this time may support our hypothesis.

Amid all the texts published by the United-Nations, some are considered more important than others. These historical, influential texts are called *architexts* (Maingueneau in Rist, 2002: 123). Such texts are recognised as being above other less important and less influential texts in terms of hierarchy. In this respect, any United-Nations text has to conform to these *architexts*. This is why any suspected reconceptualisation of a concept in United-Nations texts should be retrievable in *architexts* that deal with this issue. A selection of *architexts* on violence against women were consulted in order to see whether there was any significant change in the way the concept of violence against women was defined. Were the hypothesis defended in this paper to be valid, *architexts* would yet not enable us to understand what actually led the United-Nations to change their conception of violence against women. Where would the reconceptualisation of violence against women at the United-Nations come from? Answers to this question arise from the study of the socio-historical context of the publication of United-Nations texts conducted in this section.

In the second half of the 1970's, feminist theory focused on violence against women in the form of “woman or wife battering” in the USA, in Europe and in Latino-American countries (Delage, 2017: 34; Machado, 2019: 1). At this point, violence against women was theorised as one of the symptoms of women's oppression in the private sphere, and more specifically in the context of marriage. Sexual violence and physical violence were foregrounded as major issues and feminists proposed specific measures to help victims of conjugal violence, mainly state intervention and legal action (see MacKinnon, 1989). They also defended the idea that intimate partner violence was due to unequal power relations between men and women (Delage, 2017: 7) and that the private was political, which meant that states had to intervene to fight violence against women. This movement successfully influenced state policies, especially in North America. For example, in 1984, in the USA, the Attorney General created the Department of Justice Task Force on Family Violence to improve response to domestic violence. In the 1990's, Diana Russell, an American feminist, theorised and popularized the concept of “femicide”, and feminists across the world began to use this term to denounce the impunity enjoyed by men who killed their wives or exes (Russell & Radford, 1992).

The UN is known to draw on the feminist theories of its choice (Raus, 2013: 101). In the 1995 *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*, violence against women is defined as

Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. [...]

(a) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation;

(b) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution;

(c) Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs. (UN, 1995: 48-49)

This definition suggests that forms of violence against women taking place outside of the conjugal sphere fell into the category of acts of violence against women. Such a definition, as exhaustive as it was intended, is not enough to fully understand how violence against women was conceptualised by the United-Nations. The remarkable discrepancy between this definition and the role the United-Nations said they would play in the fight against violence against women also contributes to the conceptualisation of violence against women. The way they discussed the issue and how they intended to solve it illustrates what they considered as the most important aspects of the concept of violence against women at this point - namely domestic violence in the form of wife battering and/or marital rape – at the expense of other aspects such as female genital mutilation, forced marriage or sexual violence in conflict, to name but a few. In the same document, the organisation listed the actions it intended to take in this fight. What is particularly striking is that all the listed actions were centered on domestic violence, and none of them were related to forms of violence against women that occurred outside the domestic sphere or before marriage (UN, 1995: 51-55). This focus on domestic violence is reminiscent of the feminist theories of the 1970's and 1980's, in which there is a stronger focus on forms of violence confined to the conjugal sphere, in the home, which is seen as the place where the unequal power relations between men and women are actualised in the form of violent acts. It is likely that such a similarity is not a mere coincidence since conceptualisation and theorisation go together (Valette, 2003: 2). Yet the United-Nations do not take part in the theorisation of the concept, they merely choose from the theories that they consider valid, appropriate, and relevant to define a concept and decide what actions will be taken. This is why it is not surprising that the conceptualisation of violence against women in 1995 should be inherited from certain feminist theories of violence against women.

This strong focus on domestic violence has had consequences: it has overshadowed the problem of violence against girls in the 1990's and 2000's. In 1989, the Convention on the Right of the Child (CRC), a UN architect, was ratified.

This text condemned all the kinds of violence children could be subjected to, including the specific forms of violence affecting the girl child. Although the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action contains a section on the girl child which mentions the CRC, the organisation simply delegated actions to be taken to fight violence against girls to governments. While the organisation listed a number of actions it would take against domestic violence in this document, it did not announce any action to take to end violence against girls.

In the 2000's, new transnational contributions to feminism emerged. Antiracist feminists drew on bell hook's criticism of the 1970's and 1980's feminist movements, which said feminists needed to "think bigger and better in their struggle against male violence" and shed light on the underlying problems of the 1970's and 1980's movements (Hooks, 1984: 130-131 in Hall, 2015: 2). In this respect, four noticeable contributions are those of Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Andrea Smith, Patricia Hill Collins, and Elizabeth Philipose. In 2003, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, an Indian-american feminist scholar, contributed to the theorisation of transnational feminism. She published works in which she criticized Eurocentrist and racist feminism as well as American imperialism, focused on the forms of violence and discrimination Third World women were subjected to and advocated for anti-colonial feminism (Mohanty, 2003; Mohanty et al., 2003). In 2005, Andrea Smith argued that calling for greater state action against domestic violence obscured the state violence perpetrated against indigenous women in the Americas (Smith, 2005 in Hall, 2015: 4). She linked violence against women and girls with processes of appropriation and degradation, and theorised sexual violence as a state tool of racism and colonialism (Smith, 2005: 8) [1]. In 2006, Patricia Hill Collins, discussing the violence experienced by trafficked Nigerian girls and women, said one could not address this form of violence without putting global exploitative structures at the centre of one's conception of violence against women (Collins, 2006). In 2008, Elizabeth Philipose, focusing on international law and colonialism, said imperial powers had been using violence against women and girls to justify racist policies in their countries, intervention and occupation in some countries outside their borders, to protect women and girls from "violent, backwards cultures" (Philipose, 2008: 112 in Hall, 2015: 14).

Such conceptualisations of violence against women are likely to have influenced the United-Nations. The 2000's feminist movement stressed the fact that states could not be the only actors to fight against violence against women because they could implement racist policies in doing so, and may subject some populations to violence in situations of conflict. These feminists also made manifest the link between the often violent occupation of land in the global South by Western countries in situations of conflict and violence against women and girls. It is also in the 2000's, and more specifically from 2005 on that the organisation expressed particular concern about violence against girls in situations of conflict. In 2005, that is, ten years after the Beijing Conference, a World Summit was held by the organisation. In the published *Outcome* of this summit, there is a noticeable focus on violence against the girl-child, and on the need to protect civilians, in particular women and girls during and after armed conflicts (UN, 2005: 17, 26-27). Two years later, in 2007, resolutions on the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child and

the violation of the rights of the girl child were adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women, at its fifty-first session, based on the commitments expressed in the *Outcome of the 2005 World Summit* (UN, 2007). In the report of this session, the Commission requested that the Secretary General of the United-Nations should ensure that all relevant organs of the United-Nations system

“take into account the protection and promotion of the rights of girls against female genital mutilation in their country programmes, as appropriate, and in accordance with national priorities, in order to further strengthen their efforts in this regard” (UN, 2007: 28).

Unlike in 1995, the Secretary General and several United-Nations organs were requested to take action in the protection of the rights of girls, and did not leave everything in the hands of states. In addition to that, in 2008, the Security Council of the United-Nations adopted a resolution (resolution 1820) on women, peace and security, focusing specifically on preventing and ending sexual violence in situations of conflict. In 2010, UNICEF published a report arguing that the situation of young girls around the world remained preoccupying due to - inter alia – child marriage (UNICEF, 2010: 4-5, 46). One year later, the United-Nations launched the initiative “Girls not Brides” which they introduced as a new global effort to end child marriage, thus turning the international spotlight on this specific form of violence that affects girls. The same year, on December 19th, the United-Nations decided to declare October 11th the International Day of the Girl Child, to recognise the rights of girls and the unique challenges faced by girls around the world.

Therefore, the United-Nations’ interest in the issue of violence against girls was rekindled around 2010, possibly because of the influence of transnational feminists, along with that of the global geopolitical context of the time. Indeed, between 2007 and 2011, the United-Nations and several member states were involved in conflicts, namely in Sudan, Congo, Palestine, and Ivory Coast. Various forms of violence against women and girls were observed during these conflicts such as sexual violence, rape, and forced marriage of girls. These conflicts took place after the 51st session of the Commission on the Status of Women in 2007, hence they were the opportunity for the organisation to take concrete action for protecting girls from violence in conflict, as promised in 2007. In this respect, Denis Mukwege, a Congolese gynecologist and human rights activist who had treated thousands of victims of conflict-related sexual violence since the Second Congo War (1998-2003), was awarded the United-Nations Human Rights Prize in 2008. Moreover, in 2010, the Secretary General of the United-Nations reported

“[a] noteworthy trend since 2005 [namely] the enactment of legislation regarding harmful practices, including female genital mutilation/cutting, early and forced marriage and so-called ‘honour’ crimes, in Africa and Europe.” (UN, 2010: 79).

For example, in 2007, the Special Court for Sierra Leone prosecuted forced marriage as a crime against humanity for the first time in history. Yet, in the same document, the Secretary General stressed the fact that there were still many gaps and challenges to address to protect girls from violence around the world, acknowledging that

“the girl child does not yet receive sufficiently explicit attention in policy and programme development and resource allocation.” (UN, 2010: 82).

Nevertheless, following the tendency to enact legislation on forced marriage identified by the Secretary General and influenced by United-Nations conventions on violence against women and the rights of the child, the Council of Europe wrote the *Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence*, also known as the Istanbul Convention, which was opened for signature in 2011 and addressed the issue of forced marriage, *inter alia* (Council of Europe, 2011: 10).

All these elements seem to point to a greater effort on the organisation's part to address the issue of violence against girls conjointly with that of violence against women at the beginning of the 2010's. The increased focus on the issue of violence against girls in United-Nations commissions, as well as the concrete actions taken to address this issue in United-Nations peacekeeping missions in this period stand in stark contrast with the conceptualisation of violence against women by the organisation in the 1990's, which focused on domestic violence.

The shift observed between the feminist movements of the 1970's and 1980's and the transnational feminism of the 2000's in their conceptualisation of violence against women and how it should be addressed mirrors the United-Nations' new take on the issue, that consists of paying particular attention to violence against girls, especially in situations of conflict. These observations suggest that violence against women was indeed reconceptualised at the United-Nations, resulting in a preference for the term “violence against women and girls” rather than “violence against women” in United-Nations discourse.

Conclusion

A corpus-based analysis of United-Nations press releases dealing with the issue of violence against women and published between 1996 and 2019 revealed that a new term, “violence against women and girls” emerged in United-Nations discourse and that it became the preferred term used to discuss this issue from 2010 on. This can be seen as the sign of a reconceptualisation of the notion of violence against women at the United-Nations. This reconceptualisation was founded on the idea that many girls around the world were subjected to specific forms of violence, especially in situations of conflict, and that global intervention, rather than state intervention, was needed to tackle this issue, especially with new conflicts taking place around the world. Hence, the contrast between United-Nations texts from the 1990's and those published in the following decades can be correlated with a renewed interest in transnational feminism and new contributions to transnational feminist theory in the 2000's and a geopolitical context that favours violence against women and girls.

Notes

[1] It should be noted that in 2008, Andrea Smith was exposed for faking her Cherokee ancestry in her works. Despite the obvious ethical issue posed by this controversy, Smith's

works remained influential enough in the period under study to justify their mention in these pages.

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Appendix

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The Self and Sovereignty

Contextualizing the Sublime in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *Mistress of Spices*

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Abstract: In this article, the novel *Mistress of Spices* (1997) evinces the interaction between two socio-cultural environments, at times resulting in disillusionment. This concept of disillusionment will further debate on the feelings of terror, reason, and freedom to showcase the formulation of the sublime within diaspora studies. Immanuel Kant's account of the sublime will help to propose exile and diasporicity as natural stimulus that permits humanity to revel in some extraordinary power of their own minds. The sublime describes the awakening of a certain psychological phenomenon, especially in the subjugated woman, aiding her freedom from the masculine construct of the society and reaching the sovereign self.

Keywords: The sublime, diaspora, femineity, postcolonial literature.

Introduction

"To inhabit the sublime is to confront one's borders and boundaries." Jennifer Wawrzinek, 13.

The confrontation of boundaries in literature can be discussed from different aspects such as agency, cultural dominance or even as a process of decolonisation, opposing the imperialist construct. But at the heart of the confrontation, as Bonnie Mann observes in her book, *Women's Liberation and the Sublime: Feminism, Postmodernism, Environment* (2006) lies the "[...] special kind of terror" (Mann vii) which on the one hand threatens the boundaries of an individual, and on the other hand forces to challenge the familiar conditions and eventually elevate the self. This terror may infest the life of an individual from time to time, through extreme occurrences such as war, communal riot, catastrophic accidents and sexual abuse and the individual internalises this feeling of terror and pushes survival beyond the societal imposed limitations. Elevation of the self, amid challenging conditions of reality to construct a self-aggrandizing identity, is called the sublime. The paper will cultivate the definition in selected Indian American literature to negotiate the sublime theory and its relationship with women, their subjugation and eventual emergence as a sovereign subject under the conditions of exile and dislocation.

To construct the sublime in Indian American literature, one must recognise the presence naturally of certain kind of terror hidden in the prefix of the 'post' that Bhabha mentions in his *Locations of Culture* (1994). A "tenebrous sense of survival" (Bhabha 1) as Bhabha mentions entails sense of fear, anxiety and disorientation within the people living beyond the borders—of both location and

the self. In diasporic literature, this sense of fear may not be the kind of fear that is usually related to the aesthetic notion but "it is a more pedestrian emotion: the mundane, daily fear" (Mann 4) that grasps an individual dependent on its sphere for survival, yet unable to exert control neither over itself nor anyone else's contribution in its disruption. It is naturally a pursuit in search of a force or power that one encounters and subsequently feels out of control, therefore insignificant and alienated. The sublime in diaspora manifests through the abstruseness of existence in three steps — the life-threatening or violent occurrence, the confrontation with the self, and the subsequent disruption and restructuring. The plausibility of the sublime theory and its repeated transformation through changing theories, political and cultural events persisted since the 18th century. The aesthetic experience of terror in its materialization showcases the need of the sublime and its association in describing the process of destroying the self; it feels awkward yet demanding to engage or confront that process of disruption, and the exhilaration from the power to destroy. The process mandates recognition of the conflict, its moments of illusion and subdued form under a violent power, eventually invoking the sense of this confrontation both in the characters and in the readers. The impact of the fictionalized terror manifests and seduces the passions of the readers. In the presence of the disjuncture reality, this chapter discusses the notions of terror, power, reason, and freedom with sublimity in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's novel *Mistress of Spices* (1997) on account of the events. By choosing these specific elements, the chapter orients the argument on the Immanuel Kant's theorization of the sublime and the aesthetic judgment. In contrast to the Kantian sublime, Mann establishes woman's authority of reason and focuses on both demoulding of the self and achieving the state of sublime by confronting patriarchal and masculinist traditions of society at large. The relationship between postcolonial and the sublime is the unprepossessing excess that persists after reason's unifying teleology has done its work. To establish the authority of reason, the "Idealism of Kant" is constructed upon the notion that "reason, as a faculty of mind, is forged in and through its mastery over the conscious excesses that characterise the sublime" (Nicholls 20). The need of the sublime in the procedure that created the authority of reason, indicates that reason is at once in control of its conscious domain, and yet susceptible, since its dominion is established with the possibility of its collapse. There always lingers in the discourse of reason's practices an unaccounted for excess that opens up the prospect for a politics of disruption and reconstruction. This additional excess opens up the possibility of the relationship between diasporicity (and its postcolonial manifestations) and the sublime.

To link the trope of the sublime to the term diaspora is to embark on a journey to work upon both the sublime and its possible relationality with the postcolonial elements, especially the motif of transculturation. In many ways, the term 'postcolonial' remains obscure and unfamiliar. Alongside the haunting accounts of the colonial past, the struggle of the self in conscious spaces have become more uncertain, indeterminate, and transgressive. This stress upon unfamiliarity indicates that the referents of 'postcolonialism' — the condition of postcoloniality, the political strategy of postcolonialism, and the postcolonial self— remain obscure (Nicholls 3). The term postcolonial is "engaging" yet "unformed" so much so that its usage has become diverse and instable, and it seems to provoke

diasporic discussions “signalling the social and political concerns of the late 20th century such as cultural elimination, alienation and eventual loss of identity” (Bera 71). David Spurr advances to give a concise understanding of postcolonial as a critical term:

‘Postcolonial’ is a word that engenders even more debate than ‘colonial’, partly because of the ambiguous relationship between those two and I shall refer to postcolonial in two ways: as a historical situation marked by the dismantling of traditional institutions of colonial power, and as a search for alternatives to the discourses of the colonial the second is both an intellectual project and a transcultural condition that includes, along with the new possibilities, certain crises of identity and representation (Spurr 6).

According to Spurr, the word postcolonial is twofold; On one hand, it marks a historical trajectory, on the other, it proposes transcultural upheavals. In the historical debate of postcolonialism, cultural practises of the diaspora “expand the umbrella term from colonial reparations to transcultural issues” (Bera 71). Therefore, diasporicity concerns the life beyond the homeland, as Bhabha puts it,

‘Beyond’ signifies spatial distance, marks progress, promises the future but our inclinations of exceeding the barrier or boundary dash the very act of going *beyond*— that are unknowable, unrepresentable, without a return to the ‘present’ which in the process of repetition, becomes disjunct and displaced (Bhabha 4).

The motif of transculturation manifests Bhabha’s concept of boundaries and „beyond” and establishes the bridge between postcoloniality and diaspora. The process of territorialization and deterritorialization merges the concepts of deculturation and acculturation and carries the idea of the subsequent creation of new cultural phenomena in which the combination of cultures politicizes the migrnat image. The process of transculturation hence marks the ambiguity of time and space that migrants live in, structured by massive chaos of material and social circumstances, challenging an individual to come to desperate conditions, taking desperate measures, and (dis)locating the self in relation to others (Bhabha 2). The essential elements of the sublime, such as terror, power, and pleasure, thus unveil the need for the sublime to characterize the migrant image through the sorceress, Tillotyoma and her relationship with divinity and examine the dialectic of self consciousness, the desire and the morality to reasoning Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's fabricated world of terror.

Homi Bhabha while commenting on the process of transculturation, asserts „the borderline engagements of cultural difference” which may challenge the normative expectations of a multucultural society (Bhabha 3). In Indian-American scenario, here is a need to understand the customary boundaries between tradtions and modernity (pertaining one or more cultures) to conceive the creation of minority identities— that acts estranged to individualities and articulates into a collective body or community. „the poltical empowerment, and the enlargement of the multicultural cause,” as Bhabha observes might as well be read as a rational approach to perceive community as an „envisaged project”— going beyond the idea of individual desire to reflect and reconstruct a communal identity (4). With this in mind, the word „beyond” in diaspora makes promises of an unknowable and unrepresentable future. Indian diaspora, hence represents the sequentiality of ‘post’ in postcolonialiy and gestures constant existential

transformation. This idea of constant communal progression foregrounds the projects fears, anxieties and dominance within the the dissonant voices of the colonial past (16). If the sublime, according to Jennifer Wawrzinek, “in its traditional form depends on hierarchies that (re)instate mechanisms of power and domination” (16), then the mechanism of power and domination are also observed in the politicized space of diasporic existence. In the following chapter, hierarchical versions of the sublime depending on the mechanisms of fear, power and dominance showcase the transformation or elevation of one element over the other, such as mind over the body, morality over desire. Alongside *Mistress of Spices* (1997), the sublime becomes a strategy that constructs the Tilottoma's sublime self, by driving the self towards “an overwhelming force and to appropriate that power as one's own serves as the impetus of both the traditional sublime and the (re)consolidation” (Wawrzinek 23) of her displaced identity.

Mistress of Spices: an Aesthetical Analysis

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni has a prominent position among Indian American writers for her innovative style, pure curiosity, and unconventional response to the consequences of diaspora and cultural transposition. Each novel of Divakaruni contextualizes the experiences of immigration not in the context of geographical dislocation only but also conceives the fabric of the plots of her novels in the background of magic, dream, fantasy, and myth. Her prominent novels are *Mistress of Spices* (1997), *Sister of my Heart* (1999), *Queen of Dreams* (2004), *Palace of Illusions* (2008) and *Oleander Girl* (2013). She also creates a female-centric approach to establish her vision of immigration and exile in the context of cultural dislocation, loss of personal relationship, otherhood and the troubling associations of the homeland. Divakaruni in America set a path of an unusual mode of diaspora writings in which women protagonists exist to be trapped in the conflict of two worlds. In the process of acculturation, their struggles within the entire canvas of feminine experiences includes the concerns of motherhood, female sexuality, dynamics of marital harmony combined with “the poetics of 'exile,' 'aloofness,' 'nostalgia,' 'nationalism' and the quest for the familial and personal relationship” (Abirami; Nirmala 256). The sense of survival from life-threatening situations also gives a sense of accomplishment and excitement of self-liberation. Treating the feeling of breaking away from constraints through the sublime is essential to an understanding of suffering or terror of that the constraints entailed and perhaps will justify Tilo's association with nature, through her reasoning and determination “...in which the mind can make palpable [*fühlbar*] to itself the sublimity of its vocation over nature” (Kant 5: 262). This comparison and association to Divakaruni's text will reinforce the aesthetic quality of the major sublime elements within the study of migration and exile. In diaspora literature, all women novelists have expressed their concerns for the dilemma of women in bi-cultural spaces. Alongside the illusion of emancipation, Indian women of diaspora are subjected to racial orderliness from both homeland and hostland. Divakaruni's writings assert that “diaspora is not merely a scattering or dispersion but an experience made up of collectivities and multiple journeys” (Khandagale 1). Her works primarily deal with complications

in adjustment, nostalgia for home, inability to 'connect' on either side of the cultures, the fear of confrontation and survival, and schizophrenic sense of belonging with hyphenated identities. The trials and tribulations faced for self-preservation and self-realisation of her protagonists involve the constant flux of memories between past and present, between homeland and host land, between unfamiliar glamour of the west and familiarity of the East. In *Mistress of Spices*, the protagonist Tilottyoma offers through the spices, not only a state of homesickness and alienation but also the realm of nature that surrounds her and manifests its overwhelming power aiding the reshaping of diasporic subjects, reinforcing the immigrational movement. Through her magical realism plot, Divakaruni attempts to renegotiate the elements of fear and power over the human subjects and how Tilo thrives for salvation. The novel incorporates a complicated domain of hegemony by representing an Indian woman in America who deals in the magical, sensorial power of various spices. I shall argue that the mythical representation portrays protagonist's burden with societal expectations, transforms within the mundane world of terror, and evolves the self against the ghastly manifestations, against all odds and horrifying experiences.

The novel potentially combines three commonly othered elements in the portrayal of the protagonist Tilottyoma, or Tilo: a woman's body stripped of its desire, her Eastern origin and diasporic identity, and the sense of her spices. The touch, smell, or taste of each spice she sells can do wonders, such as healing people or fulfilling their various needs and desires. Tilo is an initiated clairvoyant who has to obey specific rules imposed on her by her foremothers to preserve her power. She must stay within the boundaries of her shop and must not touch any of her clients—a code of practice that symbolizes the imposed femininity on and the segregation of a woman who is allowed to associate with only spices. However, Tilo's later physical intimacy with Raven, her American lover, and yet her prioritization of the spices over all else is what enables her to break free from her subjugation and choose her identity. The plot of the novel includes some magical elements inserted into everyday realistic happenings, which complicates reading as well as offers an opportunity to read the text from multiple angles from the very onset; Divakaruni informs us about the presence of an overwhelming power—through the "Mistress of Spices",

I am a Mistress of Spices. I can work the others too. Mineral, metal, earth and sand, and stone. The gems with their cold clear light. The liquids that burn their hues into your eyes till you see nothing else. (Divakaruni 3)

The supernatural aspect of Tilo's existence, her ability to play with the elements enforce the more 'other', looming migrant moment. Her unnoticed hybridity, her grimace body clad in white saree, her constant escapism from physical human contact can be understood only in terms of the possibility of a disorder that seems to be lacking in Tilottyoma's dialectic situatedness. She represents fear and threat of transculturation—as a diasporic woman and as a clairvoyant. The exemplifications of the diasporic way of living, fear of change, fear of destruction, and fear of moving forward constantly hints at the idea of reason and how the conception of will and self-realization reinforces the notion of reason with the sublimity as an essence of the human mind, part of the grandeur of human nature.

Immanuel Kant's first effort to formulate a theory of the sublime is found in his pre-critical *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*, published in 1764, where Kant expressed his concerns with the correlation between feeling and morality, and Werkmeister asserts that Kant's dilemma made him "to take a closer look at the nature of feelings" (Werkmeister 36). Kant's introduction to the "Analytic of the Sublime" (Kant 23) moves forward from what is considered the cause of sublimity and focuses more on the reflective judgment derived from the object itself. Thus, the liking involved judgments concerning the sublime is different from categorized liking of an object (the beauty) and is "a satisfaction in the amenability of sensible representation to the 'faculty of concepts' – where this is specified as the faculty of concepts of reason..." (Guyer 256). Divakaruni creates Tilo within the boundaries of diasporicity with the ability to have a cognitive approach to her powers and presents her as a rational being constantly in confrontation with her spices. It could be related to the Kantian observation of the sublimity as a product of our minds, a rational capacity of self-determination and will, existing independently of nature—

...sublimity is not contained in anything in nature, but only in our mind, insofar as we can become conscious of being superior to nature within us and thus also to nature outside us (insofar as it influences us). Everything that arouses this feeling in us, which includes the powers of nature that calls forth our own powers, is thus (although improperly) called sublime (Guyer 147)

Even though the Kantian idea of the sublime as "absolutely great" cannot be established in nature, both in terms of size and power, when Tilo describes her spice shop "...there is no other place in the world quite like this" (Divakaruni 4), it enforces the existence of uncontrollable power to which Tilo surrenders, feels insignificant yet feels the pleasure of the power granted to her. Even then, amid the presence of formidable greatness, "calls forth" her own powers of resistance. The spices in the form of magical powers manifest two kinds of reflection—on the one hand, the realization of incommensurable existence of omnipotent power and human limitations of comprehending that power, and on the other hand, finding her moral virtue through daily struggles to find her "determination" and "calling" (Merritt 22). The characters subsequently fabricate a world of terror, made of incidents that seemingly will not appear life-altering, epiphanic but through the mundanity of life bears witness to the terror that accompanies diasporicity. The diasporic displacement that affects an individual's relationship with the idea of body, home, and identity, mostly results from the horror of reality, and the motif of escape or starting fresh in search of one's position in the world can be refigured with terror, power and freedom and the sublime theory.

Divakaruni explicitly sets the mood by displaying the elements of power and fear through Tilo and her spices, establishing that power like that exists to unravel the secrets of human lives that come in contact with the 'mistress' and how the spices control the present, past and future, with their "hidden properties," their "magic powers" (Divakaruni 3). From "amchur to Zafran" all the spices have both the powers to heal and hurt, the powers to create and destruct as Tilo reminds us—

Ah. You have forgotten the old secrets your mother's mother knew. Here is one of them again: Vanilla beans soaked soft in goat's milk and rubbed on the wrist-bone

can guard against the evil eye... A measure of pepper at the foot of the bed, shaped into a crescent, cures you of nightmare. (Divakaruni 3)

Even though, the power of the spices are represented as of formidable nature, it still calls forth the power of imagination. The supernatural existence of the divine powers can only manifest through the conception of human mind. Here, Divakaruni attempts to play with the imagination of the readers to delve into the world of myticism and be fearful of ancestry, traditions that have turned into mechanisms of power and dominance. Kant focuses his definition of the sublime away from the anglophone traditions, he still bases the aesthetic magnitude or the "absolutely great" (Kant 5: 245) in the greatness present in nature, amid the overwhelming godliness of creation. Yet for Kant, the greatness or the feeling of insignificance in the face of awe-inspiring power, is inbound as well as being outbound. The sublimity, in German traditions, focuses more on rationalism and reason, rooted in the distinction between sensitive and intellectual cognition—away from the subjectivism, sensory stimuli, and find the sublime in human nature. While mentioning the reflective turn, Kant focuses on returning to the object, conceiving all the necessary information from the object itself, and returning the judgment (which he terms 'aesthetic judgment') to go beyond the sensory affiliation. Henceforth, the Kantian sublime concentrates more on the moral virtue, reason, cognitive aptitude of human nature, intellectual rationalism, and the sublime effect is the ability to have a cognitive approach, confront and rationalize and challenge limitations based on intellectual capacity. The objective aptitude as Kant observes, "true sublimity must be sought only in the mind of the one who judges, not in the object in nature, the judging, not in the natural object that is better conceived as a mere occasioning stimulus" (Kant 5: 256).

The struggle of Tilottiyoma began from her birth as another girl child in a family where girls are burdens too expensive and shameful to bear. Her birth brought nothing to her parents but worry, nothing to the villagers but shame and worry. The loneliness, the secret wish of her death in her parents brought about the stars to the "dark girl" rising in anger, and she from just "Nayan Tara" became the "Star-seer" (Divakaruni 8). She became akin to the priestess, someone who could peek in the future, held power to predict or find out the truth in one touch and made "...grown men trembled", throwing themselves at her feet which seemed "easy and right to her" (Divakaruni 9). Tilo's "deep solitude laced with "dread and melancholy" induces the power that will attract the attention of the people who once disowned her. Her power made the men astonished and rigid. By projecting the past and "unforeseeable future" through her powers, she manifests terror, transfixed admiration within nature and establishes herself as absolute and omnipotent amid the insignificance, evoking sublimity (Guyer 16). This same pride, willfulness, and admiration is manifested throughout Tilo's journey as the 'Mistress' of spices—her spices let it be 'Turmeric', or 'Ginger' or 'Red Chillies', all have magical and divine associations as Tilo chants their otherworldliness to assert the infinite workings in shaping the human existence like "anointment for death, hope for rebirth" (Divakaruni 13). When Tilo observes the workings of the universe on reality and dream, she observes,

[...] if there is a such a thing as reality, an objective and untouched nature off being. Or if all that we encounter has already been changed by what we had imagined it to be. If we have dreamed it into being (Divakaruni 16).

The incomprehensibility of the real-life experiences hints at the Kantian observation of "Natural sublimity" which bequests its origin to unfathomable workings, shapeless and bewildering, requires "a formless object insofar as limitlessness is represented in it" and "which assaults, and overwhelms, our capacity to comprehend it" (Kant 5:244). Divakaruni, in her novel, creates these enclosed yet terrible circumstances where Tilo constantly challenges her limitations as she desires, as desire is the very core of man, determining action (Khurana 1). In her longing for more attention manifested the desire to belong, to be normal. The grandeur of a priestess, her Godly stature all lost its purposiveness in her desires for affection as a child, and in the dead of night she yearned for the Pirates from the tales who "somewhere out in the great ocean they stood, tall and resolute at the prows of their ships, arms crossed, granite faces turned toward our village, hair whipped free by the salt wind" (Divakaruni 17). The more she yearned, the more she used her desire to call upon the "enemy to her feet... [lifted] a soul out of a human body and place it raw and pulsing in [her] palm" (18). Tilo recalls her memories from her childhood, such as the pirates attacking her family, raping her sisters for their "evil pleasures", killing her parents in front of her, and her sheer helplessness despite having divine powers. She reconnects the associations of her fear, throughout her life in the form of magical power to which she surrendered.

The power that overwhelmingly taken over everything in her life, and even though she kept the façade on, she remained insignificant and fearful. This idea of terror and Tilo's terrible reality is constantly captured through her private and public space, hinting at her desires, her moral commitment towards her spices aligned with her practical reasoning of what is right or wrong. Through her self-determination and reasoning as opposed to the selfish pleasures that her desires propagated, she chose the spices to possess her in granting her the power to help and heal, predict and provide guidance, and revoke her sins. In the *Doctrine of Virtue in the Metaphysics of Morals* (1997), Kant created divisions regarding "duties of virtue into what one owes oneself, and what one owes others"; these follow, respectively, from the free adoption of the two morally obligatory ends of self-perfection and the happiness of others (Merritt 35). Self-perfection evokes the cultivation of one's capabilities and actions, "the highest of which is the understanding as the faculty of concepts" – where this is, once again, construed broadly to include "concepts having to do with duty" (Kant 6:386 – 7). To make oneself fit for one's indispensable rationality is itself a moral commitment, a trait of virtue. While this is initially a question of cultivating one's cognitive capabilities, it is eventually a matter of cultivating the will or "moral way of thinking" (Kant 6:387), agreeing to the standard of virtue that is discussed through the moral law. For Kant, while moral virtue presumes a feeling of fondness for humanity and gets manifested through actions, this feeling brings on its uniquely moral character when it issues an objective principles of conduct, rather than advocating superficial sympathetic reactions. It is, indeed, this very subduing of instantaneous inclination through principle which Kant finds

sublime as he explains, "as soon as this feeling of affection for humanity has arisen to its proper universality it has become sublime" (Kant 48).

Kant construes the sublime feeling as a disposition made occurrent in three distinctive ways—enjoyment with horror, quiet wonder, and a sense of the splendid. However, that will also steer the argument towards morality and the sublime, focusing on Tilo's relationship with her body, home and identity, and moral consciousness. This direction will not only showcase Kant's justification of connecting morality with the sublime but the importance of certain elements that concerns the aesthetic judgment in human nature unique enough to be worthy of termed sublime. The beautiful is an expression of harmony of imagination and understanding, but the sublime is what brings us to a sharp awareness of the incommensurability of imagination (the power of presentation) and reason (the power of cognition). The sublime is deeply concerned with questions about how we perceive the world and its others, understand and represent the relationship between self and world, or between self and other (Ozan 215). It could be said that the sublime permeates the fabric of contemporary society, culture, and politics. It is invoked whenever there is a call for a revolutionary overthrowing of a powerful individual or group, or whenever a minority group claims the right to political agency or self-determination. When silences are invoked as evidence of the suppression of difference, of multiple communities, or of the legitimate place of the other, we are once again in the realm of the sublime. The dynamical sublime also present the unrepresentable, but it is prompted by an encounter with a "power which is superior to great hindrances" (Kant 109) potentially lethal. Fear is, therefore, the first emotion aroused by the dynamical sublime. Any attempt to resist this superior force is futile. The subject consequently becomes acutely aware of the limits of his bodily powers. This experience of physical helplessness is, however, merely the prelude to an experience in which the "forces of the soul [allow us to rise] above the height of the vulgar commonplace . . . [so that we] discover within us a power of resistance of quite another kind, which gives us the courage to be able to measure ourselves against the seeming impotence of nature" (Kant 111). This power of resistance is evident in our ability to act ethically, whatever natural or human forces are arranged against us. The physical impotence experienced in the face of natural power highlights "an ability to judge ourselves independent of nature" so that what is revealed in us is the "basis of a self-preservation quite different from the one that can be assailed and endangered by nature outside us" (Kant 120-121). The dynamical sublime foregrounds the autonomy of moral sense as inner freedom over and above the physical limitations of the perceiving subject. In the confrontation with natural might, the subject discovers inner humanity and a sense of moral good that is superior to nature (Ozan 218). Once again, this experience provides strong evidence for the subject's supersensible destiny. Although Kant distinguishes between the mathematical and dynamical sublimes, the sublime operates 'negatively' in both cases. In other words, the failure of imagination or the limits of bodily strength negatively represents what cannot be represented. Kant aligns the sublime with respect for the moral law as the work of reason, arguing that the aesthetic pleasure resulting from the sublime operates negatively:

The object of a pure and unconditioned intellectual delight is the moral law in the might which it exerts in us over all antecedent motives of the mind. Now, since it is only through sacrifices that this might makes itself known to us aesthetically, (and this involves a deprivation of something — though in the interests of inner freedom — whilst in turn it reveals in us an unfathomable depth of this supersensible faculty, the consequences of which extend beyond reach of the eye of sense,) it follows that the delight, looked at from the aesthetic side (in reference to sensibility) is negative, i.e. opposed to this interest, but from the intellectual side, positive and bound up with an interest. (Kant 123)

The process of the sublime experience is based upon the ability of the perceiving subject to esteem and respect that which is on occasion opposed to the subject's sensible interests. The imagination's failure and the pain this causes allow the moral law's power to make itself known as an aesthetic pleasure. Because moral and ethical frameworks dictate or proscribe actions that are often in contradistinction to those resulting from pure desire, reason must have what Kant argues is "a power of infusing a feeling of pleasure or satisfaction in the fulfillment of duty, and consequently that it should possess a kind of causality by which it can determine sensibility in accordance with rational principles" (Kant 144). In the Kantian sublime, the reason is elevated over imagination and understanding in service of a moral framework. The recourse to an ethical and moral framework is of interest to twentieth-century (re)formulations of the sublime attempting to use force and power as the means for enabling the abject and the subaltern. Moreover, tension between the sublime, the faculties of imagination and reason (as the power of representation and that of the idea) opens a space for transcendence. In its Kantian formulation, however, the sublime remains vertical: reason rises above the imagination, and the sensible world of the body is negated in favor of transcendent principles and realities.

„Dynamical Sublime” presents immense natural power that challenges our default sense of what is worth going after, what is valuable. The enjoyment of natural sublimity is ultimately explained in terms of an interest in a standard of goodness that is proper to us as rational beings. This transition is made in the following:

[I]n our aesthetic judgment nature is appreciated [beurtheilt] as sublime not insofar as it arouses fear, but rather because it calls forth our power [Kraft] (which is not part of nature) to regard these things about which we are concerned (worldly goods, 73 health and life) as trivial [Klein], and hence to regard its might [Macht] (to which we are, to be sure, subjected in regard to these things) as not the sort of dominion over ourselves and our authority to which we would have to bow if it came down to our highest principles and their affirmation or abandonment. (CJ 5:262; translation modified, Merritt 32)

Whatever worldly goods one has, and even one's health and life, could be taken away in a flash of nature's might. Ultimately, we are without any means to resist: we will die, and our bodies return to dust. Moreover, to whatever extent we win the material and social goods we go after, and whether we have even good health and the continuance of life, is not entirely up to us: this is nature's dominion over us as Divakaruni reflects in the *Mistress of Spices*, "most ordinary, for that is the nature of magic. Deepest magic which lies at the heart of our everyday lives, flickering fire, if only we had eyes to see" (51). However, how can we regard

worldly goods, health, and life, as 'small' or 'trivial' (Klein) in a contest against 'our highest principles'? We must recognize some other standard of value, "a unit against which everything in nature is small" (Kant 5:261). This standard must lie in our freedom from the dominion that nature exerts over us as merely animal beings. With this, Kant shifts the discussion from absolute greatness of size and power that can only be apparent to a principle of unconditioned value that is supposed to be authentic within.

Tilo keeps a knife under her pillow, and the existence of a knife under her head signifies the need to keep her from dreaming, keep her from wanting the mundanity of life that the first mother and the spices cannot approve. The knife represents dangers that cut "moorings from the past, the future" to keep her "always rocking at sea" (Kant 51). Tilo's nature is flawed, and the reference of the knife is redundant in cutting her ties off with her human form. The first mother, the high priestess who introduced Tilo to the world of spices and the magical power of the ancient land, observes Tilo "shinning but flawed with a crack running through it" (Diivakaruni 83). The store full of spices that creates a natural habitat for the 'mistress', also resembles the uncontrollable, awe-inspiring, and fearful elements that though makes Tilo powerful yet makes her feel vulnerable and yearn for the world outside the doors where she will have choices and consequences of her own, where she will be touched, enticed, longed. With raven's introduction, she realizes that she, too, is a woman who deserves to thrive beyond her past, the survivor's guilt, and the powers granted to her by the stars. She yearns to be Nayantara again from Tilottoma, to be a simple village girl (who wants love), from the 'mistress of spices' (who could only win fear).

Tilo casts out the human form while being constantly pushed by the dilemma between her role as a human and a sorceress— living along the lines of unmediated existence between man and nature, power and subservience, between terror and peace. Her exile from the village to a hidden land of magic and later exiled again to the United States through the "shampati's fire" are reminiscent of her journey as a migrant who belonged nowhere but was pushed into the flow of the ones who have no home. The safe yet cursed distance from which she witnessed the pillaging of her village, the killing of her parents, and the rape of her sisters juxtaposes her finite existence riled up in front of tremendous force—the one that the pirates had and the one she had. The powers assured her safety but with a price of sacrificed morals, the life of guilt and unattainable freedom. In simple words, Kant reflected that freedom for it to be sublime must be free from empirical obligations (empirical causations are priori, set of intentions, influenced by pre-rounded information, judgment) humans should conceive themselves as moral agents and noumenally free to act on their reason and understanding to deliver their judgment, making a moral stand without the interference of natural causality—the transcendent being.

But is she a free person to achieve the state of the transcendent being? Helping Jagjit, an Indian immigrant, to survive better in school from the bullies because of his cultural signifiers, or aiding Haroun into forgetting his traumatic past during the war in Kashmir, or even helping the American lover, Raven, with his wounds from an accident— all contribute to the fact that she has desires born from her preconditioned trauma and guilt. Desire is part of the empirical causation, which is intentional and predetermined foundation. It is also the forces

Tilo has no control over, part of the "natural law" that regulates desires in a human. In her case, the spices are part of her natural law controlling her desires. In the Kantian sense, no one is free and autonomous moral agent if acts on desire. In the *Mistress of Spices*, Divakaruni explicitly plays with the motif of desire, where "desires are natural forces that we passively endure; they control and 'enslave' us" (Ortiz-Millán 321). Kant sets the perspective "Inclination is blind and servile", whether it is under kindness or not, and when morality is in question, reason must not act as a guardian watching over desires or inclination but must disregard it completely (Ortiz-Millán 328). Desires are also part of the powers she has received (while wanting attention from her parents and being worshipped) and the "earthly paradise" of the everyday life she yearns for. But if one hand, her desperate and rebelling yearning for a normal life is a desire, the reasoning and understanding of self-immolation in 'shampati's fire' is her pure practical reasoning, her moral agency. The reasoning she applies to disrupt diminishes herself altogether and the power that should not exist in the first place controlling the lives, their fate, desires, and eventual freedom of other lives. Her reasoning is to break free from the bondage of servitude and destroy the powerhouse to free the lives under servitude of the spices and free her spirit of human desires. Her final disenchantment from all her desires, longing, and guilt as she steps into the fire is the core of her rational autonomy, as the proof of self-governance. This selfless act does not represent prudential reasons or self-love but an act of morality, a virtue that invokes the sublime.

This thought of reasoning can be extended in discussing another Kantian concept, the „Dynamic Sublime“. Kant, in his introduction to the *Analytic of the Sublime* (Kant 23) "moves from what is generally true about the aesthetic judgement of reflection to what is specifically true of those judgements which concern the sublime" (Merritt 16). Kant then divides his exposition of judgements concerning the sublime into those that express satisfaction in greatness of size, and those that express satisfaction in greatness of power, calling them the "mathematical" and "dynamical" sublime, respectively. As we will see, this division aligns with the different roles that ideas of reason play in theoretical and practical cognition, respectively (Kant 5:247). According to Kant, "the sublime is to be found in an object even devoid of form, so far as it immediately involves, or else by its presence provokes, a representation of limitlessness, yet with a super-added thought of its totality" (Kant 90). The Mathematical sublime instead can be found in form, as in quantified form yet also in its limitlessness. Its existence lies in the cognitive concept in the mind to create concepts of quantity or numerical perception trying to conceive the totality of limitlessness as in of a pyramid or stary sky or an unendingly stretched field of daffodils.

On the other hand, the dynamic sublime focuses on the realisation that humans have power over nature and its awe-inspiring elements. Since humans are fragile in knowledge of their own insignificance, they are also aware of the force of nature that threatens the physical boundaries. But the realization of the cognitive superiority over nature defines the dynamic sublime. For example, the tornado can violate the humans physically and its limitlessness, overwhelming stature is conceived by humans in their minds and gradually, from a safe distance, even in witnessing its tremendous power, it gives the satisfaction of dominion over the "fear" that it represents. hence, the dynamic sublime occurs in the

process of that confrontation with nature, reasoning and realizing dominion over natural power and hindrances as Kant observes—

If we are to estimate nature as dynamically sublime, it must be represented as a source of fear (though the converse that every object that is a source of fear is, in our aesthetic judgment, sublime does not hold). For in forming an aesthetic estimate (no concept being present) the superiority to hindrances can only be estimated according to the greatness of the resistance. Now that which we strive to resist is an evil, and, if we do not find our powers commensurate to the task, an object of fear. (Kant 109-110).

The idea of terror and the dynamic process of confrontation with it is the core of Divakaruni's fiction *Mistress of Spices* (1997). Tilo's existence as a "Witchwoman" from the beginning of the novel, who could only win fear but not love, goes beyond the story of an immigrant woman. The protagonist's mysterious journey from the past and her mystical power granted by the spices saturating the reality and magical realism within the plot. The representation of fear through Tilo's imagination and reminiscences gives shape to the internalized and abstract fear such as "Dark of evening" or the looming shadow of fear that surrounds us and feeds on the uncertainty and despair. Tilo feels this fear in American, the land of "Skyscrapers of silver glass by a lake-wide as ocean...overpowering like singed flesh, the odour of hate which is also the odour fear" (Divakaruni 53). Dynamical sublimity presents immense natural power that challenges our default sense of what is worth going after, what is valuable. Our enjoyment in natural sublimity is explained in an interest in a standard of goodness that is proper as rational beings. Tilo's internal conflicts and her imbalances with the self and the spices should be represented "as a source of fear (though the converse, that every object that is a source of fear is, in our aesthetic judgement, sublime, does not hold)" (Kant 109). Kant observes—

we may look upon an object as fearful, and yet not be afraid of it, if, that is, our estimate takes the form of our simply picturing to ourselves the case of our wishing to offer some resistance to it, and recognizing that all such resistance would be quite futile (Kant 110).

Fear exists in two forms in nature— as actual fear and as imagined fear. In the case of actual fear, it threatens safety and physical boundaries. Hence, the sublime can no longer be traced within the emotions that are inclined or infused with desire, the desire to cease the fearful event. The sense of fear also gives rise to two types of negative consequences — on the one hand. The desire to never face the specific situation that caused distress and fear in the past, and on the other hand, the desire to never recall the incidents causing the distress. Divakaruni weaves the negative consequences of fear and its confrontation out of moral determination within Tilo's quest for identity. Tilo's fearful past regarding divination, the pirates destroying her home, killing her family members, her kidnapping, and her brutal training by the first mother as the sorceress contribute to the actual fear and her inclination to escape. Tilo's determination to not repeat the horrors of her helpless existence. Through the sense of this insignificance the sublime occurs from the memory of actual pain or terror. But the spice store, away from the horrors of the village, the pirates or land of the old mother— all positions Tilo in a secured and safe proximity. It aids the re-articulation of the horrors from

her past, does not become violent or life-threatening yet exhilarating, and presents the state of incessant inner turmoil. In dynamic sublime, Kant, while agreeing with Burke (on the idea of the sublime from the cessation of terror), he explains in further—

the boundless ocean rising with rebellious force, the high waterfall of some mighty river, and the like, make our power of resistance of trifling moment in comparison with their might. But, provided our own position is secure, their aspect is all the more attractive for its fearfulness. (Kant 110).

He also explains why fearfulness is attractive, under the irresistibility of power in nature forces humans to recognize their physical limitations and helplessness. But at the same time, the insignificance provides an opportunity to find meaning in existence independent of nature as Kant explains—

...reveals a faculty of estimating ourselves as independent of nature, and discovers a pre-eminence above nature that is the foundation of a self-preservation of quite another kind . . . it challenges our power (one not of nature) to regard as small those things of which we are wont to be solicitous (worldly goods, health, and life), and hence to regard its might . . . as exercising over us and our personality no such rude dominion that we should bow down before it ...Therefore nature is here called sublime merely because it raises the imagination to a presentation of those cases in which the mind can make itself sensible of the appropriate sublimity of the sphere of its own being, even above nature. (Kant 112-113).

In the case of the dynamical sublime, in contrast, understanding our moral survival performs more of a direct role. When witnessing the robust construction of natural objects from the standpoint of safety, the fear is recognized, but it also challenges the capacity to imagine situations where one remains courageous, even in the face of impending destruction by the powerful object. Faced with inexorable destruction in the presence of raw force in nature, one responds differently. On the one hand, one can merely be astounded by fears concerning physical well-being and safety.. On the other hand, one can, against the natural inclinations, transcend fear and countenance of destruction based on moral determination and virtue—thus acting on standards of moral conduct which demonstrate the true vocation as rational "supersensible" beings The pleasure in the sublime is not explainable in terms of the balance of pain or terror, one rather requires, an alternative study of how the fearful nature of the powerful natural object turns into positive account. The pleasure in the detrimental object is justifiable through its leading the self into its imagined state as an extension of the determination, virtue and moral bearing, confronting that particular power, realising the fundamentals of reason and freedom, and refuting nature's dominion.

Under the guidance of "First Mother," Nayantara renames herself as Tilottyoma. It means "life-giver, restorer of health and hope" (Aruna 99). Tilo is the sesame seed and represents the golden-brown tint under the influence of planet Venus. 'Til', when ground into a paste with sandalwood, treats heart and liver diseases; when fried in its oil restores luster in the one who has lost interest in life. Tilottyoma is also a mythical being, "apsara" or courtesan in the court of God Indra. Tilo passed the ceremony of purification, i.e., entering the Shampati's fire. She did not burn, did not feel pain, yet woke up in a body, free from the bond of perpetual servitude. Like, the courtesan in Indra's court, the Mistress is born

to serve the spices. She called for the fire to engulf her, knowing it will not kill her but will transport her soul. It will only destroy the shop and the spices that express their dominion over her, over the people bound to this store in Oakland, California. Her choice was to destroy the divine Tilo, even at the cost of sacrificing all her inclination to the store, first Mother, customers, and Raven. In the end, "Shampati's fire" called upon an earthquake to wipe away all the signs of the sorceress, also gifts Tilo a chance to live without guilt, without the past. Shampati's fire takes two distinct forms in Divakaruni's novel— on the one hand, it resembles the path of reform, through the destruction, and the other hand, it represents the overwhelming force that stays hidden in nature, amid mundane objects, such as the spices and waits to rewrite the lives that surround it, to reformat and recreate. But Shampati's fire through its painless, unscarring flames, represents the awe-inspiring natural object that demands fear and absolute surrender from Tilo, which she refutes out of her determination and that evokes the power in her to confront the nature— to use the power and not get used by it (Divakaruni 262). Her power of reason and moral decisiveness, devoid of desire and worldly inclinations, claims her identity's sublimity above the spices, above the fire and the earthquake, above nature.

Conclusion

Gita Rajan views *Mistress of Spices* as a complicated story rather than a straightforward diasporic accounts narrative. Though the novel's application of mysticism appears as a drawing of the magical elements on a canvas of realism, Divakaruni's magical realist scheme operates on a compact "Orientalized mysticism" within which Tilo's imaginary mechanisms lend her an obvious mystical power (Rajan 216). According to Rajan, Divakaruni signifies Tilo's mystical power to confront the enforced reality of an imperialist brand. Rajan asserts —

traditional genre of the realist novel works as an instrument of imperialism since the realism portrayed in such novels is essentially Western and requires "realist" novels from other locations to conform to the Western norms (Rajan 216).

The magical components in the novel symbolize emblematic aspects of fear, uncertainty, illusion, desire, and morality of human nature that counterbalances hegemonic forces of natural power and politicized dogma in the name of traditions and culture. Muhammad Manzur Alam examines the development of the senses creating an unequal space of power relations and advocated the "segregationist intents" of human beings, especially to cite the difference between masculinity and femininity to preserve "relations of dominance and subordination" (Alam 2). The masculinist version of the sublime does define a key aesthetic experience of terror and exhilaration that characterizes our material predicament and the socio-political idea of gendered dominance over women, prioritizing the masculinist project of segregation and domination of the 18th century aesthetical studies. But the idea of the masculinist traditions of the sublime may be seen as the form of fear and repression obstructing the concept of reason and freedom over instinctual, desires, and natural. Tilo is expected to be the 'mistress of spices', live in a life of servitude, prioritize the spices that

represent the authoritative voice, the parental discipline he craved for all her life. She always won fear from her parents and not adoration or restrictions, hence having no sense of belonging. The spice and the first mother represent the masculinist boundaries, the "sealed boundary" made of the worlds of reality and magic "contributes to the feminist consciousness" (Mann 160). Mann reflects—

It seems that an act of (symbolic? political?) violence is needed to tear open the boundary of an entire world, of an entire ontology, lived and (re)constructed with the masculine "I" at the center. Decentering the masculine I, opening this sealed world to difference in any genuine sense, requires the radical unraveling of its epistemes, but also a moment of shocking, awe-inspiring epiphany—an epiphany that shifts the center so completely as to bring the whole edifice down (Mann 160).

According to Bonnie Mann, the sublime, in the context of feminist politics, is the experience that pushes one to the limit of a closed. "I-centered" world, an assault on the boundary that seals it, or a glimpse (from the inside) over that boundary to exteriority that will not be reduced to the same. Most importantly, it retains the sublime moment when we know ourselves to be at the mercy of the natural world as Kant described sublime experience as a confrontation with nature at its most wild and formless, its most terrifying (Mann 161). His descriptions of hurricanes and volcanoes, wild oceans and thundering waterfalls, towering rocks, and thunderstorms evoke a nature that seemed to defy our human capacity to domesticate and control. Yet for Kant, amid an age that did indeed bring the natural world under technical control in multiple ways, the sublime was the experience of the rupture in this relationship of dependence, the undoing of this terror, and the triumph of reason.

This is a kind of sublime experience that does not reveal human's "infinite superiority" over nature but also focuses on humans capacity or "destiny" to be free of nature and it's overpowering dominance as the Kantian sublime did. Tilo's magical power might give us an indication that she has the power to overcome her subjugated identity. However, the bestowing of the same power on her can also be seen as the continuation of the tendency to be free from the natural dominion and the superiority of the first mother and the spices exerted upon her. Even though the identity of a witch gives Tilo certain powers, it, nevertheless, is a patriarchal mechanism represented through the magical realm to indicate segregation. Tilo's tactile prohibition from her spatial boundaries, or even her "witchlike" representation in the novel, evidently reflects the imposition of patriarchal expectations on women and their exclusion from mainstream life. Therefore, the paradoxical juxtaposition of Tilo's apparent spiritual transcendence and her physical confinement resonates with women's monastic enclosure. Her engagement with the spices also reflects the sensorial, religious rituals women perform in the confines of monasteries and households. However, Tilo's spiritual ascent provides her with the strength to renegotiate her confined, othered identity. Divakaruni seems to be figuratively stating that the subjugation of a woman or anyone marginalized might not just ensue from their lack of strength; the subjugation may also result from their lack of effort to break free from the psychological shackles created by oppressive forces. *Mistress of Spices* manifests two essential conditions of human existence amid uncontrollable forces

of the world, which hints at the Kantian foundation of the sublime— "mercy of the land, and the air, and the water and what we've made of them" (Mann 168). But here, in the postcolonial reality of the novel, the natural elements, in the form of fourteen spices— Turmeric, Cinnamon, Fenugreek, Asafoetida, Fennel, Ginger, Peppercorn, Kalo Jire, Neem, Red Chilli, Makaradwaj, Lotus Root, and Sesame. In terms of these spices, then what kind of sublime experience is manifested through the contemporary understanding of fear and reason? Is it then only about the freedom one experiences through rational decisions? Bonnie Mann reflects that "this sublime experience does not unravel our dependence on the planet but weaves it tighter until we choke on our own mistakes" (Mann 167). In *Mistress of spices*, the sublime experience is an experience of just terror or the superseding control of the natural elements or her subjugation as a woman of the suspense over but a reasoned response to what is to become of Tilottyoma. The sublime here orients the fear, the guilt, the grief, and the responsibility —an admixture of the feelings that unknots the boundaries of the self to achieve the sovereign state.

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Nonsense as the Artist's Identity Quest in Mervyn Peake's *Letters from a Lost Uncle*

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Abstract. This paper explores the use of nonsense in Mervyn Peake's *Letters from a Lost Uncle* (1948). It aims at shedding a light on how nonsense highlights the character's quest for identity which ultimately reflects the author's own quest as an artist. The figure of the author is shown as struggling to get a firm grasp on language while compensating through drawing, which gives him back some control. Parody and exaggeration allow Peake to take a step back on his own work and depict artistic creation as an endless quest for the unreachable.

Keywords. Mervyn Peake, 20th century, nonsense, parody, language

Mervyn Peake is one of the most fascinating and yet underrated authors of the 20th century. Indeed, his work, has often been deemed “too peculiar”, and, as such, very difficult to classify, and to find on library shelves (See Sedgwick) [1]. Although many commentators have tried over the years to give a more precise generic definition of Peake's work, the key to understand his many strange stories might be the presence of nonsense in it, both a mode and a genre which is very difficult to circumscribe and categorise in turn. According to Edmund Milly, who considers Peake's nonsense to be above all a style, “the genre of Peake's work is often unclear where nonsense techniques are present” (Milly 38 – 39). Nonsense tends to be spontaneously associated with childish and inconsequential writing in the minds of readers. However, as Sophie Aymès-Stokes states in her study of Peake's children book *Letters from a Lost Uncle*, “far from being a minor form of artistic activity or “mere side-lines”, the practice of nonsense illuminates Peake's work” (Aymès-Stokes 145). *Letters from a Lost Uncle*, which is the focus of the present paper, is an illustrated children storybook which was published in 1948. The story is presented as a series of fourteen letters from an “uncle”, whose name is never mentioned, to a hypothetical “nephew” he has never met. The letters are all accompanied by drawings enabling the main protagonist to narrate his daily life and his past. In a tale made of endless digressions, the uncle manages to tell the story of his childhood, early adulthood and failed marriage which ultimately prompted him to escape and cast off for adventure. His main goal is to find the legendary White Lion, which leads him to faraway polar regions with a “turtle dog” named Jackson as his only companion. To G. Peter Winnington, the plot follows a quest pattern which is to be found in many of Peake's other works: “the independent youth who runs away, crosses water, encounters man-like animals or animal-like men, meets and either acquires [...] or kills [...] the animal object of his quest and then returns” (Winnington 228). The story is laced with nonsensical references and features: the uncle is an eccentric and solitary character who crosses the sea on a wooden plank he uses as a boat, and, during

his journey, he regularly comes across nonsensical creatures such as snow-snakes and turtle dogs. Finally, his companion, Jackson, is a hybrid between a man and an animal who never speaks (see Tigges 77 – 80) [2]. All these elements are reminiscent of Edward Lear's nonsense as well as Peake's own nonsensical poetry. In Lear's "The Story of Four Little Children Who Went Round the World", children sail to strange countries with a creature called a Quangle-Wangle as their crewmate while in Peake's nonsensical poem "All over the Lilac Brine!", a man and his wife sail on a table "of rare design" towards islands peopled with literal Catfish. The underlying meaning of *Letters from a Lost Uncle* has led to many conjectures over the years. Sophie Aymès-Stokes interprets it as "a form of eccentric autobiography, a parody of first-person Victorian exploration narratives" (Aymès-Stokes 140-141). Alice Mills and Katherine Langrish both underline the parody and subversion of the colonial relationship between master and slave (Mills 115) or "White man and Native" (Langrish 166) which the power dynamic between the uncle and Jackson evokes. As for Milly, who agrees with Mills on the matter, he states that "the bounteous innuendo" in the work "outlines an implicit, though ambiguous discourse on gender and sexuality." (Milly 26) As both an alternative and a complement to these readings, this paper aims at exploring the use and effect of nonsense in *Letters from a Lost Uncle* in relation to the quest for identity. Indeed, nonsense in this work could be used by Peake as a means to simultaneously cover up and illuminate his attempt at defining the poet's own quest for identity and meaning through artistic creation.

Letters from a Lost Uncle as a Nonsensical Work

A Nonsensical Character with no Identity

The question of identity, which is at the heart of the story, is announced from the very title. The only piece of information we get from it is that the main protagonist does not have a name, and that he is lost. Furthermore, most of the letters he writes are not signed, except notably for the last one which only reads, in a rather ironic way, "from your lost uncle". In addition, we do not have access to the answers his potential nephew might have sent him back. He therefore remains nameless, joining the long list of "uncles" from Peake's nonsensical universe, as well as Lear's "Uncle Arly" whose identity, in a very clever pun, is all but clear. In one famous nonsensical poem by Peake entitled "Aunts and Uncles", the identity of each "aunt" and "uncle" is reduced to one predominant flaw or personality trait which leads to their transformation into a specific animal that rhymes with their name. A similar fate befalls the uncle from *Letters from a Lost Uncle* whose leg has been chopped off by a swordfish and then replaced with the same fish's nose. It turns the uncle into a hybrid being whose identity is both blurred and made rigid. Sophie Aymès-Stokes notices that: "the rigidity [is] characteristic of the true eccentric who is able to resist the homogenizing influence of social convention" (Aymès and Mellet, qtd. in Aymès-Stokes 143). While in "Aunts and Uncles" the transformations are likely to be caused by the others who kept pointing out their relations' flaws until they ended up literally reducing them to this (See Maslen 8) [3], in *Letters from a Lost Uncle*, the uncle had to flee his relatives who represent

a norm he rejects. Thus, by isolating himself from almost any relationship with other people, the uncle might have become as rigid as they were. As a result, he might have lost his own humanity, hence the loss of his name in the process.

As the uncle is said to be “lost” and felt the need to escape from his oppressive family, one may wonder about the status and purpose of the letters he is writing. Is there a real recipient to them (aside from the reader) or is it rather a means for him to express himself and therefore regain both his humanity and identity by reaching out to the social world he has shunned? (See Mills 113) [4]. These letters – which would be difficult to reply to since the uncle is lost and therefore does not seem to have any valid address, although these types of consideration do not seem to matter too much in a nonsensical world (See Mills 112) [5] – are closer to pages from a diary, as the uncle himself puts it. Thus, they can be read first and foremost as a long, self-introspective monologue. The unnamed “nephew” is nothing more than a mirror image of the “uncle” who, at the beginning of the story, is an empty signifier waiting to be given substance. The question is whether this actually ever happens at all.

Nonsensical Writing: Loss of Control over Language

Prolonged solitude can lead to madness, the kind of madness found in nonsense, which leads, in turn, to the sort of odd digression found in *Letters from a Lost Uncle*. However, this nonsensical digression which is the expression of a “lovely madness”, as Peake would put it, could paradoxically be a means for the character to avoid going completely mad.

The uncle explains in his first letter that he is not used to writing. Indeed, this quiet, social activity clashes with the ideal, albeit parodic, version of strong masculinity that the uncle embodies. Nevertheless, he proves to be extremely chatty as he writes about anything that comes to his mind. His writing seems very erratic and messy at first: he is documenting the most trivial aspects of his life, keeps repeating himself, misspells or crosses out words and frequently spills liquids on the page. This last detail, which betrays a lack of control over his movements, could be seen as a reflection of his lack of control over language and, more generally, over the codes of conversation.

In this aspect, the “lost uncle” fits the very definition of a nonsensical character. Indeed, as Jean-Jacques Lecercle reminds us “Nonsense does not seek to express the writer’s emotions” (Lecercle 35), which is what the character here, who has turned into a writer, tries hard not to do from the very start. To emphasise both his virility and carelessness, the uncle draws his hand holding a harpoon and leaves a thumb mark on the first page. He also regularly chides himself with exclamations such as “pickle my blubber!” to counter any display of sentimentality. Furthermore, instead of giving meaningful information and making his message as clear as possible, which is what one would expect from a letter, the uncle has a tendency to give out useless and prosaic details that he sometimes uses as an excuse to draw. Thus, at the end of the first letter, the uncle literally comments on himself simply “filling up the space”: “To fill up the space above, I’ll draw the sea-elephant I skinned a week or so ago.”[6] In the second letter, he decides to draw what he sees at the exact moment he is writing, that is,

his feet, before commenting on the stuffy atmosphere in his igloo: “For instance, from where I sit I can see my right foot perfectly, and my leg-spike too, with the inside of the igloo, beyond – so as an example, I will make a drawing of it, before I continue.” These are but a few examples of many digressions found in the text, which are often interrupted by drawings that seem much more consistent than the text, despite remaining two-dimensional by nature (See Winnington 228) [7].

One can notice a striking unbalance between the uncle’s control over his pen when he is drawing, and his lack of control over the words when he is typing. All in all, he appears as a flat character on the page whose babbling seems to lead nowhere. This impression is confirmed with him being “on a piece of floating ice the size of Kent” which is going “in the opposite direction to where [he] want[s] to go”, before drifting back to its starting point. As such, the narration, just like the icefloe the uncle is on, all but seems to stagnate. However, the uncle manages to leave the piece of ice by embarking on his kayak.

Thus, as a true nonsensical work, *Letters from a Lost Uncle* is characterised by a paradoxical excess of signs on the page, while simultaneously seeming to lack content. Indeed, there is not a space on the page which is not filled up with the uncle’s typing, drawings, afterthoughts added with a pencil or stains and smudges left either by him or his “turtle dog” companion Jackson. The page becomes a completely anarchical space where the form takes over the meaning. One may well wonder at this point whether the uncle has any sort of control over language.

As a nonsensical character, the uncle shares many similarities with the characters from Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland*, who, according to Lecercle “like to listen to the sound of their own voice” (Lecercle 71) and are generally driven by a “selfishness” principle or what linguists call a “Me-First Orientation” (See Lecercle 103) [8]. Such characters simply forego the rules of politeness altogether, as does the uncle in the letters he writes, since their intended recipient is almost never mentioned or alluded to. As it is, the uncle only ever talks about himself. What he writes is even duplicated with images in which he represents himself as often as fifty-eight times, sometimes even showing the same image from a different angle or perspective. Furthermore, his letters do not seem to have proper endings as they are almost never signed, which gives the impression of one endless letter, alternating between words and images. Once the uncle starts writing, he cannot seem to stop, and it is as if the language he does not have a secure grasp on is taking over. Indeed, his writing and drawings could both be seen as “compulsive” (See Milly 33) [9]. Some nonsensical, idiomatic phrases such as “blubber” or “pickle me!” keep being repeated in an almost mechanical way, which reminds us of the “tap-tap-tapping” of the typewriter the uncle is using. In the first part of the story, the uncle’s language is as stiff as his spike-leg. These sentences punctuating his tale are used to “fill the blanks”, just like his drawings seem to be. All of this may be interpreted as the uncle’s lack of grasp over language as well as an attempt to regain it by giving himself something to say. Moreover, just like the uncle cannot seem to refrain from repeating the same words over and over again, drawing appears to be a necessity he cannot go against either. Thus, at some point during his fourth letter, he interrupts his typing to draw a beetle he sees crawling on the floor, stating, once he is done “I feel very much better now that I have finished the beetle”. What seems paradoxical is that he adds a lot of unnecessary, prosaic details or involuntary interjections because he is not

comfortable with written language, while he simultaneously fills his pages with drawings because, conversely, he is extremely comfortable doing them.

According to Lecercle, a platitude, which is close to the obvious and prosaic facts the uncle writes about, has a "solid obviousness that allows easy recognition and avoids mental stress" (Lecercle 63). It therefore partakes in a "the speaker's fantasy of absolute control over his language." (64) This effort at controlling one's language may also be observed in the way the uncle goes over his typing again and corrects the many mistakes that are bound to occur every time someone speaks or writes. However, these corrections give way to more text added with a pencil in the margins, showing how language always slips from our grasp and proliferates on its own. In one of these margins, the uncle adds between brackets, "(I'd forgotten that I'd already drawn a sea-elephant - not that it matters. Oh no! It was an elephant seal)." This addition is nonsensical on several levels: it gives a useless information which is explicitly said to be useless ("not that it matters") and points at a language incoherence because why would the same animal be called both a sea-elephant and an elephant seal? It should be two different animals altogether. Is the uncle making a joke or is he aware both nouns refer to the same creature?

The added remarks and the many drawings that fill the blanks around the typed pages are proof of the uncle's unstoppable babbling, which sharply contrasts with his companion's silence. Indeed, not only does Jackson never talk, but he is also the very embodiment of both the uncle's fantasy of complete control over language and his violence on it. Jackson is a true nonsensical creation which could be seen as a "portmanteau" (See Carroll 192) [10] for several reasons. First, he is a "turtle dog", a new type of animal which would be both slow and loyal, combining the two animals' main characteristics. This strange combination may also appear as a bit contradictory, since who would want a slow companion as an assistant in the Arctic? Secondly, he is literally used as a coat rack (a "portemanteau") by the uncle who has "hammer[ed] nails into his back to hang things on". This could actually explain the choice of a turtle who literally lives inside its house, which would add an inside joke. Finally, Jackson is also used as an easel so that the uncle can draw the landscape around him by putting his canvas on his back. One can notice the violence the uncle shows against Jackson, who is nothing more than a means for the main protagonist to express himself, as well as a convenient foil. Indeed, the uncle keeps complaining about him being useless, clumsy, apathetic or not clever enough. Besides, Jackson has no control whatsoever over his identity, as he is always either drawn or described by the uncle who sometimes even forgets his name. At some point in the story, Jackson becomes Johnson and then simply J. The only times Jackson regains some control over his identity are when he involuntarily leaves traces of himself on the page by either spilling gravy or coffee or stepping on the blank page, leaving a footprint which prevents the uncle from writing or drawing on the soiled paper. However, one may wonder whether Jackson truly exists or if he is nothing more than a projection of the uncle's imagination, born out of his extreme solitude. To Alice Mills, who notices that "The turtle-dog's plight also echoes the Uncle's past", the uncle's name should even symbolically be Jack, as in "Jack's son". (Mills, 115). Being able to maintain complete control over this purely linguistic creature

therefore clearly looks like a metaphor for the uncle's attempt at maintaining his grasp over language, and ultimately over his own identity.

On the other hand, the uncle compensates his poor language skills with drawings that efficiently complete his writing, and sometimes replace it altogether. In *Letters from a Lost Uncle*, the images are not used as mere illustrations for the text, it is rather the text which is used as a caption for the pictures. It allows the uncle to be clearer and much more precise than he is with words. Unlike the many useless details he tends to add in his text, nothing seems extraneous in his drawings, which highlight his humour and wittiness. As a result, he appears as a much more human and likeable character. All along the letters, the uncle states several times his predilection for drawing over writing, for example in the second letter where he specifies "As I can explain things better by making drawings as I go along". The statement is confirmed and made explicit in the following pages, in which he tells about his encounter with an "Arctic wolf": "For instance, last Monday when an Arctic ~~polar~~ wolf sprang at me, skinny with hunger and his teeth shining, I had only to do this: - and all was over." The text shows traces of hesitations and correction, since the word "polar" is crossed out, showing how the uncle has tried to find the most suitable adjective before ultimately deciding that the word "polar" did not add anything more to the adjective "Arctic". This correction shows how the character tries to be less wordy and more straightforward, so that he can make his point in a more efficient way. It therefore clarifies why the uncle abandons words altogether and replaces them with a simple picture of himself impaling the wolf on his leg-spike. The drawing is inserted just after the dash and interrupts the text, so instead of telling the reader, the character decides he'd rather show what he did. He might have continued his text by completing his sentence with something along the lines of "I only had to kick him with my leg-spike, which easily went through him." However, the words lack the immediacy of the image, as well as the many details that have been added to it. The reader can see the wolf dangling from the uncle's leg with his jaws open, while the main protagonist, who is shown as calmly smoking his pipe, looks as if he had simply stepped on the animal. The way the event is presented is very witty and makes the reader smile.

Thus, the uncle is never as good with words as he is with pictures. His drawings do more than just filling up blank spaces, they give meaning and depth to his words. When he does use words, he perpetrates the same kind of violence on them he does with Jackson by crossing them out, misspelling them or cutting them randomly. It is his way of imposing his will and therefore his identity on them. The question of identity is once again central to the story, as the many self-portraits that invade the space confirm. This may be read as the uncle's way of forcefully imposing himself and moving from the geographical margins of society in which he had no way to express himself – the Arctic regions are at far ends of the earth – to the centre of the page.

The Artist's Quest for Identity

An avatar of the author

Just like Jackson may be read as an avatar of the uncle, the uncle may in turn be read as an avatar of the author himself. Thus, the difficulties the characters encounter with language might simply mirror the author's own loss of control over it. *Letters From a Lost Uncle* could therefore be the author's own attempt at regaining some control by taking a step back through nonsense and parody.

Just like Peake, the uncle is particularly gifted at drawing, but instead of being a maverick artist, he is a nonsensical, distorted version of Captain Ahab who is no longer after a white whale, but a White Lion. This superimposition of the figure of the artist and of the nonsensical character is made obvious from the drawing on the front page. It represents the uncle's open diary held by Jackson on an ice floe, with a pencil on top of it. The pencil is right in the middle of the diary as well as in the middle of the page, which creates a *mise-en-abyme* effect. It also seems slightly disproportionate compared to the diary, which emphasises its importance. The pencil's sharp lead points down at a fish coming out of the water, as if to skewer it. On the next page, which corresponds to the beginning of the first letter, one can only see the drawing of the uncle's hand, holding up a giant harpoon that might come in handy to hunt the polar bear drawn in the background. Both tools are very similar in shape and ultimately serve the same purpose: to catch and pin creatures on the page. As such, the uncle becomes a nonsensical avatar of the artist himself. The conjecture is confirmed by some biographical elements Peake has disseminated in the story, using nonsense as a clever way to hide and expose them at the same time. Firstly, as numerous biographers and scholars have pointed out, Peake parodies the many adventure novels he has read and loved as a child, paying them homage by appropriating them and distorting them for his own pleasure (See Yorke 181-82) [11], as well as later on, his sons'. Indeed, in his biography of the author, G. Peter Winnington explains that while living on Sark "he built an igloo for them in the garden, complete with a drawn Eskimo in the window". To Winnington, "it would be natural to assume that these activities coalesced into his illustrated storybook, *Letters from a Lost Uncle (from Polar Regions)* had not John Watney assured [...] that [Peake] had 'originally written and illustrated [it] in 1945" (Winnington 227-228). At any rate, this anecdote shows how both fiction and reality overlap.

The uncle, who feels that the ending might be near, tries to leave a trace of himself by attempting to explain and show who he truly is in the best way he can. He therefore draws a "full-length portrait" of himself in the first letter, adding ironically that "This is what artists call [it]". As a way to abide by the rules of autobiographical writing, the uncle endeavours at some point to briefly describe his birth, childhood and early adulthood, which ultimately led him to be stranded in the Arctic. The biography is of course peppered with nonsensical facts: the one-week-old uncle ran away from his cradle and had to be strapped to it. He also drank so much ink during his first day at school that he was ill for a very long time. All these facts could be interpreted as instances of literalisation of metaphors. Indeed, the first anecdote might be a way to mean that right from the start, the

uncle had caught the travel bug. As for the ink-drinking, it could be pointing at the uncle's fictional existence. However, one can spot clever allusions to Peake himself, since, as told in the author's biographies, although he could draw very well from the start, he had a tendency of misspelling words and making mistakes while writing (See Winnington 43) [12]. Furthermore, once he moved from China to England and began attending Eltham College, he did not do as well as his brother at school but was once again praised for his drawing abilities (54 – 55). As for the boat the uncle embarks on, it is called the "S.S. Em", an obscure name which is an in-joke from Peake's years at Eltham (See Winnington 228) [13].

Staging the Self

Nonsense gives Peake great freedom to explore the act of creating. Indeed, it allows him to ponder serious aspects of his work while seemingly remaining playful. First and foremost, in *Letters from a Lost Uncle*, Peake deals with the act of representation by parodying and therefore questioning both autobiographical works and exploration tales. Autobiographies are supposed to be accounts in which the authors commit to be as truthful as possible. Thus, the description they make of themselves and of the events that happened to them should be as accurate as possible. In Peake's book, the uncle tells the reader right from the start that his self-portrait might not be accurate at all: "I think I look like this but as I broke my only looking-glass twelve years ago you must remember it is from memory only." The uncle's self-portrait is therefore more of a fantasy projection of what he wishes he would look like rather than a portrait one should take at face value. Besides, as the uncle says he has not looked at himself properly for twelve years, he is either showing the reader what he looked like twelve years prior to the drawing or trying to age himself as best as he can. In any case, since the uncle is the one holding the pencil, he is also the one controlling his own image. This discrepancy between reality and representation is something inherent to the act of creating itself, however, as nonsense allows Peake to exaggerate as much as he wants, he puts a magnifying glass on it. This is why he further plays with the codes of autobiographic accounts and invents an improbable past to the uncle which starts in the fourth letter. However improbable, this past is completely valid in the nonsensical universe the uncle finds himself in. In fact, he is a character in a nonsensical universe he describes and therefore creates. Indeed, as long as he is the master of the game (See Carroll 190) [14], everything he draws and documents is true. Thus, the many creatures he does not simply represent, but rather presents to the reader are all true, as long as they are given any sort of life through the uncle's pencil, which, of course, has been Peake's pencil all along. The uncle's harpoon that is also the artist's pencil, turns from a deadly weapon into a life-giving tool. It catches the reader's imagination and transports them in a world which is a distorted, enchanted version of their dull reality. In the uncle's universe, simple beetles become exquisitely carved, detailed creatures and snow-serpents can take a week before dying on someone's leg-spike. This blank land on which everything is possible is not only a fantasy version of the faraway Arctic regions, but also a metaphor for the artist's blank page. It explains why *Letter's from a Lost Uncle* does not present itself as a well-structured, completed book but as a perpetual work-in-progress. Indeed, one of the paradoxes of this story is that

it stages the act of creation to make it look more real, while the use of nonsense ostensibly points at it being a distortion of reality. However, what remains true is the power of artistic creation which is celebrated by the author in this surprising tale. Thus, Peake has fun making his book look like dirty pages from a manuscript. He adds all sorts of stains and smears and purposefully misspells and crosses out words as a joke, since nonsense frees him from any constrictive rule. One can look at it as nothing more than a representation of what it looks like to create, and therefore, a deception. However, by doing so, Peake lifts the curtain on what creation is all about, since the uncle's true quest might not be the White Lion per se, but rather what it symbolises for the artist.

The artist's quest for the unreachable

One might find it odd that Peake should choose a character such as the "Lost Uncle" to embody the figure of the artist. But one must remember that at some point in his life, Peake was seen walking around dressed as a pirate as a way to "affirm his separate identity and freedom" (Winnington 82 - 83) [15]. Thus, through the character of the uncle, the author presents the artist as a marginal and misunderstood figure who is seen as fundamentally different from the rest of society. Society is represented in the story by the family of the uncle's wife. However, the uncle's seeming madness is no more than a reflection of the others' madness (See Lecercle 109) [16]. This puts the whole notion of normalcy and eccentricity into question, since in Peake's universe, everyone is odd and does not fall into any pre-established category, even though none of his characters seems to realise it. As it is, the uncle certainly does not appear to think he is mad or abnormal but simply wishes to be free to be himself.

As an avatar of the artist, the uncle sets out on a quest to find a seemingly legendary creature called the White Lion. Finding the White Lion should mark the end of his journey, and therefore, the end of the story he is writing. The White Lion could, to some extent, also represent what Peake as a writer was after at the time, which kept eluding him: finding a suitable ending to his stories. Indeed, Peake had no problem creating extraordinary universes and characters but had troubles saying goodbye to them properly (Winnington 94, 128) [17]. This inability to find closure for his creations might explain why Peake felt most comfortable writing nonsense. Indeed, just like Lear's limericks that have no point and are characterised by a circular structure, it is not so much the ending that counts rather than the linguistic games that are at play. Thus, *Letters from a Lost Uncle* is less about finding the White Lion than about the writing journey itself. This may be observed in the way the uncle starts to enjoy writing about his adventures more and more, as he himself states: "Isn't it wonderful – I'm beginning to enjoy writing to you?". In fact, the closer he gets to the White Lion, the smoother his writing becomes. From a clumsy, digressive, prosaic tale, his writing turns into a much more organised, and sometimes even poetic text. In the thirteenth letter for instance, the uncle evokes a "sepia-coloured darkness" which "began to close around [him]" as well as "an ice-field with nothing else for miles". One can hear in this extract the internal rhyme created with the words "ice" and "miles" (See Langrish 169) [18]. At this point, the uncle and Jackson walk in a world of pure

white which leaves them “exposed and alone”. It might be the same feeling the artist is experiencing while staring at his blank page before inspiration strikes him. Inspiration, as well as the ultimate truth the artist is seeking in spite of the language aporia, is symbolised in this story by the White Lion: a legendary animal which is supposed to be uncatchable. The uncle does find it at the end, only to see it die before his eyes, which means his only way of truly catching it is to write about it and draw it. (See Langrish 170) [19]. Here lies the paradox of artistic creation: it is presented as nothing more than an illusion, a poor attempt at controlling language and catching an elusive truth, and yet it is a vital quest.

Letters from a Lost Uncle is a true nonsensical work which combines Peake’s favourite devices. It is both a parodic tale and a playground for linguistic and visual games, which, as a result, can leave the reader “lost” in turn as to what its true meaning might be. Children might not embarrass themselves with finding an in-depth meaning to it and simply enjoy the main character’s quirkiness. However, as often with Peake’s work, nonsense and parody could also be his way of trying to find a way to depict at best the paradoxical figure of the artist who is both celebrated and yet dismissed by society as nothing more than an eccentric. The artist’s journey might be akin to the uncle’s singular adventure in the polar regions, struggling to reach the unattainable with a spike-leg or a harpoon as his pen and a curious portmanteau character representing linguistic inventiveness by his side. But of course, as the story is nonsensical after all, its meaning will remain unreachable.

Notes

[1] To Marcus Sedgwick who deals with the lack of more substantial success for such a novel as *Titus Groan*: “for some people it is just too peculiar, but even those that may like it may never come across it simply because it defies classification and easy journalism”.

[2] Tigges makes a list of the themes and motifs found in Nonsense, among which “the nonsense voyage or quest”, the “common motifs of animals and things that are personified, or living creatures that are treated as objects”, “verbal invention” and “ill-assorted or nonexistent pairs”.

[3] “These presumably unmarried and childless family members [...] have become defined by the things their nephews and nieces say about them, locked into the limited frame of reference provided by teasing, rumour and gossip; and most of them seem either indifferent to or positively delighted by the fantastic metamorphoses to which they have become subjected.”

[4] To Mills, “The choice of a nephew to address his letters to, especially a nephew whom he seems to know only through his imagination, is an ambiguous one. Choosing his hypothetical nephew as a reader, the Uncle wavers between wanting and not wanting to make contact with his family.”

[5] On this subject, Mills adds that “The typewriter that he has managed to transport across oceans and jungles, and the unlikeliness of a delivery service in the unpeopled Arctic of his travels, send up the epistolary convention; so too, does the Uncle’s initial lack of enthusiasm for his self-imposed task.”

[6] The edition used does not provide page numbers.

[7] G. Peter Winnington notes that "The Story of the Lost Uncle's search for the polar White Lion, the Emperor of the Snows, is the pretext for many superb pencil drawings, but the storyline is weak and fizzles out when the Uncle encounters the White Lion [...]."

[8] "The Politeness Principle operates on the basis of a linguistic and pragmatic You-First Orientation [...] But the characters themselves hardly ever conform to the maxims of politeness. They seem to follow a Selfishness Principle, which is the mirror image of its polite counterpart."

[9] According to Milly "The Uncle's elliptical prose style is more than merely comical or a signifier of a dim wit; his prose exemplifies his psychological pattern of compulsive repetition." The character's 'stuckness' identified by Mills is a sign of trauma to him.

[10] In *Alice Through the Looking-glass*, Humpty-Dumpty explains what a portmanteau word is to Alice: "You see it's like a portmanteau – there are two meanings packed up into one word."

[11] "A children's writer often creates the kind of tales he or she would like to have read in their own childhood and in *Letters from a Lost Uncle* Peake includes all the elements he'd enjoyed in Stevenson, Ballantyne, Defoe, Melville and other writers of adventure yarns [...]."

[12] "[...] Mervyn was not a scholarly child and never distinguished himself at school. In the books that reproduce his handwriting, such as *Captain Slaughterboard*, or his typing, such as *Letters from a Lost Uncle*, his spelling is erratic and he invariably misplaced the apostrophe in such contractions as 'don't'."

[13] "The ship the Uncle sails on is called the S.S. Em, which recalls the pre-1912 name of Eltham College, 'School for the Sons of Missionaries'. At school matches, the boys would support their team with the chant, 'Ess-ess-emmm!' The Uncle points to the joke by adding, 'Whether her name was short for Empire or Emu I never found out.'"

[14] As Humpty Dumpty puts it: "The question is [...] which is to be master – that's all."

[15] Winnington also quotes Eric Drake who was quoted by Watney: "He wore his hair long and flowing, had his right ear-lobe pierced, and wore a gold 'pirate's ring in it. To this he added a cape à la Augustus John, lined with scarlet (and thoroughly enjoyed the sensation caused among both down-to-earth peasants and fisherman and respectable middle-class residents)".

[16] To Lecercle "Lear's eccentrics are as alienated as the 'they' that smash them. Their being alienated in and by their eccentricity of madness is the mirror image of the stupid common sense of the 'they'."

[17] For example, Winnington writes about the ending of *Mr Slaughterboard*, a short story by the author: "The brief final chapter records the captain's stoic reaction to the shipwreck and ends with a two-word paragraph: 'The Silence.' To me it sounds like a frank confession of what happens when a writer cannot get his story going and gives up on it."

[18] Langrish also notes about the drawings that "the Lost Uncle pictures are lyrical and magical, using swirling lines and blurred soft pencil shading to evoke the wonder of the natural world [...]."

[19] Langrish reminds us that the uncle does not wish to kill the White Lion, but simply photograph it. Therefore, to her "the White Lion stands for the unattainable, the ungraspable moment of enlightenment and joy which is like a lightning flash – there and gone."

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Poetics of an abstract author in Ackroyd's *The House of Doctor Dee*

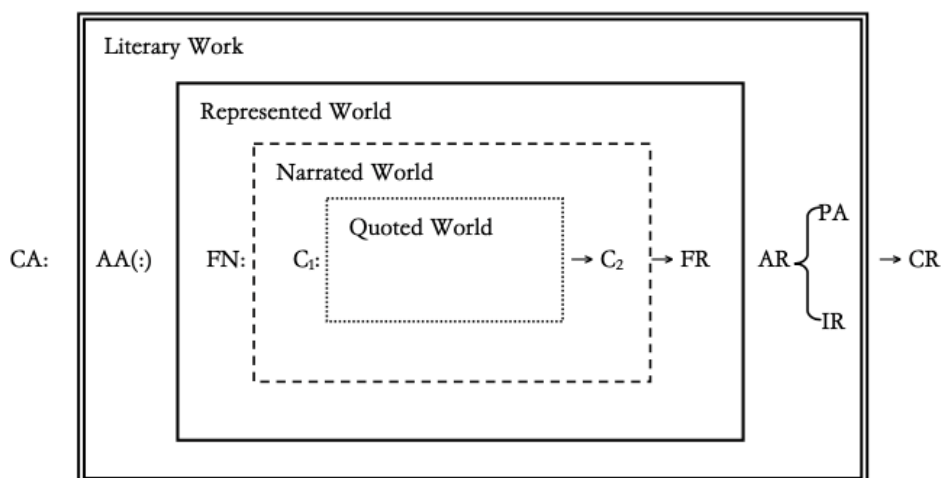
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Abstract. This paper constitutes a part of one of the subchapters of my doctoral thesis the aim of which is to examine the different attitudes to esotericism in Dan Brown's and Peter Ackroyd's selected six novels. The general chapter under which this subsection falls is an attempt to frame Peter Ackroyd's and Dan Brown's esoteric narratives. Having introduced the authors' literary activities at this point, it investigates the narratological differences between them. Nevertheless, this paper exclusively focuses on one of such differences, namely, the presence of the abstract author in Peter Ackroyd's *The House of Doctor Dee* (1994). Here, using the theory of Wolf Schmid, it argues that Peter Ackroyd's text deviates from Barthes' concept of "the death of the author" and conveys the presence of the real author stylistically along with several semantic-linguistic techniques by locating Ackroyd himself within the text as an abstract author.

Keywords: abstract author, mythical self, implied author, second self, Peter Ackroyd

In "The Death of the Author," Barthes describes writing as a space "where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing" (1977). With the start of the writing process, the author evaporates among the lines and loses control over the meaning production process of the text written by him. His discourse becomes detached. However, this very case is complicated with Peter Ackroyd since he is "blurring... the relation between the writer and his character" (Barthes 1977) and the reader. The connection is hard to detect, yet the author's presence in the novels is traceable not just because of the semiotic acts through the linguistic expressions within the narration. As a concrete living being along with other characters in the narrative work, Ackroyd's presence is not visible, nevertheless detectable. This paper argues that Ackroyd's such camouflaged presence is intentionally being carried with the help of the concept of "abstract author" (Schmid 36). It is an implicit but "a specific role-playing form of the author" (Vinogradov 203) on his behalf. Ackroyd is not a direct subject or the semantic centre of the discourse, nor a narrator of the acts; he is not even a named body. His abstractness comes into light out of a sudden at the end of his novels. Ackroyd engages with the characters in a way that transcends the corporeal understandings of the characters as he unites with them as a whole and leaves the reader in the ambiguity of the comprehension.

In general, to map the location of the real and abstract author in the communication levels of a narrative work, I refer to Wolf Schmid's model sketched as below (Schmidt 35), since – according to my knowledge – it is the most detailed one clearly pointing out each entity of the communication system of a literary work:



Explanation

CA = concrete author
 AA = abstract author
 FN = fictive narrator
 : = produces
 C₁, C₂ = characters
 → = addressed to

FR = fictive reader (narrataire)
 AR = abstract reader
 PA = presumed addressee
 IR = ideal recipient
 CR = concrete reader

The earlier communicative models of the literary works have mainly focused on the interrelation among the author, text, and the reader (Okopień-Sławińska 1971, Bartoszyński 1971, Janik 1973, all in Schmid 2010) and put accent on one of them. From this standpoint, Schmid's model is multi-layered since it subsumes the transmission of a narrative work through all possible instances not limited to the author and the reader only. For this reason, the illustrated image overtly manifests that the abstract author is totally distinct from the concrete or real author and falls into the realms of the literary work. Furthermore, the abstract author is the creator of the represented world and fictive narrator with the help of which the narrated world is actualized in the text. Based on these insights, Ackroyd's novel *The House of Doctor Dee* (1993) is one of the transparent examples to track the trace of the presence of Ackroyd's abstract author. The novel deals with two alternating narratives featuring two characters – Matthew Palmer from the twentieth century and Doctor John Dee from the sixteenth century. Matthew inherits a house from his father in Clerkenwell, where John Dee lived four centuries ago. Matthew is a researcher and investigates theatrical companies of the sixteenth century. Unaware of the prior resident of the house, Matthew starts to explore the surroundings of the house since the location is new to him. Only after his only friend Daniel Moore's visit, they pay attention to the age of the house and to the fact that it might be older than they assume. He visits the National Archive Centre and searches the years between 1560 and 1570. As the result of this search, he is being told by the archivist that his house was previously owned by John Dee - "a black magician" (93). Thus, he sets out to collect information about Doctor Dee, his father's relation to Dr Dee and how his father

has acquired the house. It is noteworthy that *The House of Doctor Dee* is a visionary historiographical metafiction and accordingly, historical facts are distorted, e.g., historically John Dee never lived in Clerkenwell as the novel claims.

In contrast to Matthew Palmer's life story, Doctor Dee's chapters tell the story of his activities – getting gold from other metals and creating homunculus – against the background of his life in Renaissance England. John Dee lives with his wife and, after a while, accepts Edward Kelley's assistance to help him in scrying – talking to spirits or angels to reveal the secrets of the philosopher's stone.

It should be mentioned that John Dee and Matthew have a lot in common. They are both isolated, and none of them can build good relations with their fathers at first. Both have a woman figure in their lives that they start to love towards the end of the novel. They are also in search of an unknown and undergo a transformation from darkness to light throughout the book. The novel ends in the dialogue where “Matthew's present self, the texts of the others, i.e., the author's self and the texts of the past, i.e., John Dee's self, blend together within a mystical self” (Garayeva 2021) or in an abstract author:

It's like this house. Nothing ever seems to stay in the same place. And do you know what? This may have been the actual room where Doctor Dee saw his visions. What did I call it just now?"

'The scrying room. Or the chamber of presence. What is the matter, Matthew?'

'Did you hear something then?'

'No.'

'I thought I heard a voice.'

'You'll be seeing him next, glimmering in the corner.'

'Well, I do see him. Look here.'

John Dee heard all these things, and rejoiced. And, yes, I see him now. I put out my arms in welcome, and he sings softly to me... (277)

This dialogue is carried out by Matthew Palmer and his interlocutor, who is not Doctor Dee or any other character featured in the text. The figure taking an active part in the communication between Palmer and Dee is also not a personified or neutral narrator since the narrative work lacks any such symptoms. This is a standpoint that resonates with Boris Korman's "consciousness of the work" (1977), Jan Mukařovsky's "abstract subject" (1937), Wayne C. Booth's "implied author" (1983), Janusz Sławiński's "subject of the creative acts" (1966), Miroslav Červenka's "unit in *absentia*" (original italics, 1969), Umberto Eco's "model author" (1979), Antony Easthope's "subject of enunciation" (1983), Gérard Genette's "auteur induit" (1988) or Seymour Chatman's "inferred author" (1990). This kind of author is the merit of the consciousness that the concrete, real author produces through the experiences of the abstract author. Author as a subject of consciousness, "the expression of which the entire work is... is, in principle, the same as the correlation of life experiences and artwork in general: guided by a certain perception of reality and based on certain normative and cognitive opinions, the real, biographical author (the writer) produces, with the help of imagination, selection and the processing of life experiences, the artistic (conceived) author" (Korman 126, 174). The detail making Ackroyd's "abstract author" different from the above-listed concepts is that it does not have an audible

voice and only appears as a part of the narrative in the last page of the book. It is neither an “agency within the narrative fiction itself which guides any reading of it” nor “the locus of the work’s intent” (original italics, Chatman 74). However, the remaining variations are “responsible for the world-view emanating from a narrative” (Herman and Vervaeck 16).

The positioning of such a technique at the end of the narrative work is of great importance. This final chapter of the book titled “The Vision” is an all-inclusive chapter where all historical periods, plot lines and narrative voices are blended in unison with Peter Ackroyd’s or his abstract self’s voice. The infusion of Ackroyd’s voice into this combination changes the comprehension of the essence of the abstract author, sheds a different light to the total understanding of the narrated work, results in different reading and converts it into a post-cognitive (Martínez 1999) construction. It displays one more time that Ackroyd’s literary text is not independent of him as a real author. However, it does not affect or question the fictive status of the text. The real author’s abstract self is in a fictional world with fictional characters.

In another instance, Ackroyd’s abstract author addresses the reader directly:

Oh you, who tried to find the light within all things, help me to create another bridge across two shores. And so join with me, in celebration. Come closer, come towards me so that we may become one. Then will London be redeemed, now and for ever, and all those with whom we dwell - living or dead - will become the mystical city universal. (277)

The impersonal narrator of the text has transformed into the author’s “second self” (Dowden qtd. in Tillotson 15). This second self or abstract author who has been abstract till the last page is not a mere “semantic dimension of the text” (Nünning qtd in Schmid 42) nor “the norms or value system of a specific work as reconstructed by the reader from that work” (Diengott 1993), rather a (meta)physical participant in communication who has acquired an “authorial intention” (Porter 78) and calls the reader for the action of unifying. In case of the intentional reading of the text, based on the prior knowledge about the concrete author, it can be argued that this authorial intention has emerged from the real author’s – Ackroyd’s position in life. The mystical value attached to London is a traditional device that Ackroyd implements in the most of his London novels.

The above-mentioned case is supported by the path of conventionalism, the followers of which try explicating the implied author “as long as the appropriate information is available” (Kindt and Müller 165; Harker 1988). The information determining the essence of the abstract author is constituted by the dialogue and addressing stated above. Consequently, it also contradicts the Dutch narratologist Mieke Bal’s opposing view as she approaches the concept of the abstract author as not being able to deliver the ideology of the text (Bal 1981). However, it is not the abstract author who is the “source for the aggregate of norms and opinions that makes up the ideology of the text” (Herman and Vervaeck 16) but the narrator or the fictional author. In *The House of Doctor Dee*, not only the ideology of the text is in fusion with that of the characters and abstract subject, but with its real author as well.

In conclusion, coming back to Barthes, his idea that assigning an author to a text is imposing a frame onto that text contradicts Peter Ackroyd’s conventions

since aligning him to a text as an additional abstract author broadens the dimensions of *The House of Doctor Dee*. His metaphysical appearance at the end of the book implicitly signs his omnipresent existence throughout the whole text, which in its turn allows the text to be multi-layered and transcendental at the same time. The abstract author mirroring his image unifies the differing ethea of the main two characters living four centuries apart as well as the reader engaging with the narrated work in the process of reading. Due to the presence of Ackroyd's abstract author, the reader is no longer an external entity outside the literary work but a real and active correspondent penetrating the realms of the represented world within the communicative framework of the narrated work.

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Against Dehumanised Hermeneutics

Eroticisation of Literary and Academic Discourse

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Abstract. The paper problematises two distinct approaches to contemporary hermeneutics which advocate its complete reconceptualisation. One, offered by Jacques Derrida, excoriates “hermeneutic somnambulism” that disregards the text’s sovereignty, and – by extension – the author’s intended meaning. Derrida criticises the prescriptivist mindset of an exegete who imposes their interpretation on a text in an attempt to classify, delimit, and appropriate its meaning. On the other hand, Roland Barthes, as one may read in *The Pleasure of the Text* and *A Lover’s Discourse: Fragments*, praises the ultimate readerly and interpretative freedom; to read deeply is to achieve a sense of bliss (*jouissance*), a sensual pleasure which Barthes compares to that of a sexual climax. Both authors noticeably eroticise their language and employed imagery: partly to shock, and partly to make their reader aware of how much human corporeality, affectivity, and carnality have been disregarded in traditional hermeneutics. Both, too, propose exchanging scholarly hermeneutic paradigms (active interpretative stance) for the sheer readerly pleasure (passive receptive stance), by means of which reading – freed from its exegetic function – becomes a passionate act full of interpretative possibilities.

Keywords: hermeneutics, rhetoric, phallogocentrism, normative poetics, eroticism, affectivity

Countering the hermeneutic impasse

While perusing Friedrich Nietzsche’s unpublished manuscripts one may eventually stumble upon a most unusual and seemingly random sentence, written, quite probably, in his hand: “ich habe meinen Regenschirm vergessen” (*Sämtliche Werke* 578) [1]. Is it an actual confession or, rather, a figment of Nietzsche’s imagination? Is it a quote? In such a case, the author of *The Gay Science* not only forgot his umbrella but also a necessary reference (the line is, after all, encased in quotation marks), not to say anything about the lower-case “i.” This minute note scribbled hastily on the margin may be quite perplexing for the reader; admittedly, ascribing some deeper meaning to it seems nigh impossible. It caught the ever-attentive eye of Jacques Derrida, who assesses that said sentence, “detached as it is, not only from the milieu that produced it, but also from any intention or meaning on Nietzsche’s part, should remain so, whole and intact, once and for all, without any other context” (*Spurs: Nietzsche’s Styles* 125). In its apparent haphazardness, it actively – and very subversively – resists, if not completely nullifies, univocal interpretation. As further explicated by the father of deconstruction,

[i]t is quite possible that that unpublished piece, precisely because it is readable as a piece of writing, should remain forever secret. But not because it withholds some secret. Its secret is rather the possibility that indeed it might have no secret, that it might only be pretending to be stimulating some hidden truth within its

folds. Its limit is not only stipulated by its structure but is in fact intimately confused with it. The hermeneut cannot but be provoked and disconcerted by its play. (133)

The infamous statement about the umbrella invites the reader to partake in a very specific “grammatological reading,” [2] a highly idiosyncratic textual game according to whose precepts one is to find some meaning against all the odds. “Interpretation,” a finite activity, becomes “interpreting” – an unending process of decoding of the unsaid. In *Spurs*, the philosopher attempts to rationalise any potential readings of Nietzsche’s *inédit* as much as he tries to prove the veritable infinitude of readerly points of reference, thus delimiting the boundaries of what he deems more conventional (and by now obsolete) exegesis. Derrida’s choice of this very sentence may be motivated by its dualistic nature. On the one hand, it is easily translatable from German and forms a perfectly intelligible message. “No fold, no reserve appears to mark its transparent display. In fact, its content gives the appearance of a more than flat intelligibility” (129). On the other hand, it is entirely devoid of both non-literary and intertextual meaning – one cannot possibly say what the author meant, if he did mean anything at all. “There is no infallible way of knowing the occasion of this sample or what it could have been later grafted onto,” asserts Derrida (123), offering further commentary on the Nietzschean manuscripts:

Given this lack of assurance, the note which the editors have appended to their classification of these unpublished pieces is *a monument to hermeneutic somnambulism*. In blithest complacency their every word obscures so well a veritable beehive of critical questions that only the minutest scrutiny could possibly recover there those questions which preoccupy us here. (124; emphasis mine)

There is no easy way out of the hermeneutic impasse created by Nietzsche’s note; in its very core it is based on a dissonance between its apparent clarity as well as straightforwardness and its infinite openness for interpretation, by which token it as much induces in the reader the desire to fully interpret its potential implications as it renders futile any coherent construal of meaning in that “the ‘*ich*’ stands as a definite pronoun whose referent is indefinite” (Schrift 107). Derrida appears to sneer at the hermeneut who engages in a truly quixotic endeavour of the retrieval of the *pharmakon* – at them struggling with unsurpassable aporia underlying this crux of a sentence, which, in actuality, might not mean anything at all. In its simplicity, the *inédit* undermines the basic dichotomy of truth and falsity, for neither concept seems applicable or practical in its analysis. The sentence in question “is not caught up in any circular trajectory. It knows of no proper itinerary which would lead from its beginning to its end and back again, nor does its movement admit of any center. Because it is structurally liberated from any living meaning, it is always possible that it means nothing at all or that it has no decidable meaning” (*Spurs* 131–133). Given its markedly high “stratum of readability,” it can be easily “translated with no loss into any language” as well as subjected to a whole spectrum “of much more elaborated operations” (129). To substantiate this claim, Derrida even offers a minor “‘psychoanalytic’ decoding” (129) of Nietzsche’s thought process, the main purpose of which is divulcation of the absurdities of the aforementioned

“hermeneutic somnambulism” omnipresent in academia. The major task of any psychoanalyst is to achieve “a hermeneutic mastery” (131) over their subject – a venture as commendable as it is, at times, naïve. In a terse passus in *Beyond Good and Evil* concerning respect (or lack thereof) for what is sacred and canonical, the German philosopher states outright: “what is perhaps the most disgusting thing about so-called scholars, the devout believers in ‘modern ideas,’ is their lack of shame, the careless impudence of their eyes and hands that touch, taste, and feel everything” (161). And for the academically trained hermeneut-prescriptivist, posits Derrida seconding Nietzsche, everything *has* to have some sense; unfortunately, their efforts to uncover hidden meaning can verge on the absurd and the impossible – especially when they project sense onto something that happens to be inherently meaningless, as, chances are, the random comment on the forgotten umbrella. Every “impulsive reader” and “hermeneut ontologist” – driven by “their common belief that this unpublished piece is an aphorism of some significance” – struggle with all their might “to satisfy their interpretative expectations” (Derrida, *Spurs* 131). To make things worse, as rightfully observes the deconstructionist, the sentence was encased in inverted commas, thus signifying it might come from some other source (which then promises it quite possibly being imbued with even greater significance). Dangling somewhere on the margin, Friedrich Nietzsche’s whimsical note – just as his umbrella – might have been *left* there and completely *forgotten*; “folded/unfolded,” it “remains closed, at once open and closed or each in turn” like “an umbrella that you couldn’t use” (Derrida, *Spurs* 137). It may indeed hide some truth hidden beneath its folds, to use a Derridean metaphor, but it might just as well only tempt the reader to engage in an interpretative game which they cannot possibly win, by provoking them to disambiguate its mystery, while – at the same time – actively resisting any such concentrated effort. The search for “the intended meaning” of a text – one of the primary tasks of the reader – oftentimes ignores the author of a given literary work altogether. As observed by Louise M. Rosenblatt on the pages of *The Reader, The Text, The Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work*, “with most texts, the naive reader automatically assumes that his interpretation approximates to the author’s ‘meaning,’ to ‘what the author had in mind’” (112–113). “Literary texts provide us with a widely broadened ‘other’ through which to define ourselves and our world,” (145) adds the academic but at the same time emphasises that one should be aware that “[w]hat the reader brings to the text will affect what he makes of the verbal cues” (83). To read and to interpret is to engage oneself in a two-way relationship with a text, which may either enhance or nullify its meaning depending on one’s knowledge, sensibility, or life experience. “The interpreter’s primary task is to reproduce in himself the author’s ‘logic,’ his attitudes, his cultural givens, in short his world” (Hirsch 242) – the task, one may add, as commendable as, at times, difficult.

Derrida, at one point, dares hypothesise that, “[t]o whatever lengths one might carry a conscientious interpretation, [...] the totality of Nietzsche’s text, in some monstrous way, might well be of the type ‘I have forgotten my umbrella’” (*Spurs* 133). [3] This overgeneralisation is in many ways problematic, for, in actuality, “there is no ‘totality to Nietzsche’s text,’” because his impressive *œuvre* is, in a way, “fragmentary and aphoristic” (135) in its entirety. Non-interpretability of the note found in the manuscripts brings into question the

condition of traditional hermeneutics – nothing seems to be certain, what Derrida further emphasises by doubting objectivity of his very own statements. “My discourse,” he daringly asserts, “has been every bit as clear as that ‘I have forgotten my umbrella’” (135). Just as Nietzsche’s sentence – despite its apparent intelligibility – connotes nothing concrete about reality, Derrida’s commentary on its potential implications is equally inefficacious, which fact, after all, he himself subversively acknowledges. Following his line of reasoning, one may then state that what dominates in his works (just as in some of Nietzsche’s) and what is – perhaps paradoxically – also one of their strongest elements is their “undecipherability” which originates in “certain movements where the text [...] could very well slip quite away” (135). [4] Undecipherability that goes against the reader “succumbing to the old occultist urge to crack codes, to distinguish between reality and appearance, to make an invidious distinction between getting it right and making it useful” (Rorty, “The Pragmatist’s Progress” 108).

Derrida does not attempt to answer the question that he tentatively posed beginning his metatheoretical divagations – whether or not one may actually interpret a sentence taken out of context, be it truly meaningful or not, is entirely irrelevant. Naturally, he does not wish to expound his own interpretation of Nietzsche’s note, either. What seems to be the sole focus of his analysis, as is the topic of the present article, is the state of contemporary hermeneutics and its ambition to unambiguously decode, classify, and impose meaning. As one may conjecture on the basis of his loose observations regarding Nietzsche’s output, the French scholar is against both hermeneutic close reading, the main purpose of which is “excavation” of hidden sense, and philological, i.e. purely academic, exegesis, which – in turn – almost inadvertently imposes a range of methodological conceptualisations onto its subject. What needs to be emphasised is that in no way does it imply that Jacques Derrida disregards Friedrich Nietzsche’s *œuvre* or its importance to modern philosophy. On the contrary, the focal point of *Spurs* is but a search for truth – a topic very relevant to Nietzsche as it is to the broader public sphere. And it is no coincidence: the marked scepticism of the author of *Beyond Good and Evil* is indeed clearly visible in his treatment and criticism of (broadly defined) truth, rationality, and morality, whose many facets cannot be controlled and bound “by throwing drab, cold, gray nets of concepts over the brightly colored whirlwind of the senses” (Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* 15). Derrida, following Nietzsche’s footsteps, tries to problematise their intricacies as well as to dispel the illusion – sustained by traditional hermeneutics – that truth can be fully grasped, explored, and accounted for. [5] Both thinkers seem to say in unison: it cannot, because truth, supposedly just like a woman, “will not be pinned down” (Derrida, *Spurs* 55).

“Supposing truth to be a woman”

One may risk to surmise that this comparison (Derrida, *Spurs* 55), which is recurrent in Nietzsche and in Derrida, appears to draw attention to general non-accessibility of both truth and women. Controversial though it may be, such a statement lends itself well to new modes of exegetic reading and, consequently, to formulation of new discourses, including those based on semi-erotic, anti-

phallogocentric, or simply anti-normative rhetoric. “All the emblems, all the shafts and allurements that Nietzsche found in woman,” including “her seductive distance, her captivating inaccessibility,” or “the ever-veiled promise of her provocative transcendence, [...] these all belong properly to a history of truth by way of the history of an error” (89). Derrida seems to say: truth, not unlike a woman, can be sought, looked after, and courted – but she is never easily found and, being fully independent, she may never be trapped. “Man and woman change places. They exchange masks *ad infinitum*,” which then nullifies the relations of “appropriation, expropriation, mastery, servitude” (111). To further motivate his incendiary and provocative argument, Derrida employs a number of Nietzschean metaphors:

There is no such thing as a woman, as a truth in itself of woman in itself. That much, at least, Nietzsche has said. Not to mention the manifold typology of women in his work, its horde of mothers, daughters, sisters, old maids, wives, governesses, prostitutes, virgins, grandmothers, big and little girls.

For just this reason then, there is no such thing either as the truth of Nietzsche, or of Nietzsche’s text. (101–103)

At the end of the day, it is then “[t]he question of the woman” that “suspends the decidable opposition of true and non-true” (107). “The hermeneutic project which postulates a true sense of the text,” continues Derrida, “is disqualified under this regime. Reading is freed from the horizon of the meaning or truth of being, liberated from the values of the product’s production or the present’s presence” (107). [6] There is much to be said about the truth–woman analogy – to further employ this gender-indexical metaphor, one may state, following Céline, that “[w]oman is very troubled” – as is truth – insofar as

she wants to stay young. She has her menopause, her periods, the whole genital business, which is very delicate, it makes a martyr out of her, doesn’t it, so this martyr lives anyway, she bleeds, she doesn’t bleed, she goes and gets the doctor, she has operations, she doesn’t have operations, she gets re-operated, then in between she gives birth, she loses her shape, all that’s important. She wants to stay young, keep her figure, well. She doesn’t want to do a thing and she can’t do a thing. (“The Art of Fiction No. 33”)

Naturally, such an opinion can be easily countered; Hélène Cixous, her wit and language always as sharp as steel, states with confidence and assurance:

A feminine text cannot fail to be more than subversive. It is volcanic; as it is written it brings about an upheaval of the old property crust, carrier of masculine investments; there’s no other way. There’s no room for her is she’s not a he. If she’s a her-she, it’s in order to smash everything, to shatter the framework of institutions to blow up the law, to break up the ‘truth’ with laughter. (888)

I wished that that woman would write and proclaim this unique empire so that other women, other unacknowledged sovereigns, might exclaim: I, too, overflow; my desires have invented new desires, my body knows unheard-of songs. [...] Where is the ebullient, infinite woman who, immersed as she was in her naiveté, kept in the dark about herself, led into self-disdain by the great arm of parental-conjugal phallogentrism, hasn’t been ashamed of her strength? (876)

The abovementioned conceptualisations, the former crude and unnecessarily underlaid with irony, do indeed problematise truth (“woman”) and broadly understood veracity in a satisfactory manner – both are very complex in nature; both may change with time; both – given their multifacetedness – resist easy interpretations and becoming but “a fading rose” (Céline, “The Art of Fiction No. 33”). All of which work against the traditional exegete and his by now ossified methodological apparatus.

With time, what is quite noticeable, Jacques Derrida seems to fall under the spell of Nietzsche’s sensual and highly evocative language – his rationalist, distant, and unemotional stance on the topic with which he began his ruminations in *Spurs* slowly thaws out, subtly giving way to a more exuberant, eroticised discourse. As he himself notices, an analysis devoid of formal and societal impositions appears to be a far more efficient way of commentary on the complex nature of interpretation and on a text itself; a text, which – after all – more often than not has the very same sensual, alluring qualities, many of which are, as if by default, regarded by Nietzsche as feminine. Once again both thinkers assert, practically in unison: the text, the hermeneut’s *inamorata* – just like truth and just like a woman – will never be appropriated or “pinned down.”

One’s indefatigable efforts to uncover sense or hidden meaning, as preached by traditional hermeneutics, are many a time as inviable as they are unnecessary. The incessant search for truth may blight the actual beauty of literature; given its “institutionality, i.e. its fragility, its absence of specificity, its absence of object” (Derrida, “This Strange Institution Called Literature” 42), the exegete’s efforts “to finalize literature, to assign it a meaning, a program and a regulating ideal” (38) might bring about its eventual demise. Nietzsche imagines an ordinary reader saying: “This work charms me: how could it fail to be beautiful?” (*Beyond Good and Evil* 104). He does so only to contrast them with a figure of an authoritarian theoretician, a person that one may recognise in “these philosophers [who] admit to taking *pleasure* in saying no, in dissecting, and in certain level-headed cruelty that knows how to guide a knife with assurance and subtlety, even when the heart is bleeding” (104; emphasis in the original). They do not understand simple readerly joy any more, reacting but with “a genuine disgust for all these over-enthusiasms, idealisms, femininities” (104). Such an attitude is also criticised by Derrida, who comments – addressing the “desire for *everything* + *n* – naturally I can analyze it, ‘deconstruct’ it, criticize it, but it is an experience I love, that I know and recognize” (“This Strange Institution” 35; emphasis in the original). This experience, underlaid with a real zest for life, is rendered void by traditional hermeneutics which imposes onto it a range of binary conceptualisations, none of which truly account for its *sui generis* nature. The domineering tone of academic discourse that characterises most of literary and philosophical analyses is, then, inferior to “the element of chance [...] and apparent randomness” (66) as well as simple pleasure that the reader may derive from immersing themselves in a given text. It is not about constituting one *true sense* or one *true interpretation*, Derrida seems to say, but – on the contrary – about allowing oneself to generate more meanings, and to let them proliferate both in academia and in the public sphere, which, in turn, begets more ever original and creative (re-)readings. For it to work, said proliferation cannot be controlled or governed by any external authority – only then may contemporary hermeneutics truly thrive anew. If there

is any additional end to *Spurs*, apart from the aforementioned search for truth, it is a confirmation that there is no *one* truth in and of a given text, for its meanings are, as they well should be, infinite.

Admittedly, such a conceptualisation of the topic is progressive and untypical, to say the least. It is based on a number of idealistic premises that enforce certain conformity both on the writers and on the readers. Jacques Derrida is, as can only be expected, fully aware of its potential implications; by referring to the Nietzschean understanding of truth and by projecting gender-specific properties on its particularities, he consciously – and very subversively – attacks a long tradition of normative hermeneutics, exposing its weaknesses and contradictions. Being fully cognisant of its monumental status, he does not mar its practices as much as he reminds the reader that there are *other* ways of reading (and reading into) literature, not necessarily marked by structuralist purity and orderliness. It then begs the question: is Derrida actually against interpretation? The answer is twofold: he disregards the importance (of by now obsolete) traditional hermeneutic reading, according to which one is to uncover some predefined “sense,” “meaning,” or “truth,” when the reading practice and concomitant critical response are limited by normative poetics, which imposes the “right” and “wrong” modes of reading (the latter going against the glorified figure of the Author). On the other hand, the philosopher praises “interpreting” (previously distinguished from mere “interpretation”), i.e. a creative and imaginative process dictated solely by the text itself, whose outcome may never be foreseen or formally limited. In this sense he is opposed to conventional exegesis known to be the basis for and of the metaphysical tradition. In *Spurs*, as in his later works, Derrida not only criticises its vices, but he also promulgates a new mode of reading-interpreting, namely *lecture*. By comparing truth to women (and *vice versa*), he shows by this analogy how much pressing for truth hinders its eventual discovery, as much as it tantalisingly intensifies the reader’s desire for its actual retrieval. For a person to fully comprehend a text, to achieve “the understanding of the understanding” (Greisch 25), he or she attempts to possess it, quite possibly against its will. And this, in turn, changes reading into a completely different activity altogether.

Appropriation of the Other

When a number of formal propositions phrased so eloquently in *Spurs* may, in a way, be read as a preliminary manifesto offering new conceptualisations of one’s reading practice, Derrida further develops his ideas a few years later in *Signéponge*, his examination of Francis Ponge’s *œuvre*. All his theoretical hypotheses concerning the hermeneut’s Sisyphean retrieval of the *pharmakon*, of the-meaning-that-is-not-there, are finally put to the test on concrete material. The philosopher focuses primarily on human inherent desire to *appropriate* and, quite possibly, *manipulate*, *classify*, or *delimit* meaning, which is – to all intents and purposes – a primary function of exegetic reading. While interpreting a text, any text, one always works with a creation written by the Other. His or her piece is literally taken, possessed, usurped by the reader, and they may do whatever they wish with its contents. One may even venture to say that the reader also

appropriates the Other, just as Derrida – for the sake of an experiment – appropriates Ponge himself:

Francis Ponge will have been self-remarked. I have just called this sentence, I have just given a name to a sentence. To a sentence, not to a thing, and I have, among other things, called it an attack.

Attack, in French, forms a very hard word, which nevertheless, and very promptly, falls into pieces. As for the thing thus attacked in the attack, however, falling into pieces is not in any way ruinous; on the contrary, it monumentalizes. (*Signéponge/Signsponge* 4)

I don't believe it at all, but if I were to believe that a proposition acquired its pertinence by miming its subject matter and letting the thing speak (and the thing here is Francis Ponge), I would justify my attack in the name of *mimesis*. (4)

By “attacking,” or – to somewhat assuage this term – addressing his subject, the philosopher also pays homage to his creation. Whether he expresses praise or opprobrium, Derrida reverts to the fundamental right of *voicing his opinion*; looking at it from a different, less text-focused perspective, he does not appropriate the otherness as much as he simply confronts it on the same terms. Hence, he engages in a deeply personal contact with the Author and their creation in what he calls “a situation of radical heteronomy in regard to the thing” (12). “In the disproportion of this heteronomy,” continues Derrida, “an *erotics* engages itself between two laws, *a duel to the death* whose bed and turf, object [*l'objet*] or objective [*l'enjeu*] (object [*l'objeu*]) will always sketch out a signature in the *pre* of a text in abyss” (12; emphasis added). To reformulate his assertion: to read and to write is to engage with a *thing* which both *is* and *is not mine*, for it “remains an other whose law demands the impossible” (14); it is to make contact with the Other and enforce the relation of heteronomy. “The thing is not just something conforming to laws” – in its reception we may be “foraging within it *or* within ourselves” (12; emphasis in the original), which eventually generates meaning independent of the two. By saying so, Derrida harks back and refers to the very cornerstone of traditional exegesis, to it being “[i]nsatiable, yes, and insaturable, a point I insist on since it always also involves water and thirst” (12). And even though one may find “water” aplenty in any library, it is never enough to satisfy their craving.

What begs the question is why Derrida is so preoccupied with and interested in *le pré d'un texte en abyme*, “the *pre* of a text in abyss.” Why does he try to conceptualise something that has been taken as a given since time immemorial? The academically trained hermeneut, or simply any reader who was raised in that intellectual tradition, [7] assumes it to be completely normal to appropriate various texts they happen to peruse (even if they themselves would never use this word) – after all, such an activity begets meaning, broadens their horizons, and enriches their knowledge, bringing “[a] joyful wisdom” (Derrida, *Spurs* 139). The French philosopher with great verbal dexterity manages to highlight and purposefully defamiliarise what came to be considered perfectly acceptable: the disrespectful treatment of a text and blatant disregard for its sovereignty, further sanctioned, and even promoted, by normative poetics (it was not without a reason, as emphasises E. D. Hirsch in *Validity in Interpretation*, that Gadamer very tellingly conceptualised the reader's pre- or proto-understanding of a text as

“prejudice” [259]). “I owe to the thing an absolute respect,” declares Derrida, “which no general law would mediate: the law of the thing is singularity and difference as well” (*Signéponge/Signsponge* 14). Only then can an *object* of interpretation truly become its *subject*, by which token a given text comes to be a unique, and respected, representative piece of a particular literary tradition that may be read-interpreted in opposition to other works of culture. This, in turn, requires the reader to cultivate their *ethical sensibility*. According to Richard Rorty, it is a specific interpretative stance that allows the reader to truly commune with the subject of the work which they peruse. Ethically sensible interpretation would account for its subject and place it somewhere in a broader literary culture, in which sense the hermeneut does not appropriate the Other’s work by projecting onto it a range of *their* conceptualisations but includes it into their discourse on the same terms; to truly appreciate works of literature, one should concentrate on “us” rather than on “I,” thus promulgating a tolerant, inclusive, respectful attitude to the otherness of the subject which, what one should never forget, lays itself open to attack by voicing its innermost feelings, opinions, and thoughts in a given text. The reader should *always* react to a given work with genuine, uncurbed emotions, “[f]or a great love or a great loathing” – remarks Rorty – “is the sort of thing that changes us by changing our purposes, changing the uses to which we shall put people and things and texts we encounter later” (“The Pragmatist’s Progress” 107). Attaining such an affective attunement with the Other is a choice which may or may not be made; it does not govern interpretation inasmuch as it bespeaks one’s sensibility and openness to what is different, “non-mine.” [8]

This line of reasoning brings Jacques Derrida to a number of surprising stipulations: by engaging with the Other “in a situation of absolute heteronomy and of infinitely unequal alliance” (*Signéponge/Signsponge* 48), the reader may experience both “the impossibility of re-appropriation and the moments of depressed impotence” as well as “the dance of an erection just before the moment at which it ‘jubilates’ and ‘joys,’” for they are “in the process of exchange,” interspersed with moments of ecstasy, frustration, anxiety, anger but also happiness, all of which are constitutive to “the power of an infinitely singular writing” (16). A most peculiar description of reading indeed, and noticeably eroticised. One cannot help but wonder: is there a particular end or a reason for such suggestive and carnal rhetoric? The process of reading-interpreting, Derridean *lecture*, may be treated as a highly idiosyncratic intimate encounter, during which the exegete succumbs to the charms of the Other. What differs from a traditional hermeneutic approach is the relation between the reader and the writer – for Derrida, it is a personal confrontation – not with the glorified, larger-than-life figure of the Author but with the subject, viz. some other *individual*.

To substantiate his argumentation, the philosopher quotes Ponge himself: “It all happens (or so I often imagine) as if, from the time I began to write, I had been running, without the slightest success, ‘after’ the esteem of a certain person” (16). [9] The subject of interpretation, “a certain person,” in actuality becomes the hermeneut’s “object of love” (50) – to show said “object” their affection, the reader respects its difference and sovereignty, “letting it breathe *without me*” (20). In the end, to partake in *lecture* means to partake in the aforementioned jubilant dance, which, alternatively, might as well be comprehended as “a duel to the death,” in which both parties have the same rights and privileges. In yet another words, it is

a *tête-à-tête* of two “entirely-others” (100) who agree to meet on their own terms, none of which can be externally enforced by some third party. Thus conceptualised, Derrida’s scholarly ruminations on the particularities of interpretation give way to an erotic, carnal discourse pertinent to and much better suited for an exploration of interpersonal relations, becoming very Barthesian in its form and message. Roland Barthes, after all, also disregarded traditional exegesis, only to praise *lecture*, limitless reading-writing which defies and deflects the cold, patronising gaze of the hermeneut.

Imagined authors, idealised readers, and the intricacies of literary lovemaking

What Derrida said about the reader and the writer, as well as about their intimate relationship sustained by the act of reading-interpreting, may be assumed as auxiliary to his broader contemplations on the essential characteristics of traditional, systematised exegesis. Barthes, on the other hand, devoted his whole work to nothing but the aforementioned interrelation – in *The Pleasure of the Text*, one of the more original and daring academic analyses in the last half-century, the literary theorist examines a range of various experiences an individual may derive from reading, some of which are very sensual and carnal in nature. As assessed by Susan Sontag, “whereas Nietzsche addresses the reader in many tones, mostly aggressive – exulting, berating, coaxing, prodding, taunting, inviting complicity – Barthes invariably performs in an affable register” (“Writing Itself: On Roland Barthes” 71). For both authors “the point is to make us bold, agile, subtle, intelligent, detached,” but it is Roland Barthes, who – having “repeatedly compared teaching to play, reading to eros, writing to seduction” – truly strives “to give pleasure” (72).

The beginning of his work is as prescriptive as it is provocative: “never apologize, never explain” (*The Pleasure of the Text* 3), declares Barthes after Bacon. Introducing the notion of pleasure to the otherwise stiff, “antiseptic” discussion on interpretation is not that unwarranted – as only stands to reason, since the writer may experience joy in their creative process (which, at the same time, does not necessarily nullify their “writerly maladies”: a pervasive sense of *ennui*, *acedia*, or *Weltschmerz*), the reader may also derive pleasure from perusing their creations. For that to occur, and for the “grammatological reading” to commence, the author has to first initiate the interpretative game:

I must seek out this reader (must “cruise” him) *without knowing where he is*. A site of bliss is then created. It is not the reader’s “person” that is necessary to me, it is this site: the possibility of a dialectics of desire, of an *unpredictability* of bliss: the bets are not placed, there can still be a game. (4; emphasis in the original)

The fact that one may feel “bliss” while reading is self-evident and beyond any doubt, of which Barthes is surely well aware: suffice to mention his typology of texts which classifies them as either “readerly” or “writerly” in form and character, and two concomitant types of pleasure that he distinguishes – *jouissance* and *plaisir*. What is unconventional, and so controversial, is the way he conceptualises the readerly experience; his description is clearly saturated with sexual overtones: what allures the reader is “that foam of language which forms by the effect of a

simple need of writing,” “those milky phonemes,” “the motions of ungratified sucking, of an undifferentiated orality, intersecting the orality which produces the pleasures of gastrosophy and of language” (4–5). By addressing the figure and life philosophy of de Sade, he proceeds to elaborate:

Neither culture nor its destruction is erotic; it is the seam between them, the fault, the flaw, which becomes so. The pleasure of the text is like that untenable, impossible, purely *novelistic* instant relished by Sade’s libertine when he manages to be hanged and then to cut the rope at the very moment of his orgasm, his bliss. (7; emphasis in the original)

Barthes concludes his argument by stating that “what pleasure wants is the site of a loss, the seam, the cut, the deflation, the *dissolve* which seizes the subject in the midst of bliss” (7; emphasis in the original). While his licentious language may initially be quite shocking and overwhelming, for the author clearly compares readerly pleasure to that of a sexual climax, Barthes does elaborate on and rationalise his line of reasoning on the following pages. His formal proposition is equally surprising as those of Derrida’s – he denounces the linear decoding advocated by traditional hermeneutics in one’s attempt to “excavate” a given text’s meaning, and promotes the search for its irregularities, for all the places where it falls apart or does not make sense, for its cuts, fissures, seams. Thus understood, the pleasure of the text comes not from a formulation of one coherent message in and of the text but from exploring its numerous evanescent nuclei of meaning interspersed throughout its pages “like the ashes we strew into the wind after death” (Barthes, *Sade, Fourier, Loyola* 9). In other words, the reader may truly experience the beauties of a given literary work if they let themselves be carried and influenced by the text’s *signifiés* and its “twisted dialectic” (8). “Language reconstructs itself *elsewhere* under the teeming flux of every kind of linguistic pleasure” (Barthes, *Pleasure of the Text* 8; emphasis in the original) – it needs not be compartmentalised, classified, appropriated. On the contrary, what Barthes emphasises by referring to Flaubert, one should truly master “a way of cutting, of perforating discourse *without rendering it meaningless*” (8; emphasis in the original). In this sense, literary discontinuity and various lacunae within a text are what generate pure pleasure, and what may be equally alluring as “the most erotic portion of a body *where garment gapes*” (9; emphasis in the original). The author builds upon this mental image, comparing the text’s tempting qualities to those of “the intermittence of skin flashing between two articles of clothing (trousers and sweater), between two edges (the open-necked shirt, the glove and the sleeve); it is this flash itself which seduces, or rather: the staging of an appearance-as-disappearance” (10).

Roland Barthes’s ideas on interpretation are equally original as those of Derrida’s on “[t]he question of the woman” and its importance for “[t]he hermeneutic project” that freed reading “from the horizon of the meaning” (Derrida, *Spurs* 107). Despite a number of differences in their argumentation, they both seem to agree on what exegesis should *not* be, namely an emotionless search for unity, oneness, and linearity which appropriates and totalises a given text by imposing on it meaning that it might not contain in the first place. Instead, one should look for “the seam of the two edges, the interstice of bliss” (Barthes, *Pleasure of the Text* 13) where sense truly is, and approach it accordingly: the

reader is “not to devour, to gobble, but to graze, to browse scrupulously, to rediscover” (13) and subject themselves to “drifting” to be “driven about the language’s illusions, seductions, and intimidations” (18). Only then may one attain “[t]he pleasure of the text,” which Barthes defines as “that moment when my body pursues its own ideas – for my body does not have the same ideas as I do” (17); the reader relishes “the pulsional incidents, the language lined with flesh, a text where we can hear the grain of the throat, the patina of consonants, the voluptuousness of vowels, a whole carnal stereophony: the articulation of the body, of the tongue, not that of meaning, of language” (66–67). The truly passionate *lecture*, so advocated by Barthes, has two forms: “one goes straight to the articulations of the anecdote, it considers the extent of the text, ignores the play of language” (12), whereas

the other reading skips nothing; it weighs, it sticks to the text, it reads, so to speak, with application and transport, grasps at every point in the text the asyndeton which cuts the various languages – and not the anecdote: it is not (logical) extension that captivates it, the winnowing out of truths, but the layering of significance; as in the children’s game of topping hands, the excitement comes not from a processive haste but from a kind of vertical din (the verticality of language and of its destruction) [...]. (12)

“Winnowing out” the truth is as important to Barthes as it was for Nietzsche and Derrida – the difference being his understanding of what said truth entails. The author of *S/Z* seems to signal that the only “truth” that matters is the pleasure that – inasmuch as reading and love life are concerned – one may occasionally experience, should the circumstances be auspicious, or not, which he also emphasises, taking a closer look at Honoré de Balzac’s *Sarrasine*, by analysing “Sarrasine’s passion [...], his *seduction* inaugurated by a preliminary ecstasy; a long series of bodily states” (Barthes, *S/Z* 109; emphasis in the original) and by referring to “the *first time* he knows pleasure and loses his virginity” (109; emphasis in the original).

“I am engulfed, I succumb...” – *affirmation, altération, angoisse*

affirmation / affirmation

Against and in spite of everything, the subject affirms love as *value*. (Barthes, *A Lover’s Discourse: Fragments* 22)

altération / alteration

Abrupt production, within the amorous field, of a counter-image of the loved object. According to minor incidents or tenuous features, the subject suddenly sees the good Image alter and capsize. (25)

angoisse / anxiety

The amorous subject, according to one contingency or another, feels swept away by the fear of a danger, an injury, an abandonment, a revulsion – a sentiment he expresses under the name of *anxiety*. (29)

Roland Barthes’s *A Lover’s Discourse* is, quite possibly, one of the most charming attempts at conceptualisation of disorderly, affective language of a person being in love, who in no way can “keep his mind from racing, taking new measures and

plotting against himself. His discourse exists only *in outbursts of language*, which occur at the whim of trivial, of *aleatory* circumstances” (3; emphasis mine). His work, in so many ways devoted to the “anatomy of human desire,” [10] may also be read as an anti-hermeneutic manifesto. Love, affection, intimacy – as Barthes suggests – those are the concepts which are never properly accounted for in traditional exegesis; for they never can be: the highly systematised methodological apparatus of the hermeneut, a person normally excelling in cerebral pursuits, is not suited for the examination of such elusive phenomena. Human emotionality and affectivity are, as if by nature, unsystematic, unmethodological, and haphazard. They are driven by psychosomatic and somatopsychic stimuli, in which sense they care not for rationality, social mores, or other people’s expectations. Love knows no boundaries, and neither does it acknowledge semantic and topical coherence suited for an academic discourse. It is governed by evanescent feelings and mere serendipity, which – as previously explicated on the example of *The Pleasure of the Text* – may form very important nuclei of meaning for the subject that experiences them. There is no logic underlying the lover’s discourse, unless it can be based on pure affectivity.

Barthesian subject is to be “engulfed” [*s’abîmer*] in their feelings, to revel in an “[o]uburst of annihilation [...] in despair or fulfilment” (*A Lover’s Discourse* 10). Love, one of life’s greatest values, is to be *affirmed*: “when the lover encounters the other, there is an immediate affirmation (psychologically: dazzlement, enthusiasm, exaltation, mad projection of a fulfilled future: I am devoured by desire, the impulse to be happy): I say *yes* to everything (blinding myself)” (24). “[L]ove’s *value* is ceaselessly threatened by depreciation,” warns Barthes, “[b]ut the strength of love cannot be shifted, be put into the hands of an Interpreter; it remains here, on the level of language, enchanted, intractable” (24). Said language changes, *alters*, becomes distorted, by which token the image of one’s object of affection also changes: “Quite frequently, it is by language that the other is altered; the other speaks a different word, and I hear rumbling menacingly *a whole other world*, which is the world of the other” (26). The threatening confrontation of, as Derrida would have it, two “entirely-others” may lead to a noticeable sense of “disreality” [*déréalité*]. “I see the world – the other world – as a generalized hysteria” (88), says the subject, which may eventually make them feel pervasive *angoisse*, anxiety, that one day – due to mutual miscommunication – they may lose their lover forever. Assuming, of course, that their feelings were pure to begin with, for there is also a slight possibility that “the subject manages to annul the loved object under the volume of love itself: by a specifically amorous perversion, it is love the subject loves, not the object” (31).

As may be clearly conjectured, the state of being in love completely reverts the normal hierarchy of values, which is also applicable to the lover’s discourse – what ought to be filled with sense may be inherently meaningless and *vice versa*: a thing that in certain circumstances would have been assessed as trifle, for the enamoured subject may be priceless and filled with sense to the brim. The overabundance of sense, if one can even conceptualise such a phenomenon, sometimes quite subversively resists interpretation as much as its lack does. As exemplified by the Barthesian analysis of courtship, love encourages a new form of exegetic reading; the sentiment which is also clearly visible in, for instance, Sontag, as both theoreticians could say in one voice: “In place of a hermeneutics

we need an erotics of art” (Sontag, “Against Interpretation” 14). Or, to reconceptualise both ideas, hermeneutics based on a lyricised or eroticised discourse, *anti-hermeneutics*. “I want to change systems,” confesses Barthes, and adds peremptorily in quite a prescriptive tone: “*no longer to unmask, no longer to interpret*, but to make consciousness itself a drug, and thereby to accede to the perfect vision of reality, to the great bright dream, to prophetic love” (*A Lover’s Discourse* 60; emphasis mine). This perfect, bright vision has an almost transcendental and oracular nature: it just as well may be a revelatory manifestation, an epiphany, or an anamnesis. It is not easily analysable, which – once again – goes against traditional hermeneutics. There is no exegetic reading of intimate love that would not be superficial: love and lust are not governed by academic methodologies, and can only be commented upon *de actū*. One’s intimate relationship with the Other is unique and singular, as is their common language; a person never knows whether they love as much as they are loved back, which is equally true of the reader-writer interconnection. According to Barthes,

[t]he author who leaves his text and comes into our life has no unity; he is a mere plural of ‘charms,’ the site of a few tenuous details, yet the source of vivid novelistic glimmerings, a discontinuous chant of amiabilities, in which we nevertheless read death more certainly than in the epic of a fate; he is not a (civil, moral) person, he is a body. (*Sade, Fourier, Loyola* 8)

Then perhaps the subject returns, not as illusion, but as *fiction*. A certain pleasure is derived from a way of imagining oneself as *individual*, of inventing a final, rarest fiction: the fictive identity. This fiction is no longer the illusion of a unity; on the contrary, it is the theater of society in which we stage our plural: our pleasure in *individual* – but not personal. (*Pleasure of the Text* 62; emphasis in the original)

In this sense, “a lover’s discourse” is also “a lover’s interpretation of the Other,” where to read and to interpret means to endow someone with one’s trust and affirmation. In other words: the act of reading is the act of intimate communion between two subjects: the one who experiences and the one who offered the experience in the first place.

Roland Barthes’s revolutionary propositions concerning *lecture*, reading-interpreting, are very similar to those offered by Jacques Derrida. Both thinkers inquire what the sense of reading is and why it is inherently connected to an impassionate, cerebral, and highly systematised “excavation” and subsequent verbalisation of the author’s intended meaning advocated by traditional hermeneutics. They promulgate a different type of reading: one that is not an “antiseptic,” dehumanised, automatous *retrieval of meaning* – especially when meaning has the status of the *pharmakon* – and that is a unique *experience* between two people: an intimate, highly personal encounter. Both Barthes and Derrida are much more interested in this “chance meeting,” with all its enticing, mysterious attributes; letting oneself “drift” with the narrative flow, to be surprised by the text, to be tempted, charmed, and enthralled by its potential infinitudes – those are the qualities they seek in each and every text.

Their ideas are most interesting indeed, but one might still wonder: is there a specific end for such a conceptualisation of reading and interpreting?

Ways of seeing, ways of reading

Barthes addresses and partially assuages the reader's unease by admitting that "the position of pleasure in a theory of the text is not certain. Simply, a day comes when we feel a certain need to *loosen* the theory a bit, to shift the discourse, the idiolect which repeats itself, becomes consistent, and to give it the shock of a question. Pleasure is this question" (*Pleasure of the Text* 64; emphasis in the original). Now, as one may assess with certainty, this day has finally come; the beginning of theory becoming "loosened" may indeed be traced back to the late 1960s, when the academic discourse was fully saturated with structuralist purity and imposed methodological perfection. Pleasure "can embarrass the text's return to morality, to truth: to the morality of truth: it is an oblique, a drag anchor, so to speak, without which the theory of the text would revert to a centered system, a philosophy of meaning" (64–65). The theoreticians' need to free the discourse from external impositions, the very cornerstone of poststructuralism, had many consequences; its influence can be seen on generative grammarians, who had initially planned to conceptualise the universal grammar of literature, on normative poetics worshipped by numerous prescriptivists, and on narratologists, who tried to universalise and compartmentalise the entirety of human literary production. As it happens, the change was also present in traditional hermeneutics; structuralist theoreticians were not really interested in the problematics and intricacies of interpretation, simply classifying them as appurtenant to the domains of poetics and hermeneutics (thus very unfairly minimising or even completely nullifying their importance to the humanities); surprisingly, they did not really concern themselves with the linguistic component underlying traditional exegesis. Poststructuralist critics, on the other hand, not only did account for by then forgotten aspects of reading-interpreting, but they also suggested one assume a new perspective on many problems that burdened literary theory at that time, two of which were its orthodoxy and inherent systematicity. They, in a way, allowed the humanities to concentrate on a human being again: on one's corporeality, affectivity, somaticity; in part to counteract and undo, as interestingly phrased by Terry Eagleton, "the damage done by a Cartesian tradition," because of which "one of the first images the word 'body' brings to mind is that of a corpse. To announce the presence of a body in the library is by no means to allude to an industrious reader" (*The Illusions of Postmodernism* 71).

Both Barthes and Derrida very actively contributed to the discussion on the state of hermeneutics from the late 1960s onwards. Suffice to mention Barthes's "Science versus Literature," in which he truly championed the importance of pleasure for and in reading literature, and which – as he assessed – was non-present in scientific discourses. What he did have in mind was not only a pleasure one derives from engaging in their cerebral pursuits but a purely sensual, erotic experience. While problematising "the Eros of language" (Barthes, "Science versus Literature" 898), he acknowledged its absence in literary studies – something which he could hardly accept. Both Barthes and Derrida, once again, were very much against the number of traditional conceptualisations: of literature, of the canon, of reading, of interpreting. They were well aware that to truly change the by now ossified approach to the topic, they needed to surprise

their reader, to shock and agitate them. As charmingly phrased by Virginia Woolf, the main end of a good text is that “it should give us pleasure; the desire which impels us when we take it from the shelf is simply to receive pleasure. [...] It should lay under a spell with its first word, and we should only wake, refreshed, with its last” (“The Modern Essay” 216). Derrida and Barthes knew full well that to put a spell on their readers and to criticise hundreds of years of exegetic analysis, boldly as they did, they had to propose something revolutionary, to launch an attack which nobody anticipated. By conjoining erotics with hermeneutics, love with science, and, most controversially, sex with the text, they achieved an enormous success. They did have a “scientific scandal” in mind from the very beginning; as recalled by Barthes, who “[o]ne evening, half asleep on a banquette in a bar, [...] tried to enumerate all the languages within earshot” (*Pleasure of the Text* 49), only to conclude:

This speech, at once very cultural and very savage, was above all lexical, sporadic; it set up in me, through its apparent flow, a definitive discontinuity: this *non-sentence* was in no way something that could not have acceded to the sentence, that might have been *before* the sentence; it was: what is eternally, splendidly, *outside the sentence*. Then, potentially, all linguistics fell, linguistics which believes only in the sentence and has always attributed an exorbitant dignity to predicative syntax (as the form of a logic, of a rationality); I recalled this scientific scandal [...]. (49–50; emphasis in the original)

Barthes’s work, as much as Derrida’s, had an enormous impact not only on linguistics and philosophy, being their respective points of departure, but also on poetics, literary theory, and hermeneutics. Both thinkers jousted against much stronger opponents: head figures of various other disciplines and revered scholarly institutions. Still, they knew what they were doing and what would be the most effective strategy: “If you hammer a nail into a piece of wood, the wood has a different resistance according to the place you attack it: we say that wood is not isotropic. Neither is the text: the edges, the seam, are unpredictable” (36). Their verbal onslaught might not have changed hermeneutics forever – might not have hewn this block of wood, to use Barthes’s metaphor – but they did make a deep enough cut. [11] After all, they sowed a seed of doubt, garnering a broad readership of like-minded individuals who believed that there are *other* ways of reading, interpreting, and commenting upon literature – also in an academic setting.

By fusing hermeneutics and erotics, the text and pleasure, not only did both theoreticians undermine the scientific and methodological principles of traditional exegesis, but they also managed to achieve one more thing...

The humanities – humanised anew?

The number of changes in academia in the second half of the 20th century had an irrevocable impact on the way contemporary readers approach literary texts nowadays. It was structuralism that managed to “dehumanise” literary studies, and whose proponents cared for nothing but recurrent linguistics patterns and theoretical structures. The user of language (and, by extension, the reader-interpreter) was not treated as a living and breathing person but as a placeholder,

a speculative construct onto which the scholars projected their ideas of what one may (or, more prescriptively, should) say, think, and act like. As for hermeneutics, it also dehumanised the figure of the Author, who became – at best – an “author,” an elusive “guarantor” of meaning preserved in his or her texts, a formless, shapeless figure whose sole purpose was to impose their sense onto their creation, which was then “excavated” by the hermeneut. Communication *and* artistic creation became, in a way, inferior to the acts of their decoding in forms of linguistic analyses and exegetic reading, both of which offered scholars a methodological toolkit that could well account for the examination of their objects alone: no figure of the “author” or the “reader” were needed. Such academic research, given its character, may indeed have been precise and self-sufficient, but it lacked one important element: the human behind it. The entirety of human artistic production was analysed as prescribed by theoretical paradigms, but said analysis was – to all intents and purposes – lifeless and two-dimensional. A human being was thus deprived of Bergsonian *élan vital*, affectivity, and its body, becoming but a barren automaton. [12] The dehumanised humanities – a repository of unoriginal ideas pertaining to exanimate subjects – were what really worried Derrida and Barthes, which may have incentivised them to excoriate hermeneutics in the first place. Their main goal was not to criticise the methodological apparatus by means of which texts were dissected and examined in so mechanical a manner; rather, they wanted to *humanise* both the subject and the object of scholarly analyses: not only to make them “alive” as much as truly “human.” Their idea to address the problematics of reading and narrativisation was a sensible one – after all, it is the domain of the text where the writer and the reader may truly commune with each other. Both Barthes’s and Derrida’s message seems to be pretty straightforward: it is not *structures* but *people* who communicate with one another; not lifeless *constructs* but *persons of flesh and blood* – in many ways imperfect but all the more beautiful for their inherent flaws.

Any literary creation is much more than *just a text* – it spans “all the operations by which one can make of one’s signature a text, of one’s text a thing, and, of the thing, one’s signature” (Derrida, *Signéponge/Signsponge* 20). This signature, as asserted by Barthes, is also “an anagram of the body” (*Pleasure of the Text* 17) – it encompasses all of one’s lived experience, *Lebenserfahrung*, and can be rearranged in the form of the narrative only to be subsequently shared with others so that people “may help one another to attend to words, phrases, images, scenes,” (Rosenblatt, *Reader, Text, Poem* 146) all of which facilitate their mutual communication, promote camaraderie, and encourage a collective sense of *esprit de corps*. As a consequence – what seems to be equally applicable to Barthes as it is to Derrida – one may assume that writing is a kind of intimate confession, a love letter to the Other-that-is-not-here, as much as reading is a deeply personal contact with the Other whose absence one tries to negate by familiarising themselves with their life story carved onto the pages of their work.

Notes

[1] The entry dated Autumn 1881, 12 (62).

[2] See Greisch (209ff.). Greisch's work, just like Derrida's *Voice and Phenomenon* as well as *Margins of Philosophy*, encourages one to "demystify" a whole range of various texts, especially philosophical analyses, in a truly deconstructionist fashion that goes way beyond more traditional hermeneutic reading.

[3] Notice how the translator corrects Nietzsche's sentence by capitalising "I"; in the French version one may spot both upper- and lower-case variants: *J'/j'ai oublié mon parapluie*.

[4] The assumption is that "meaning" or "sense" can originate in various places in a text where it does not conform to any standards, being incoherent, disjointed, or supposedly unintelligible. As Derrida adds later, "[y]ou might even agree to that is contained a certain ballast of rhetorical, pedagogical and persuasive qualities. But suppose anyway that it is cryptic. What if those texts of Nietzsche [...] were selected for reasons whose history and code I alone know? What if even I fail to see the transparent reason of such a history and code? At most you could reply that one person does not make a code. To which I could just as easily retort that the key to this text is between me and myself, according to a contract where I am more than just one" (*Spurs* 135–136).

[5] Cf. Rorty, "Philosophy as a Kind of Writing," wherein the author claims that "Derrida looks about for a way to say something about language which will not convey the idea of 'sign' or 'representation' or 'supplement'" (151).

[6] Cf. Hirsch's comment in *Validity in Interpretation*: "The interpreter's job is to specify the text's horizon as far as he is able, and this means, ultimately, that he must familiarize himself with the typical meanings of the author's mental and experiential world" (223).

[7] Eric Donald Hirsch assesses that any "beginner may on occasion arrive at an understanding that is truer than the practiced scholar's. The narrowing process of trial and error, guess and counter-guess that the beginner must go through may in rare, lucky instances save him from an overly hasty typification. His expectations may be more flexible, and he may therefore perceive aspects that an expert could miss" (103).

[8] "The reader, concentrating his attention on the world he has evoked," assesses Louise M. Rosenblatt, quite similarly to Richard Rorty, "feels himself freed for the time from his own preoccupations and limitations. Aware that the blueprint is the author's text, the reader feels himself in communication with another mind, another world" (86).

[9] The quote comes from the Preface to Ponge's *Proêmes* (1948).

[10] The term proposed by Peter Brunette. Review from *The Washington Post Book World* on the book's back cover.

[11] "I distrust," admits Richard Rorty in "The Pragmatist's Progress," "both the structuralist idea that knowing more about 'textual mechanisms' is essential for literary criticism and the post-structuralist idea that detecting the presence, or the subversion, of metaphysical hierarchies is essential. Knowing about mechanisms of textual production or about metaphysics can, to be sure, sometimes be useful. Having read Eco, or having read Derrida, will often give you something interesting to say about a text which you could not otherwise" (105).

[12] Cf. Eagleton's comment in *The Illusions of Postmodernism*: "The postmodern subject, unlike its Cartesian ancestor is one whose body is integral to its identity. Indeed from Bakhtin to the Body Shop, Lyotard to leotards, the body has become one of the most recurrent preoccupations of postmodern thought" (69).

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On Translatability of an Intensional Function within Computer-Assisted Literary Translation

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Abstract. This paper discusses literary translation against the backdrop of digital humanities and explores the applicability of a computer-assisted approach to detection, re-creation, and translatability of an intensional function. Using Sketch Engine as the main tool, a single-novel parallel corpus is set up, containing an English novel and its Czech translation, and a series of computations is performed so as to reveal potentially useful narratological and linguistic data. The results are interpreted through the lens of fictional worlds theories, arguing that with the intention of successfully rendering a fictional world available to readers of another language, its intensional structure needs to be considered in the process of translation. Accordingly, this paper uses the proposed corpus-aided model to detail the distribution of a naming function in both, the source and target text, and suggests what adjustments might have been made in order to preserve the intensional trace.

Keywords: *computer-assisted literary translation, single-novel corpus, fictional worlds theories, intensional structure, the naming function*

1. Introduction

First and foremost, it should be noted that while this paper indeed proceeds from a multi-faceted theoretical background anchored in many established disciplines, it does not aim to encompass them in their entirety. The main objective of this paper is to introduce an interdisciplinary approach to the translation of fictional worlds, or, more precisely, to the translation of their intensional structures. The idea of bringing together translation studies and narratology is not, by any means, meant to be presented as revolutionary, since many have already explored this area from various viewpoints (e.g., Boase-Beier, 2020; Hermans, 1996; Slater, 2011), but rather as a matter that deserves some further attention. From the vast array of narratological concepts and frameworks that might be of interest to translation scholars, this paper focuses solely on fictional worlds theories, a framework that has already been discussed within the context of translation studies (Kamenická, 2007; Lojonen, 2009), but remains relatively under-researched. Interestingly, those who have already ventured into this cross-disciplinary area oftentimes proceed from the same theoretical basis and build upon the notions of fictional semantics formulated by Lubomír Doležel (1998). This paper, too, follows the same train of thought and investigates the translatability of Doležel's intensional functions.

Methodology-wise, this paper makes use of tools and techniques that have emerged as literary translation has begun to accommodate computer-assisted workflows. Overall, the translation industry has undoubtedly been revolutionised by digitalisation, but literary translation remains relatively unaffected by this

development, standing its ground as a bastion of minimal technological involvement. Within academia, this has not passed unnoticed, and studies focused on different facets of this phenomenon are increasing in number (Rothwell & Svoboda, 2019; Youdale, 2019; Kenny & Winters, 2020; Kolb, 2021), collectively asserting that while machines might not take over just yet, literary translation is expected to make greater use of computer assistance in near future. The same consensus was reached at the first conference dedicated to Computer-Assisted Literary Translation, held in Swansea, UK, in May 2021, where the contributors introduced many ways of successfully integrating technology within literary translation processes, ranging from MT systems, CAT platforms or corpus-aided models. This paper joins the ranks of the latter and proposes a corpus-aided model intended to explore the intensional structure of a single novel and its translation. The premise is that effective data management and/or visualisation can be instrumental in revealing information that would otherwise be unperceivable to the naked eye, and can thus provide a literary translator with useful narratological and stylistic data. Due to its short scope, this paper narrows its focus down to one intensional function only, the naming function, and does not aim to provide a comprehensive stylistic analysis. The main objective is to demonstrate the usability of the proposed model and put forward the idea that fictional worlds theories can have a rightful place in literary translation studies.

2. Theoretical background

Nowadays, fictional worlds theories represent a synthesis of key concepts and frameworks developed by literary theorists such as Marie-Laure Ryan, Ruth Ronen, Umberto Eco, Thomas Pavel and Lubomír Doležel. The theories themselves are rooted in possible worlds theory and loosely inspired by late 20th century philosophers and logicians (Ryan, 2012). The shared foundation, however, does not warrant for the unanimity of thought and the way key concepts are adapted differs from author to author. Hence, it needs to be clarified that this paper makes use of the foundations laid by Lubomír Doležel, who approaches the entire framework as a theoretical tool for the investigation of literature. One of his most significant contributions to the fictional worlds theories is the division between extensional and intensional structures of fictional worlds (SemiotiX, par. 13). It is based on a seemingly simple idea that fictional worlds, being purely semantic entities, consist of extensional and intensional structures, forming a two-fold structure not dissimilar to Gottlob Frege's *sense* and *reference*. The extensional structure refers to the semantic elements that are explicitly or implicitly given and can be, since they are not tied to the exact wording of the world-constructing text, subjected to paraphrase, and transferred into extensional representations (Doležel, 1998, pp. 138-9). In comparison, the intensional structure is far more elusive. It is connected to the texture of a text—the very form of expression—and is unfit to absorb any potential changes, retellings, or interpretations (Doležel, 1998, p. 138).

Before discussing how this conceptual framework translates into translation studies, a note needs to be made on the account of a translator's motivation: This paper operates on the author-oriented end of the continuum and presumes that

the goal of a translator is to re-create a fictional world in its utmost fidelity to the original, be it to the detriment of the translator's visibility. In the aftermath, it means that both, extensional and intensional structure, should be transferred in the process of translation. Extensional representations seem to be solvable on word-level and can, for instance, pose a challenge if an occasional need to accommodate a culture-specific item arises. As for the intensional structure, the "insurmountable heuristic obstacle" (1998, p. 138), Doležel proposes to surmount it using intensional functions, governing "the global morphology of texture, its formative principles [and] stylistic regularities" (p. 139). An intensional function thus represents "a global regularity of texture that affects the structuring of fictional worlds" (1998, p. 139); after all, it is at the level of intension where aesthetically effective meaning is achieved (1998, p. 139).

Out of the three intensional functions Doležel himself identified, the naming function appears to have the most straight-forward impact on literary translation. It displays regularity by implementing different means of singular reference, such as proper names or definite descriptions, while the former carries zero intension and the intension of the latter varies depending on the particular verbal form (Doležel, 1998, p. 140). The proposed relevance to translation goals is fairly unadorned: If there is a stylistic regularity operating within the source text (ST), the world-creating target text (TT) should aim to re-create said regularity or operationalize some other stylistic means in order to communicate the aesthetic meaning formerly present in ST. In case of a fully operational naming function, TT would be expected to follow the distribution of singular references and introduce a 'symmetric' system to be employed in the target language. Nonetheless, I acknowledge that the feasibility of said proposition is largely dependent on available linguistic means and particularities of specific language pairs, and will thus move on from vague generalisations to a specific circumstance. Hence, the language pair utilised in this paper is English (ST) and Czech (TT). Despite the predominantly analytical nature of the English language paired with Czech, a language of a predominantly synthetic nature, the realisation of the above-mentioned proposition and its implementation in the process of translation shall not be thwarted. The naming conventions are similar enough to accommodate for various means of reference and the differences in the expression of a subject, such as the frequent occurrence of verbal subjectless sentences in Czech, for instance, can be compensated for.

3. Corpus and methodology

The cornerstone of the proposed model is the intention to treat a narrative text as a small-scale corpus, thus allowing to run a series of computations to extrapolate potentially useful data. If combined with qualitative methods, such as semantic analysis and close reading, this set-up can be instrumental in identifying regularities that might be carrying intensional meaning. The usability of a single-novel corpus has already been argued for (Youdale, 2019), showing that the integration of a reliable text-processing tool in the translation process has the capacity to enhance the translator's competence. By looking into an already

published translation, the direct effect on translators' competence cannot be taken into account and is thus approached as a what-if scenario.

The narrative text used to create the single-novel corpus is Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006) and its Czech translation *Cesta* (2008). Having both copies obtained in an e-version, the texts were then manually pre-processed and both textual files, the full-text ST and the full-text TT, stripped of any additional typographical characters (such as hyphens used for splitting words at the end of the line). The texts were then aligned, using an aligner by Wordfast PlusTools, and loaded into Sketch Engine, making use of an automatic POS tagging and automatic lemmatisation and tokenisation, resulting in a searchable parallel corpus of 58,721 ST words and 55,535 TT words. A sequence of computations was then performed, using the n-gram tool as a locator to pinpoint general areas of interest and a series of frequency wordlists to obtain comparable data. After this general survey, individual definite descriptions for the two main fictional entities were derived ("man", "father", "papa" for Entity 1 and "boy", "child", "son" for Entity 2) and their behaviour explored with the aid of the integrated word sketch tool. This yielded some insight into the distribution of the naming function, limited to the two fictional entities in ST, which was then compared to its Czech counterpart. To facilitate comprehension, the results are interpreted with the aid of componential analysis and the illustrative TT excerpts supplied with interlinear glosses.

4. Results

The initial corpus-survey confirmed that the ST naming function is fully operative. In general, a regularity can occur when an author assigns a number of singular references consistently, provided the individual references carry linguistic meaning that is, at least at the lexical level, perceivably stratified. By default, the conceptual meaning of these definite descriptions, or lexemes, is represented by a set of nearly identical distinctive features, as the lexemes refer to the same fictional entity. Thus, the stratification happens at the level of associative meaning. For instance, the operators for the lexemes used to refer to the two main characters of *The Road*, not having any proper names assigned, would be [human], [adult] and [male]. The binary notation would look as follows:

Entity 1	{	<i>man</i>	>	[+ human]	[+ adult]	[+ male]
		<i>father</i>	>	[+ human]	[+ adult]	[+ male]
		<i>papa</i>	>	[+ human]	[+ adult]	[+ male]
Entity 2	{	<i>boy</i>	>	[+ human]	[– adult]	[+ male]
		<i>son</i>	>	[+ human]	[± adult]	[+ male]
		<i>child</i>	>	[+ human]	[– adult]	[± male]

All lexemes share the feature [+ human] and, save for “child”, the feature [+ male]. The neutral values of [\pm adult] and [\pm male], i.e., for “son” and “child” respectively, do not eliminate the positive value, meaning the conceptual meaning of the three lexemes referring to Entity 2 is still nearly identical. However, the neutral feature [\pm male] for “child” turned out to be quite troublesome. One way to justify its significance within ST and the call for its preservation in TT is to refer to yet another concept introduced by Doležel, the so-called *fictional encyclopaedia*. In essence, the fictional encyclopaedia represents “knowledge about a possible world constructed by a fictional text” (Doležel, 1998, p. 177) that provides the reader with just enough information that they need at a given time. As the reader proceeds with reading, they adjust or discard fictional facts that might have been refuted by a newly discovered piece of information. The resulting structure functions as a notional map the reader receives and uses to reconstruct the meaning of the fictional text. Should these fictional facts be re-arranged or changed in translation, the intensional mapping of the TT fictional world would change as well. Provided one wishes to keep the intensional structure as intact as possible, this phenomenon of ‘revealing a potential secret earlier than intended’ is highly undesirable, but not uncommon. In many cases, the translators find themselves in a peculiar position that requires complementary (re)constructions of a given text – after all, a translator acts as both, the reader and the text-composer (Doležel, 1998, p. 177).

An interesting situation occurs when a translator cannot, or decides not to, distinguish between these two roles. Having already learnt all the fictional facts when processing ST, translators are, at one point, inevitably endowed with the complete knowledge of the fictional world and possess a fictional encyclopaedia in its entirety. An author-oriented translator would likely strive to discard what they have just learned so as to mediate the experience to their readers of another language, all without spoiling any surprises or crucial moments. However, the corpus-aided venture into the naming function shows that the same premise can be applied to much smaller, less ground-shattering instances. To illustrate, let’s start with the opening lines of *The Road*, where both fictional entities are first introduced into their fictional world:

ST: When he woke in the woods in the dark and the cold of the night he'd reach out to touch the **child** sleeping beside him.

TT: Probudil se v lese za noci, do tmy a zimy, a dotkl se **dítěte**, které spalo vedle něho.
(and touched **the child**)

Both highlighted lexemes, the ST “child” and the TT “dítě”, carry the same conceptual meaning that operates with [+ human], [– adult] and [\pm male]. Consider, however, sentence 6:

ST: In the dream from which he'd wakened he had wandered in a cave where the **child** led him by the hand.

TT: Ve snu, z něhož se právě probudil, byl v jeskyni, do které ho **chlapec**
zavedl za ruku. [where **the boy** led
him by the hand]

In TT, the operator [\pm male] changes to [+ male] and reveals the gender of the child sooner than intended. Sentence 6 belongs to the introductory paragraph, where the ST Entity 2 appears only as a somewhat conceptual *child* in order to better accommodate for a featured dream sequence. In ST, the gender of the child is revealed later, in sentence 18, hence outside the introductory paragraph. By limiting the operant to [+ male] only, the translator misplaces a fictional fact and shows certain disregard for the emerging naming function, despite a relatively easy remedy.

Upon further analysis of the word sketch results, additional patterns came to light, indicating that the definite descriptions in ST might be assigned more diligently than expected. The results suggest that the choice of descriptions largely depends either on the syntactic frame and/or collocative meaning (Entity 1), or the level of investment bordering on the social/affective meaning (Entity 2). Entity 1 is referred to as “the man” in third-person narrative, both in agentive and patientive roles, provided the utterance does not emphasize his relation to Entity 2. In cases where it does, “father” is used, thus occurring only in possessive structures. The third descriptor, “Papa”, occurs in structures where Entity 1 finds himself in the role of an addressee and is addressed by Entity 2. See below:

man The man dropped to his elbows. // The man stopped. // The man looked up.

father He looked at **his** father. // **His** father was asleep. // Was that **your** father?

Papa What is it, Papa? // Can we help him, Papa? // I’m really cold, Papa.

As for Entity 2, the “boy/child/son” descriptions represent a scale with growing prominence of affective meaning. This fictional entity is referred to as “boy” in neutral and descriptive passages, “child” in passages highlighting vulnerability or relationship dynamics and “son” in the most tender moments:

boy The boy turned in the blankets. // The boy nodded.

child He **held** the child and after a while the child stopped **shivering**.
He crossed **half dragging** the child.
He lay in the leaves holding **the trembling** child.

son [He]...wrapped his son in a towel. [recollection of the moment his son was born]

I cant [sic] hold my son dead in my arms.

In most parts, the TT retains the stratification of descriptions for Entity 1 and—save for an occasional case of substitution—succeeds in recreating the intensional meaning. When it comes to Entity 2, however, the descriptions “dítě” [child] and “chlapec” [boy] are used interchangeably. Additionally, a fourth descriptor is introduced, “kluk”, to alternate, seemingly haphazardly, with “chlapec”. Even though the lexeme “kluk” corresponds to the desired [+ human], [– adult], [+ male] operators, its introduction disturbs the regularity of the naming function and thus changes the intension of the TT:

ST: Maybe he understood for the first time that to **the boy** he was himself an alien.

ST: When he got back **the boy** was still asleep.

TT: Možná mu vůbec poprvé došlo, že pro **kluka** je on sám jakýsi mimozemšťan.
[the lad]

TT: Když se vrátil, **chlapec** ještě spal.
[the boy]

To briefly summarise, there was an opportunity to introduce a tripartite system of definite descriptions corresponding to the one used in TT (i.e., “boy/child/son” x “chlapec/dítě/syn”), but the translator opted for a more varied system of interchangeable references. As a result, the naming function is not operational in TT and the intensional structure is not preserved.

5. Discussion

One of the main objectives of this paper was to discuss the translatability, or, more precisely, transferability of an intensional function. Due to the fairly straightforward nature of the naming function, one can conclude that in case of *The Road*, the translator could have made use of the available linguistic means and introduce the naming function in TT as well. The motivation to do so, however, resides in the assumption that one of the translational goals was to re-create a fictional world in its utmost fidelity, which is admittedly not the most commonly pursued goal in common practice. Further, I acknowledge that literary translation does not happen at the word level. To those familiar with the practices, hunting down individual instances of parts of speech and dismissing the free or semantic translation in favour of formal correspondence might seem as taking somewhat draconic measures designed to limit the very input, liberty, and style of a translator. These self-imposed restrictions are thus approached as desirable only within the bounds of discussing literary translation vis-à-vis fictional worlds theory. The conclusion that the intensional structure has been altered is by no means a comment on the quality of the translation or the performance of the

translator; given all the factors that can influence a translator's strategy, preserving the intensional structuring might not always be the priority.

As for the usability of the proposed model, the corpus-aided setup proved instrumental not only in identifying the potential areas of interest, but mainly in further exploration of individual instances. The word sketch tool provided a comprehensive overview of the linguistic behaviour of selected definite descriptions and illuminated the way the naming function is distributed. In the what-if scenario, presuming the translator were equipped with this tool and the accompanying knowledge, chances are the resulting product would bear the qualities of a better-informed translation. This does not necessarily put forward that the result would be an overall better translation, but alludes to its potential to be so. The computer-assisted model appears to have the capacity to provide the translator with potentially valuable narratological and linguistic data that can, in consequence, shape the way a translation is made. In spirit of finding one's place as a literary translator in a heavily digitalised industry, the ultimate decision what does or does not find its way into the final product should, at least for the foreseeable future, remain in the translators' hands. The takeaway is that computer-assisted models can prove useful in literary translation, and it does not have to be to the detriment of human translators.

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Turns of the Century

Urban and Suburban Places from James Joyce to David Lodge

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Abstract. The city is a frequent setting in various novels written in the last century and an important entity, almost a character in its own right, in many of them. This paper investigates the modes and techniques of narration in the representation of the city in selected novels of David Lodge and compares them with those of James Joyce in order to investigate the similarities and differences of the representation of the city at the beginning and the end of the 20th century, as well as to establish the ways in which the image of the city and its suburbs affects the representation of the novels' characters and their narratives in general.

Keywords. David Lodge, city novel, spatial studies, literary space, James Joyce

Currently, urban space is one of the most discussed and scrutinised types of spaces across multiple fields of study. The space of the city, its features, boundaries and limitations are analysed by geographers, sociologists, urbanists and other specialists interested in the inner (and outer) workings of urban spaces. With more than half of the world's population living in cities, and with people moving freely both within and between cities all around the world, urban space has become an important and fairly unavoidable part of everyday life for billions of people and a fascinating subject to study.

The rapid process of urbanisation that started about two centuries ago has changed its shape and vectors multiple times. Industrial and post-industrial ages have seen the highest levels of urbanisation arriving eventually at a point of a certain degree of deindustrialisation and deurbanisation, a process that has taken countless mostly wealthy people out of the cities and into the suburbs or the countryside: motivated by the accessibility of goods and workplaces, people moved to the cities, and driven by the proximity of nature and the comfort of the quiet countryside, they started the inverse migration.

It should not come as a surprise that, over the decades of urbanisation, the city has frequently drawn the attention of artists, poets and writers, and not only as an important cultural hub that could provide opportunities and inspiration: being the main form and container of people's existence and dwelling, it could not be avoided as a subject in literature and visual arts. The city, having stayed in the background of both for centuries, eventually expanded in importance to become a major character in paintings and poems. Zadie Smith's *NW* (2012), Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities* (1972), Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* (1967), Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1924) and, most notably, James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), as well as countless other novels that have been written in the last two centuries, put the city — be it London, Dublin or Rome — into the centre of

the narrative, often presenting it as a living creature, anthropomorphising its parts or as a whole. The city lives, affects the lives of its citizens and visitors — both in literature and in life.

As Henri Lefebvre, a philosopher, sociologist and specialist in urban and social space, states in his study of city life titled *The Urban Revolution*, urban space can be defined as follows:

...the place where people walk around, find themselves standing before and inside piles of objects, experience the intertwining threads of their activities until they become unrecognizable, entangle situations in such a way that they engender unexpected situations. The definition of this space contains a null vector (virtually); the cancellation of distance haunts the occupants of urban space. (39)

The space of the city is simultaneously the space of anonymity and extreme proximity. The unrecognisable “piles of objects” and routes of citizens’ everyday activities are what identifies and characterises the city as both a ramified vastness and claustrophobia-inducing closeness, both an ability to identify with the space and an impossibility of doing so.

Expectedly, the city with all its paradoxes and complexities is an important entity that is explored, described and utilised in many ways in various novels and short stories written by David Lodge, a contemporary British author whose novels are most often preoccupied with the lives of writers, university lecturers, researchers and other people whose lives are tied to the city for one reason or another. Lodge’s interest in the theme and chronotope of the city is in no uncertain terms related to his fascination with the fiction of James Joyce, whose novels and short stories (notably, *Ulysses* (1920) and *Dubliners* (1914)) include Dublin as an important setting, if not an additional character. It seems safe to assume that Lodge was both inspired and led by Joyce in his approaches to the representation of the city. The city itself, is, of course, different - Lodge’s characters mostly inhabit London.

It is important to note that while Lodge does not focus on the descriptions of the city as much as Joyce, it is, sometimes silently, present in the majority of his novels. It is often the case that the setting, be it the city or its noticeable absence, is the formative factor for the characters, the space that provides safety or promises endless dangers (for instance, suburban Brickley in *The Picturegoers* (1960) that conceals some characters from the eyes of others to give them privacy or to put them in danger), the space of the glorious futures or the one they are futilely trying to escape from (as does the protagonist of *Therapy* (1995), who, on multiple occasions, travels away from London only to come back and discover that his life has not improved after his attempted escape).

It is not only London that is present in Lodge’s fiction. Some characters live in unidentified suburbs; a number of university towns are featured in Lodge’s academic novels; and some characters never stop moving from one place to another. However, it is possible to affirm that in all of these cases the image of the city is significant for the narrative. Following are some of the many examples of the representation of the city in Lodge’s novels. In some of them, the city is a living and breathing entity, in others — a mere backdrop for the action. In both cases, it is important to acknowledge its presence and influence on the plot and the characters, as well as compare it to the other modalities of living, such as suburbs

and aspects of the countryside, which often participate in juxtaposition with the city.

The aforementioned novel, *The Picturegoers*, for example, juxtaposes a small British town with a London suburb at the very beginning of the text, introducing in this way the protagonist's rejection of peaceful life of a town and preference for the complexities of a city life. Mark Underwood is not interested in the "the neat, clean villas and smug, dull shop-fronts of Blatcham", his home town, and prefers to them, to the extent of identifying them as home "grimy, arid streets of Brickley" (*Picturegoers* 42). He goes on to elaborate that

...he had never felt any affection for Blatcham, a dull, featureless town set in the no-man's-land between London and 'the country', belonging to neither, but affecting a combination of both. In practice, the men of the town exhausted themselves in the diurnal pilgrimage to the City and back, leaving their womenfolk to wave vacantly... (*Picturegoers* 39, emphasis added)

Here, not only does the text provide an explanation for Mark's choice to leave his home town, but also gives the reader a hint at the personality of the protagonist. The rejection of his "featureless town" indicates Mark's conviction that his own "features" and the way they are pronounced are in strict contradiction with the places he used to inhabit (39). The ironic twist of the move from one place to the other is, clearly, that the City is hardly much easier to approach from Brickley than from his native Blatcham (neither he, nor other characters ever leave Brickley throughout the story), which also indicates that the change he assumes to be making in the way of life to accommodate for his perceived features of character might not happen.

The in-betweenness of places in the "no-man's-land" the protagonists occupy might, among other things, be symbolic of the whole structure of the narrative that swings between different focalisers. The novel links together a number of people with various backgrounds, interests and financial statuses, and gives each of them a distinct voice to vocalise their beliefs. The way all these people are connected is compared to the life of the whole city whose inhabitants they are. In the following quotation, the protagonist describes a vivid image of the city life that can, metaphorically, apply to the structure of the novel as well.

Looking out over a city gives me a sort of sick feeling—a sense of the appalling multiplicity of life. I get a sort of dizziness—that helpless feeling you get when you read that a star is ninety million light years from the earth. I think of sewage pulsing through thousands of miles of pipes, of trains crammed with humanity hurtling through the tube, of the people who never stop walking past you on the pavements—such infinite variations of appearance, none of them alike, each with his own obsession, his own disappointment, his own set of values, his own magazine under his arm catering for his own hobby—railway engines or beekeeping. One feels that one wants to gather them all in like a harvest; or stop one, understand him, absorb his identity, and then pass on to the next one—but there's no time, there are too many, and you're swamped. (*Picturegoers* 80)

As suggested above, the vivid image of the city life that Mark paints is representative of the themes and structure of the novel. It delineates the struggles of the characters to find their path in the absurdity of the anonymous crowd of the metropolis and brings forward the polyphony that is so characteristic of the

city, as well as the novel. While Lodge himself states that the first of his novels to be written “polyphonically” in the Bakhtinian sense was *The British Museum Is Falling Down* (*Practice of Writing* 129), the polyphonic characteristics are clearly identifiable in *The Picturegoers* too. What Bakhtin calls “a plurality of independent and unmerged voices, [...] and each with its own world (*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* 6) is clearly present in *The Picturegoers*, where the story is not only focalised through various characters but also provides their backgrounds and allows them to express opinions.

The city, being a “complex system of representations” (Borden et al. 14) that “allows an individual, through an encounter with the other, to realize his or her own being” (Forty 207), is also a theme that runs in the background of *The Picturegoers* and parallels its structure. This idea becomes an important topic for consideration for the protagonist of *Therapy*, Laurence Passmore as well. Not only does he contemplate the comforts and disadvantages of urban life, but also elaborates on the important differences between it and the life of the countryside. The first time London is mentioned in the text (in the form of Laurence’s direct speech written in his diary), the description is given in a Joycean manner. The seventh episode of *Ulysses*, “Aeolus”, starts with the depiction of the busy city transport: “before Nelson’s pillar trams slowed, shunted, changed trolley, started for Blackrock, Kingstown and Dalkey, Rathgard and Terenure...” (104); and Laurence, when he enters London, begins the description with the train station allowing the reader to “arrive” in the city with the protagonist and then to take a look at the complexity of the space around. Lodge, together with his protagonist, enters London welcomed by the same mayhem and noise.

...here it is never quiet, even at night. The growl and throb of buses and taxis inching up the Charing Cross Road in low gear carry faintly through the double glazing, punctuated occasionally by the shrill ululation of a police car or ambulance. If I go to the window, *I look down on pavements* still thronged with people coming out of theatres, cinemas, restaurants and pubs, or standing about munching takeaway junk food or swigging beer and coke from the can, their breath condensing in the cold night air. Very rarely does anyone raise their eyes from the ground level of the building, which is occupied by a pizza & pasta restaurant, and notice that there are six luxury flats above it, *with a man standing at one of the windows*, pulling the curtain aside, looking down at them. (*Therapy* 38, emphasis added)

This description is of interest not only because it gives the reader a glimpse of Laurence’s understanding of urban life, but also because of the sudden close-ups and zooming out present in the text. The way the narration moves between Laurence looking at London through the window of his West End flat and the city life so busy and preoccupied with itself that it disregards the observer is in itself indicative of the constant movement of the urban life and, in a way, serves as a means of foreshadowing the protagonist’s own pendulum-like movement between the city and the suburb, as well as between Britain and overseas. Such spatial “play” is similar to the cinematic camera pans and zooms in which Laurence, who is a screenwriter, is an expert. It is also somewhat reminiscent of Marcel Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time* (1913-1927) and its first volume, *Swann’s Way* (1913), in particular, where, arguably, the technique of magnifying and

retracting from the action and characters was emphatically used for the first time in European Modernist literature.

The silent observer of the city that Laurence becomes when in his London flat is prone to surveying the city from the distance, from the inside of his place of comfort. The “observation deck” that is his flat provides safety and even urges to search for inspiration through the screen of his video entryphone:

Sometimes in idle moments I press the button for the wide shot to have a look at the people passing or pausing on the pavement. It gives me ideas for characters “you see all types” and I suppose there’s a certain childish, voyeuristic pleasure in using the gadget. It’s like an inverted periscope. From my cosy cabin high above the ground I scan life on the scruffy surface (*Therapy* 52)

This voyeurism that is possible in the anonymity of the big city, the process of secretly observing people’s lives and activities resembles in a way the structure of the panopticon, a building and a system of observation within it that Michael Foucault uses in his essays as a metaphor for urban surveillance (*Discipline and Punish* 200-202). Laurence, however, does not seek control over the people he observes, but rather over the narratives he creates: he, as all writers do, turns readers (or, in his case, viewers) into voyeurs by providing them with stories of other people’s lives. He admits that such observations inspire his writing, and, in a way, becomes another “pendulum” swinging between his voyeurism and providing the possibility of it to others, the viewers.

The life of the city resembles a pendulum in more ways than the ones already mentioned. Laurence, as well as other dwellers of the apartment building he occasionally lives in, participates in what some researchers of urban life call “elective belonging” (Savage et al. 53), a practice of choosing places of living that disregard historical and personal connections, a process that rejects “the presence of kith and kin and length of residence as the main determinants of local belonging” and that is so typical for urban life (Tomaney 98). Here is how Laurence sums up this type of occupancy:

The other owners, like me, are only occasionally in residence — there’s a long-haul air hostess, a Swiss businessman whose job requires him to shuttle between London and Zurich, accompanied by his secretary and/or mistress, and a gay American couple, academics of some kind, who only come here in university vacations. (*Therapy* 38)

While it seems surprising that Laurence knows so much about these people (although the uncertainty regarding the Swiss businessman’s companion hints at the fact that Laurence has very fleeting connections with the people he describes), they all definitely belong to the category mentioned above, the people who practice “elective belonging”. It is also possible to assume that Laurence does not actually know anything about the people he observes in his building, but rather assumes and creates stories around them — the reliability of the narrative is compromised, as it turns out that the monologues that are presented as accounts of Laurence written by his friends and family members are, in fact, imagined and composed by him for therapeutic purposes. This, in turn, puts an ironic twist on the comparison with the panopticon as well as Laurence’s perceived knowledgeability of the city life around him.

Michel de Certeau describes this movement between the aerial perspective and the close look at the city as the difference between the divine view and the “ordinary practitioners” perspective and compares the movement between them to the fall of Icarus (93). Laurence, eventually, follows the legendary fall by stepping out of his “divine” position in the window of his flat and walks through the city. His view of the people and the city life does not change significantly depending on his position in space; however, it is possible to observe a certain shift in attention. While he recounts the city’s busy life through the images of people moving between what can be called institutions and public places (theatres, cinemas, shops) while he is away from the crowd, once he is among the people in the streets, he pays much more attention to the discomforts of the city, its foulness and griminess.

The narrative of Laurence’s life in London is abundant in people who may, potentially, become the characters of his scripts. Not only does he observe life from inside of his flat, but also goes beyond the comfort of being an anonymous voyeur. In the quotation below he leaves the safety of his flat and explores the city, still anonymous in the crowd.

Lately I've come to value the privacy, the anonymity of the place even more. Nobody on the pavement knows I'm up here in my cosy, centrally-heated, double-glazed eyrie. And if I go down into the street to get a newspaper or pick up a pint of milk from the 24-hour Asian grocery store on the corner, and mingle with the tourists and the bums and the young runaways and the kids up from the suburbs for an evening out and the office workers who stopped for a drink on the way home and decided to make a night of it, and the actors and catering workers and buskers and policemen and beggars and newspaper vendors — their gaze will slide over me without clicking into focus, nobody will recognize me, nobody will greet me or ask how I am, and I don't have to pretend to anyone that I'm happy. (*Therapy* 41-42)

While Laurence identifies the people around him as belonging to different classes, ages and occupations, they are described very schematically in his descriptions. This is the case, in the first place, due to the brief nature of the encounters with them — they meet in the streets for a split second, in which Laurence is able to assume the strangers’ identities based on their most noticeable features. It is, hence, feasible to say that the anonymity of the big city makes it possible to identify London as a vast, branched-out non-place, the briefness of encounters being one of the most important characteristics of a non-place, along with the absence of connections between the visitors (in this case, citizens) and the lack of relationships with the place itself and its history. The latter is especially true in the cases of first-generation city migrants, whose family history is not tied to the place they currently inhabit — or, as is the case with Laurence, who does not live in London permanently, but only pay occasional visits to the capital. The deficiency of connections unites the city as a non-place with the idea of “elective belonging” and its most significant features as well.

It's too noisy and dirty. Noise not just from the traffic, but also from the high-pitched whine of restaurant ventilator fans at the back of the building that never seem to be turned off, and dirt not just in the air, which leaves a fine sediment of black dust on every surface though I keep the windows shut most of the time, but also on the ground, the pavement permanently covered with a slimy patina of

mud and spittle and spilt milk and beer dregs and vomit, and scattered over with crushed burger boxes, crumpled drinks cans, discarded plastic wrappers and paper bags, soiled tissues and used bus tickets. The efforts of the Westminster Borough street-cleaners are simply swamped by the sheer numbers of litter-producing pedestrians in this bit of London. And the human detritus is just as visible: drunks, bums, loonies and criminal-looking types abound. Beggars accost you all the time, and by 10 p.m. every shop doorway has its sleeping occupant. (*Therapy* 38-39)

What Samuel Beckett expressed about Joyce's writing, can be applicable here as well: "It is not to be read — or rather it is not only to be read. It is to be looked at and listened to" (14), and, indeed, to be felt. "Everything speaks in its own way" (*Ulysses* 109), including the city, the ever living, ever moving creature that defines the lives of its citizens. Lodge's city lives too, it bursts out with smells, noises and hundreds of people that Laurence meets on his way through the streets. Laurence, interestingly, seems to experience the city through fact rather than emotions, coldly and factually enumerating the visual and olfactory stimuli that he comes across in London. This might be due to what Georg Simmel explains in his essay "The Metropolis and Mental Life" as a process of development of a "protective organ" in the inhabitants of big cities that helps the "metropolitan type [of dwellers to react] primarily in a rational manner" (*On Individuality and Social Forms* 325-326). This rationality negates the emotions of the encounter with the city in order to minimise the impact of it on the senses.

Another example of such a vivid but gloomy picture of the city can be found in *Out of the Shelter*, a novel written by Lodge in 1970 but set in the post-war years, whose protagonist, Timothy, returns from a long trip to Germany and is shocked by the state of London (mainly in contrast with the settlements of the American army in the German town he visited). The description of his experience of the city is saturated with elucidations of the consequences of the recent war.

From the window of the bus the familiar streets took on a strange visual clarity and resonance of association. He felt that he was seeing them for the first time as they really were, that he was responding with all his senses to *the special character of South-East London, its soiled, worn textures of brick and stone, its low, irregular skyline, its odours of breweries and gas and vegetables and tanneries*. He noticed how *old and neglected* it all was: if you raised your eyes above *the modern shop-fronts*, you saw that they had been pasted on to buildings crumbling into *decay*, with cracked, *grimy windows and broken-backed roofs* and chipped chimney pots. The predominant colours were *black, brown and a dirty cream*. Guinness tints. Those were the tints to use if you were to try and paint it — and he was suddenly filled with the urge to try. (*Out of the Shelter* 69, emphasis added)

As opposed to Laurence's emotional response to the experience of London, the city is presented seemingly objectively here; however, the decay and depressing colours of the city seem to be inspiring for Timothy (which may or may not be an implicit commentary on the nature of art). Interestingly, his image of London does not include people at all: it focuses solely on the visual presentation of the city as a built environment (with a small addition of smell), whose "special character" appears to be mostly constructed from the dirt and decay. Similarly to the London described by Laurence, it is possible to say that this description

expresses the individual perception and psychological state of the character observing it.

As previously established, in the case of Laurence's London, city as a whole can be perceived as a non-place (when it is seen as a singular unit of space), a location that is characterised by the loss of identity of its visitors, as well as by the lack of connection. However, in this case, it is possible to say that Laurence grants and produces the city's and the citizens' identity in the process of narration and interpretation of his experiences of them. The "slimy patina of mud", "soiled tissues", "drunks, bums, loonies and criminal-looking types" and other aspects of London he provides paint a fairly negative picture of London as a dirty, unkempt and chaotic city (*Therapy* 38), especially as compared with cosy and friendly suburbs that Laurence also describes.

The negative attitude towards the city as, often implicitly, compared to the suburbs may correspond with Laurence's personal circumstances. The city dwelling is perceived by him as the one for migratory individuals (the countryside, on the contrary, is the space of comfort and perpetual life), and, once his stay there becomes permanent, the city becomes a problematic presence in his life.

Now that I'm living permanently in the flat I find it claustrophobic. I miss the clean-smelling air of Hollywell, I miss the squirrels playing tag in the garden, I miss the daytime hush of those suburban streets where the loudest noise at this time of year is the burr of a distant lawnmower, or the pock pock of a game of tennis. But I couldn't stand the strain of sharing the house with Sally any longer. (*Therapy* 201)

The advantages and disadvantages of both urban and suburban habitation are presented subjectively and with regard to Laurence's current situation; the understanding and perception changes based on whether he inhabits the space by choice or out of necessity. The constrain that forces Laurence to stay in the city goes against the idea of elective living, because it takes the choice he is supposed to be making out of the equation. However, his attitude towards the juxtaposition of the urban and the rural corresponds with the general indicators that define privacy, anonymity and connection in different kinds of settlements. It is not only the calm routine and joyful activities that are present and possible to identify in the absence of the city's hum and noise. The noise of the city in the quotation above is another instrument of imposing anonymity on the inhabitants of the city, while rural life provides enough quiet for the observer to be able to identify different aspects and details of the surrounding life.

The space Laurence describes is, however, not necessarily in opposition with the space of the city and its constraints. While he himself describes the two types of dwelling as antithetical, it is possible to say that the suburban town space he occupies is, in fact, an intermediary category between the rural and the urban. It can be called a *bann* (from French "banlieue") an interim type of space of the inner suburbs of big cities that marks the lines along which the city walls used to be located (Soja 33). Such spaces preserve the characteristics of the city and the urban culture but do not necessarily belong to it themselves, as they contain the characteristics of both. However, it is important to note that such areas were formerly used to introduce the newcomers to "what proper 'civilized' or 'urbane' life was about" (Soja 33), hence forming a figurative border between the two types

of spaces. This borderline space that Laurence finds the most comfort in may imply, among other things, the state of perpetual unrest and search for answers that Laurence suffers throughout the novel. While he states that the space of the suburban dwelling is the most comfortable for him, it is apparent from other descriptions that it is only what he believes to be true. The city flat he is so drawn to and the international journeys he takes on at every possibility indicate Laurence's inability to come to terms with this space.

Another example of the juxtaposition of urban and suburban in the quotation below is focused on the varying possibilities of communication in the two types of spaces. The city is, again, described as an overwhelming presence within which any kind of communication is limited to the necessity or does not happen at all.

...and the third thing we discovered was that people were still civil to each other outside London, that shop assistants said "lovely" when you gave them the right change, and that taxi-drivers looked pleasantly surprised when you tipped them, and that the workmen who came to repair your washing-machine or decorate your house or repair your roof were courteous and efficient and reliable. The superior quality of life in Britain outside London was still a well-kept secret in those days, and Sally and I could hardly contain our mirth at the thought of all our friends back in the capital pitying us as they sat in their traffic jams or hung from straps in crowded commuter trains or tried in vain to get a plumber to answer the phone at the weekend. (*Therapy* 40)

The impossibility to communicate with the people and the world around is a typical characteristic of the globalised society that is also related to the abundance of non-places in a contemporary city (and that may also turn the city itself into a non-place). While Laurence's description does not mention such places, it still contains the sentiment associated with them. "The main feature of the 'public, but not civil' places ... is the redundancy of interaction. ... If meeting strangers cannot be averted, one can at least try to avoid the dealings" (Bauman 105), which seems to be the preferred mode of interaction for both Laurence's habitual presence in the city and for other people he communicates with within its borders. A meeting of two individuals in a non-place thought to be "an event without a past; more often than not, it is also an event without a future (it is expected to be, hoped to be, free of a future)" (Bauman 95), and this tendency is presented through the fleeting encounters and fruitless attempts at interactions in Laurence's city life.

Not only do Lodge's novels touch upon the comparison of the urban and the rural, they also often go beyond this distinction and into a contrast between more significantly different types of spaces. The theme of disparity between the artificially created environment and nature itself is also brought up in the texts as well. One of the protagonists of the novel *Thinks...* describes her arrival at the university campus she will work at in terms that indicate the conflict between the natural and the artificial.

Anyway, here it is, like a *gigantic concrete raft* floating on the green fields of Gloucestershire — or rather two rafts *loosely roped* together, for most of the buildings are arranged in two clusters separated by *landscaped grounds* and an *artificial lake*. (*Thinks...* 10-11, emphasis added)

The juxtaposition of nature and architecture present in this description is a merger of epithets and oxymoron that creates an effect of unity of the two seeming

opposites. The oxymoronic combination present in the phrase “concrete raft” introduces and foreshadows the binary, dichotomous nature of the relationship between the academia and the city, as well as different branches of academia (neuroscience and literature, to be precise) that are further elaborated on throughout the novel. The phrases “landscaped grounds” and “artificial lake” further intensify the impression of an unlikely connection between the two very different types of environments by drawing the reader’s attention to the artificiality of what is supposed to be natural: the landscape is organised in a manner convenient for the visitors.

Lodge addresses the experience of the city space not only in his novels: the image of the city finds its way even into the collection of short stories written by Lodge over the years. Even though very often short stories avoid vivid or detailed descriptions of the settings (due to their length and, often, unity of setting which does not require introduction), Lodge’s short stories are often preoccupied with the ways their protagonists experience spaces and the ways in which these experiences affect the characters. The stories in the collection *The Man Who Wouldn’t Get Up and Other Stories* (1997), arguably, can be compared to James Joyce’s *Dubliners*, since Joycean influence is traceable in the thematic scope and the handling of the city space in the collection written by Lodge.

The sense of space conveyed through the characters and the influence these spaces have on them play a significant role in both collections in question. In the majority of Joyce’s stories the spaces are enclosed and claustrophobic, they pressure themselves into frames and “create static pictures from their experiences in order to glorify or diminish themselves (or both)” (K. Conrad 71), while Lodge’s characters often move freely within and outside their rather fluid and dynamic spaces. However, it is still the case that locations are significant for the characters occupying them, and these spaces bare a number of similarities in both collections when it comes to particular stories.

Most stories of Lodge’s collection take place in London, and this city is as important for him as Dublin for Joyce. In *Dubliners*, the city often reflects the state of the characters, and sometimes their movement towards hope (in the beginning of the collection) or inevitability of death (the end) (Gifford 23). The characters in *The Man* are sometimes lost in London, and have to come to terms with it to make sense of their state of being.

One example of how the attitude towards space shapes the story can be found in *The Miser*, a story about a teenage boy who is wandering all around London to find a firework shop at the end of the Second World War. The city is represented as an endless labyrinth of streets and houses, where one can easily get lost if they do not have a clear aim. Once the shop appears in the text, it is represented as a mysterious hidden place:

Timothy glanced idly round him, and sat up sharply.

‘Look!’ he breathed, scarcely able to believe such luck. About thirty yards away, on some rough ground screened from the road by the golf-club fence, was a ramshackle wooden shed. Leaning against one wall was a notice, crudely painted on a wooden board. ‘Fireworks for Sale’, it said.

Slowly they got to their feet and, with silent, wondering looks at each other, approached the shed. The door was open, and inside an old man was sitting at a table, reading a newspaper and smoking a pipe. (*The Man* 15)

In the beginning of the passage, the quiet of the street is suddenly broken by the characters, identifying them as those who are capable of change. The surroundings of the main character of Joyce's *Araby* are introduced in a similar fashion:

North Richmond street, being blind, was a quiet street except at the hour when the Christian Brothers' School set the boys free. An uninhabited house of two storeys stood at the blind end, detached from its neighbours in a square ground. (Joyce 249)

The streets carry the same impression of mystery, which, in both cases leads to creating the dreamlike characteristics of the location that is found by the characters. The expectations of using the opportunity (to go to the bazaar in *Araby* and to use the fireworks in *The Miser*), waiting for the possibility of action put the characters in the state of immobility, they freeze concentrating only on the outcome of their patience:

What innumerable follies laid waste my waking and sleeping thoughts after that evening! I wished to annihilate the tedious intervening days. I chafed against the work of school... The syllables of the word Araby were called to me through the silence in which my soul luxuriated and cast an Eastern enchantment over me. (Joyce 251)

The sense of unreality accompanies the idea of the location for the characters of both stories. In *The Miser*, even a very obvious physical proof of the existence of the shop is not enough for it to become real in the character's memory, as "the whole episode had been like a dream, or a fairy tale, and Timothy was afraid that at any moment the fireworks would dissolve" (*The Man* 18).

The characters of both stories rely on the respective places in their stories, and are both failed by them, although in different ways. And in both cases the attitude and reaction to the location reveals hidden information about the characters. The narrator in *Araby* is so anxious to meet his own expectations regarding the gift for Mangan's sister that, eventually, he does not buy anything at the bazaar. Timothy in *The Miser*, although he have obtained the fireworks from a mysterious shop, decides not to use them and expects a bigger holiday to come. In both cases, the expectations of the characters ultimately lead to disappointment.

These similarities in particular, and the effects produced by the representation of space in general in both James Joyce's and David Lodge's writing indicate the similarity of understanding of the role of the city in a person's life and, arguably, in literature: both Dublin and London the two writers describe in their texts are confusing, but beautiful, unfriendly, but tempting. It seems reasonable to assume that Lodge followed in the steps of Joyce's understanding of the city in many ways, including the ways it is represented and the effects it produces on the characters. Joycean "cityful passing away, other cityful coming, passing away too: other coming on, passing [on; h]ouses, lines of houses, streets, miles of pavements, piledup bricks, stones" (*Ulysses* 146) turn into Lodge's "drunks, bums, loonies", Guinness tints, endless crowds of people and the sense of loneliness in the enormous city that London is. "No one is anything" (*Ulysses* 146) says Joyce about Dublin's inhabitants, and Lodge's characters feel the same — as anonymous, singled out parts of a bigger whole.

The city can only be romanticised from an aerial, “divine” perspective. Otherwise, once characters have to interact with it, it becomes an overwhelming presence of negative stimuli (noise, smell, passers by — all of them seem to be perceived negatively by the protagonists). The city often imposes its presence on the characters of Lodge’s novels, defines their behaviour and interactions. The characters either try to follow the rules imposed by the non-place-like characteristics of the city space or flee towards the more “natural” and “friendly” suburbs. The city in Lodge’s texts is most often associated with noise, dirt and loneliness, and, while some characters strive for attaining a certain, both literal (physical) and metaphoric (social), place in it, the majority of them prefer the calm and predictability of smaller settlements. While the anonymity of the city can be both comforting and frightening, the characters often seem to prefer the suburb’s or small town’s lack of confidentiality, since the closer connections within their community are of higher value. Even if for whatever reasons they are tied to the city, the characters cannot find peace in it and lack any meaningful communication with the others within the borders of the city-sized non-place.

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Presentation of vox pop in public media broadcasts

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Abstract. My dissertation project, written in the *English Linguistics* doctoral programme, focuses on the investigation of the presence of “vox-pops”, sound-bites and fragmented interviews with members of the public in TV news broadcasts, as part of the tendency towards the “conversationalization” of public discourse. This article introduces the aims and methods of the project, outlines the theoretical points of departure and presents a preliminary small-scale study performed within the project, focusing on the strategies used for representing voices of citizens in TV news broadcasts on a public-service Czech and British channel and a commercial Czech channel.

Keywords. Vox pop, media discourse, TV news, conversationalization

1. TV news discourse and conversationalization

Despite the ever-growing number of media platforms and sources of information, traditional TV news broadcasts are still watched by a significant number of viewers. Being broadcast on television, which is an institution belonging to the public sphere, they are traditionally perceived as representing the institutional talk. Television is, however, a mass medium at the same time, producing content for an audience, and thus there is the unrelenting need to attract the audience, adapt to their needs and strive for high viewer ratings. This phenomenon goes in hand with the theory of audience design. Based on the accommodation theory by Giles and Powesland (1975), it asserts that the way people speak is dependent on whom they talk to (Bell, 1984, 2001). Similarly, everything in the discourse of radio and television is also motivated by the type of the audience (Scannel, 1991). What is therefore characteristic of TV discourse is not only its institutional nature, but also the tendency towards tabloidization, consumerization and conversationalization (Fairclough, 1994, Esser, 1999, Franke, 2011). The overall format of the broadcasts, their structure, contents and topics as well as the discourse that is used in them tend to be designed in a way that puts more emphasis on increasing the entertaining value, in an attempt to arouse the audience's interest and to successfully “sell” the produced contents. Conversationalization attempts to simulate intimacy with the audiences by adopting features of informal, conversational language; it “imitates the audience's own informal ways of speaking” (Franke, 2011) and involves a “restructuring of the boundary between public and private orders of discourse” (Fairclough, 1994). It permeates all types of TV broadcasts, with TV news programmes being no exception. Institutional talk and private talk, which from their nature constitute two different “speech exchange systems” (cf. Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974, Franke, 2011), are combined and blended in these television formats, giving them

a kind of a hybrid nature with the information and entertainment functions mixed and often resulting in so-called “infotainment” programmes (Wittwen, 1995).

Some of the typical manifestations of conversationalization employed in TV news formats are e.g. addressing the target viewers, asking them questions, using colloquial or slang language. Another frequent and powerful strategy is the inclusion of interviews with and sound-bites of various speakers. Interviews and sound-bites have become a common occurrence in TV news broadcasts and an inseparable part of almost every news report. Due to the hybrid nature of the news formats, combining institutional and conversational elements, news interviews show features typical of the public sphere, such as the journalists’ practices for preserving objectivity, maintaining the power relations between the interviewer and the interviewee, specific rules of turn-taking etc., and, at the same time, they represent the conversational sphere by their dialogic nature, by the language included which can imitate the conversational practices in the private sphere, and also by including voices which the audiences can identify with easily. My dissertation project focuses on such interviews through the lens of conversation analysis and discourse analysis, drawing on previous research by e.g. Tolson, 2006, Hutchby, 2006, Montgomery, 2007, Myers, 2004, Ekström, 2001, Ekström & Patrona, 2011, Ekström & Tolson, 2017 etc. The aim is to understand the role of such sound-bites in the TV news broadcasts and their orientation towards the target audience - in accordance with the theory of audience design, it can be expected that channels with differing target audiences might use differing strategies in including and treating the voices in interviews and sound-bites. My main focus is on the voices of actors that can be considered “ordinary” and that the target audiences can potentially identify with the most easily. However, defining an “ordinary” voice represented in the news broadcasts turns out not to be easy at all and the boundaries between the “categories” of speakers that appear on TV screens are not always clear-cut.

2. Voices in TV news

Previous research offers approaches to distinguishing the voices included in TV news broadcasts. Many scholars use traditional dichotomous distinction between elite/official and non-elite/unofficial sources (e.g. Bennett, 1990; Lee, 2001; Raeymaeckers et al., 2015; Vandenberghe, d’Haenens & Van Gorp, 2015; Splendore, 2020). Beckers and Van Aelst (2018) propose a more detailed and useful 4-fold distinction between representatives of government and politics, professionals and experts, representatives of civil society organizations, and citizens (the categories with their more specific representatives are illustrated in the Figure 1 below).



Figure 1, Actor classification across issues (Beckers & Van Aelst, 2018)

Montgomery (2007) proposes another useful categorisation of speakers in TV news broadcasts, based on the types of interviews in which they appear:

- In “affiliated interviews”, journalists of the same institution deliver their commentaries (Montgomery 2007, p. 118);
- in “accountability interviews”, public figures, such as politicians, are questioned about their acts for which they are “held accountable” (Montgomery, 2007, p. 148);
- in “experiential interviews”, people describe their personal experience with the reported events (Montgomery 2007, p. 155); and
- in “expert interviews”, experts express their knowledge about the reported issue and elucidate it (Montgomery 2007, p. 170).

The category of speakers that has the greatest capacity of offering the audience a chance of identification and that can be interpreted as representing “ordinary” people, who at the same time form the major part of the viewership, is the category of “citizens” based on Beckers and Van Aelst’s distinction. Beckers and Van Aelst further divide the category of “citizens” into “involved citizens” that are affected by the news event, such as victims and eye-witnesses of a crime. In Montgomery’s categorization, this group would correspond to speakers involved in “experiential interviews”. However, this type of interviews is not the only one in which “citizens” can and do appear, as it is not only their experience with the reported events that they express. Involved citizens should be distinguished from “uninvolved citizens” that do not have a specific representative function regarding the news event (Beckers & Van Aelst, 2018). These uninvolved citizens are often labelled as “vox pops”.

The definitions of vox pops appearing in literature usually include the following characteristics: vox pops are brief edited reactions of ordinary people,

the speakers are usually not introduced, they are typically interviewed on the street, they answer unheard questions and typically express their opinions and attitudes (cf. Montgomery, 2007, Myers, 2004). These features would describe a prototypical case of a vox pop, however, the data collected from TV news broadcasts show that the real appearance of sound-bites does not always fall within such clear characteristics and it is difficult to find a vox pop which would meet all these conditions. As has been mentioned above, it is problematic to define who is an “ordinary” person; what is more, the majority of speakers in TV news broadcasts on some channels tend to be introduced – there seems to be a tendency to individualize the citizens and present them as unique personalities; the speakers are not necessarily interviewed on the street as often they are preselected for the report and are filmed in their homes; often the sound-bite is not fragmented to the extreme extent that no question of the interviewer is heard, and more turns are presented; the voices also express not only opinions and attitudes, but also give testimonies by describing their actions and sharing their experience, offer explanations for the reported events and their own motivation to participate in them etc. There are therefore very few cases that would meet fully all the characteristics outlined above, but at the same time they do not really fall within any other categories of actors in TV news broadcast introduced above, either. My preliminary analyses of collected data have shown already that there are many voices in TV news broadcasts which could be either considered vox pops which deviate from the prototypical vox pop case, or a different type of (fragmented) interview which on the one hand treats the speakers in a way similar to experts, politicians and other actors, and on the other hand resembles vox pops just in some features.

A similar problem arises when other definitions of vox pops are applied. For example, De Swert (2013) refers to the concept of replaceability as an important characteristic of a vox pop. He emphasizes that for vox pops it is not important who speaks, as any other person can easily replace the interviewee since the interviewee does not own any exclusive information. However, again the collected data show that just a minority of speakers can be replaced by literally any other speaker. They are often bound to the news event due to the locality which they come from, the social group they belong to etc. It is also problematic to say that vox pops represent the “public opinion”. They might be used to make such an impression, but naturally they cannot be representative of it as they are always only a selection.

What proved to be useful for the treatment of fragmented interviews and sound-bites in TV news broadcasts is Myers’s (2004) “membership categorization” approach to analysing the voices in broadcasts. His findings are in line with what my collected data show: the speakers tend to represent certain categories; either they themselves or other discourse strategies applied in the TV news report construct their affiliation to a certain group of citizens and they speak on behalf of this group. Myers (2004) defines the “public” as “the category of participants not assigned to other categories, the category assignable when other attempts at categorization have been for practical purposes exhausted”; it “is constructed by the negation of other possible categorization devices, so that what is left is a category that is taken to be no particular category” (p. 208). Based on such a definition and the tendencies found in the collected data, it can be said that

just a minority of sound-bites represent “the public” in this sense - most speakers speak on behalf of just a part of the public; they speak on behalf of groups rather than the public in general.

3. Research aims and methods

Based on the observations outlined above, I believe this area is worth further exploration. My dissertation project strives to answer the following research questions:

- How are the voices of “citizens” presented and represented in TV news broadcasts?
- How is their “ordinariness”/lack of “ordinariness” constructed?
- What discourse strategies are linked to such presentation? Do these strategies differ from those utilized for presenting voices of experts, politicians and other publicly known personalities?
- Does the presentation of voices of the “citizens” differ between public service and commercial channels? If so, how?
- Can any conclusions be drawn concerning how the way the voices of the “citizens” are presented relates to the channels’ target audiences?

In order to answer the set research questions, I have been collecting recordings of TV news programmes on selected channels, transcribing and tagging their relevant parts and subjecting them to a closer analysis depending on the specific research questions. So far, I have focused on collecting data from prime-time evening news programmes on British and Czech channels, where I exclude weather forecasts and sport sections and analyse just the rest of the reports devoted to domestic and foreign affairs. My main interest consists in the interviews, which usually do not appear in the news broadcasts as complex units with all the question-answer exchanges. Rather, they are included as de- and re-contextualised fragments or sound bites (Ekström, 2001; Montgomery, 2007, 2010) and therefore, attention needs to be paid also to their framing and preceding and following passages. Transcribing and tagging these relevant parts prepares the data for the subsequent analysis through the lens of discourse and conversational analysis. Especially the introduction and contextualization of the (fragmented) interviews, presence and character of questions, turn-taking, the room the speaker is given, the issue and topic, the speakers’ construction of their relevance for the report, and also other discourse features, are studied. With regard to the multimodal nature of TV news broadcasts, also the visual aspect of the fragmented interviews as well as written elements present on the screen and the interplay of various modes need to be taken into account.

So far, I have performed mainly small-scale preliminary studies which map the tendencies and discourse strategies in the data and can serve as a basis for further exploration. Currently, analyses are being conducted which should shed light on the tendency of the actors to represent categories and speak on behalf of certain groups of the public, and analyses which should compare involving the voices of the citizens on commercial and public service channels. The following

section briefly outlines findings from a preliminary small-scale study focusing on the way the voices of “involved and uninvolved citizens”, also referred to as “ordinary” people (with the knowledge of the problematic nature of such a label), are represented on a commercial and public-service Czech channels and a public-service British channel, and on the similarities and differences between these channels.

4. Voice of people in British public-service and Czech public-service and commercial TV news broadcasts

The data for the preliminary analysis of how the voice of people is represented in TV news were taken from BBC News channel’s 8 p.m. news programmes broadcast in the period of 29 January to 4 February 2021, Czech public-service channel ČT1’s 7 p.m. news programmes broadcast in the period of 16 August to 22 August 2021 and Czech commercial channel Nova’s 8 p.m. news programmes broadcast in the period of 16 August to 22 August 2021¹. The 7 news programmes from BBC News, 7 news programmes from public-service ČT1 and 7 news programmes from commercial Nova were scanned for interviews with “ordinary citizens” and their fragments, which were then transcribed together with the introductory passages and created a small corpus. (By the introductory passage I mean the passages uttered by the reporting journalist or the voice-over before the interview/interview fragment/sound-bite).

The interviews, interview fragments and sound-bites that are included in the corpus involve voices of people that could be considered “involved” citizens and “uninvolved” citizens based on Beckers & Van Aelst’s definition outlined above; voices of people obviously identifiable as politicians and government representatives, spokespeople of organizations, journalists and experts were not included. The analysis of sound-bites with any type of citizens that could be considered “ordinary” should offer space to explore what the boundaries are between sound-bites that correspond to the definition of “vox-pops” and sound-bites which also present the voice of “ordinary” people, but whose form departs from the vox-pop prototype.

The research questions the study was supposed to answer are the following:

¹ The analysed TV news broadcasts on the Czech channels ČT1 and Nova were broadcast on the same day, at the same daytime. These conditions are therefore the best for making a comparison between the representation of the voice of people on these two channels, as the events and affairs going on in the world that the news coverages might report on are the same. The differences found can be ascribed to the public-service/commercial nature of the channels. The analysed broadcasts on BBC News channel come from a different period, which is, however, not so distant from the period of broadcasting of the Czech analysed material and it can be expected that BBC News has not changed its company policy about presenting the voice of people between January/February and August 2021. Therefore, the material taken from BBC News is compared to the Czech material in this study even though it was not broadcast in precisely the same time period; it serves as an example of a British public-service channel that can, in comparison to the Czech material, show if the way the voice of people is represented is dependent on the company policy or particular cultural context.

- How is the voice of people represented in Czech commercial and public-service news broadcasts and British public-service broadcasts?
- Can any differences be found concerning the practices of representing the voice of people between public-service and commercial channels?
- Can any differences be found concerning the practices of representing the voice of people between Czech and British news broadcasts?
- Do the practices of representing the voice of people correspond to the vox-pop format prototype?

In terms of the correspondence to the vox-pop format prototype, especially the *anonymity* and *replaceability* of the voices was investigated. I looked into whether the voices are left anonymous, or are introduced and referred to with their name (either written on the screen or spoken in the introductory passage by the newsreader/reporter/voice-over) or with so-called identifier. The term *identifier* was taken from Montgomery (2007) and is defined as “a specification on the grounds of which the person speaks for the purposes of the interview at hand” (p. 151). In this study, the term is understood as basically any specification of the speaker’s identity other than their name, typically a specification of their role in society, job position, affiliation to a specific locality etc. The discursive practices used for introducing and referring to the voices also construct how replaceable the voices are: if the voices are presented as representatives of a specific group (cf. Myers’s membership categorization), they are replaceable only by voices belonging to the same group/category.

The findings answering the set research questions are presented in the following section.

4.1. Found instances of the voice of people in Czech and British TV news broadcasts

In total, 120 instances of fragmented interviews and sound-bites with the “voice of people” on the Czech commercial channel Nova were collected, 51 instances on the Czech public-service channel ČT1 and 50 instances on the British public-service channel BBC. The following table breaks the found instances down indicating the individual broadcasts in which they appeared.

Date of broadcast	Number of sound-bites on ČT1	Number of sound-bites on Nova	Date of broadcast	Number of sound-bites on BBC
16 August 2021	10	10	29 January 2021	7
17 August 2021	6	20	30 January 2021	4
18 August 2021	9	30	31 January 2021	4
19 August 2021	7	11	1 February 2021	9
20 August 2021	7	17	2 February 2021	7
21 August 2021	6	22	3 February 2021	9

Date of broadcast	Number of sound-bites on ČT1	Number of sound-bites on Nova	Date of broadcast	Number of sound-bites on BBC
22 August 2021	6	10	4 February 2021	10
Total	51	120	Total	50

Table 1: Found instances of sound-bites with the voice of people, broken down by channel and date

The found numbers of sound-bites with the voice of people indicate, even in this small corpus, differences between the practices of public-service and commercial channels. In the same number of prime-time TV news broadcasts, the numbers of found sound-bites with the voice of people on the public-service channels (ČT1 and BBC) are comparable (51 and 50, respectively), whereas the number of sound-bites with the voice of people on the commercial channel is more than twice as high (120). The significance of this difference would need to be verified on a larger corpus and on more commercial channels, nevertheless, the present findings hint to the preference of commercial channels to represent the voice of people in a larger scale than public-service channels.

The following table outlines the topics of the reports in which the sound-bites with the voice of people appeared:

Topic	Number of sound-bites on ČT1	Number of sound-bites on Nova	Topic	Number of sound-bites on BBC
Covid tests and vaccination, restrictions	5	51	Covid tests and vaccination, restrictions	20
Economic problems, inflation, investments	20	3	Economic problems, inflation, investments	12
Free time activities and cultural events	4	19	Free time activities and cultural events	5
Decisions and scandals of politicians		3	Decisions and scandals of politicians	4
Therapeutic programmes, medical prevention	4		Therapeutic programmes, medical prevention	4
Sensations, discoveries, unusual events	1			2
Riots, protests				3
Natural disasters	2	11		

Topic	Number of sound-bites on ČT1	Number of sound-bites on Nova	Topic	Number of sound-bites on BBC
Traffic restrictions in specific localities	3	12		
Travelling and tourism	8	6		
Pensions	2	7		
New traffic and employment regulations	2	1		
Crop production		5		
Weather		2		

Table 2: Found instances of sound-bites with the voice of people, broken down by channel and topic

Some of the topics covered in the table and appearing on one channel were not included in the analysed news broadcasts on the other channels at all (e.g. a report on unusual weather conditions was included only on the Nova channel) and thus the overview of topics in some cases points to differences between what the individual channels decide to cover in the news broadcasts rather than to differences between how they present the voice of people. However, the reports on topics which are shared among the channels can be investigated in more detail and it can be compared how much the channels allow the voices of people speak on those topics. For example, in reports on vaccination against Covid-19 and people's interest in it, all three channels gave room to the voices of people, but the Nova channel let more such voices to be heard. That was not because of a higher number of reports on this topic broadcast in Nova's news, but because Nova presented more voices of people speaking on the topic in one report and accumulated them after one another, whereas ČT1 and BBC tended to nominate fewer voices but often devoted them more space. This is a notable difference between the practices of the commercial channel and the public-service channel and is worth further exploration. This difference is also connected to the way the voices are introduced and referred to on the individual channels.

4.2. Anonymity of the voices of people in Czech and British TV news broadcasts

A prototypical vox-pop format includes a voice which is left anonymous. In the collected data, anonymity of the presented people's voices was predominantly utilized by the Nova channel, whereas on the ČT1 and BBC channels it was not a strategy preferred to other ways of introducing and presenting the voices of people, as illustrated by the following table.

	ČT1	Nova	BBC
Number of voices left anonymous	1	90	13
Out of total	2 % (out of 51)	75 % (out of 120)	26 % (out of 50)

Table 3: Voices of people left anonymous

The anonymous voices were not introduced with their name (neither spoken nor written on the screen) and there was not even an identifier on the screen that would present them by referring to their role in society etc. On the Nova channel, such voices were mostly accompanied by the caption “survey” appearing on the screen. As mentioned in the previous section, there were often multiple voices following one another, all arranged under the label of a “survey”. When voices were left anonymous on the ČT1 and BBC channels, there was no caption on the screen at all and the voices were left to be interpreted just based on the preceding introductory passage.

As opposed to anonymity, for many voices of people who would be considered ordinary citizens the strategy to introduce them with their full name was used. The table 4 summarizes the numbers of such instances.

	ČT1	Nova	BBC
Number of voices introduced with their name	48	12	26
Out of total	94 % (out of 51)	10 % (out of 120)	52 % (out of 50)

Table 4: Voices of people introduced with their name

It can be seen that both on the Czech and on the British public-service channel, this strategy of presenting the voices was used for the majority of sound-bites with the voices, even though for the Czech ČT1 channel the number is much higher. On both these channels, these voices were introduced with their names even though the names are not known to the general audience, because they belong to speakers who are not publicly known figures and can be considered ordinary citizens. It could thus be argued that their name bears no particular relevance to the report. Still, especially for the ČT1 channel, presenting the speakers’ names seems to be the dominant strategy: the voices often speak on the same topic as the anonymous voices on another channel (as e.g. in the Examples 4 and 5 below) but a choice is made to present their name, which gives them a unique-personality status.

The voices which were not left completely anonymous and neither were presented with their full names were mostly presented using the strategy of introducing them with their identifier only and thus classifying them as members of a specific group of citizens (e.g. “citizens affected by the tornado”, “a visitor of the festival” etc.) which corresponds to Myers’s findings concerning the membership categorization.

4.3. Replaceability of the voices of people in Czech and British TV news broadcasts

De Swert (2013) names replaceability as an important characteristic of a prototypical vox pop. Most of the voices of people found in the analysed corpus of ČT1, Nova and BBC news broadcasts, however, cannot be easily replaced by *any* other voice. The examples of those which can, can be found in this particular corpus just among the voices included on the Nova channel, as in the Example 1 below:

Example 1 (Nova 21 August 2021, 8 p.m.)

- 1 REPORTER Zeptali jsme se lidí, jestli by využili možnost online testování
We asked people if they would use the possibility of online testing
2 WOMAN Je to lepší: (.) bude to rychlejší e: nemusí člo člověk nikam chodit
It is better: (.) it'll be faster e: you don't have to go anywhere

In this Example 1, the introductory passage spoken by the reporter refers to “people” who were asked about their approach to online testing for Covid-19. What follows is a sound-bite with the voice of an anonymous woman. In the context of the reporter’s introductory passage, she is just “one of the people” and thus any other “one of the people” could replace her and their voice would still be relevant for the news report. However, among sound-bites with anonymous voices found in the corpus there are also such that cannot be replaced by literally anybody else’s voice; even though the names are not mentioned, the identity of the people whose voices are heard is constructed by their affiliation to a certain group, locality, by their experience with an event etc., as in the Example 2 below:

Example 2 (BBC News 4 February 2021, 8 p.m.)

- 1 REPORTER The team here (.) are confident they can get through all their
2 housebound patients in priority
3 groups (.) by the middle of this month but in other areas (.) it
4 seems to be proving more difficult.
5 MAN The thing is she can't walk.

In this Example 2, the anonymous man is in the house of an immobile elderly lady that was visited by NHS staff to receive vaccination. He describes the condition of the lady and through that he confirms the reporter’s statement that “in some areas, getting to patients is more difficult”. This man’s relevance for the report consists in his experience with the reported issue and presence in the locality that is reported on. Therefore, his voice is replaceable only with a voice of a person having similar experience and connection to a similar locality.

Such replaceability of the voices only with voices which belong to the same category/represent the same group is very common in the corpus and applies to most even anonymous voices. Similarly, it applies to voices which are introduced with an identifier or with their full name. The fact that their full name is presented

does not mean that they cannot be replaced by anybody else because they would speak on behalf of themselves as a unique person in the world, rather than that they still speak just as representatives of a group of similarly affected people and can be replaced by other individuals from the same group, as illustrated by Example 3.

Example 3 (ČT1, 18 August 2021, 7 p.m.)

- 1 REPORTER Třeba 80letá Markéta Hužerová má důchod necelých 10 300.
For example 80-year-old Markéta Hužerová's pension is 10 300.
- 2 Když zaplatí bydlení (.) zbyde jí na všechno kolem 3000 měsíčně.
When she pays for housing (.) she has about 3000 a month left to pay for everything.
- 3 MARKÉTA HUŽEROVÁ si musíte vypočítat na ten týden co můžete spotřebovat...
You have to count for the week what you can spend...

This Example 3 is taken from a report about the possible increase in pensions. It wants to show that the current height of pensions is not sufficient for some people. The reporter introduces the sound-bite by identifying the speaker with her name, which is preceded by the phrase that could be loosely translated as “for example”, and describing her unfavourable financial position caused by the low pension. Such phrases similar to “for example” (e.g. “also” etc.) present the speaker as “one of more people equally affected”. Nevertheless, the strategy to present the speakers’ names and often also further details from their life bears significance; it can be argued that it suppresses the mass character of groups and categories into which society is divided and highlights the individuality of each of the group’s member. Such treatment of the speakers representing certain categories of ordinary citizens makes them look formally similar to elite speakers in the news broadcasts. As certain members of the audience can identify themselves with the speakers in the broadcasts in cases when they could replace the speakers, the audience might feel that their identity and personality is important for the news broadcast. In a way, such a strategy can thus be interpreted as the TV company policy’s attempt to show the audience that “every citizen matters”.

4.4. The approach of the analysed channels to presenting the voice of people

As has been outlined above, there are similarities and differences between how much the individual channels involve the voice of people in their reports as well as between how they tend to introduce and present it. The following Examples 4-6 are selected to illustrate the individual channels’ prominent approaches to presenting the voice of people in reports on the same topic. The reports cover the topic of vaccination against Covid-19, which divides both Czech and British society as it has its supporters as well as opponents.

Example 4 (ČT 1, 22 August 2021, 7 p.m.)

- 1 REPORTER 74letá Božena Mužíková (.) dnes dostala teprve 1. dávku.
74-year old Božena Mužíková (.) got only the first jab today.
- 2 Očkování se dosud bála (.) Nakonec ji přesvědčila známá.
She was afraid of vaccination until now (.) At the end, a friend of her persuaded her.
- 3 BOŽENA MUŽÍKOVÁ Nedala si říct (.) a dovezla mě sem a bylo to.
She wouldn't budge (.) and brought me here and that was it.

Example 5 (Nova, 18 August 2021, 8 p.m.)

- 1 REPORTER Většina očkovaných odpověděla, že s 3. dávkou nemá problém.
Most vaccinated answered that they didn't mind the third jab.
- 2 Ale najdou se samozřejmě i lidé (.) kteří by si pro ni už nešli.
However, there are naturally also people (.) who would not take it.
- 3 SURVEY já bych to:: neschvalovala tu třetí dávku (1.5) třetí si myslím
I wouldn't:: approve of the third jab (1.5) the third is I think
- 3 zbytečná že (1) člověk by se už tomu měl bránit sám
useless (1) one should protect by oneself against it
- 4 SURVEY No když už jsem dostala dvě tak proč bych si nevzala i tu třetí
Well when I've already got two why wouldn't I take the third too
- 5 SURVEY Já su pro (.) já jsem byl dvakrát a kdyby bylo potřeba tak
I am for it (.) I've had two and if it was necessary then
- 6 potřebí jo
the third too
- ...

Example 6 (BBC News 3 February 2021, 8 p.m.)

- 1 REPORTER Down the road from the mosque (.) in this diverse part of
- 2 Birmingham (.) a number of people have told me (.) they don't
- 3 totally trust the vaccine(1) but they don't want to be named.
- 4 MAN The hesitance is eee (1) cos i wannna see: (.) how other people
- 5 and their immune systems reacted to it.

The voices included in the Examples 4-6 all represent ordinary citizens giving their opinions on vaccination, but each is introduced and presented differently. Example 4 illustrates the ČT1 channel's preference for introducing the speakers with their name and including them in the report as selected representatives of a group whose identity and personality is highlighted and who basically serve as a model case. On the contrary, Example 5 shows the Nova channel's tendency to leave the speakers anonymous and present them rather as parts of the mass, which is supported also by accumulating more voices after each other without any further specification. This approach corresponds the most to the prototypical vox-pop format. Example 6 illustrates anonymous presentation of a voice on the BBC channel (although more voices on the BBC channel were presented with their

names than left anonymous and were closer to the ČT1's tendency). What is notable about the Example 6 is the fact that the reporter draws attention to the fact the speaker's name is not mentioned. It is typical in the data collected for the corpus that the strategies of introducing/not introducing speakers are not explained or justified in any way. Here, however, it is explicitly explained why the speaker is not introduced with their name and the fact that they do not want to be named is stressed. This explanation attracts the viewers' attention and it might be argued that this has a specific function – its intention may be to lead the viewer to wonder if the speakers were ashamed for their opinion and therefore did not want their name to be revealed etc.

4.5. Summary

This small-scale preliminary study offered insight into how the voice of people is represented on public-service and commercial channels. The collected data from a Czech public-service, a Czech commercial and a British public-service channel hinted to certain tendencies towards presenting the voice of people in the prototypical vox-pop format as well as a format that departs from the vox-pop prototype. A brief comparison of the strategies applied by these channels also helped to address whether they are culture/channel specific, although a larger corpus, including more public-service and commercial channels would be necessary for confirming the indicated tendencies.

The analysis revealed the tendency towards departing from anonymity of the presented voices, especially on the public-service channels. The data from BBC and mainly from ČT1 showed the preference for introducing the speakers with their names and presenting them as unique personalities, who, however, speak on behalf of a group they represent, and serve as model cases with whom similarly affected people can identify. Anonymity of the voices was preferred by the commercial Nova channel, whose strategies for presenting the voice of people corresponded to the vox-pop prototype the most. What is more, it was found out that most of the voices are not arbitrarily replaceable with any other voice, as they do not represent just the broad homogenous “public”, but rather than that they mostly represent specific groups and categories of the citizens who are somehow involved in the event.

A brief comparison of the commercial channel's and public-service channels' strategies hinted to more similarities between the Czech and British public-service channels (preference for naming the voices, including fewer of them in the reports, suppressing their mass character and highlighting their personalities compared to the commercial channel). These tendencies need to be verified on a larger corpus, but the similarities between the data coming from different cultures promise the applicability of findings gained from a national corpus transnationally.

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