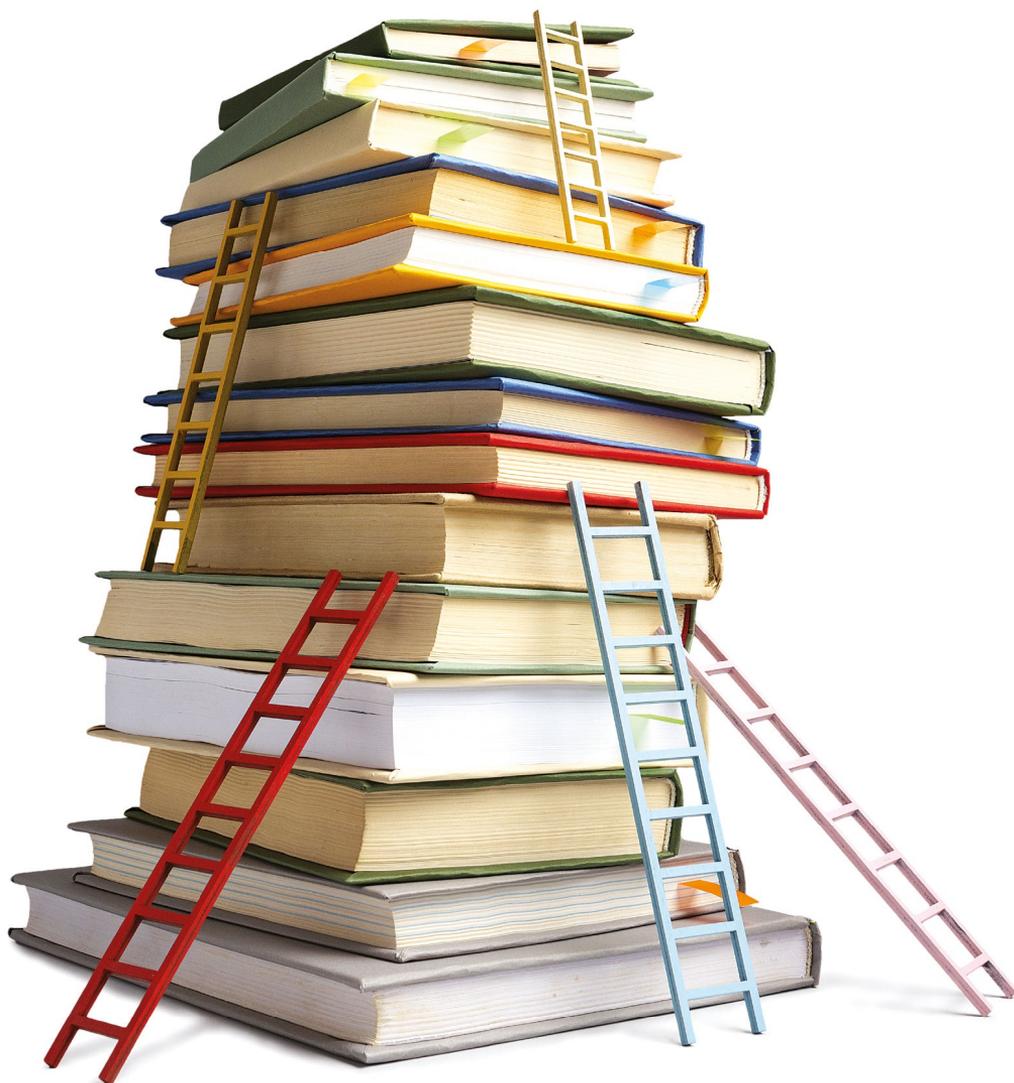


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[Confixal word-formation rows with the suffix *-ment*]

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[Abstract] *This article presents a detailed analysis of the structure of five confixal word-formation rows with the suffix -ment from the synchronous point of view and with the help of the applicative generative model. The confixal word-formation rows are studied in terms of their homogeneity and heterogeneity, complexity and depth. Some theoretical notions such as “word-formation row”, “confix”, “circumfix”, “derivational suffix” and “applicative generative model” are discussed. The paper outlines different interpretations of the origin of the suffix -ment. The article is mainly aimed at analyzing the structure of confixal word-formation rows rather than describing their semantic features.*

[Keywords] *word-formation row; applicative generative model; homogeneity; heterogeneity; derivational suffix; confix*

[1] Introduction

This paper consists of the following parts:

1. Introduction: 1.1. Literature review
2. Method
3. The origin of the suffix *-ment*
4. Result and discussion
5. Conclusions

The objective of the paper is to analyze the structure of confixal word-formation rows in English. It is well-known that confixal word-formation is not very widely used in the English language. Nevertheless, while studying the structure of word-formation rows with the suffix *-ment*, five word-formation rows consisting of the prefixes *en-/em-*, *dis-*, *over-*, *non-*, *re-* and the suffix *-ment* were identified. A detailed structural analysis of English confixal word-formation rows represents the new contribution of this study. The subject of the analysis is confixal word-formation rows with the suffix *-ment*, and the research focuses on their structural peculiarities.

This article is of particular relevance due to the lack of studies of confixal word-formation rows in English.

[1.1] Literature review

The theoretical framework of this paper comprises works by *Soboleva (1972)*, Markov (2001), Shepel (2006; 2013; 2016), Evseeva (2014), Musatov (2010), Rahmayani (2013), Dalton-Puffer (1996), Plag (2003), Partridge (2006), Gräfe (2009), Booij (2018), Kriaučiūnienė (2020), and Peppler (1916).

Many attempts have been made, e.g. by Tykhonov (1991), Soboleva (1972), Heyher (1987), Hlebova (1988), Shepel (2006; 2013), to study and describe word-formation rows. Tykhonov (1991) states that “a word-formation row is a word-formation unit which lacks scientific research and this unit is still a subject of discussion” (p. 2). Heyher (1987) interprets a word-formation row as a set of derivative words of different word-formation chains which are at the same derivational stage (pp. 305–309). Heyher adds that the elements of a word-formation row are characterized by paradigmatic relations.

Hlebova (1988) considers a word-formation row to be “a hierarchically organized class of derivative words which have equal relations with basic elements” (p. 10). However, none of these definitions appear to be entirely clear. In this article, the definition suggested by Shepel (2006) is taken into consideration. Shepel states that a word-formation row is “a paradigmatic row, it is a set of derivative words combined on the basis of the variable-invariable principle: an invariable element for a row is a word-formation formant of the last derivational step and a variable element is a stem or a root of a motivated word” (pp. 134–135).

The applicative generative model was investigated by Soboleva (1972). This model is known to relate to the category of the abstract derivation system with a limited number

of original objects and rules of derivation. In this article, I deal with R_iX , where R_i may be called an operator, X an operand and R_iX an R-image of X . R-words of the applicative generative model are analogues of words in natural language (L=words). There are three relator-affixes: R_1 to denote a verb, R_2 a noun, and R_3 an adjective. The morphemic stem O serves as an initial operand, and the three relators are operators. The application process is the act of adding the function (a relator) to its argument (a morphemic stem). Derivational steps determine the application operation in the applicative generative model. The process of adding a word-forming affix to the derivative word comprises each derivative step. The word-forming structure is based on a large number of derivational steps required for word generation.

For example, the noun *management* corresponds to the R-word R_2R_1O , where R_1O is a zero derivational step and O displays the morphemic stem *manage*, and R_1 is a verb, i.e. a part of speech of the deriving stem *manage*. Then the suffix *-ment* is added to the morphemic stem to form the noun *management*, which will be written as R_2 and considered the first derivational step. It should be noted that only the present-day synchronous status of words is considered in this paper.

The concept of the depth and the complexity of a word-formation row is also of relevance to this paper. Shepel (2006) points out that the depth of a row or the degree of derivation is determined by the number of derivation steps in the longest derived word. The number of word structures included in a row comprises the row's complexity.

Confixal word-formation rows are investigated in this article, so we should define what a “confix” is. The term “confix” emerged due to Markov (2001), who stated that “each derived word distinguishes one word-forming morpheme in its composition complicating the so-called stem” (p. 104). Shepel (2016) considers that “a confix is a functionally unified two-element morpheme used to form words” (p. 54). Shepel supports the point of view that a confix as a formant is no longer perceived as a combination of prefix and suffix.

Rahmayani (2013) uses the term “derivational morpheme”, which he defines as “a prefix or a suffix for creating one word from another” (p. 2). He states that the derivational suffix usually changes both the meaning and the word class, i.e. the suffix is often added to a verb or an adjective to form a new noun with a different meaning, e.g. the noun *establishment* consists of two morphemes – the stem *establish* is a verb and the morpheme *-ment* is a suffix. Dalton-Puffer (1996) understands a bound lexical morpheme as a derivational suffix.

Gräfe (2009) states that the derivational suffix can, but need not, change the syntactic category of the generating word, e.g. the derivational suffix *-ment* can either form a noun from a verb (*develop_v → development_n*) or a noun from a noun, i.e. without changing the grammatical category (*rock_n → enrockment_n*).

Booij (2018) points out that in the English literature, the term “component of a complex word” substitutes the term “confix”. He argues that “ambix” and “confix” can be synonyms for the term “circumfix”. He suggests using “confix” for non-intrusive affixes consisting of a single phonological unit, i.e. the prefix and the suffix excluding circumfixes.

Kriauciūnienė (2020) expresses the idea that “confixes are formed from unique lexemes that can be found now in certain words, and a confix is not just a productive element of a word but it exists in word combinations” (p. 122). Evseeva (2014) considers a confix “an independent two-element morpheme and a complex word-forming formant” (p. 29). Musatov (2010) defines a confix as “a single complex joining simultaneously the generating stem or the generative word” (p. 63).

In this article, the term “confix” will be considered according to the definition given by Shepel (2013), who considers it to be “a two-suffix (or more) morpheme with a derivational function, i.e. it serves as a material and an expression of an unambiguous act of word-formation” (p. 21).

The notion of conversion also applied in this paper. For Quirk et al. (1985), conversion is “the derivational process whereby an item is adapted or converted to a new word class without the addition of an affix” (p. 1558). Bauer and Valera Hernández (2005) define conversion as “a derivational process linking lexemes of the same form but belonging to different word-classes” (p. 8). For example, the disjunction $R_2R_2R_1O \vee R_2R_1R_1O$ (*commit_n* > *commitment_n* > *recommitment* \vee *commit_v* > *recommit_v* > *recommitment*) shows the conversion of word classes, i.e. the deriving stem *commit* in the first R-structure belongs to the noun and this word is converted into the verb in the second R-structure.

[2] Method

For this research, the sampling method used to collect words with the suffix *-ment* used the online Cambridge Dictionary, the online Collins English Dictionary, and the Merriam-Webster Dictionary. The structure of the collected words was analyzed by means of the applicative generative model (Soboleva, 1972). This model is explained in the previous section. With the help of this model and, five confixal word-formation rows were built, and they are observed in Section 3.2.

[3] The origin of the suffix *-ment*

This paper presents an analysis of word-formation rows with the suffix *-ment*. For this reason, some information related to the origin of this suffix will be given in this section.

According to Rugaiyah (2018), the suffix *-ment* is a derivational morpheme that can be added to some verbs to form nouns. Due to this suffix, the word may take on a new meaning. Plag (2003) states that there are four types of suffixes: a noun suffix, a verbal suffix, an adverbial suffix and an adjectival suffix. Plag considers the suffix *-ment* to be a noun suffix, i.e. a suffix that forms abstract nouns from verbs, adjectives and nouns. To the authoritative opinion of Plag (2003) and Rugaiyah (2018), I will add my point of view that the suffix *-ment* can create not only nouns (*payment*, *treatment*, *engagement*) but also attributive nouns (*presettlement*, *nonmanagement*, *nongovernment*, *posttreatment*), and that polysemantic words with the suffix *-ment* can also have a verbal meaning (*statement*, *com-*

pliment). Therefore, in this article, the derivational suffix *-ment* is considered as a suffix forming not only nouns but also attributive nouns and verbs.

Peppler (1916) investigated the origin of the suffix *-ment*. He states that it came from the suffixes $-\mu\alpha$, $-\mu\alpha\tau$ (Latin *-men-*, *-men-to-*, Eng. *-ment*), which were added to the verb stem to form the name of the action, namely the result of the action. A large number of such nouns were used in works by Herodotus and Hippocrates. Peppler (1916) expresses the idea that “words with the suffix *-ment* are of Ionic origin” (p. 459).

In this article, I will support the opinion of Partridge (2006), who has conducted a detailed study of the history of this suffix’s development and presented several interpretations, including the opinion that this suffix comes from the Latin suffix *-men* (*abdomen*, *acumen*, *tegmen*, *rumen*).

[4] Results and discussion

The structural analysis of five confixal word-formation rows starts with the investigation of R-words using the applicative generative model which was explained in the literature review section (1.1.). These rows will be considered in terms of their structure (whether they are homogeneous or heterogeneous), complexity and depth.

According to Shepel (2006), homogeneous rows have the same meaning of *i* at the *n* (penult) step. If the meaning of *i* at the penult derivational step does not coincide, then such structures are called heterogeneous. For example, the word-formation row with *en-* (Table 1) is heterogeneous because there are R-words R_1 and R_2 at the penult step, while the word-formation row with *non-* (Table 4) is homogeneous because there is only one R-word R_2 at the penult step.

Soboleva (1972) introduces the concept of the complexity of a row, measured by the number of R-words of the corresponding R-structure. For instance, the complexity of the word-formation row with *dis-* (Table 2) is five because five R-structures ($R_2R_2R_1O$, $R_2R_1R_1O$, $R_2R_2R_2R_1O$, $R_2R_2R_1R_1O$, $R_2R_1R_1R_1O$) comprise this row.

The word-formation row with *en-* is presented in Table 1. There are two *en-* prefixes. One comes from the Latin suffix *in*, with the main meaning “in”, mainly forming verbs. It can also have the meaning “force to be” and may be represented as *in-*. The second prefix, *en-*, is of Greek origin with the meaning “in, within”. Before the letters *b* and *p*, the prefix *en-* is changed to *em-* (*embodiment*, *emplacement*).

The word-formation row with *en-* is motivated by verbs (*rage* > *enrage* > *enrage*, *title* > *entitle* > *entitlement*, *trench* > *entrenchment*), adjectives (*noble* > *ennoble* > *ennoblement*, *large* > *enlarge* > *enlargement*) and nouns (*rock* > *enrockment*, *table* > *entablement*). In the row, at the first derivational step, the prefix *en-* and the suffix *-ment* are added simultaneously (*rock* > *enrockment*, *table* > *entablement*). The disjunction $R_2R_1R_1O \vee R_2R_2O$ (*camp*_{*v*} > *encamp* > *encampment* \vee *camp*_{*n*} > *encampment*) shows that the words *encampment*, *encasement* can have both one and two derivational steps and are motivated by both a verb and a noun.

The disjunction $R_2R_2R_1O \vee R_2R_1R_1O$ (*ravish* > *ravishment* > *enravishment* \vee *ravish* > *enravish* > *enravishment*) shows that the nouns *enravishment*, *enticement* are motivated by verbs (*ravish*, *tice*). At the first step, not only the verb but also the noun motivates words.

The disjunctions $R_2R_1R_2O \vee R_2R_1R_3O$ (*rich*_n > *enrich* > *enrichment* \vee *rich*_{adj} > *enrich* > *enrichment*) and $R_2R_1R_1O \vee R_2R_1R_3O$ (*feeble*_v > *enfeeble* > *enfeeblement* \vee *feeble*_{adj} > *enfeeble* > *enfeeblement*) show that the noun *enfeeblement* is motivated by the word *feeble* with the meaning of both the verb and the adjective. It is worth paying attention to the disjunction $R_2R_1R_1O \vee R_2R_2R_2O$ (*tangle*_v > *entangle*_v > *entanglement* \vee *tangle*_n > *entangle*_n > *entanglement*) because the noun *entanglement* can be motivated by nouns at all derivational steps.

In addition, in the confixal macro row with *en-* it is possible to identify a row R_2R_2O , $R_2R_2R_2O$ (*enrockment*, *entanglement*) with the derivatives and generating words belonging to the same part of speech – a noun – which is unusual for the English language. Due to the conversion of word classes and, as a result, to the disjunctions, the row is heterogeneous. The complexity is six (R_2R_2O , $R_2R_1R_1O$, $R_2R_1R_3O$, $R_2R_2R_1O$, $R_2R_1R_2O$, $R_2R_2R_2O$) and the depth is two derivational steps.

Table 1. Confixal word-formation row with *en-*

Ser. No.	Step No.	R-words	L=class=en
1	I	R_2R_2O	enrockment, entablement
2	II	$R_2R_1R_1O$ (R_2R_2O)	encampment, encasement
3	II	$R_2R_1R_3O$	ennoblement, enlargement
4	II	$R_2R_1R_1O$	engragement, entitlement, encompassment, encirclement, entrenchment, erasement, escapement
5	II	$R_2R_2R_1O$ ($R_2R_1R_1O$)	enravishment, enticement
6	II	$R_2R_1R_2O$ ($R_2R_1R_3O$)	enrichment
7	II	$R_2R_1R_1O$ ($R_2R_1R_3O$)	enfeeblement
8	II	$R_2R_1R_2O$	enrollment, enjoyment
9	II	$R_2R_1R_2O$ ($R_2R_1R_1O$)	enslavement, enslavement, enthronement, enframement, engraftment
10	II	$R_2R_1R_1O$ ($R_2R_2R_2O$)	entanglement

The word-formation confixal row with *dis-* is heterogeneous, the complexity equals five ($R_2R_2R_1O$, $R_2R_1R_1O$, $R_2R_2R_2R_1O$, $R_2R_2R_1R_1O$, $R_2R_1R_1R_1O$), and the depth is three. The prefix *dis-* gives the word a negative meaning, and it is translated as “not”, e.g. *disagreement* – “a situation in which people do not have the same opinion”.

This prefix comes from the Old French prefix *des-*, which originated from the Latin prefix *dis-*, coming from the adverb *dis-*, with the meaning “separately”. The row is moti-

vated by verbs, but the generating words are both verbs and nouns at the first and second derivational steps which can be shown by the following disjunctions:

- 1) $R_2R_2R_1O \vee R_2R_1R_1O$ (*agree_v > agreement_n > disagreement* \vee *agree_v > disagree_v > disagreement*)
- 2) $R_2R_2R_2R_1O \vee R_2R_2R_1R_1O \vee R_2R_1R_1R_1O$ (*tangle_v > tanglement_n > entanglement* $>$ *disentanglement* \vee *tangle_v > entangle_v > entanglement > disentanglement* \vee *tangle_v > entangle_v > disentangle > disentanglement*)

Table 2. Confixal word-formation row with *dis-*

Ser. No.	Step No.	R-words	L=class=dis
1	II	$R_2R_2R_1O$ ($R_2R_1R_1O$)	disagreement, disannulment, disarrangement, disarmament, disengagement
2	III	$R_2R_2R_2R_1O$ ($R_2R_2R_1R_1O$) ($R_2R_1R_1R_1O$)	disentanglement

The word-formation confixal row with *over-* (Table 3) is heterogeneous with a complexity of four ($R_2R_2R_1O$, $R_2R_2R_2O$, $R_2R_1R_1O$, $R_2R_1R_1R_1O$) and a depth of three steps. According to Brenda (2014), the word *over* can function as a preposition, adverb, adverbial particle, prefix, adjective, noun and verb. The prefix *over* is spatial, temporal, and also metaphorical in meaning, and expresses not only “excess”.

The row is motivated by both verbs and nouns at the zero, first and second derivational steps. This can be represented by the following disjunctions:

- 1) $R_2R_2R_2O \vee R_2R_1R_1O$ (*pay_n > payment_n > overpayment* \vee *pay_v > overpay_v > overpayment*)
- 2) $R_2R_2R_1O \vee R_2R_1R_1O$ (*treat_v > treatment_n > overtreatment* \vee *treat_v > overtreat_v > overtreatment*)
- 3) $R_2R_2R_1O \vee R_2R_1R_1R_1O$ (*fill_v > fulfillment_n > overfulfillment* \vee *fill_v > fulfil_v > overfulfil > overfulfilment*)

Table 3. Confixal word-formation row with *over-*

Ser. No.	Step No.	R-words	L=class= over
1	II	$R_2R_2R_1O$	over-assessment
2	II	$R_2R_2R_2O$ ($R_2R_1R_1O$)	overpayment
3	II	$R_2R_2R_1O$ ($R_2R_1R_1O$)	overtreatment, overachievement, overcommitment, overexcitement, overinvestment
4	III	$R_2R_2R_1O$ ($R_2R_1R_1R_1O$)	overfulfillment, overrefinement

The word-formation confixal row with *non-* is described in Table 4. It is motivated by both verbs and nouns. Hamawand (2011) states that “the prefix *non-* has three meanings:

1) the inability to perform the action indicated by the word stem 2) not belonging to what the root of the word indicates 3) different from the quality described by the root of the word” (p. 79). Blake (2019) specifies the fact that in nouns, the prefix *non-* “denotes someone or something insignificant and that is not worth paying attention to” (p. 60).

In the above-mentioned word-formation row, there are not only nouns but also two attributive nouns – *nongovernment*, *nonmanagement*, the generating stem of which is the verb. The row is homogeneous despite the disjunction $R_2R_2R_1R_1O \vee R_2R_2R_1R_1O$ ($force_n > enforce > enforcement > nonenforcement \vee force_v > enforce > nonenforce > nonenforcement$). The complexity of the row is four and the depth is three.

Table 4. Confixal word-formation row with *non-*

Ser. No.	Step No.	R-words	L=class= non
1	II	$R_2R_2R_1O$	nonargument, nonattachment, noncommitment, nondevelopment, nonengagement, nontreatment
2	II	$R_2R_2R_1O$	nongovernment, nonmanagement
3	III	$R_2R_2R_1R_2O$ ($R_2R_2R_1R_1O$)	nonenforcement

The word-formation confixal row with *re-* is heterogeneous, the complexity equals five ($R_2R_1R_1O$, $R_2R_2R_2O$, $R_2R_2R_1O$, $R_2R_2R_2R_1O$, $R_2R_1R_1R_1O$) and the depth is three derivational steps. This prefix expresses a repeating action. Additionally, according to Bauer (2015) and his colleagues, “the prefix *re-* is usually added to verbs with the meaning of a non-permanent (temporary) result” (p. 419).

At the zero derivational step, the part of speech of the motivating word is changed, i.e. it can be both a verb and a noun. This is shown by the disjunction $R_2R_2R_2O \vee R_2R_1R_1O$ ($pay_n > payment_n > repayment \vee pay_v > repay_v > repayment$). Changing the meaning of the motivating word is possible at the first derivational step, e.g.:

$R_2R_2R_1O \vee R_2R_1R_1O$ ($commit_n > commitment_n > recommitment \vee commit_v > recommit_v > recommitment$).

There is a variation in the first and second steps that is shown by the disjunction $R_2R_2R_2R_1O \vee R_2R_1R_1R_1O$ ($portion_v > portionment_n > apportionment > reapportionment \vee portion_v > apportion_v > reapportion > reapportionment$).

Table 5. Confixal word-formation row with *re-*

Ser. No.	Step No.	R-words	L=class= re
1	II	$R_2R_1R_1O$	Replenishment
2	II	$R_2R_2R_2O$ ($R_2R_1R_1O$)	Repayment
3	II	$R_2R_2R_1O$ ($R_2R_1R_1O$)	recommitment, readjustment, reappointment, redevelopment, reequipment, reassignment, rearrangement, reattachment, resettlement
4	III	$R_2R_2R_2R_1O$ ($R_2R_1R_1R_1O$)	Reapportionment

[5] Conclusions

In the previous section, five confixal word-formation rows with the suffix *-ment* have been described and discussed. In terms of homogeneity and heterogeneity, four rows with *en-*, *dis-*, *re-* and *over-* are heterogeneous. This can be explained by the conversion of word classes of English words that is shown with the help of disjunctions. Only one word-formation row with *non-* is homogeneous. In general, these confixal rows are not deep; the maximum depth is three derivational steps in rows with *dis-*, *re-*, *non-*, *over-*. The most complex row is the row with *en-*, the complexity of which is six, but it is not deep – with only two derivational steps. This means that confixal rows with the suffix *-ment* may be complex but not deep. The complexity of the rows with *dis-* and *re-* is five. The complexity of the simplest rows with *non-*, *over-* equals four. The depth and the complexity of confixal rows do not coincide. The reason is that complexity means the number of words suitable for a certain R-structure, and the number of these words may vary depending on e.g. how many required words are found in a dictionary. The depth of a row is unchangeable, as it implies the number of derivation steps in every word and these steps cannot be altered. To my mind, the difference between the depth and the complexity of confixal rows can be explained by the changeable nature of complexity and the unchangeable character of depth. While analyzing the structure of confixal word-formation rows, I came to the conclusion that the suffix *-ment* is a derivational suffix, as it can be added not only to verbs, but also to nouns and attributive nouns. In this research, an attempt has been made to analyze the structure of confixal word-formation rows with *-ment*. Ultimately, this study does not investigate the phenomenon to the fullest extent, so further work will include a detailed analysis of semantic fields of English words with the suffix *-ment*.

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[Characterization by Means of Verbal and Visual Transitivity in Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963)]

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[Abstract] *Framed with Halliday's (1994) systemic functional grammar and Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) visual grammar, the paper studies verbal and visual transitivity in the construction of characters in Maurice Sendak's Where the Wild Things Are (1963). While the verbal transitivity is determined by the semantic property of a lexical verb, the visual transitivity is realized by vectors, by the shapes dominating the characters' appearance, and by the positioning of the character on a page. The paper concludes that the dynamic relation between visual and verbal transitivity functions as an effective means of characterization that results in the formation of Max's personality.*

[Keywords] *transitivity; SFG; visual grammar; Halliday; Kress and van Leeuwen; Sendak*

[1] Introduction

A picturebook story, like any other type of word-image text, is built on Halliday's (1994) systemic functional grammar (SFG) and Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) visual grammar. In SFG, pictures and words are chosen from their systems of verbal and visual resources (systemic) and organized according to a set of rules (grammar) in such a structure so as to successfully convey the meaning of a text (functional). The combination and interdependence of words and pictures perform three metafunctions (Halliday, 1994) that help to create a meaningful text. First, both pictures and words work with cohesive devices, and thus the textual function is performed. They also help to establish a bond between the author and the reader, and thus the interpersonal metafunction is performed. Additionally, the interplay between words and pictures enables the narrator to construct a fictional world, and thus the ideational metafunction is performed. This metafunction organizes three crucial narrative components, i.e. characters, events and circumstances, in a way that enables the target readership to share the intended narrative experience. This organization is allowed by the system of transitivity that "construes the world of experience into a manageable set of process types" (Halliday, 1994, p. 106). This means that words and pictures follow certain grammatical rules in order to capture what is happening in a story (i.e. the individual events that build the plot), to whom (i.e. the characters engaged in the plot), and under what circumstances (i.e. the temporal, spatial, mental and psychological conditions that are associated with the individual events and/or with the participants). The selection of particular events, circumstances and characters can be either verbalized or visualized, or both verbalized and visualized. Since language is perceived linearly while pictures are perceived spatially, there is always a dynamic relation between these two codes, which has an impact on the pace of the narrative and the reader's comprehension of the story (Nikolajeva and Scott, 2006). The possibilities of choices are what O'Halloran et al. (2019, p. 446) identify as a multi-directional relation, accentuating that words and pictures function as "parts of a whole which are perceived in relation to each other". A picturebook narrative thus represents a whole whose "full significance can only be obtained if both verbal and visual modalities are read in combination and as interdependent components of the same multimodal production" (Moya, 2011, p. 2982).

The point of departure of this paper is that both words and pictures participate in the process of characterization, that is how the characters and their relationship develop and how the characters are meant to be perceived by the reader. In his work on characterization in plays and other texts, Culpeper (2001) speaks about textual clues that help the reader to construct a character's identity. These clues are found in both the narrator's and in the characters' linguistic behaviour. In a picturebook narrative, a character's identity is predominantly constructed by the visual code, since the image of a character enables the reader to learn about his or her appearance. Moreover, as Painter et al. (2014, p. 56) add, "the viewer can, as in life, infer from this (and the depicted context) other categories, such as age, class, ethnicity, role and place in the family". The character's visualization thus communicates not only what the character looks like, but also their demographic

and social aspects. All these traits might or might not be also communicated via language. This paper aims to describe how words and images participate in characterization in one of the most famous and influential picturebooks of the twentieth century, Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*, published in 1963 (for an assessment of the book and its influence, see e.g. Stanton, 1998; Nodelman, 1988; or Cech, 1995). Its artistic and aesthetic values, as well as its educational content, were recognized a year later, in 1964, when the book received the prestigious Caldecott Medal (American Library Association, 1996).

The plot of the book is very simple. A boy called Max misbehaves in such a way that his mother sends him to his bedroom without supper. Being upset with his mother, Max escapes into the world of his imagination, where he meets creatures called wild things. He becomes their king and continues misbehaving with them. After this wild rumpus, he feels lonely, so he says goodbye to the wild things and returns home, where supper awaits him. Despite Max's fantastic adventure, it is in fact a story about a child-parent relationship in which the child protagonist experiences humiliation, exercises power control over socially subordinated individuals (the wild things), and in the end, achieves a reconciliation with his mother (Gilead, 1991; Gottlieb, 2009; Pavlik, 2011). Keenan ascribes the book's popularity with both children and adults to the fact that Sendak managed to turn Max into "a cultural icon" (Keenan, 1996, p. 144). Max's iconicity can be explained by the overall topic of social inequality between a child and a parent. In Cech's words (1995, p. 121), the reader witnesses Max's "ego-formation", a complicated psychological process that helps to form his personality. The discrepancy between Max's social inferiority in the real world and the social superiority he gains in the world of his fantasies reflects a common childhood experience and is supposed to make Max realize that being a parent, an adult in a socially higher position, also encompasses being responsible for those in a socially lower position, such as children.

Although several scholars comment on the interplay between words and pictures in this story (Nodelman, 1988; Lewis, 2001; Salisbury and Styles, 2012; Painter et al., 2014), none of them discuss how means of verbal and visual transivities are combined in order to construct the characters and to reflect the development of their relation. Sendak, who both authored and illustrated the book, stated in a 1966 profile in *The New Yorker* that in this book he had managed "to fuse himself as a writer and as an illustrator" (Hentoff, 1966, p. 64). In other words, the choice of words and pictures in the narrative was fully in Sendak's control. The objective of this paper is to study which types of verbal processes and which types of visual representations participate in the construction of the characters of Max, his mother, and the wild things. The paper endeavours to prove that the interplay between verbal and visual transitivity functions as a means of characterization through which Sendak achieved the formation of Max's personality.

[2] Theoretical background

In SFG, transitivity is understood as a grammatical facility that enables language users to capture their experience (and experiences) in language. A grammatically correct clause

enables us to communicate not only who/what does what to whom/what, but also what is the relation between an action or a state expressed by a lexical verb and the participants or objects involved in the action or state. Halliday (1994, pp. 109–144) distinguishes six types of processes in which participants (both human and non-human) can have several roles. The individual process types depend on a semantic property of a verb, and the participants' roles depend on whether the participant is the one that does the process or whether the process is done to him or her or somehow affects them. Toolan (2013, p. 89) distinguishes the former type as 'doers' of the action or state, and the latter as 'done-to' participants. Besides the processes and the participants, the system of transitivity allows us to talk about circumstances that accompany a particular process. Since the scope of this paper does not allow for a detailed explanation of Halliday's framework, Table 1 offers a simplified overview of the individual categories and sub-categories, participants' roles, and illustrative examples. For more detail, see Halliday's original work (1994) or Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), and for the application of SFG in stylistics, see e.g. Toolan (2013), Simpson and Montgomery (1995), Jeffries and McIntyre (2010).

Table 1 Transitivity categories adapted from Halliday (1994)

Main Category	Sub-category	Participants' Roles (and examples)
Material		<u>Actor</u> <u>Goal</u> <i>He is walking <u>the dog</u>.</i>
Mental	Perception	<u>Senser</u> <u>Phenomenon</u> <i>I can hear <u>you</u>.</i>
	Affection	<i>He doesn't like <u>her/playing basketball</u>.</i>
	Cognition	<i>He didn't know <u>it</u>.</i>
Relational	Intensive	modes: <u>Attributive</u> <u>Identifying</u>
		<u>Carrier-Attribute</u> <u>Identified-Identifier</u>
		<i><u>She is a teacher</u>.</i> <i><u>Tom is the leader</u></i>
	Circumstantial	<i><u>The event is on Tuesday</u>.</i> <i><u>Tomorrow is 1st of May</u>.</i>
	Possessive	<i><u>She has got a piano</u>.</i> <i><u>The piano is hers</u>.</i>
Behavioural		<u>Behaver</u> <i>He was laughing.</i>
Verbal		<u>Sayer-Receiver</u> + Verbiage <i>My mum told me <u>the truth</u>.</i>
Existential		<u>Existent</u> <i>There are <u>some oranges</u> (on the table).</i>

To aid comprehension, the participants' roles are indicated by different underlines. In some cases, only one participant appears (e.g. in the behavioural process, there is only the behavior), or more than two participants are uttered (e.g. in the verbal process in which the direct object *the truth* represents the verbiage). Of course, circumstances can

be added to any of these process types, such as the circumstance found in the example of the existential process indicated in brackets.

While Halliday (1994) speaks about six major processes, in visual communication Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) identify two major types of representations, that is narrative and conceptual representations. These two categories further work with several action types, some of which correspond with Halliday's processes, while others are specific to visual communication and do not have an equivalent in language. Table 2 offers a simplified overview of the visual SFG. It includes just some of the major processes and their description, and what kind of role the participants can perform.

Table 2 Visual representation adapted from Kress and van Leeuwen (2006)

Main Category	Processes (and examples)	Participants' Roles
Narrative	Action 'doing or happening'	Actor-Goal
	Reaction 'looking'	Reacter-Phenomenon
	Speech 'speaking'	Speaker
	Mental 'thinking'	Senser
	Conversion 'natural processes, e.g. food chain diagrams'	-
Conceptual	Classificational 'taxonomy of participants'	Superordinates, Subordinates
	Analytical 'consist of and /or in'	Carrier-Attributes
	Symbolic 'convention based'	Carrier-Attributes

The basic difference between the two major categories is in the presence of what Kress and van Leeuwen (2006, p. 46) call a *vector*. Vectors are not depicted, but they are present in an image as a way "in which objects, and their relations to other objects and to processes, can be represented" (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 42). While narrative representations always have a vector, conceptual ones do not have it. The narrative representation "serve to present unfolding actions and events, processes of change, transitory spatial arrangements" (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 59), and thus this type of representation can be seen as action-oriented, since an image with this type of representation conveys a kind of action that can be verbalized in terms of action verbs. Vectors in this type of representation are courses or directions which indicate a type of action that comes from one participant or an object and that is targeted at the same or another participant/object depicted or to someone or something that can be outside the boundary of an image. Unlike the narrative representation, the conceptual representation is more participant-oriented because there is hardly any 'happening going on'. What is depicted are participants that are represented "in terms of their more generalized and more or less stable and timeless essence, in terms of class, or structure or meaning" (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 79). A picture can include several processes at the same time, and thus a process can be embedded in another process. For instance, a phenomenon can be realized as an action process that is embedded in the major reactional process.

In terms of the fusion of Halliday's and Kress and van Leeuwen's framework in a word-image text, Motta-Roth and Nascimento (2009, p. 324) argue that Halliday's material processes are realized as narrative representations in visual grammar "because both serve to represent 'outer experiences' in the material world" (Motta-Roth and Nascimento, 2009, p. 324, original single quotation marks), and relational and existential processes correspond with conceptual representations in visual grammar "because all of them are about 'being and having'" (Motta-Roth and Nascimento, 2009, p. 324, original single quotation marks). It is important to realize that words and pictures in a picturebook narrative do not have to represent the same things, because as Kress and van Leeuwen (2006, p. 76) explain they can "represent the world quite differently, allowing the development of the different epistemologies". This means that both words and pictures have the potential to provide different pieces of information about the characters involved in a story, and these pieces of information have an impact on how the reader learns about the character.

Following O'Halloran et al. (2019, p. 447, original capitals) the major difference in terms of visual and language participants is that "in text, someone (or something) can be a Participant in only one Process at a time, while in a photograph the same person or thing can be a Participant in a number of Processes simultaneously". In other words, a participant expressed in language performs only one role, because of the temporal, linear character of language, while a participant visualized in an image can perform more roles at the same time, because of the spatial dimension of a picture. However, this is not the difference the paper is interested in; rather it focuses on the meaning-making potential that each of the semiotic codes projects into the characterization.

[3] Methodology

To understand how language and visual transitivity participates in characterization, the analysis was conducted in the following way. First, verbal (language) transitivity was considered. Attention was paid to both main and subordinate clauses, and within the subordinate clauses to both finite and non-finite verb phrases. Since it is a lexical verb and its contextual aspect that determine the type of transitivity process, all lexical verbs were analyzed in terms of the process types they represent within the narrative, and the roles of the participants involved in these processes were identified. Special attention was paid to those processes in which the three major characters are engaged, and their individual roles in the individual processes were studied. Second, the visual transitivity was investigated. The individual pictures were studied in terms of narrative and conceptual representations, which means that it was taken into consideration whether what is happening in the picture is driven by a vector or not, or whether the 'essence' of the participant/object depicted predominates in the visual text. Accordingly, the individual narrative and conceptual actions and the roles related to them were identified. Again, special attention was paid to those pictures in which the major characters are depicted. Third, the findings from verbal and visual transitivity were compared and discussed in terms of how they complement the characters and their mutual relationship.

[4] Analysis

The results below provide the major aspects of the interplay between verbal and visual transivities as they construct the three major characters and their relationships. The direct quotes are not acknowledged, since all of them are taken from Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* 1963 edition, which is not paginated.

[4.1] Mother

Since the character of the mother is not visualized but only verbalized, the system of transitivity can be traced only in verbal processes, not in visual representations. The only process in which she acts as an explicit doer is her role of a sayer in the verbal process in “his mother called him ‘Wild Thing!’”. This is the first and also the only instance when the narrator refers to this parental figure with the definite noun phrase *his mother*, and it appears in the very first sentence of the narrative. Regarding its grammatical structure, this verbal process represents the main clause, which is preceded by the definite noun phrase “the night”, which is postmodified by a defining relative clause in which the major protagonist of the narrative is introduced. In other words, Max as a doer is introduced as a circumstance that accompanies the main clause in which his mother acts as a doer. This main clause is followed by another main clause in which the mother acts as a goal in Max's direct speech: “I’LL EAT YOU UP!”, and as an implied actor or sayer in the next subordinate clause “so he was sent to bed without eating anything”. Even though it is not explicitly stated who ordered Max to go to sleep, it might be assumed that it is the mother, because of her and Max's interaction that precedes this adverbial clause of purpose.

The last mention of the character of the mother occurs at the end of the narrative. In the circumstance “[he wanted to be] where someone loved him best of all”, which specifies the place of Max's mental process of cognition (*wanted to be*), the choice of the indefinite pronoun (*someone*) is meant to refer to a doer that is able to perform the mental process of affection, i.e. loving. The choice of the indefinite pronoun *someone* signifies Max's stance towards the conflict from the beginning of the story. Max is still a bit angry with his mother because she has sent him to bed without supper. His irritation does not allow him to refer to her directly. At the same time, *someone* in the subject position causes the character of the mother to be perceived as an important doer here – as someone who can justify Max's longing for love. In other words, the choice of the indefinite reference to his mother in the subject position reflects Max's current ambivalent stance towards her.

Even though the character of the mother does not appear in any of the pictures, there are nevertheless certain ‘traces’ of her participation. She acts as an absent phenomenon, i.e. as a participant at which Max stares at but who is not visualized. This image of Max as a reactor who stares at the missing phenomenon, which implies his mother, follows their verbal interaction that results in Max's punishment. The other picture that indicates her presence is the very last one, in which Max is back in his room and the supper is on the table. A glass of milk, a bowl with a spoon and a piece of cake suggest that it

was his mother who prepared the supper and brought it to his room. However, there is no narrative representation of the mother visualized in these actions. It is thus left up to the reader to fill in the actor of this act of reconciliation.

[4.2] Wild Things

As far as the characters of Max's imagination are concerned, Sendak uses the rather vague expression *wild things* in reference to them. The semantic property of the word *thing* does not include any aspect of a living creature. On the contrary, it suggests something inanimate, stable and immobile. However, by describing their physiognomic aspects (such as the sound they make, plus the reference to their teeth, claws and eyes), the narrator admits that they are animate. Their animalism is also signified by the attribute *wild*. In fact, the phrase *wild things* works with an oxymoronic relation between the qualitative adjective combined with the vague noun head. The visual code depicts them as half-animals and half-humans, as they walk on two legs, they can speak human language, and one of them seems to wear a pullover. Even though the wild things are gigantic in comparison to Max, their curved shapes and rounded bodies cause them to be perceived as rather adorable and cute (Nodelman, 1988, p. 127). The language that is used for their characterization seems to invoke fear and anxiety: "they [wild things] roared their terrible roars and gnashed their terrible teeth and rolled their terrible eyes and showed their terrible claws". The visual adorability and the verbal fearfulness establish an ironic relation, because the wild things "contradict the implications of the text" (Nodelman, 1988, p. 227). And this is where the transitivity can explain the ironic, yet still complementary characterization of the wild things. The wild things are presented as behaviors that consciously perform the behavioural processes of 'roaring', 'gnashing', 'rolling' and 'showing'. The anxiety and fear associated with these physiological actions are underlined by the direct objects. These take the form of a noun phrase with the structure of a possessive pronoun, the descriptive modifier *terrible* and the head that refers to a particular body part of the wild things. They show off their physiognomy, probably to construe an identity of a dangerous creature. On the other hand, nothing is said about who or what is supposed to be scared by them. This is implied in the visual text of the narrative. A double page spread shows an image of a couple of wild things that are walking towards Max, moving from the right side of the picture to the left, where Max is still on board his little boat. The image works with the actional process of narrative representation, in which both the wild things as well as Max are involved in a transactional process with two actors and two goals. The first actor is represented by the group of wild things, whose vector is formed by the direction of their movement, and the goal of their walking is Max. Even though Max is located aboard the boat, and seems just to look at the wild things, he (together with his boat, with a pointed flag at the top of the mast and a pointed bowsprit) form a vector directed at the wild things. Since the first wild thing in the row is very close to the pointed spike of the bowsprit, it is rather Max's boat that looks dangerous, not the creatures. Moreover, Max wears a white wolf costume with a number of pointed parts,

such as whiskers, ears or claws. These sharp objects contrast with the rounded bodily parts of the wild things. The wild things perform a behavioural process verbally, which is visualized as an action process. At the same time, they are depicted as the goal of Max's visual action. However, since Max and his boat are depicted with more pointed objects, while the wild things have curved shapes, the visual fear is rather associated with Max, while the verbal fear is associated with the wild things. The fact that Max is to be feared is further developed when he becomes the king of all the wild things.

Besides the behavior, the other roles the wild things perform in the verbal text are that of a sayer ("the wild things cried"), an actor ("we'll eat you up"), as well as a goal ("he tamed them"), a senser ("we love you so"), a carrier ("they were frightened"), and an existent ("where the wild things are"). In the visual text, however, the wild things are rather depicted as actors involved in an action process. In the three consecutive spreads in which the wild rumpus is visualized, but no verbal text is provided, both Max and the wild things act as one actor in a number of processes of 'dancing', 'jumping', or 'hanging', as well as mental and verbal ones such as 'howling' or 'singing' (for more detail, see Nodelman, 1988, pp. 161–162 and pp. 169–170).

Contrary to what is said in the verbal text, one of the wild things is visualized as an actor whose vector causes Max to land on the wild things' island. The image that visualizes this narrative representation shows a wild thing that is situated on the left, and a puff of air that comes out of its nostrils causes Max's boat to fly onto the land of the wild things. Even though the verbal text states that it was Max who sailed to "where the wild things are", which makes Max an actor in a material process accompanied with an adverbial circumstance, the visual text reveals that it is a wild thing that 'sails' Max to this particular place. In other words, Max is not the one that steers the rudder to the land. He is aboard, trying to protect his face while being a goal of the wild thing's action.

To sum up, the wild things are depicted as doers, as they direct Max to their homeland, 'welcome' him and crown him, and last but not least join Max in the wild rumpus. The verbal wild things, on the other hand, are rather described as 'done-to' participants, and Max as the one who does things to them. It is him who tames them and who punishes them in the same way his mother did to him. Additionally, they are behavers whose physiological processes are to be perceived as invoking fear, but this fear is diminished by the image of curved shapes and rounded bodies.

[4.3] Max

The major protagonist, Max, is depicted in each picture of the story, and is mentioned in almost each sentence. In the visual text, he is predominantly represented as an actor in action processes, while in the verbal text he takes several roles. The prevailing verbal process is the material one. In these material processes, Max initiates an action specified in a finite verb phrase, e.g. "made mischief", "sailed off", "came", "tamed", etc. This makes him the most active character in the story. However, we can find certain shifts in the negotiation of his role of an actor in the visual and verbal texts. The narrator's rather

vague and general reference “made mischief of one kind and another” is concretized in two consecutive images. In the first, Max is building a shelter, and in the other, he is hunting his pet dog. Even though role-playing belongs to the repertoire of children's games, what is striking here is the anomalous reality of the playing. Max is just about to nail a real nail into the wall with a real hammer to fix a rope that holds the shelter, and in the next picture he is depicted in the middle of jumping off a staircase, with a real fork in his left hand and with his right hand as if snatching the dog that Max is chasing. He does not play with toys, but with real things, which might result in real damage and injury. His way of playing goes far beyond what is normal and conventionally appropriate. To underline the inappropriateness of his misbehaviour, both images offer a more complex scene. In the first picture we can recognize that Max had already done mischief to the teddy bear that is hung by one limb down the rope whose other end Max wants to fix to the wall. While the teddy bear is positioned on the left side of the picture, Max, as a new piece of information being introduced into the story, is positioned on the right side. In the picture that follows, Max is again situated on the right side, while the dog is on the left. To interpret this scene, we have to read from right to left, giving ‘Max is chasing the dog’. In the case of left-to-right reading, ‘the dog is chased by Max’, the actor and the goal remain the same. Following Kress and van Leeuwen's distinction (2006, pp. 179–185) between given and new information, Max again represents a new piece of information despite the fact that he is a new piece of information in the preceding picture. What is new here is the gradation of Max's mischief; while in the first picture he seems to cause damage ‘just’ to the wall, in the next one, he seems to be determined to cause damage to a living animal. The verbal portion of the narrative, however, refers to this inappropriate act as “and another [mischief]” without any further evaluation. Not only does the visual transitivity concretize the verbal transitivity, but it also extends it beyond the social conventions of what is appropriate and acceptable in a child's innocent game. At this stage of the narrative, the visual Max is to be perceived as a very naughty boy. To sum up these two pictures and the first clause of the narrative, it can be said that the character of Max is verbalized as an actor in inexplicit misbehavior, but is visualized as a character who can be violent and cruel, which is also underlined by his wolf costume.

Max's other verbal material processes do not communicate any mischief, but rather communicate his locomotion (“he sailed off”, “he came to the place” and “he sailed back”) and his gaining of power (“he tamed them”, “he sent the wild things off to bed”). Considering the locomotion, however, the visual text slightly shifts the meaning of the extent to which Max initiates and performs these actions. Instead of doing the actual sailing, the image shows Max standing or being aboard, his right arm akimbo and his left arm leaning on the edge of the boat. Moreover, he looks directly at the reader, not ahead in the direction in which the boat is moving. What happens here is that the character breaks the narrative to speak or rather to look directly at the reader, as if checking whether the reader is following the story carefully. The visual Max does not correspond with the verbal one. As discussed above, it is one of the wild things that directs his boat to the wild things' island. Therefore, the visual transitivity in the image of a wild thing modifies

the verbal material process conveyed in the narrator's "he came to where the wild things are". Max is not depicted as an actor of the material process of sailing, but rather as a goal, since the process of sailing is done to him, not by him. Simultaneously, he is involved in a conceptual representation, namely in the symbolic suggestive process in which he is a carrier to whom the quality of being satisfied is assigned. This is in contrast with the stage during which he is furious with his mother.

He further acts as a senser in the mental processes of cognition ("he wanted to be") and of perception ("he smelled good things to eat"), as well as in an intensive relational process in which he is a carrier that carries the attribute of being lonely ("Max the king of all wild things was lonely"). Immediately after the rumpus, the character of Max shifts from the role of an actor ("he sent the wild things off to bed without their supper") to a senser and carrier in the verbal code. This shift from the role of an actor to a non-actor is also visible in the visual code. In this particular scene, he is depicted on the right side of the double-page spread, thus occupying the position of a new piece of information. What is new about Max here is that a different trait of his personality is visualized. So far, Max has been predominantly visualized as an actor, especially in those actions that are perceived as inappropriate. In this picture, he is depicted as a tired, sad and lonely boy despite the company of the wild things.

Considering the visual text, another role which Max performs and which is not provided in the verbal transitivity is the role of a reactor. The reason why Max 'escapes' to where the wild things are is the conflict with his mother. What the visual text offers is his immediate reaction to being sent to his bedroom. This is realized in the image of Max who is located in his bedroom, staring in an exasperated way at the closed door with his left arm akimbo. He is furious because he has no control over the situation. The only thing he can do is to obey his mother's orders. As Painter et al. (2014, p. 32) explain, Max's facial expression as well as his gestures and bodily postures convey the affect he is experiencing. The verbal text, however, does not provide any information about Max's inner feelings. The image shows Max as the reactor, and what is missing in the visual portion is the phenomenon, his mother. This visual reactional process embeds what in Halliday's terms is known as the mental process of affection (he seems to hate his mother at that very moment) as well as the intensive relational process (he is furious). As a result, this picture builds not only on the narrative representation of a reactional process, but also on the conceptual representation of the symbolic attributive process that conveys the concept of being upset and angry with his mother.

This image also represents a turning point in the spatial setting of the narrative. After the conflict, Max's room changes into a forest through which he escapes his home, finds a boat and sets out on a voyage. This spatial change is provided on three consecutive double-page spreads, both in words and pictures. The furniture as well as the room itself are transformed into the outdoors. As far as the character of Max is concerned, he is neither visualized nor verbalized as an actor of this changing process, but as somebody who happens to be there. The verbal transitivity shifts Max into the position of a pre-modifying element: "the very night in Max's room". Max is no longer ascribed any role,

neither doer nor done-to participant, but rather he is positioned into a circumstance. What is accentuated in the visual transitivity are his feelings, which gradually change from anger to happiness. His inner feelings are predominantly communicated by his lips and eyes, but what is also noticeable is the way the whiskers of his wolf costume change. In the reactional process with his left arm akimbo, both corners of his lips turn downwards, and so do the whiskers in a very straight way. However, in the next picture, when his eyes are closed and his mouth is curved with one of the lips higher than the other, his whiskers are less straight, and more curved. This suggests a relief from the anger that he felt immediately after being sent to his bedroom. In the last picture of his bedroom's transformation into a forest, he has a broad smile on his face, his hand partly overlaps his mouth, his eyes are still closed and his whiskers are still curved, but a little bit more than in the preceding picture. The sequence of these three pictures foregrounds the change of Max's inner feelings, because this inner change happens simultaneously with the verbal behavioural process communicated by the narrator's "a forest grew and grew and grew". Moreover, the whole transformation scene is achieved by changing the size of the illustration, from not filling the whole page to occupying the entire right page of the double-page spread. What also underlines the change of Max's inner state and the environment of his home is that a framed picture becomes an unframed one. This is a very peculiar moment of the narrative. The plot does not develop, but the space develops, so it appears that the setting, i.e. the place where the plot is happening, becomes an important participant, so that things do not seem to be happening in time, but only in space. Within the context of the story, this is a moment at which Max does not do anything; he only happens to be present at this spatial transformation. Moreover, the image of the forest that grows in Max's room can be also interpreted as a symbolic suggestive process, since it is meant to communicate Max's escape from the real world, represented by his bedroom, to the world of his imagination, represented by the wild things' land.

[5] Conclusion

The paper analyzes the system of verbal and visual transivities in their construction of the characters of Max, his mother and the wild things in Maurice Sendak's picturebook *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963). The paper focuses on which processes the characters are engaged in, which roles they play in these processes, and how the processes and the assigned roles are verbalized and/or visualized. The main analytical framework is based on Halliday's systemic functional grammar and its extension into visual communication as introduced by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006).

The analysis has found that the narrative representation is mingled with the conceptual representation. This is not unusual, as Kress and van Leeuwen (2006, p. 95) admit that "[t]he categories of visual grammar do not have clear-cut edges, and specific representations can merge two or more structures – for instance, the narrative and the analytical". A peculiar stage in the narrative development appears at the moment when Max's bedroom changes into a forest. In three consecutive double-page spreads, the con-

ceptual representation of the character of Max takes over the narrative representation. The conceptual representation focuses on how Max deals with his humiliation. The narrative representation does not disappear at this particular moment, since Max's legs show movement in a particular direction. As soon as the transformation starts, Max's bedroom becomes a participant, namely the carrier of the possessive attributes of trees and bushes. In this sense, the consecutive images work with the conceptual representation of a spatial analytical process. As a result, the conceptual representation of both Max and his bedroom seems to slow down the narrative, but the verbal transitivity ensures that the story itself develops in a steady, rhythmical way.

As far as the characters of the wild things and Max are concerned, there is a contrast in how they are introduced to the reader visually and how they are introduced verbally. While words are supposed to build an image of a dangerous character when the wild things appear on the scene, their visual image, especially the means of visual transitivity realized by the curved and rounded shapes of their bodies, mitigate (or rather overshadow) the impact of the verbal transitivity. In the case of Max, however, it is the other way around. The verbal transitivity exploits a vague noun phrase (“mischief of one kind and another”) that constructs an image of an ordinary boy without any further specification of his misbehaviour. The visual transitivity, which is realized by vectors, the image layout and pointed objects, concretizes Max's inappropriate deeds, which might be interpreted as cruel and dangerous. When he meets the wild things, the visual transitivity accentuates his potential cruelty. However, this is mitigated by the manner in which Max manages to tame the wild things (“by staring into their yellow eyes without blinking once”). This verbal behavioural process suggests that no physical strength is needed to become the wild things' king. Once Max and the wild things are engaged in the wild rumpus, the visual text dominates the narrative and provides both narrative and conceptual representations that nonetheless indicate Max's superior position within the community. After the rumpus, the verbal Max performs the direct act of executing his superior power, which resonates with his mother's position in their child-parent relationship. This is the moment when the narrative pattern is stopped, as both visual and verbal transitivity builds an identity of a sensitive character. The visual transitivity employs the conceptual representation that displays Max as a new piece of information, and the symbolic attributive action expresses his feelings. The verbal transitivity is realized by an intensive relational process in an attributive mode (“was lonely”). This is the very first moment of the narrative in which the means of both visual and verbal transitivity build the same image of the character of Max.

As far as Max's relation with his mother is concerned, this is communicated by both words and pictures, which are combined in such a way that enables the narrator to reveal the individual stages that Max goes through – that is, from humiliation, through rage, to reconciliation. Max's mother, who is not visualized, is implied as a phenomenon in the picture in which Max stares at the closed door of his bedroom. Max's affective gaze, the straight lines of his whiskers and the pointed shapes of his costume, as well as his unfriendly posture, communicate his rage, while the mother's emotional state is neither

depicted nor verbalized. Another implied visual reference to the mother appears in the very last picture, in which the supper on Max's table indicates that it was her who made the supper. The narrator's verbal transitivity conveys Max's behavioural process ("where he found supper waiting for him") and the relational intensive process in the attributive mode connected to the supper ("it was still hot"). The picture shows Max walking slowly towards the table with the hood of his costume down. This conceptual representation of symbolic suggestive action (the hood down) and the picture composition (Max is positioned on the right side of the picture) indicate that Max's playtime is over, and his smile suggests that he has forgiven his mother. It might be concluded that the formation of Max's personality is achieved via the interplay between the means of both verbal and visual transivities. In this sense, the dynamic relation between these transivities can be understood as an effective means of characterization in picturebook narratives. This, of course, is a question explored by semiotic studies of diverse picturebook narratives.

The paper endeavours to illustrate that in a multimodal text, the system of transitivity can serve as a useful device for characterization. The means of verbal transitivity are represented by the lexical verbs found in the finite phrases. The semantic property of a verb and the role related to this process are determined by the position the character occupies in the verb's valency pattern. The construction of a character's identity is thus built on the lexico-grammatical structure of the language. Considering the visual mode, however, the process of characterization is more complicated. The vectors determine the roles that the characters are meant to represent, and at the same time, they convey the narrative aspect in terms of actions. The composition of a page, i.e. where the objects and characters are placed, as well as the shapes of objects and figures, including the shapes of their bodily parts, are meant to convey the conceptual representation. Their combination with the verbal transitivity supports the dynamic relation between verbal and visual characterization that unfolds throughout the entire story. This dynamicity is achieved by the frequent position of Max on the right side of the image, which is meant to convey new pieces of information about the development of his character, by the absence of his mother in the visual text and by the omitted and indefinite references to her character in the verbal text. In this study, not all the means of visual transitivity are discussed in detail, and thus more investigation needs to be done in terms of colours, hues and saturation, as well as techniques of drawing.

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[*“You Will Be Missed You Know, but This Is No Place for You to Grow”*: A Critical Metaphor Study of Pre-Adoption Narratives]

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[Abstract] *This article discusses (pre-)adoption narratives by investigating a selection of children’s picture books featuring multi-ethnic families. The research examines both textual and pictorial resources, focusing specifically on the use of metaphors as a tool of cognition which may help an audience of young readers understand and become acquainted with unfamiliar notions connected to the process of interracial adoption. Attention is also devoted to the identification, interpretation, and explanation of recurring metaphors in the books as a means of framing (pre-)adoption experiences, i.e. foregrounding certain aspects of the target domains and backgrounding others. The analysis has revealed an almost ubiquitous presence of the journey metaphor in the sample of books.*

[Keywords] *interracial adoption; adoption narratives; critical metaphor analysis; multimodal metaphor analysis*

[1] Aim and Background

This study investigates the role of verbal and visual metaphors in children’s picture books about interracial adoption, presenting a case study involving a sample of five stories published in the USA. Whereas recent years have witnessed a significant increase in the production and sale of books for young adoptees (Garcia Gonzales and Wesseling 2013, p. 258), research that examines them, especially research investigating interracial adoption publications, is rather rare (Jerome and Sweeney 2014, p. 681). Against this backdrop, this paper aims to contribute to filling this gap, as it recognizes the important part children’s literature can play in helping youngsters who have been adopted make sense of their present and past reality (Sun 2021, p. 232).

Stories featuring adoptee protagonists provide repertoires for identity construction (Garcia Gonzales and Wesseling 2013, p. 258) because they act as mirrors through which the latter can see their selves reflected (Sims Bishop 2012); the narratives included in books about adoption are thus a tool through which readers can interpret the outside world as well as present themselves to it. Since picture books can be turned into valuable resources, adoptive parents are interested buyers. Oftentimes, besides purchasing and reading them to their children, they also feel the need to write (and sometimes even illustrate) stories with adoptee protagonists (Bergquist 2007, p. 30). Their intent is to increase the number of narratives available to adoptive families and to provide them with a more widespread representation. Parents of children adopted interracially are particularly committed to inventing and circulating narratives about racially heterogeneous families, as multiethnic households are much less frequently acknowledged in literature and cultural media products (Satz 2007).

Previous research on adoption books for children has revealed that the latter are not particularly creative, in that they are:

shaped by deeply ingrained narrative templates or “scripts”, that is, normative sequences of specific actions that are performed by certain types of characters in a set order within given circumstances. [...] In literary terms, scripts are substantiated by stereotypical plot structures, motifs and metaphors recycled from one story to another. (Garcia Gonzales and Wesseling 2013, p. 258)

The fact that (interracial) adoption stories do not display significant variations may make them easier for young readers to understand, assimilate, and memorize. In particular, the presence of recurring tropes based on analogy (e.g. metaphors, similes, metonymies) has been identified as a recurring trait of these books, which seems to favor children’s comprehension of their narratives; this kind of trope is typically relied upon in order to make sense of and communicate unfamiliar concepts in simpler and more accessible terms. Metaphors, in particular, seem to play a significant part in the communication of abstract or unknown notions within picture books, as they occur both in verbal and visual form (Lakoff and Johnson 1980).

In light of the above, this study aims to isolate patterns in metaphor use in a sample of five illustrated children’s books focusing on interracial adoption. Drawing on the assumption that metaphors (especially conventional metaphors) tend to go ‘unnoticed’ and are highly persuasive tools of cognition (cf. section 2), the paper intends to determine which metaphorical configurations lie at the basis of pre-adoption narratives, and to explore whether they occur frequently and across different stories, as their incidence may have a remarkable influence on young readers’ framing of their early life experiences and their arrival in their multiethnic families.

The paper is organized as follows. After outlining the data set and the methodological framework adopted in the research, the study will look at the most recurring verbal and visual metaphors of the pre-adoption picture books selected for the analysis, how they are realized and how they activate networks of meaning. The identification and interpretation of these metaphors will be followed by considerations on their potential impact on adopted children’s coming to terms with their past, on their and their families’ ongoing process of identity development, and, more generally, on how the interracial adoption process is commonly viewed.

[2] Sample Selection and Method

As previously mentioned, the analysis was conducted using a sample comprised by five children’s picture books, which are the following:

- 1] *A Mother for Choco* by Keiko Kasza ([1982] 1992)
- 2] *Horace* by Holly Keller (1991)
- 3] *The Red Thread* by Grace Lin (2007)
- 4] *Red in the Flower Bed* by Andrea Nepa (2008)
- 5] *Forever Family* by Kelley and Lindsey Bullard (2017)

A Mother for Choco is the story of a baby bird who wishes he had a mother, so he decides to search for one. He meets some grown-up animals but no one seems to be right for him until he is adopted by Mrs. Bear. *Horace* is the leopard son of tiger parents. Every night his mother tells him the story of his adoption, but he never hears the final part of the story because he falls asleep. One day, feeling that he does not belong with his adoptive family because of his different physical appearance, he runs away to be with other leopards, but he is very happy when his parents find him and ultimately goes back home with them. That night, he is finally able to stay awake and provide his own ending to the story of his adoption. *The Red Thread* contains a frame narrative in which a couple of adoptive parents read a fairy tale about adoption to a little girl and a secondary narrative in which the fairy tale is told. *Red in the Flower Bed* describes the journey of a little poppy seed that is carried by the wind and finally lands on a patch of earth where it takes root and blooms with other colorful flowers. Finally, *Forever Family* is set on the “Gotcha Day” (i.e. the anniversary of the day on which a child is adopted) of the protagonist. His parents tell

him the story of the days preceding his arrival and their first encounter, highlighting the central role played by God’s will in their becoming a family.

The sampling process complied with a set of formal criteria: first, all the stories must contain interracial adoption narratives about the lives of the protagonists before and when they are placed in their new families. Secondly, these books are addressed to a target readership of adoptees between ages 4 and 8. This age span was picked as it has been identified as the moment in which adoption language starts being used in families and children begin to form their adoptive identity (Jerome and Sweeney 2014, p. 682; cf. also Brodzinsky 2011). Finally, all picture books were written by American authors in English and for an English-speaking audience.

The data set was also built with a view to obtain the best possible representativeness. Since many picture books about interracial adoptions feature animal protagonists, three out of the five books chosen for this analysis are about little pets. The remaining two books, which are centered on human characters, are about an African-American (*Forever Family*) and an Asian (*The Red Thread*) adoptee. These texts either promote a religious view of adoption or spread popular legends about individuals destined to meet and form a family together. A balance between books created by adoptive parents and by professional writers was also sought; *Red in the Flower Bed* and *Forever Family* were penned by authors who had adopted children, whereas the other three stories were written by professionals. Lastly, the selection is chronologically varied, as it includes books published in all of the past last four decades. During this time span and especially since the mid-Nineties, when the *Interethnic Placement Act* (1996) and the *Adoption and Safe Families Act* (1997) were passed,¹ formal hindrance of interracial adoption has been removed and the formation of multiracial families has gained momentum.

The book sample constructed using the abovementioned criteria was examined from a discourse-analytical perspective. A compound methodology was applied to the chosen texts, which included tools for the exploration of the verbal component as well as the visuals, on account of the paramount role the latter play in children’s picture books. The theoretical tenets of Critical Metaphor Analysis (or CMA; Charteris-Black 2004; 2005) were combined with those of Multimodal Metaphor Studies (Forceville 1996; 2006; 2013) in order to verify the presence of patterns of metaphor use in the books, both in words and in images. Although dealing with different semiotic resources, Charteris-Black’s and Forceville’s models can be jointly applied to the study of social constructs such as adoption narratives, because they both recognize the framing function of metaphors (cf. Semino 2008) and start from the premise that the choice of the source domain (i.e. the semantic field metaphorical items are selected from) strategically calls attention to some aspects of the target domain (i.e. the entity or conceptual meaning described by the metaphor) while downplaying the importance of others (cf. also Lakoff and Johnson 1980). Recourse to metaphors is so widespread that both text producers and recipients are often unaware of the presence of this kind of trope. Although they may be ‘overlooked’, they still provide a framing for what they describe, with the result that they can turn into silent persuaders that are particularly influential because generally unresisted:

I am not arguing that metaphor predetermines a certain interpretation; however, it may create a predisposition towards one interpretation over another. One way it may do this is by utilizing the underlying evaluations that are conveyed by the choice of certain words and phrases because of the particular connotations they convey. (Charteris-Black 2004, p. 41)

As CMA and Multimodal Metaphor Studies acknowledge the potential of metaphors to persuade and even ideologically orient the audience, they both draw upon Norman Fairclough’s framework for the critical analysis of discourse (1995), which, in turn, is heavily indebted to Halliday’s systemic functional grammar (1985). Both models present a similarly organized structure involving three steps: metaphor identification, interpretation, and explanation. Identification entails deciding what counts as a metaphor and is therefore linked with the investigation of ideational meaning (Charteris-Black 2004, p. 35). The interpretation stage is associated with the study of interpersonal meaning, whereas explanation is connected with textual meaning, i.e. the way in which metaphors establish systems of meaning coherent with the context in which they are used (*ibid.*).

In CMA, metaphor identification involves the isolation of words and phrases that are used metaphorically and their preliminary grouping in categories such as ‘novel’ and ‘conventional’. With regard to this stage, reference will be made in this study to some useful notions belonging to the tradition of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT; Lakoff and Johnson 1980), a model which draws on the assumption that metaphors provide a cognitive organization for areas of knowledge that are unfamiliar or difficult to comprehend. After identifying metaphors, Critical Metaphor Analysis interprets them by “deciding *how metaphors are to be classified, organized and arranged*” (Charteris-Black 2014, p. 175; emphasis in the original) either by source domain or by target domain. Finally, metaphor explanation represents the stage at which metaphors are illustrated in light of the contextual factors of ideology and culture, and not only on the basis of cognitive, semantic, and pragmatic considerations (Charteris-Black 2004, p. 248).

As already noted, Multimodal Metaphor Studies, which mainly focus on the categorization of pictorial metaphors and on the combination of the textual and visual mode, also relies on a three-step approach (Forceville 1996, p. 108; 2002, pp. 2–3). The identification phase coincides with the singling out of the images that perform the role of source and their target. Just like CMA, in the interpretation stage Multimodal Metaphor Studies also consider the purpose of metaphor use within specific discourse contexts to be of the utmost importance. More precisely, in Forceville’s model the notion of context is utilized with reference to the interaction between textual and pictorial resources; such an interaction performs a strategic role in visual metaphor recognition and interpretation, since the visual mode lacks the verbal cues which explicitly express the equivalence ‘A is B’ (Forceville 1996, p. 111). Finally, Multimodal Metaphor Studies return to the wider social and political context as a final step of the analysis (i.e. in the explanation step) to establish the purposes that illustrators had when using these metaphors.

By isolating and examining metaphors in narratives on interracial adoption, the three-tiered analysis applied in this study is expected to make it possible to determine

whether there is a systematic use of this trope in the selected picture books, and, if so, which types of frame it provides for the early experiences of young adoptees.

[3] The Journey Metaphor

An initial glance at the data set reveals a number of emerging patterns. First, the presence of metaphors in the text sample is so significant that they appear both in the choice of characters visually featured on the covers and, albeit less frequently, in the title wording. As a result, the readership’s understanding of the notion of adoption is immediately oriented toward a limited range of concepts or images (which are the object of analysis in this and the following sections).

As far as characters are concerned, in three picture books out of five the protagonists are anthropomorphous metaphors (namely animals and flowers). Lakoff and Johnson (1980) define anthropomorphism as an example of ontological metaphor where human behaviors or traits are applied to animals or non-human entities. Anthropomorphous metaphors are widely used in children’s stories to explain concepts or to make abstract ideas easier to understand. Metaphors are also present in the book titles *The Red Thread* and *Red in the Flower Bed*, although it may be hard to establish whether the elements of the thread and the flower bed are to be intended as metaphors without reading the stories first.

Most books (i.e. three books out of five²) portray the pre-adoptive life of their protagonists relying on the metaphor ADOPTION IS A JOURNEY³. According to Lakoff and Johnson’s model (1980), the ‘target domain’ of this metaphor corresponds to the concept of adoption, while the idea of journey represents the ‘source domain’, i.e. the domain from which metaphorical expressions are taken. Lakoff (1993) maintains that metaphorical mappings involving the JOURNEY source domain are “organized in hierarchical structures, in which ‘lower’ mappings in the hierarchy inherit the structures of the ‘higher’ mappings” (p. 222). The ADOPTION IS A JOURNEY metaphor thus represents the lower level of a three-rank hierarchy in which the highest position is occupied by the ‘event structure metaphor’ and the middle position by the conceptual metaphor A PURPOSEFUL LIFE IS A JOURNEY (Lakoff 1993, p. 223). As a matter of fact, according to the ‘event structure metaphor’,

Changes are movements [...]. Causes are forces. Actions are self-propelled movements. Purposes are destinations. Means are paths to destinations. Difficulties are impediments to motion. [...] Goals in life are destinations on the journey. The actions one takes in life are self-propelled movements, and the totality of one’s actions form a path one moves along. Choosing a means to achieve a goal is choosing a path to a destination. Difficulties in life are impediments to motion. (Lakoff 1993, p. 223)

This superordinate metaphorical configuration deeply structures the lower-ranking conceptual metaphor A PURPOSEFUL LIFE IS A JOURNEY, “since events in a life conceptualized as purposeful are subcases of events in general” (*ibid.*). In the same way, the middle level of the conceptual metaphor markedly shapes the bottom level of the hierarchy, i.e.

the metaphor ADOPTION IS A JOURNEY, as the adoption process can be envisaged as a specific set of events occurring in the course of a purposeful life.

Against this backdrop, the starting point of the metaphorical journey coincides with the moment in which the purpose or desired goal has been formulated but not yet realized, while the end point stands for the achievement of the goal. As a consequence, a narrative revolving around the journey metaphor depicts the movement towards the destination in terms of a resolution for the initial difficulties or undesirable situation of the protagonist; in other words, the presence of the journey metaphor may convey the message that adoption is the solution to the adoptee’s problems. This seems to be the case when the type of movement performed by the main characters is a quest or a journey towards their destiny (and thus inherently positive), as suggested in the following paragraphs.

[4] The Quest

The picture book *A Mother for Choco* can be defined as a “quest” because it deals with the protagonist’s search for his mother. At the beginning of the story, the reader is told that “Choco was a little bird, who lived *all alone*. He wished he had a mother, but who could his mother be? One day *he set off to find her*” (emphasis added; Kasza 1992). In the very first lines of the book, Choco is described as undertaking his journey as a response to his loneliness. Interestingly, he is portrayed as ‘all alone’, as there is no mention – metaphorical or otherwise – of a family of origin. The absence of birth parents (and notably of birth mothers) has been identified as a recurring trait of adoption narratives (cf. Bordo 2002), possibly associated with “the adoptive parents’ [often coinciding with the books’ authors’] judgments and feelings about the child’s birth parents” (Jerome and Sweeney 2014, p. 681). Once he sets off on his quest, Choco encounters a number of obstacles and failures: as a matter of fact, he goes through a sequence of unsuccessful encounters with adult (female) animals who turn him down due to his different physical appearance (“No matter where Choco searched, he couldn’t find a mother who *looked just like him*”; emphasis added; Kasza 1992). As highlighted by Calvo-Maturana (2020, p. 296), this part of the journey is visually represented through the use of simile-type pictorial associations, a kind of visual trope that consists in the juxtaposition of two entities placed next to each other as a sort of invitation to the viewer to establish a comparison between them (Forceville 1996, p. 137).⁴ The simile-type pictorial association can therefore be utilized to depict instances of identity negotiation, such as those narrated in the book. Figure 1. illustrates the unsuccessful simile BIRD [CHOCO] IS (NOT) A PENGUIN.

The awkward expression on Mrs. Penguin’s face indicates that the meeting between the two results in “a rejection based on lack of physical appearance and the genetic bond” (Calvo-Maturana 2020, p. 296).

The end of the quest corresponds with the moment in which Choco finally meets his adoptive mother, Mrs. Bear. From the visual perspective, this coincides with the fulfilled simile-type relation BIRD [CHOCO] IS BEAR.



Fig. 1 Choco and Mrs. Penguin



Fig. 3 The beginning of the poppy seed's journey

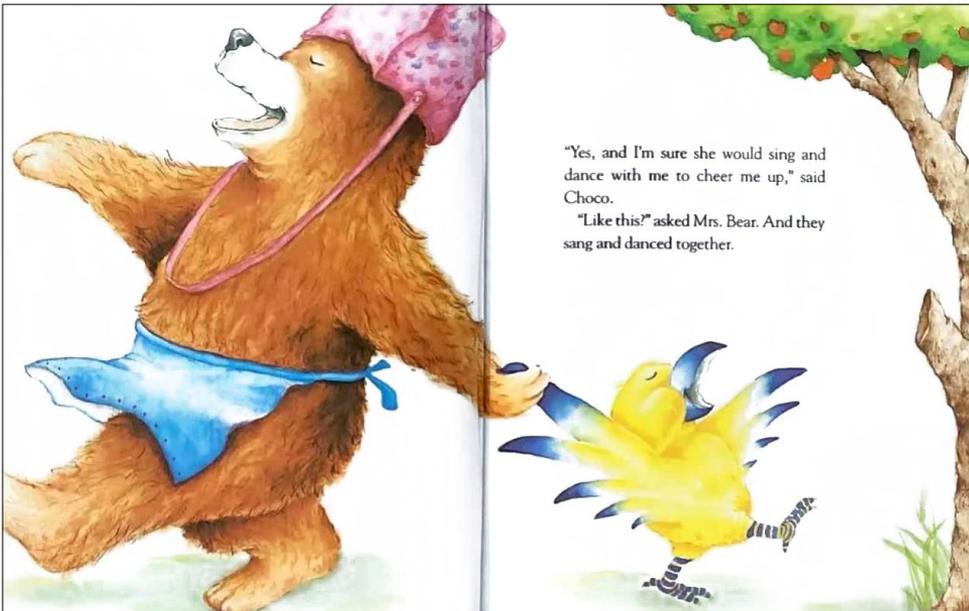


Fig. 2 Choco and Mrs. Bear

The identification between the little bird and the bear is made possible by “their mutual affection and despite their physical difference” (*ivi*, pp. 297–298). Figure 2 indicates that Choco’s quest ends with the protagonist’s happiness. This story thus supports the hypothesis that the presence of the journey metaphor in children’s books conveys the message that adoption may be viewed as a process of solving the adoptee’s problems or difficulties.

[5] The Journey towards Destiny

The Red Thread and *Red in the Flower Bed* feature metaphorical journeys towards destiny; the presence of the color red, besides hinting at the element of blood, signals that both stories (especially the first) are indebted to the “ancient Chinese belief that an invisible, unbreakable red thread connects all those who are destined to be together” (Lin 2007). Just like Choco, the protagonists of these books start their journeys to put an end to their suffering or hardships, but, differently from the little bird, they do not know what awaits them and they leave their initial location because they have been encouraged by others to do so. However, in both cases, it is ultimately the forces of destiny that prompt characters to set off on an adventure.

Whereas in *Red in the Flower Bed* the protagonist (as well as the traveler) is a poppy seed, an anthropomorphous metaphor which stands for young adoptees, in *The Red Thread* it is the Queen and the King, i.e. the adoptive parents, who embark on the journey towards destiny. The Queen “[o]ne morning [...] woke up with a pain in her heart. It was a steady ache that filled her with sadness” (Lin 2007); once a peddler reveals that the pain is caused by a red thread pulled from her heart, she decides to follow it and find out who is at the other end. The narrative that illustrates the Queen and the King’s journey to a far-off land where they meet the baby with the red thread tied around her ankles thus rests upon the metaphor FAMILY CONNECTIONS ARE THREADS. Significantly, threads which connect family members are portrayed as invisible and can only be seen with glasses: the only characters able to spot the red thread (i.e. the peddler at the beginning of the story, the Queen and King, and the wrinkled elder who eventually identifies the babies as their daughter) are all depicted wearing glasses. This seems to metaphorically suggest that family ties in interracial adoptive households may not be immediately visible as they are not based on biology, but that they nevertheless represent the outcome of a process of destiny fulfillment.

In *Red in the Flower Bed* it is the poppy, which stands for the birth mother, who urges the little seed to leave, as the circumstances in which she was born are unfavorable: “But [the earth] was too dry, / and the poppy began to cry: / “Good-bye little one. / You will be missed you know / but this is no place for you to grow.” (emphasis added; Nepa 2008). Differently from the other stories analyzed so far, here the beginning of the journey is depicted as the separation from a birth parent who is not only present in the narrative, but even sets it into motion. The departure from the family of origin is rendered through

a very sophisticated visual metaphor which incorporates and blends the idea of movement with that of sadness.

The seed's motion is portrayed in the book as a series of sequential positions that it occupies in space. The initial part of the journey, which corresponds to the seed's painful detaching from the mother/poppy, also construes the visual metaphor of sorrow, because in this picture (unlike in the following ones) the seed is shaped like a tear and the anthropomorphous flower is depicted as crying (cf. Figure 3), an act which is represented both verbally in the text and pictorially.

As already stated, destiny is what drives the characters to reach their destination, and it is therefore attributed agency and responsibility for bringing them together with their adoptive parents/children. The literary trope of destiny thus seems connected to the bureaucratic procedures of adoption matching, which are not in the hands of the prospective parents (or the child) but are managed by professionals, i.e. by people who are outside the family. In other words, adoptive family members have no control over the matching process. This lack of control is observable in the choice of the wind metaphor in Nepa's book. The natural element of the wind is conventionally used with reference to destiny (the expression “winds of destiny” is a case in point); in this particular story it highlights the aspect of unpredictability in the pairing between the poppy seed and her future flowerbed/family. At the same time and rather paradoxically, though, the wind is not described as a blind force, but as an entity actively deciding where to plant the seed:

“Here”, said the wind, / “I have found on this ground a lovely patch / that I think will match.” (Nepa 2008)

A similarly ambiguous metaphor for destiny is the red thread of the homonymous book; the notion of destiny is linked with that of family bonds, which are depicted as both “unbreakable” (“no scissors, knife, or blade could cut the thread, any more than they could cut a beam from the moon”; Lin 2007) and “red”. This color is traditionally associated with blood, an interesting choice which may suggest the strength and naturalness of the new family ties in spite of the fact that adoptive families are *not* linked by blood.

Both the King and the Queen's as well as the seed's journeys come to an end when the protagonists have realized their destiny, that is to say when they have finally met the family (members) they are destined to be with. The King and the Queen discover that the red thread connects them to a baby from a far-off, foreign country. The pictures of the book show a local woman intent at explaining that this is a sign that they belong together:

“Whose baby is this?” the queen asked. “Who does she *belong* to?” [...] The elder's bespectacled eyes followed the short threads connecting the king and the queen to the baby. Her face broke into a broad smile. “This baby,” the old woman said, “*belongs* to you.” (emphasis added; Lin 2007)

The story ends with a sense of completeness as the queen and king's travel has reached its destination: once they find the baby, the pain in their heart (i.e. the initial metaphor related to their decision to leave) subsides.

A similar emphasis on the notion of wholeness appears in the final pages of *Red in the Flower Bed*, where the poppy seed eventually blossoms into a beautiful red flower. Thanks to its color, the poppy complements the flower bed from which it has shot up so that the latter looks like a rainbow:

There is now red in the flower bed. And best of all, look down in the row... we have a *complete rainbow!* (emphasis added; Nepa 2008)

The metaphor A FAMILY IS A RAINBOW is thus used to suggest that, just as a rainbow is not a rainbow unless all colors are there, a family is not complete until all the people who are destined to join it become actual members of it. The presence of this metaphor conveys a sense of belonging and completeness and signals that the poppy seed has finished its journey and reached its designated destination.

Before moving on to the next paragraph, a comment should be made on the picture book *Forever Family*, where not destiny but God's will is depicted as the force that brings families together. In spite of obvious differences, the role played by destiny and by God in these stories is comparable, in that they both create a perfect match between parents and children, which results in a feeling of fulfillment:

God did something only God could do. He brought the perfect child to our family when He gave us you. [...] Then the day finally came when we would officially meet. With tears running down and smiles on our faces, we knew our family was *complete*. (emphasis added; Bullard and Bullard 2017)

The divine plans involving the baby's adoption are described by means of a metaphor: “God placed you in our hearts before we knew you long ago” (*ibid.*; emphasis added). The idea of God placing a baby in his future parents' heart is analogous to that expressed by the image of the heart pain introduced at the beginning of *The Red Thread*: as a matter of fact, they both rely on the conventional metaphor HEART IS (THE PLACE OF) LOVING FEELINGS. In these books, just like in adoption narratives in general, reference to mothers and fathers' hearts is often employed to metonymically indicate their love for their children. In both *Forever Family* and *The Red Thread*, prospective parents unconsciously sense that there are babies waiting to join their family, and hold loving feelings in their hearts even before meeting them. This arguably suggests that children's books attach much prominence to the notion that adoptive families are the result of an ideal match desired by the superior forces of either destiny or God. Such a framing of the adoption process is all the more poignant since both stories are told from the viewpoint of mothers and fathers. *Forever Family* features a first-person plural narrator which coincides with the collective voice of parents, who are thus given the opportunity to provide their religious perspective on the unfolding events. *The Red Thread* contains a frame and a secondary narrative; although very short and consisting of a dialogue between mother, father, and child, the former tells the story of adoptive parents who usually read the book of *The Red Thread* to their adopted little girl. In this case, too, the dominating stance is that of the adults, who can impose their interpretation and reading of the story of adoption.

[6] A Journey through Space and Time

In the journey metaphors that appear in the book sample, particular prominence is sometimes given to the spatial-temporal dimension. As previously noted, *The Red Thread* and *Red in the Flower Bed* are indebted to a Chinese legend and more or less implicitly chronicle interracial adoption stories from China. Both narratives emphasize that the conceptual metaphor PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITY IS MOVEMENT is connected with the passing of time and the crossing of space. In particular, what emerges from both adoption journeys is that it takes time and space for the protagonists to metaphorically reach their target and realize their goals (cf. Forceville 2013). In *Red in the Flower Bed*, the poppy seed is visually and verbally depicted as moving through changing seasons. The textual representation of the changing of seasons rests upon a series of synecdoches involving natural elements.

Slowly *leaves* turned orange, red and yellow. / The *air* began to mellow; Then *snow* started to fall. One day *birds* began to call. Green was starting to show / As *grass* began to grow. (emphasis added; Nepa 2008)

The corresponding pictorial rendering also entails the use of synecdoches, as shown by Figure 4. The notion that motion is slowing down in the winter is metaphorically construed by the presence of more space between the positions of the dot representing the poppy seed (cf. Fig. 3 for comparison).

In *The Red Thread* the spatial-temporal element of the journey is highlighted through the use of images portraying its different stages, e.g. when the King and Queen cross the vast sea or when they walk through a snowy field. Their travel is so long and full of hardship that they end up with ripped clothes and holes in their shoes. The stress on the duration of the journey and the distance covered to reach the final destination suggest that adoption is a long and challenging process and that, in spite of all possible difficulties, people from very far-off countries and belonging to different ethnicities can nonetheless form something as intimate as a family.

Whereas most of the books selected for the research underscore how arduous the pre-adoption stage can be, *Horace* represents an exception in that it focuses on the protagonist's struggles both before and after he has joined his adoptive family. As a matter of fact, at the beginning of the story the little leopard is portrayed as symbolically rejecting his pre-adoptive past; when his tiger mother tells him how he was adopted at bedtime he always falls asleep and never listens to the story. Horace's problematic relationship with his visibly different physical aspect is visually represented through the use of simile-type pictorial associations which highlight that he does not belong to the same species as his parents and relatives. Unlike Choco, whose failed encounters with prospective parents precede his meeting with his adoptive mother Mrs. Bear, Horace feels that he does not match with his new parents, and this prompts him to leave his home after he has been adopted. His escape thus represents a metaphorical movement from his present to his past, from his destination (i.e. his adoptive family) to his origins. Viewed from this per-



Fig. 4 The poppy seed's journey in the summertime

spective, Horace's journey is the opposite of all the other journeys narrated in the sample texts, and unlike them, it problematizes the issue of physical appearances in interracial adoption.

On his day away from home, Horace experiences what it is like to be surrounded by animals that look exactly like him. In the book pictures that represent this part of the story, his outer resemblance with the little leopards is so striking that it is impossible to distinguish him from the others.

In spite of having reached his goal (i.e. finding a family of his own species), Horace eventually refuses to go with the leopards and decides instead to return home to his tiger parents. His metaphorical journey therefore describes his movement towards his destination (his origins) and back (his adoptive family). At bedtime, when his mother once again tells him his adoption story and declares that she and her husband chose him as their child, Horace is finally ready to give his own contribution to the end of the story by affirming that he, too, chooses his adoptive parents as his family.

Although all interracial adoption narratives explored in this study convey the message that physical similarity does not equal parenthood, *Horace* presents this issue as rather problematic. Moreover, the journey metaphor is here utilized to frame adoption as something requiring agency on part of those concerned. Whereas the other stories draw attention to the role played by other agents (namely destiny or God's will) in the forming of an adoptive family, this book rests upon the metaphor ADOPTION IS CHOICE and stresses the importance of adoptees' involvement in the process. As a matter of fact, it is only when Horace explicitly agrees to having tiger parents that his pre-adoption narrative is finally complete.

[7] Concluding Remarks

This paper has shed light onto the presence of patterns in metaphor use across five different pre-adoption picture books about multiethnic families. This indicates that a discourse on interracial adoption runs across these publications and, possibly, even across similar ones (cf. also Calvo-Maturana 2020). Certain source domains appear more frequently than others, and they are reproduced both in the textual element of the books as well as in their illustrations, thus reinforcing their presence. As a consequence, young readers who constitute the target audience of these narratives may be repeatedly exposed to the same recurring metaphors, with the effect that both their understanding and their framing of the (pre-)adoption process are shaped and heavily affected by them.

In particular, the ADOPTION IS A JOURNEY metaphor occupies a paramount position in the sample of books. In cognitive terms, this trope describes a movement from an initial situation to a desirable destination or goal. The storylines investigated in the research provide a number of different frames for the experience of the journey (i.e. of adoption); the quest and the journey towards destiny are comparable because they present similar characteristics. Primarily, these narratives tend to emphasize the initial hardships experienced by the protagonists as well as the long duration of their travel and the difficulties they meet.

This kind of representation of the adoption process may be viewed as problematic, as it is simplistic. In all the stories except *Red in the Flower Bed*, no mention is ever made of birth families, a choice which downplays the importance of adoptees' origins and biological parents. The lack of representation deprives this category of its voice and of the possibility of explaining the reasons at the basis of the choice to give up children for adoption. Although adoptees may come from arduous circumstances, framing adoption as a quest or as a journey towards destiny that starts from total isolation or alienation from the birth family provides an image that may not necessarily correspond to reality.

Some biological parents do love their children but decide not to keep them because their circumstances do not allow them to do so. *Red in the Flower Bed*, for example, features a metaphorical representation of a birth mother who encourages her child to leave in order to grow up in a better place. However, the mother is also depicted as crying when the little one starts her journey (cf. Section 5). The travel of the poppy seed is therefore not solely framed as a movement away from problems and towards their solution, but also as a story beginning with a difficult detachment.

As mentioned above, another common pattern characterizing pre-adoption narratives is the insistence on the journey's length and complications. These elements seem strategic in order to give even more prominence to the happy ending of the books and to convey the message that the adoption process can be challenging for both parents and children, but when it is over everybody feels complete and joyful. Whereas a happy ending is to be expected in stories that illustrate and promote interracial adoption,⁵ a somewhat debatable portrayal of adoption as the “triumph of colorblind love” (Sun 2021, p. 244) appears at the conclusions of some of the stories. The sense of happiness

and completeness construed by the metaphors in the final pages of *The Red Thread*, *Red in the Flower Bed*, and *A Mother of Choco* does not allow room for considerations about the difficulties and possible discrimination often faced by multiracial households. Differently, *Horace* foregrounds the struggles experienced by children belonging to visibly adoptive families; it still includes a happy ending where the protagonist finally integrates with the rest of the family, but it does not neglect to mention the possible challenges and conflicts felt by children while adjusting to their new reality (*ibid.*).

Finally, the study has identified recurring metaphors associated with the idea of fate or God's will. These metaphors suggest that the protagonists do not have many real opportunities to avoid embarking on their journeys because they are destined to do so. Agency for the adoption process is therefore attached to either God or destiny, and not to the parties directly involved. Whereas matches between prospective parents and youngsters are decided by adoption agencies and professionals and not by fathers, mothers and children, it may be argued that forming a family requires more than simple bureaucracy. Young adoptees and their parents also have to actively play their part and “choose each other” in order to create family connections and bonds: this is the main message of the story *Horace*, which ends with the little leopard eventually accepting to live with parents who do not look like him. This kind of framing also stresses the equality of parents and adopted children.

In conclusion, the systematic use of textual and visual metaphors in picture books about interracial adoption may represent a valuable tool to help readers who have been adopted to comprehend their past and the process that brought them into their new families. However, some adoption framings have proven only partially empowering for a readership of small children. Such framings seem to dramatically foreground the positive aspects of interracial adoption while backgrounding some problematic aspects connected to it. Yet, some metaphors, such as the journey metaphor, are so ubiquitous because they are so cognitively familiar and seemingly so appropriate that they can impose a certain reading of reality. As a consequence, challenging their use or coming up with alternative ones is rather difficult, as suggested by the results of this study. While simplified, reassuring narratives are needed when addressing young readers, some authors are more successful than others in selecting metaphors that can favor an easy but still nuanced understanding of interracial adoption reality.

[Notes]

- 1 The *Interethnic Placement Act* (1996) aims at eliminating racial discrimination in foster care or adoption placement as it forbids agencies to delay or deny placement based on the race, color, or national origin of children or parents.
- 2 The only book from which the journey metaphor is completely absent is *Forever Family*. As highlighted in Section 6, *Horace* features the journey metaphor but, instead of relying on it as a frame for the pre-adoption stage of the protagonist (like the other three books), it presents his escape from home as a travel of self-discovery.

- 3 The paper relies on the use of block capitals as the conventional notation for indicating source domains in metaphor theory.
- 4 In the study, similes were included as “metaphor-related words” (Steen *et al.*’s 2010, p. 58) since they can be considered as forms in which “indirectness in conceptualization through a cross-domain mapping is expressed by direct language”.
- 5 As already noted, a good proportion of publications on this topic are produced by adoptive parents.

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**[literature
and culture]**

[The Legacy of Mary Wollstonecraft's Educational and Philosophical Storytelling]

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[Abstract] *In her works, Mary Wollstonecraft was greatly concerned with women's education. Highlighting the importance of exemplary storytelling, she laid special emphasis on the importance of reading in young girls' lifelong learning; she even co-edited a collection of texts specifically designed for female readers. In addition to her novels, political treatises and translations, she also wrote two pieces on education, Thoughts on the Education of Daughters (1787) and Original Stories from Real Life (1788), and an unfinished tale titled "The Cave of Fancy" (1787). I will discuss the unique features of her self-trained storytelling in general, while also exploring disturbing content imagined by a "fanciful" woman's spirit in one particular tale. Mary Wollstonecraft's fantastic tale not only provides a framework for the creative development of the female mind; it also includes several images that would later appear in Romantic philosophical narratives, as exemplified by Mary Shelley's "The Fields of Fancy".*

[Keywords] *Mary Wollstonecraft; Mary Shelley; education; tales; fancy; reason; reading*

The eighteenth-century novelist, essayist, and educationalist Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797) was an enlightened thinker. She was greatly influenced by the ideas of her radical contemporaries, and she was an ardent believer in reason, common sense and sensibility. In her early works titled *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787) and *Original Stories from Real Life* (1788), she published educational stories and tales to instruct the female reader. In her edited collection *The Female Reader*, she also propagated reading, while in her novels – *Mary: A Fiction* (1788) and *Maria: or, The Wrongs of Woman* (1798) – she discussed the possible paths for women's self-development. In her best-known political debates, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790) and *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), she demonstrated that critical thinking was indispensable in personal education, while her reviews, translations and her travelogue also contributed to the process of her self-training.

In addition to being a member of the Radicals, Mary Wollstonecraft frequently attended the dissenters' meetings and lectures that were organised by the publisher Joseph Johnson.¹ She read the fashionable “conduct books” of her time, for instance, Rev. James Fordyce's *Sermons to Young Women* (1766), John Gregory's *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters* (1774), and John Bennett's *Strictures on Female Education* (1787), and she vehemently criticised their rigid notions concerning women's roles and possibilities. These works exemplified the proper behaviour of women, following the rules of etiquette and good manners, which was regarded as appropriate to their social status. Even well-educated girls were not encouraged to read or know anything other than the Bible, and the above-mentioned John Gregory voices his utter despair when he writes about the theatre. In the chapter “Entertainment,” he complains that he can scarcely offer his daughters a literary work from his own era “without a shock to delicacy” or an evocation of unnecessary, disturbing, or even inappropriate emotions (Gregory 62, 68).

Interpreting Wollstonecraft's lifework, I cannot help referring to the influential ‘intellectual fathers’ – John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Edmund Burke among others – whose writings provided her with a framework of thinking in the textual debates she published. John Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Emile, or On Education* (1762; in English 1763) had a great impact on her philosophy of education. While Locke mainly explored the education of young gentlemen and Rousseau wrote about the natural education of boys, Wollstonecraft tried to apply their notions to women's development. Her early *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787) and *Original Stories* (1788) clearly show the influence of Locke's and Rousseau's ideas, and she engaged in a famous debate with Rousseau in her *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). Her other famous debate, in her *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790), was targeted at Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790). In *Emile*, in the fifth book on female education entitled “Sophy, or Woman,” Rousseau states that men's and women's education cannot be the same, and the modest Sophy is to be brought up mainly to accompany the naturally educated man, to be a “companion [...] given to him” (Rousseau 357). Moreover, according to Rousseau, girls “ought to be constrained very early,” since it is “inseparable from their sex [...]. All their lives they will be enslaved to the most continual and most severe of constraints – that of the proprieties” (Rousseau 369).

The reading of novels was also discussed in conduct books and educational writings due to its effects on women’s development. Wollstonecraft, who waged a battle against conduct books based on “a false system of education, gathered from the books written on this subject by men,” was willing to acknowledge that novel-reading was dangerous for young women (Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication* 11). She believed that reading fashionable romances would stunt girls’ intellectual growth, increase their sensibility and lead to weakness, thus perpetrating their subjection to men. For this reason, not only Wollstonecraft but also her contemporary Catharine Macaulay, in her *Letters on Education*, promoted the critical reading of allegorical fables and satirical novels, as such works provided young people with “instructive lessons” and the possibilities of realising “a perversion of reason and common sense” in the fashionable pieces of *belle lettres* (Macaulay 144–148). Macaulay, best known as a historian, recommends the realistic novels by the contemporary writer Henry Fielding as well as Cervantes’s *Don Quixote*, while making no distinction between girls and boys in reading – or indeed in educational matters in general; for instance, thanks to her own aristocratic upbringing, she unwaveringly expects the young learner to know four languages. Macaulay urges a radical and somewhat utopian study of contemporary and satirical readings, since only those novels pose questions about the intricacies of existing reality and also propagate ‘real’ reading – and, as a result, these works will assist the reader-learner in being a virtuous person.

[1] Educational Tales

Now, focusing on Wollstonecraft’s ideas on female development, I should highlight that in her *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787), she claims reading to be “the most rational employment” (49). In this educational text, on the one hand she warns against reading novels of sensibility and romances that might mislead the female mind, while on the other hand she instead recommends adventure stories, “beautiful allegories and affecting tales,” in which reasoning is illustrated by “the brilliancy of fancy” and the mind is cultivated by the teacher while allowing the female reader to pursue self-development on her own (Wollstonecraft, *Thoughts* 51). In addition to the works referred to in her *Thoughts*, as the editor of *The Female Reader*, Wollstonecraft also promotes the reading of narrative poems, sermons, journalistic essays, and carefully selected passages from dramatic works, mainly from Shakespeare’s comedies and tragedies.²

In the twenty-five chapters of her *Original Stories* (1788), the framework is provided by the tutoring of two young girls, Mary (age fourteen) and Caroline (age twelve). The strict Protestant governess Mrs. Mason can be taken as Wollstonecraft’s mouthpiece; she tells exemplary stories to the girls while walking outside in natural surroundings and in London, when they go on an excursion to the city with the girls. Presenting examples was a well-known and accepted form of instruction at the time, because as the author writes in the “Preface,” the example “directly addresses the senses, the first inlets to the heart” and the mind is enriched by the moral which is later deduced from the tales.³ In this sense, the educational stories and tales in *Original Stories* follow the Lockean notion

of *tabula rasa*, namely that the child's mind is like a "blank sheet" or a "wax tablet" to be filled by a large amount of experience. John Locke himself points out the importance of examples in education, claiming that it is difficult to persuade children to do good simply by presenting rules to them. As he writes in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*: "[...] of all the ways whereby children are to be instructed, and their manners formed, the plainest, easiest, and most efficacious, is to set before their eyes the examples of those things you would have them do or avoid" (Locke, *Some Thoughts* 65). Wollstonecraft agrees with Locke in this regard, and she also builds on his idea of the child as a rational creature. As Mrs. Mason claims about her own tutoring and learning: "this employment humanized my heart, while, *like wax*, it took every impression; and Providence has since made me an instrument of good – I have been useful to my fellow-creatures" (OS 8). The governess not only displays her exemplary stories; she also presents her proper behaviour to the girls as a model in order to "set [them] an *example*" on a daily basis (OS 20).

According to Wollstonecraft, the tutoring of young girls for a virtuous and happy life begins with a love of animals, since every living being is a creature of God, who takes care of all his children. Thus, the cruel treatment of animals, or even the killing of worms, beetles and birds, are evil acts. In contrast, goodness primarily means that one has "to avoid hurting any thing; and then, to give as much pleasure as you can" (OS 3). At the end of the lesson, which teaches general admiration of the beauties of nature, the governess frightens the girls with stories about the torture of animals, and she praises her students who, following God's teaching, "have acted like rational beings" when they rescue a broken-winged bird and its chicks (OS 5). The two children receive a practical education, and their experience of kindness leaves an imprint on their hearts (viz. *tabula rasa*). The acceptance of animals as companions appears in several tales, such as in that of the crazy Robin, who, after losing his family, his wife and children, can only count on his dog, and when the animal is killed, the poor man dies from grief. There is a stronger social critique in the story of a man imprisoned in the Bastille, whose guard tramples on his only friend, a spider. However, the historical events are not of great interest to the girls, and the governess seems to aim rather at affecting the children's emotions.

Several of Mrs. Mason's parables show the unhappy lives of pampered and spoiled women with telling names: there is the story of the bad-tempered girl Jane *Fretful* (cf. peevish, OS 15–18), of the ill-dressed woman Mrs. *Dowdy* (cf. untidy, OS 48–49), and the notorious liar Lady *Sly* (cf. cunning, OS 21–23). In the planning and strict observation of a daily routine, the girls are to engage themselves in meaningful activities. Apart from learning how to do things around the house and how to help the poor, they have time to practice drawing, to play music and to read. While all useful pursuits are recommended, as they train and sharpen the mind, reading is presented as a privileged activity for the acquisition of knowledge, because when reading "the heart is touched, till its feelings are examined by the understanding, and the ripenings of reason regulate the imagination" (OS 54–55). Here the governess / Wollstonecraft again emphasises the lifelong process of reading, and she suggests not only moralistic pieces, but also light-hearted *works of fancy*. Mrs. Mason recommends stories by the contemporary children's writer Mrs. Trimmer,

specifically her *Fabulous Histories* (1786) for daily reading, and all the “original stories” can be taken as parables assisting young women’s mental development. Although these are fictional literary narratives, the authors mentioned in the text insist that the source of their stories is the world around them, and through their writings they can educate their readers, broadening their understanding of real life. As a farewell gift, Mrs. Mason hands her collection of stories to the girls (OS 87).

In the girls’ upbringing, from the beginning, the children are requested not to lie, and they are instructed to avoid speaking untruths and falsehoods in all areas of life. A true man / woman possesses an inherent love of truth, because the beauty of the soul and its virtue originate in the natural goodness and honesty of humanity. Thus, in accordance with Mrs. Mason’s Protestant ethics, she states that “lying is a vice” for which punishment is imposed, although she does not state in what way she will punish the girls (OS 25). The perfect gentlewoman, the proper lady, is exemplified by Mrs. Trueman (cf. “true man”), who is a virtuous good woman, exercising benevolence and love (OS 77). She behaves in an honest and simple way, while the previously mentioned Lady Sly, who serves as a counter-example, has never behaved uprightly in her life. The former, being a curate’s wife, does not belong to the higher circles of society, while the latter, a lady, reveals the superficiality of her class; her nobility is only a question of her “*state*, not *dignity*” (OS 21, italics in the original). Mrs. Trueman and her husband are “noble people”, but it is not their wealth or social status that makes them noble: in accordance with the Lockean concept of the gentleman, the couple are educated, they have a taste for the arts, and their home is an island of happiness.

In *Original Stories*, self-control is frequently discussed, as the governess’s duties in guiding the two young girls’ development include suppressing anger and other emotional outbursts of temperament. As Locke writes about the early training of the mind:

As the strength of the body lies chiefly in being able to endure hardships, so also does that of the mind. And the great principle and foundations of all virtue and worth is placed in this, that a man is able to deny himself his own desires, cross his own inclinations, and purely follow what his reason directs as best, though the appetite lean the other way. (Locke, *Some Thoughts* 28)

The physical education of the body is not directly addressed in Wollstonecraft’s work, though it is true that the characters walk a lot in nature and the outdoors, and Mrs. Mason regards the endurance of physical pain as a physical and mental exercise (OS 78–79). At the same time, there are several lessons and conversations about the formation of the young girls’ character, and the ways in which their mistakes can be corrected. The parable on the beauty of the “flaunting tulip” and the usefulness of the “modest rose” in Chapter VII not only addresses the question of external and internal beauty; it also reveals the difference between the two girls’ characters (OS 29). Mary is smart, quick-witted and sensitive, while Caroline is beautiful and benevolent. But the clever Mary loves to ridicule others, treats her servants with contempt, and is regularly late and negligent. The charming Caroline is proud of her beauty; as a result, she is often vain and even gluttonous.

Mrs. Mason regularly confronts the girls with the defects in their behaviour, so after a while, the girls pay attention to these defects and learn to control themselves, because “in society virtue is acquired, and self-denial practised” (OS 39). By accepting parental and foster care, the children are able to learn self-control – actually, self-denial – while the “white sheet” of their mind is covered with writing during their training – again recalling Locke’s idea of *tabula rasa*. At the end of the book, Mrs. Mason parts from her disciples, who have changed a lot:

The girls were visibly improved; an air of intelligence began to animate Caroline’s fine features; and benevolence gave her eyes the humid sparkle which is so beautiful and engaging. [...] Mary’s judgment grew every day clearer; or, more properly speaking, she acquired experience; and her lively feelings fixed the conclusions of reason in her mind. (OS 79–80)

At the governess’s request, in the future the girls will report on their emotional and intellectual development in honest letters to her – self-controlling themselves, in other words doing their own “monitoring” (Richardson 31).

The parables of *Original Stories* are sometimes morbid and rather tragic; they seem to be “anti-tales” written for adults. I have already referred to crazy Robin’s misfortune, or the prisoner’s spider companion, but I can also mention the sailor Jack’s stoic suffering, the Welsh harper’s grief, the account of Charles Townley’s extravagant life, or the poverty-stricken London family – all these stories end terribly. The question can be raised what kind of educator seeks to torment teenage girls with such stories. Indeed, the determined protagonist of *Original Stories* Mrs. Mason believes that discussing such real-life narratives will guide the girls’ emotional development while shaping their mind to accept “the principles of truth and humanity”, as stated in the author’s “Preface” (OS xviii). In the book, the governess, being a relentless moralist and rationalist, barely smiles, and there is only one occasion, while listening to the harpist’s playing, when she succumbs to her emotions. In her Christian Stoicism, as if she were above all the characters, she is not afraid of storms or death – “God is still present, and we are safe,” she proclaims (OS 33). The two girls respect and fear her, especially her disapproving expression, and the greatest praise in the book is when she calls Mary “her friend” for her good behaviour (OS 40). At the same time, she helps the poor, she pays attention to the fallen, and she loves her friends, as well as cherishing the memory of her loved ones. Similarly to the stories of the suffering she presents, her own life is full of grief, as she has lost her husband and daughter.

Wollstonecraft’s governess is a special female figure, yet the reader feels some quality of inhuman cruelty in this ideal private educator’s methods and her striving for perfection. It is true that in her later works Wollstonecraft rejects the “masculine” tone of instruction, the style of conduct books and counselling booklets (Jones 119), but this genre also represents an important stage in the author’s own development.⁴ This is exactly what I expect from a female educationalist, a philosopher who proclaims that an honest and authentic life can change her and she can develop through her self-denial or

self-transcendence. Regarding the writer’s early works, her *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* and *Original Stories*, I think that Mrs. Mason did a good job.

[2] Tales of Fancy

Analysing the elements of Wollstonecraft’s tales, I have already used the term *works of fancy*, which simply indicated the fictitious and imaginative feature of the writings. Wollstonecraft also left behind an unfinished philosophical fable titled “The Cave of Fancy” (1787, posthumously published in 1798), which she composed while writing her early educational narratives. Before analysing this tale, the term “fancy” should be investigated. The term itself sounded rather old-fashioned even by nineteenth-century standards, being related to nostalgia and the medieval romance, as Julie Carlson points out in her essay. Carlson also claims that it frequently occurred in the historical-biographical writings of the Wollstonecraft–Godwin–Shelley family in their “magical communion with the dead” (165).

For fancy, Samuel Johnson in his English dictionary (1755) refers to the Latin *phantasia*, stating that the primary meaning is “Imagination; the power by which the mind forms to itself images and representations of things, persons, or scenes of being” (Johnson). Johnson also lists other meanings of the word, such as “taste”, “opinion”, “image”, “conception”, “thought”, or even “humour”, “fondness”, or “vagary”. Here, I am focusing on the mental quality of *fancy*, the way in which it is based on common sense and coloured by the individual characteristics of the human thinker. Relying on the Lockean framework in Wollstonecraft’s thinking, it is worth noting that in Locke’s *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, the concept of *tabula rasa* is described in terms of the functioning of the mind, fancy and experience:

Let us then suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas; how comes it to be furnished? Whence comes it by that vast store, which the *busy and boundless fancy of man has painted on it*, with an almost endless variety? Whence has it all the materials of reason and knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, from experience: in that, all our knowledge is founded; and from that it ultimately derives itself. (109, italics are mine)

Indeed, the main emphasis is on the empiricist roots of our knowledge, yet the filling of the mind takes place via the mutual functioning of reason and imagination. Fancy is also strongly connected to memory; Locke writes that memory is “to furnish to the mind those dormant ideas which it has present occasion for,” being a storehouse of the ideas, and “having them ready at hand on all occasions,” when “invention, fancy” and wit need them (Locke, *An Essay* 151). Wit is associated with the quickness of the mind, operating with fixities and memories, and in the eighteenth century, imagination and fancy were both defined in close relation to wit. In contrast to the critical activity of judgement, “fanciful” wit is pleasurable, since “lying most in the assemblage of ideas, and putting those together with quickness and variety, wherein can be found any resemblance or congruity,

thereby to make up pleasant pictures and agreeable visions in the fancy" (Locke, *An Essay* 153; cf. Burke 68–69).

In fancy, the imaginative mind's functioning is regulated by reason, but it is also shaped by our personal creative capacities, while through experience we can acquire our knowledge of the world. In Wollstonecraft's "The Cave of Fancy", the tale presents an imagined realm, where the hermit, the old wise Sagestus (cf. sage) lives in sublime surroundings at the end of the world:

In a sequestered valley, surrounded by rocky mountains that intercepted many of the passing clouds, though sunbeams variegated their ample sides, lived a sage, to whom nature had unlocked her most hidden secrets. *His hollow eyes*, sunk in their orbits, retired from the view of vulgar objects, and *turned inwards*, overleaped the boundary prescribed to human knowledge. Intense thinking during fourscore and ten years, had whitened the scattered locks on his head, which, like the summit of the distant mountain, appeared to be bound by an eternal frost. (Wollstonecraft, "The Cave of Fancy" 191, italics are mine)

In his cogitation, Sagestus's isolation and self-closure are emphasised not only by his eyes (turning inwards), but also by the faraway and ancient cavern through which he can enter the depths of the earth, where "the various spirits, which inhabit the different regions of nature, were here obedient to his potent word" (Wollstonecraft, "The Cave of Fancy" 191). The grave-like cave, being like a "limbo" between life and death, welcomes the ghosts of the dead; some of them are evil, waiting for their long purification, and some are good, like "guardian angels" who are allowed to leave their prison.

In her depiction of the cavern, Wollstonecraft relies on the Platonic image of the cave and the idea that man should come out of "his" cave and into the light, in order to re-discover the truth of human existence. The cave itself is associated with the body and the skull, and the narrative reflects on the workings of the human mind, including some references to Wollstonecraft's radical friend William Blake's understanding of imagination. Blake writes that "the Imagination is not a State: it is the Human Existence itself," and that man should open "the doors of perception" – the holes of the senses in the head/skull – in order to be able to experience infinity (Blake 522 and 154). In Wollstonecraft's understanding, fancy, together with the image of the cave, also stand for the secrets of the female heart, the mind and sexuality; Meena Alexander even claims that "the cave itself, in a kind of imaginative extremity is both the womb of Mother Nature and the tomb of all mothers" (185). On the one hand, in her educational writings, Wollstonecraft's thinking female characters (similarly to herself) struggle to find their home, their partner and their role in the world, while also having to learn to tame their desire. On the other hand, as Sylvana Tomaselli writes, Wollstonecraft – in a Platonic way – presents "human love as an ephemeral delusion in an uneasy relation to virtue and esteem, which must not be allowed to usurp the rightful place of divine love in the soul" (30).

In Wollstonecraft's allegorical "Cave," the wise man Sagestus is able to sense (imagine or fancy) the life-stories of the dead, studying their bodily features. Then, when he

finds a baby-girl who has survived a shipwreck, he adopts the child and later educates the young girl (named Sagesta, after himself) by allowing her to listen to the narratives of (dead) women. Only one female spirit's life-story is completed, and it gives Sagesta a warning "that women should beware confusing fantasy and reality in their visions of love," as Julie Carlson points out (168). In the (promised) realistic narrative(s), the emotional, financial and bodily struggles of the eighteenth-century women are revealed, and in this way Sagesta – through her fancy – is trained to become a wise and sensitive human. It seems likely that she will assist or replace the aged Sagestus in coordinating the spirits at the cavern, but this can only be guessed at, since the tale is unfinished.

In the philosophical and spiritual setting of the tale, the reader is also invited to sense the movement from outer features to inner thoughts. This is partly inspired by J. C. Lavater's notions of physiognomy; when Wollstonecraft was working on this puzzling story, she was influenced by (and also debated) the Swiss thinker's stereotypical approach – especially in the understanding of the female character. The inspirited ghosts are individuals, not types, and the highlighting of female voices brings a new direction in the writer's work. In Mary Wollstonecraft's own lifework, "The Cave of Fancy" presents a new way (out), embodying the author's opening up and her new readings of the 'fathers' works'. Through her liberating fantasy / fancy, she moved towards her rebellious writings, in which she began to re-define the female body, sensibility and consciousness. As about the main character of her first novel, *Mary: A Fiction* (1788) she writes, "a new genius will educate itself," growing out of her own spiritual (in)fancy (Wollstonecraft, *Mary* 211).

Regarding the legacy of Mary Wollstonecraft's tales, I can refer to the Romantic and Gothic features in the stories written by female writers in the nineteenth century. Her own daughter, Mary Godwin (later Mary Shelley), published a collection of such tales in the *Keepsake* during the 1820s–30s. Now, let us focus on fragmented narrative titled "The Fields of Fancy" (1819) that was supposed to be an introduction (later attached as an appendix) to Mary Shelley's short novel, *Mathilda* (1819–20; posthumously published in 1959). Striking similarities can be found in the mother's and the daughter's Platonic tales of fancy, but here, Julie Carlson indicates, "fancy comes alive as Fantasia, the sage is a 'prophetess', and fancy moves into the fields" (171). In the tale, the female narrator is deeply in grief, dejected, and she cannot sleep. Fantasia, the winged spirit, appears to her and offers her consolation, but the narrator, being overwhelmed by the loss of her beloved, rejects her invitation into the realm of fantasy. Then, falling into a reverie, she is carried away to the Elysian Gardens. In Mary Shelley's fanciful tale, instead of the aged man Sagestus, it is Fantasia who is the guiding spirit; Fantasia takes her to the Elysian Fields, where she listens to "the Prophetess Diotima the instructress of Socrates" teaching some young people about the beauties and the sublimity of the world (Shelley 683). Fantasia also explains the differentiation of the spirits: some are here to find consolation, to forget, some are to study, "to become wise & virtuous", while some are to be punished before returning to the earthly world (Shelley 681).

In Shelley's tale, both Fantasia and Diotima provide a 'superhuman' perspective, being detached from reality; the former is an immortal spirit, the latter is immersed in her

pursuit for wisdom. Although the Platonic character Diotima, named “Diotima of Mantinea,” lectured Socrates on the art of human love in *Symposium*, in the tale she is speaking about universal, divine love, the selfishness of man and the corruption of civilization (cf. Plato). Diotima is asked by the young female spirit whether she can understand human passions, as in her own life she has been lost in the darkness of her heart, “of the dreadful struggles of a soul enchained by dark deep passions which were its hell & yet from which it could not escape” (Shelley 691). The Second Chapter is supposed to relate the young female’s life story, but “The Fields of Fancy” ends here in order to introduce Mathilda’s narrative. Initially, the narrator does not want to be inspired by Fantasia and be comforted in her mourning. However, later she wants to listen to the beautiful female spirit’s account. Feeling that she can sympathise with the wretched female, having both experienced similar misery, the narrator/Mary Shelley is eager to learn a lesson:

Tomorrow I will again woo Fantasia to lead me to the same walks & invite her to visit me with her visions which I before neglected – Oh let me learn this lesson while yet it may be useful to me that to a mind hopeless & unhappy as mine – a moment of forgetfulness a moment [in] which it can pass out of itself is worth a life of painful recollection. (Shelley 692)

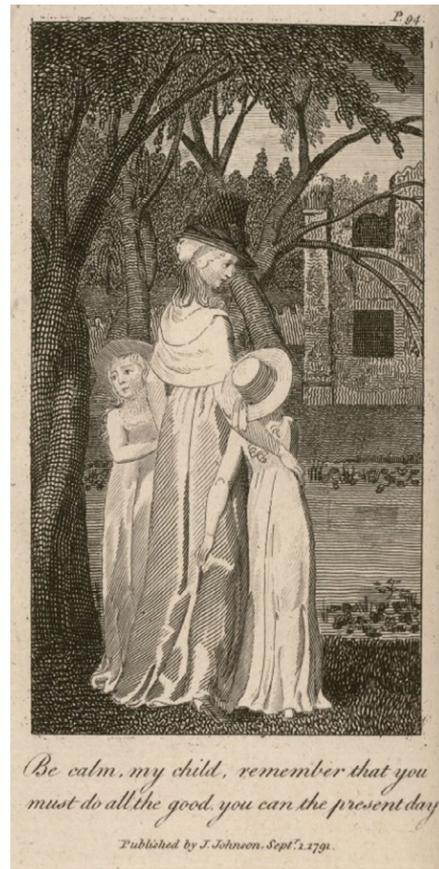
In this sense, the female spirits help each other in their self-understanding, and the narrator steps onto the path of self-consolation. Accordingly, writing her novel *Mathilda*, Mary Shelley begins her work of mourning, in which her memory and her imaginative fancy are therapeutically combined. Moreover, I cannot forget that in the tales of fancy, the daughter is also connected to the lost mother, and in Shelley’s interpretation, the spiritual guidance of Fantasia–Diotima recalls reminiscences of the rebellious motherly voice heard from beyond the grave.

[3] Coda: Blake’s engravings for *Original Stories*

The illustrations in this volume were created by the author’s contemporary and friend William Blake. Blake was one of the first appreciative readers of *Original Stories*, and his engravings spectacularly highlight the essentials of the radical-minded Wollstonecraft’s concept of education. Two of the five pictures created by the Romantic poet-artist depict the nurse, Wollstonecraft’s alter ego (with the character’s typical garments, a simple dress and a pointed hat or a headband), who leaves the parental house with the girls for a walk, and they spend time in nature together (see Ill. 1 and 2). “Look, what a fine morning it is. Insects, birds, and animals, are all enjoying existence [this sweet day],” says the nurse in the opening image of the book (Ill. 1; cf. *OS* 5), and her outstretched arms allude to the joy of showing the new world to her pupils, while the girls step out of their house in a posture expressing delighted enthusiasm. The other illustration depicts the group returning from a walk (Ill. 2), and shows that one girl would rather stay in nature, while the other – facing the house – is hiding in Mrs. Mason’s embrace, as if she were hesitant to accept that the lessons learned from the stories will help her thrive in social life in the



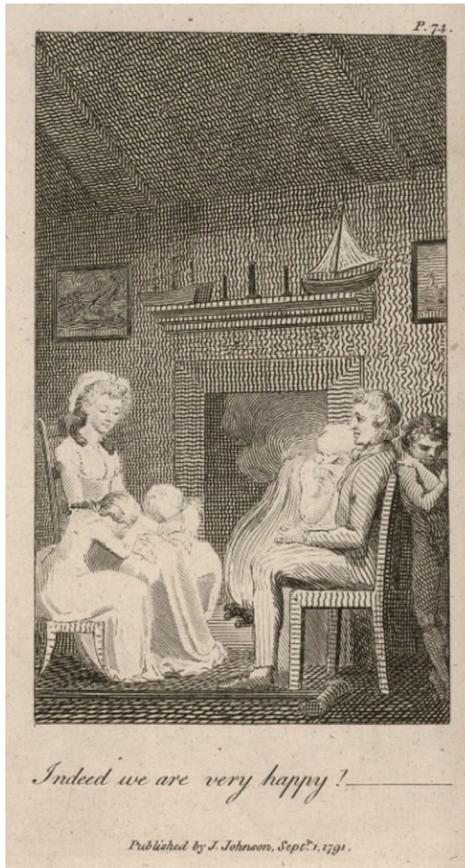
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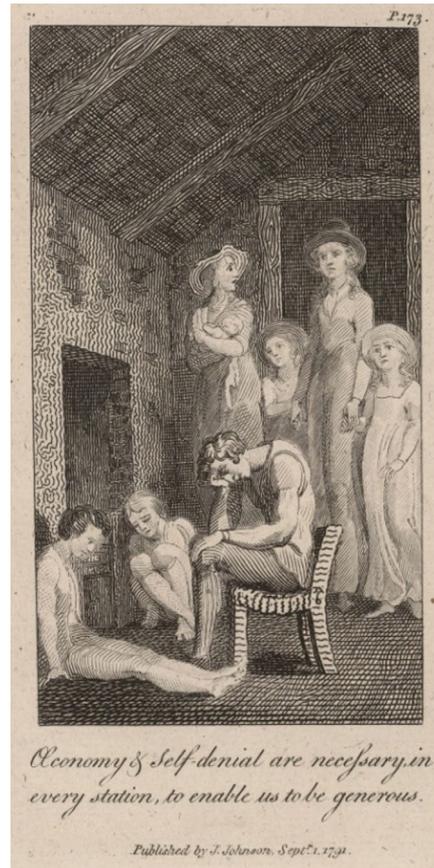
III. 2

long run. As the quote goes, “Be calm, my child, and remember that you must [...] do all the good you can the present day.”⁵

As a counterpoint to the lessons spent outdoors, two illustrations display what life is like for those living in poverty (see Ill. 3 and 4). In contrast to the images of a natural upbringing that suggest openness and unfolding, these two engravings show a mood of confinement and depression. One presents the home and family of Jack, a half-blind sailor who has suffered multiple shipwrecks, while his story testifies that the unfortunate though good-hearted man helped others even in his misfortune. However, the highlighted quotation in the caption below the illustration sounds rather ironic: “Indeed we are very happy!” (cf. OS 36) The other drawing, depicting a poor family in London, gives the following advice: “Economy and self-denial are necessary in every station, to enable us to be generous” (cf. OS 86). The advice is originally given to the girls, but it is also a general warning provided by Blake and Wollstonecraft to their own society. In both illustrations, the characters seem to have accepted their fate, and they look rather languid; only



III. 3



III. 4

the educator's figure suggests some energetic independence. In the drawings, the rigid, framing lines of the beams and the meticulous pattern of the interior space not only illustrate the constraints of the contemporary family and social life; they also summarize the author's (and the illustrator's) social critique: the individual can only be happy by accepting limitations, and only through strict self-control. While William Blake looked for the cause of people's suffering in the spread of mechanical rationality, and in his later works he would find a way out of this by freeing his imagination, Mary Wollstonecraft saw the oppression of women as the source of the problems, as she would later discuss in her masterpiece *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), in which she would provide concrete reform proposals.⁶

[Notes]

- 1 See more about this in Claire Tomalin, *The Life and Death of Mary Wollstonecraft* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974) 89–109.
- 2 See Mary Wollstonecraft, *The Female Reader*, in *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*, eds. Janet Todd and Marilyn Butler, vol. 4 (London: William Pickering, 1989, 53–353). The original title, without the indication of Wollstonecraft’s editorial work, reads: *The Female Reader: Or, Miscellaneous Pieces in Prose and Verse, Selected from the Best Writers, and Disposed under Proper Heads, for the Improvement of Young Women* by Mr. Cresswick, Teacher of Elocution to which is Prefixed a Preface, Containing some Hints on Female Education (London: J. Johnson, St. Paul’s Church-Yard, 1789).
- 3 Mary Wollstonecraft, *Original Stories* with Five Illustrations by William Blake, with an Introduction by E.V. Lucas (London: Henry Frowde, 1906) xviii. Subsequent references to this source, abbreviated as OS, are given as page numbers in brackets in the text.
- 4 In “Editor’s Introduction” written by E. V. Lucas in 1906, he not only highlights Wollstonecraft’s rigour, but also states that the early work is a step backwards in the author’s career (xiii).
- 5 In the book, a fifth illustration also appeared. It is probably the best of them, and it shows Mrs. Mason listening to the Welsh harper. Moreover, there was a sixth drawing depicting a madman with his dog, standing next to his dead children (cf. crazy Robin’s story); however, being so terrifying, it was finally left out, upon the publisher Johnson’s request. See Mitchell 27–28.
- 6 See my article “Irony and Culture in Feminist educational Writings: Wollstonecraft, Edgeworth and Macaulay,” *Practice and Theory in Systems of Education*, Volume 12, Number 2 (2017): 100–107.

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[Storytelling as Playful Practice toward Social Cohesion and Overcoming the Fear of Death]

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[Abstract] *Approaching Alfonso Gomez-Rejon's 2015 film, Me and Earl and the Dying Girl through an evolutionary literary perspective draws attention to the adaptive advantages of fictional storytelling with respect to the film's treatment of three key universals of human evolution: the propensity toward social integration; overcoming one's fear of death and dealing with grief; and transcending the emotional anxiety that accompanies the incomprehensible meaninglessness of a life that ends, inevitably, in death.*

[Keywords] *storytelling; theory of mind; cognitive play; grief; evolutionary literary theory*

Me and Earl and the Dying Girl is a quirky tragi-comedy that follows a simple, time-honoured story arch: boy meets girl, boy and girl become friends, girl dies, boy is heart-broken, but has a new appreciation for life. Beneath the surface of this cringe-inducing cliché, the film is a genuine tear-earner, a clever and heartfelt coming-of-age tale that speaks to the intrinsic benefits of cultivating friendships despite the fear of social rejection and the potential for heartbreak and the loss of a loved one. The film tells the story of an awkward teenage boy, Greg (the 'Me' of the title), and how he deals with the emotional challenges of navigating a minefield of high school social relations, avoiding the potential for embarrassment and humiliation, while ever-fearful of transitioning toward the even scarier prospect of university life. In the midst of all this, Greg is coerced by his mother into hanging out with Rachel, a classmate he knows only superficially, and who has been diagnosed with leukaemia. While *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl* draws indelibly upon a predominantly teen audience buying into the premise: how would I deal with these situations?, I believe the film's genuine appeal may be more richly understood through an exploration of the film's underlying treatment of three universal principals of human evolution: 1. humankind's adaptation for social cooperation; 2. the significant role played by displays of sadness and grieving rituals in solidifying social bonds; and 3. the function of art and fictional storytelling in providing playful practice for negotiating new and unfamiliar situations, and for imaginatively transcending the emotional anxiety that accompanies the incomprehensible meaninglessness of a life that ends, inevitably, in death.

The film begins with a short narrative introduction, incorporating a voiceover (Greg's) and a mixed media sequence that presents the audience with Greg's attempt to begin the story: scenes of Greg sitting at his desk and pacing around his bedroom are coupled with a clay animation of the narrative method Greg considers adopting. I will return to the discussion of the evolutionary adaptive function of art below; for now, I believe it valuable to note how the film employs artistic meta-narrative devices to draw attention to the artistic space of creation, making the point that storytelling is not merely a by-product of lived experience, but rather, storytelling is inherently interwoven into the everyday fabric of life; the implication is that we live in and through the stories we tell. As the narrative proper begins, we are presented with a number of establishing shots that together evoke a feeling of unpreparedness, disorientation, alienation and fear: the image of Greg slouched against the window of a school bus portrays his indifferent, apathetic attitude; a wide-angle overhead shot of the tree-lined street – school buses coming and going, the American flag centre-framed – is a depiction of familiarity and order; it is an order disturbed as the camera pivots to a birds-eye view, looking directly down the façade of the high school building. The camera pivot technique is repeated a number of times throughout the film; on the surface it is a quirky, artistic flare; yet, considered more critically, the pivot is disorientating, depicting the life of a teenager as having the potential to be flipped on its head at any time. At a more extreme emotive level, the pivot, from what would be the ledge of the building's roof, is the disturbing jumper's perspective of a contemplative suicide. The film, as a whole, does not lend itself to such explicit fearful disturbance; yet there remains, throughout, a lingering anxiety that elicits empathy

and concern for the protagonist and other characters as they struggle to feel comfortable within themselves and inside their social surroundings. Further establishing shots – a crowded stairwell, a chaotic hallway – depict the hustle and bustle of high school; a long shot of Greg zooms into a close-up before the camera turns 180° to a wide-angle shot, focalized not so much on Greg’s point of view, as he looks out upon an inhospitable world, but hovering above, in a consciousness that is somewhat detached from embodied experience, a consciousness that finds voice in a deadpan voiceover giving a reasoned account of Greg’s threat assessment and survival strategy. The camera flips 180° again, tracing Greg’s movement through the hallways as he presents the lay of the land of Schenley High School, what he calls ‘a world unto itself’ (2:50). It is a succinct introduction to the universal fear easily aroused in the individual entering into the potentially hostile world of other people.

[1] In need of a large brain – Social complexity and strategies for survival

Humans seek social connection for a variety of reasons, while wishing to avoid the pitfalls of embarrassing or negative experiences that may lead to social devaluation or outright rejection. Social integration is contingent upon the individual’s capacity for assessing and negotiating the associated risks and rewards. The social brain hypothesis posits that the complex social life of humans made necessary the sufficiently large capacity of the human brain (Oatley 624). In this light, Torben Grodal draws attention to the “complex mental structures” required to assess and negotiate environments that offer opportunities for both positive and negative experiences (123). Accordingly, thinking is based on the generation of mental models that incorporate characteristics and inferences attained from an individual’s experiences in the social world (Oatley 624). One would be hard pressed to think of a more complex and perilous social environment than the hallways of an American high school. At this stage of their life, teenagers are still in the process of developing the rigorous mental structures and emotional capacity necessary for their survival in the ‘real’ world. One way humans manoeuvre in complex environments that require a high level of informational processing is through a highly adapted capacity to recognize patterns, and a propensity to categorize (Boyd “Experiments with Experience” 227). To this end, Greg adopts a system of swift pattern recognition and classification: “By senior year, [he] had mastered the languages and customs of its various sovereign states. The head nods of Jock Nation, the fist bumps of the Kingdom of Stoners, the innocuous witticisms of the People’s Republic of Theater Dorks” (2:52). Greg’s strategy revolves around obtaining “citizenship in every nation. Passports to everywhere ... [being] on low-key good terms with everyone” (3:22). He maintains surface-level friendships without investing fully of himself or committing completely to any single social group, which, he explains, “can never guarantee you total security” (3:18). Greg’s apathetic indifference comes at the cost of his own personal development, for he lacks the kind of

robust practice in problem solving and social interaction that interpersonal contestation and cooperation contributes to the well-rounded development of the individual; as Grodal notes, doing “nothing will not enhance fitness in the long run” (123).

In his homelife, Greg appears to have supportive, loving, open-minded parents; there is evidence of his being positively influenced by his father, a rather quirky sociology professor. He finds support also in the form of a ‘new-age’ high school history teacher, Mr. McCarthy, who Greg describes as “the only reasonable adult in all of Schenley [High School]” (4:54). Greg hides out in McCarthy’s office during lunch break, since the lunch hall is a no-go zone of hotly disputed territory, a challenge to Greg’s non-committal social strategy. Strong parental figures and role models are an integral component in the construction of a child’s potential personhood. In his theory of human culture and behaviour, René Girard points to the observation and mimicry of parental figures as fundamental to the development of human potentials (Palaver). Girard proposes that we use others as a model of how we may understand and enter into the world: “Man is the creature who does not know what to desire, and he turns to others in order to make up his mind. We desire what others desire because we imitate their desires” (Girard 122). Girard’s idea is that children from a very early stage learn by observing and copying their parents, playing and practicing at being the adults they will grow to become. Parents, in the meantime, provide the protective care and support, the encouragement and modeling that will provide the foundations of the child’s readiness for their integration into social life. As children mature, they must learn to balance greater independence and their own self-conscious insecurities with the discomforts and risks of social interaction, confounded by the ever-expanding field of potential friends and foes. Choosing a best friend is an obvious first step in developing social relations away from the protective umbrella of parental care; a best friend is a powerful asset to have at one’s side when negotiating ever-increasingly complex social situations. Greg and Earl appear to be best friends, yet despite the obvious bond, Greg is unable to commit himself to speaking of them as friends, referring, instead, to Earl as a “co-worker.” The “work” refers to their creative projects, clay-animation spoofs of classic films, such as: *Rosemary Baby Carrots*, *The 400 Bros*, *Senior Citizen Cane*, and *ate 1/2*. Greg displays an emotional insensitivity in referring to Earl as his “co-worker;” yet we may perceive a certain logic in his assessment if we view friendship as something we work towards, not a pre-supposed relationship. Greg’s voice-over explains that they “come from pretty different backgrounds, but somehow like most of the same things” (17:20); the implication is that the “things” they like and “work at” together are the very things that develop and signal their friendship. The two “friends” enjoy the classics of foreign cinema, such as Werner Herzog’s *Burden of Dreams* and Truffaut’s *The 400 Blows*, which leads to their creative film projects. According to the novelist and professor of cognitive psychology Keith Oatley, engagement in fiction makes for good practice in “inference making,” for reasoning “what people mean and what kinds of people they are” (621). Oatley cites numerous cognitive psychological studies, along with brain imaging studies, that have found engagement in literary fiction to improve empathy, theory of mind capabilities, and social understanding (619–620; 625). Greg,

as an only child, works toward a comprehension of friendship through practice and experimentation in fictional projects, rather than from an a priori understanding of what friendship means. Art, in this way, provides a mimetic conduit through which Greg may develop his imaginative capacity to understand and enter into complex social situations previously unencountered.

Greg and Earl's homemade movie projects dominate the first half of the film. While the creative projects provide Greg with a tool for developing his social skills, their explicit and creative meta-fictionality within the greater film container exemplify the way in which humans employ art and storytelling as a means of imaginatively exploring potential ways of being, of negotiating uncertainty, and shaping the life they hope to participate in. Adopting ideas from performance studies and the work of theorists such as Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner, we may interpret Greg and Earl's film viewing and creative projects as liminal activities in which strict cultural codes, such as definitions of friendship and the rules of social cooperation, are suspended, in favour of various creative and artistic modes of imaginative play (Carlson 8–19). The idea is that liminal activities give rise to new cultural insights and coping strategies that allow the individual to transition through challenging developmental stages of their life. Similar to Huizinga's conception of play, art and storytelling may be seen as a tool through which culture and meaning arise, rather than a direct representation of what we find in the world (Huizinga 46). 'Huizinga', Carlson notes, 'considers the development or reinforcement of a community spirit or consciousness, "communitas," to be one of the basic features of play' (22).

[2] “Hey bro, I’m not your friend” – Fears of social-devaluation

Though Greg appears comfortable with his social survival strategy, and at ease with his “co-worker” friendship with Earl, a significant challenge comes when his mother coerces him into spending time with a girl from school, recently diagnosed with leukaemia, who he knows only in his typically superficial way. Thrust into a complex social situation by his parents, the situation arouses in Greg a human universal fear, the possibility of social devaluation and rejection. He visits Rachel, and subdues his nervous discomfort through humour and self-deprecation, valuable tools of social bonding. In order to finally convince her that he is not spending time with her out of pity, Greg points to the mutual benefit of social cooperation, pleading with Rachel, “my mom is gonna turn my life into a living hell if I don’t hang out with you” (12:40). Her acceptance allows him to open up in a more honest manner, and in time he admits to his social awkwardness, telling Rachel: “I’m not in a group. I’m terminally awkward ... for a kid like me, in high school ... best case scenario ... just ... survive ... survive without creating any mortal enemies or hideously embarrassing yourself forever” (25:50). As Greg intimates, negotiating social relations is not merely an inconvenience, it is a matter of survival. Earl sums up Greg's fear of

social rejection, explaining to Rachel: “Bottom line, dude’s terrified of callin’ somebody his friend ... and they sayin’, Hey bro, I’m not your friend” (37:20). In response to Greg’s vulnerability, Rachel insists that he join her and her friends in the lunch hall. Greg’s commitment to Rachel compromises his strategy of world-citizenship, and, as he fears, his nervousness leads to social embarrassment and conflict (29:00).

Having developed a genuine care and affection for Rachel, a far greater challenge comes to Greg in the form of having to cope with the very real prospect of his new friend dying. Greg and Rachel’s friendship is nourished on the emotional commitment they invest in one another, and as their bond grows, so too, their sadness and despair intensify. Rachel becomes progressively more withdrawn as she goes through the debilitating effects of chemo. She is scared and upset with how she looks and finds it much harder to deal with than she thought it would be. She laments to Greg feelings that reflect her own sense of social devaluation: “Everyone comes in here and sees me and they’re so clearly repulsed” (41:20). The thought of living in such pain compels her into making peace with the inevitability of death, and she makes the decision to abandon further chemo treatments (1:03:05). Greg’s subsequent anger at Rachel’s acceptance of her own death is understandable, as a reflection of his sadness and confusion; however, his anxiety and incapacity to deal with Rachel’s decision may be more acutely understood as a product of human evolution and his youthfulness. An evolutionary expansion in the neocortex, especially in the frontal lobes, led to higher order executive functions in memory, language, imaginative thought, planning, decision making, regulating emotions and moderating social behaviour. The problem for Greg is that the regions of the brain largely responsible for these functions, particularly with respect to social cognition, undergo significant developmental during adolescence (Choudhury, et al. 2006). As Matthias Clasen notes with respect to the psychological effects of children’s early exposure to “scary media presentations” (162–163), Greg lacks the emotional maturity to cope with the negative psychological consequences of his premature exposure to the complex subject of death.

[3] The adaptive advantages of storytelling

While theorists in the still relatively nascent field of evolutionary literary theory debate where exactly the adaptive advantages of fictional storytelling lie, Denis Dutton’s three types provide a solid foundation upon which to expand (Dutton 187–188; see also Jons-son 2020). Modifying the terminology used by Dutton, evolutionary literary theorists generally allocate the adaptive advantage of fictional storytelling to one or more of the following three types:

- **Low-cost scenario simulation**
- Stories provide the “testing grounds for hypothetical scenarios” (McAdams 156), a form of low-cost, low-risk framework for emotionally and cognitively engaging simulation (Clasen 157).

— **Instruction manual**

Dutton proposes that “[s]tories, – whether overtly fictional, mythological, or representing real events – can be richly instructive sources of factual (or putatively factual information)” (188).

— **Sharing and exploring the mental states of others**

Stories are useful tools for developing theory of mind capacity as an aid toward social cohesion and cooperation.

Brian Boyd’s contributions to the field of evolutionary literary theory are instructive in how we might advance upon Dutton’s classification. I believe that *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl*, in its treatment of the risk-reward aspects of social integration and a teenager’s difficulty to comprehend the meaning of life and death, also provides further insights into how we might offer amendments to Dutton’s classification. To begin, I would argue that the ‘scenario simulation’ category may be absorbed under the wider classification of ‘cognitive play’. Boyd proposes that art is a form of rigorous cognitive play that helps refine our mental capacities, particularly with respect to social cognition (“Experiments with Experience” 230). In this light, drawing again upon Huizinga’s conception of play as constitutive of cultural meaning, storytelling may be seen as an integrative bridge between existing frameworks of embedded knowledge and ideas and concepts that sit beyond the horizon of knowledge; whether these ideas lie hidden in the realm of the unconscious, or await in new experiences. Stories, no matter how far-fetched or ‘unrealistic’, typically contain a readily accessible semblance of the real, of what is already known, often in characterizations that resemble ‘real-life’ situations and concerns. We find this in Greg and Earl’s film projects, which are peculiar and outlandish, yet accessible in their resemblance to the classics of cinema. The adaptive advantage of storytelling is not to be found in its productive capacity to merely generate future-consequential scenarios, of which we will never have enough; rather, it is more likely to be found in the increased cognitive competency to integrate imaginative ideas into existing frameworks of knowledge, so as to better prepare the individual for whatever may come. I believe the second category, storytelling as instruction manual, ought to be reconsidered under the category, vehicle for the transmission of cultural complexity. Once again, Boyd’s comments are revealing:

Art ... can create work worth human attention for a long time— human instances of mastery that last, that have been designed to appeal to other humans, including those still to come, and that therefore embody a trust that humanly achieved complexity can survive even in the face of death (“Experiments with Experience” 231).

Factual information alone is less important than the human ability to share from one generation to the next (and beyond) how specific cultural knowledge and practices facilitated a mastery over one’s surrounding environment; in short, the transference of a record of the relationship between culture and nature.

Brian Boyd is particularly instructive in highlighting the adaptive advantages of art and storytelling toward social cohesion, for it is, arguably, in light of the enhancement

of social bonding and cooperation that storytelling is most bioculturally advantageous. While humans have multiple means at their disposal for accomplishing many of the individual and social tasks required of life, what separates fictional storytelling from other tools, what makes storytelling the Swiss-Army knife of the biocultural toolbox, is its capacity to attend to such a wide spectrum of human universal needs, and to interconnect multiple cognitive functions. The incomparable adaptive advantage of storytelling lies in three specific attributes: 1. Tellability; 2. Accessibility; 3. Flexibility. Fictional stories are (to many at least) vivid and memorable, easy to obtain and share, and generally easy to relate to; stories can be adapted over time to appeal to future generations and different cultures. These attributes reinforce the view that adaptive advantage of storytelling lies not in aiding a quantitative accumulation of facts and hypothetical scenarios, but in exercising and expanding cognitive capacities that allow humans to better integrate new information into existing frameworks of knowledge and to share this information for the benefit and enrichment of social cohesion and the advantage of future generations.

[4] **Sitting here thinking death, death – Life as an artistic preparation for death**

Having examined some of the theoretical underpinnings of the adaptive advantages of storytelling, I would like to return to *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl* and the film's use of storytelling as a means through which Greg deals with Rachel's death in a way that is ultimately life-affirming.

Though it may warrant its own category, I believe the preservation of cultural complexity incorporates within its sphere the universal human need to attain a 'sense of meaning', a sense of understanding life's purpose in view of our inevitable death (Carroll 2018). Death is an unescapable fact of life, our awareness of which is a consequence of enriched high-level cognitive functions, particularly with respect to imaginative thought, memory, and language. The by-product of a rich reflective memory situates humankind in an ever-unfolding temporal space, whose extremes border upon the conjectural uncertainty of what came before and what awaits us in the afterlife. In *On the Origin of Stories*, Brian Boyd observes: "To judge from grave rituals dating back at least 70,000 years, and from evidence of the fear of death and the hope of immortality in the records of early civilizations, the preoccupation with death has loomed large ever since the appearance of a distinctly human culture" (404). If the oldest and utmost fear is fear of the unknown, what greater unknown is there but death? Jonathan Gottschall points out that in light of our ineffable fear of the unknown, "[t]he storytelling mind is allergic to uncertainty, randomness, and coincidence. It is addicted to meaning" (103). Just as the capacity for reflective imagination leads our species into anxiety, imaginative thinking and storytelling may also bring comfort, in providing a sense of meaning and life's purpose, as well as positing possibly comforting scenarios in regard to the afterlife. Is this not how humankind arrived at the universal idea of God? As an act of imaginative

storytelling? Unlike universal fears of predators, contagions, and social devaluation (fears which call for an immediately response in the order of freeze, fight or flight), our imaginative awareness of our inevitable death, the exact timing of which remains largely unknown, gives cause not to fear, but to an anxiety that lingers in the background of our lives. Greg demonstrates clearly his own preoccupation with the subject: “I’m getting all weird about it. And ... I can’t get unweird because despite what you said I’m clearly still sitting here thinking death, death” (23:15). Coerced into making a film for Rachel, Greg is propelled to invest in a subject that he is not yet emotionally ready to deal with. It is not that Greg is fearful of Rachel judging the film. He simply understands that a film will not stop his friend from dying, a film cannot beat cancer. And while art has helped him navigate life and social relations up to this point, the very real prospect of Rachel’s death brings Greg face to face with the existential question, what’s the point of it all: art, life, of anything?

Art and storytelling are the core and container of Greg’s coping mechanism. The container story is the film proper, the one narrated by Greg’s voiceover; it begins with Greg admitting: “I have no idea how to tell this story” (1:02), which draws immediate attention to the difficulties of artistic creation and comprehending the enigma of life. Greg sums up the container story as: “how I made a film so bad it literally killed someone” (2:14). The audience is instructed up front that this is a story that ends in death; yet it is not so much a story about death as it is a story about life, life as story; stories we tell ourselves in order to navigate and lend meaning to life, while simultaneously preparing for life’s inevitable end. Prepared for Rachel’s death, the audience shares in Rachel and Greg’s journey and their respective struggles as a catalyst of social bonding; for, even if we do not watch the film together, film viewing is a collective, shared experience. Greg shapes the container narrative with the aid of animated side-storylines and ironic self-reflection, building layers of artistic expression that open up possibilities of meaning and avenues for interpretation. *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl* may not rank with the likes of *Goddard* or *Herzog*, but it is decidedly and self-referentially artsy; and, as such, it welcomes the audience into what Stanley Fish calls an “interpretive community,” a space of co-creative meaning-making. Oatley explains that when faced with a piece of artistic literature, readers tend to experience their own emotions through the simulations they are running, not those of abstract literary characters; by contrast, faced with a narrative written to persuade, readers’ feelings and conclusions tend to align with those specified by the author (625). If we expand Oatley’s consideration of artistic literature to include non-literary texts such as film, we may understand art films like *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl* as invitations for emotional self-reflection that draw on simulations of imaginary worlds running in the mind of the viewer.

I believe fictional storytelling and art have another adaptive advantage that seems to be under-examined in the evolutionary literary field; storytelling provides a distraction from the negative by-product of our high-level capacity for imaginative thought; that is, an escape from thinking too much, particularly about the meaninglessness of life in the face of our inevitable death. Research by Dor-Ziderman, Lutz, and Goldstein found

that reminders of death, as simple as death-related linguistic stimuli, result in the downgrading of self-sentient predictive processes (9). Whether or not such a coping mechanism has adaptive advantages for the individual remains the topic of further empirical research and discussion; suffice to consider:

Existential philosophers have long argued that boldly facing the prospects of dying; truly knowing we, rather than everybody else, are going to die, is the factor which can summon the mental resources necessary for overcoming a deeply ingrained acculturation and facilitate an existential shift towards a more authentic and meaningful life. (Heidegger [1962] and Kierkegaard [1983] in Dor-Ziderman et al. 9)

In this light, storytelling may provide the necessary elixir to our troubling thoughts, deep-seated anxieties and cognitive inhibitions in the face of death; for, as Brian Boyd determines, focusing on life provides only a marginal distraction to the anxiety of our inevitable death (“Experiments with Experience” 227).

Inside the container story, Rachel works her way through Greg and Earl’s film oeuvre between chemo treatments. At its core, Greg’s film for Rachel represents both purpose and distraction. As though to illustrate the notion of art as creative living, Greg works on the film all winter, doing virtually zero schoolwork. Greg delivers the film to Rachel at the hospital, and before hitting play, he explains the film as the best he could come up with after numerous failed attempts. The film is vivid, abstract and ethereal, devoid of any attempt to eulogize or provide meaning. There is no narrative or speech that we are made aware of. In its geometric abstraction, there are similarities to the Heider and Simmel experiment. Though, in contrast to the Heider and Simmel film, we are unable to impose a narrative upon the visual images, since Greg’s film is only momentarily or partially accessible to the audience. Instead, we are largely presented with Rachel’s reaction to the film, along with images of the reflected light on the walls of the hospital room, as nurses and doctors and Rachel’s mother rush to attend to her, while Greg stands aside, powerless and overwhelmed by grief. Rachel’s complete absorption in the flickering images suggests her recognition of the film as the unspoken connection between Greg and herself; the film speaks for his investment and commitment to her life as the best version of himself, an artistic, playful exuberance beyond rules and strategies and classification. Like a Swiss Army knife, the container and the core fold in upon one another; Rachel watches the film, as we watch, captivated by Rachel’s blank, comatose expression, illuminated by the light of the film in her last moments of life. The low-order effects of Rachel’s blank facial expression convey neither joy nor sadness; rather, we are left with the intersubjective transference of awe (Grodal 129). The abstract meaninglessness of Greg’s film and Rachel’s transfixed expression are a synthesis of life and art, an expression of life as art in a Socratic preparation for death. Greg is ushered out of the room and a voiceover explains that Rachel slipped into a coma shortly after and died 10 hours later.

[5] Sadness as social cohesion

The hospital scene is a genuine tear-earner and evokes feelings of profound sadness and joy. Facial expressions of joy and sadness are contagious, and appear to be hardwired, suggesting that displays of joy and sadness promote social cohesion by creating emotional resonance within a social group; this helps to explain ritual or collective joy and sadness, such as an audience feels when watching a tragic ending, or the bond we feel in attending a funeral, where feelings of overwhelming love, joy and sadness intermingle (Grodal 129). Grodal cites Nico Frijda in pointing out that “weeping centrally expresses helplessness and in that sense is a surrender and detachment response, a giving up of coping” (127). The implication is that watching sad films relaxes our coping mechanisms, opening us up to social bonding and the care of others. As we were forewarned, Rachel does die; Greg is noticeably sad, though the many months of storytelling, creative play and projects have been valuable practice in cultivating social bonds and developing an emotional maturity that will see him through. Family and friends gather at a service for Rachel, which lays bare the social implications of the death of a loved member of a family and community. Funeral and memorial rituals are an integral aspect of social gathering, bonding and remembrance (Boyd “Some Comments” 25). At this stage, the film steps back into the container of Greg’s narrative voiceover, and the audience has a moment to wipe the tears from their eyes and perhaps question the appeal of such a sad film. Torben Grodal points to various hypotheses seeking to explain our attraction to sad stories, though he stops short of fully accepting that we are attracted to sad stories for the boost in mood we gain from perceiving a persons’ relatively sadder story, or that we take pleasure in exercising our own capacity for empathy; instead, he suggests the reasons behind our enjoyment of sad stories can be found in bio-evolutionary explanations and our adaptation for socialization (123). Grodal explains that the evolutionary roots of sadness are rooted in the mechanisms which attach mothers (parents) to their offspring and vice versa (126); he suggests that attachment mechanisms have expanded to support other social attachments, such as pair-bonding, kin bonding, and tribal bonding (126). Grodal draws upon James Averill’s argument that “grief, as a painful response to separation and loss, is a biological reaction: an evolutionary adaptation to secure social cohesion” (130). As the viewer shares in Greg’s grief and sits back to ponder their attraction to sad films, they likely lean in to hug the person next to them, surrendering coping mechanisms and opening up to the care of others.

Finally, the film’s closing scenes lend themselves to an aspect of storytelling that we may trace back to Homer and the notion of *kleos apthiton*, or eternal renown. The idea is that in order to attain a certain immortality one’s deeds in life must couple with a (re) telling of these deeds. Rachel continues to be a present in Greg’s life after her death; she submitted a letter to Pittsburgh State University on Greg’s behalf, in an effort to convince the university to reconsider Greg’s admission request, explaining how he had neglected his academic responsibilities because of his friendship and generous care. This reiterates the lesson Greg’s teacher tried to impart: “Even after someone dies you can still keep

learning from them. You know, their life. It can keep unfolding itself to you just as long as you pay attention to it” (1:10:50). In the letter, Rachel adds that she hopes it works, “because that would mean I have powers from beyond the grave” (1:33:47). Greg also discovers in Rachel’s room evidence of her creative vitality in life and her affection for their friendship far beyond what he had ever realized during the time they shared. Rather than think of this “speaking from the grave” in terms of immortality and one’s eternal renown, we may consider it as exemplifying the way in which storytelling functions as a vehicle of cultural complexity, carrying one’s presence and life lessons beyond the grave for others to continue to learn from. Like the myths conveyed in the stained-glass windows of gothic cathedrals, stories and art are monuments to the people and ideas that bring communities together in remembrance and reflection.

[6] Conclusion

Me and Earl and the Dying Girl overcomes a façade of cliché to present a thoughtful tale of friendship, life and death. Adopting an evolutionary perspective toward the film proves fruitful to uncovering the tremendous value of art and storytelling as a tool of cognitive play. Creative storytelling and art projects can be viewed as liminal spaces through which the individual may practice and develop their capacity for understanding the mental states of others and forging social bonds. Fictional storytelling, particularly of an artistic nature, invites an emotional self-reflexivity through the viewer’s simulation and construction of imaginary worlds. The highly adaptable, engaging, and accessible nature of storytelling makes it a powerful instrument for training high-level cognitive capabilities in language, imaginative thought, planning and decision making, regulating emotions and moderating social behaviour. Finally, the facilitation of cognitive play and practice through storytelling may allow us to more boldly work toward the creation of authentic and meaningful lives as a preparation for the inevitability of death.

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[Western and Eastern Fantasies: Possible Worlds and Isekai in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*]

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[Abstract] *The study presents an analysis of Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland regarding its possibilities considering the function of imagination, mainly drawing on the literature exploring possible world theories. Based on the assumption that a similar yet different world exists, Western and Eastern fantasies meet in one similar concept: isekai (Japanese, meaning 'different world' or 'otherworld'). Isekai is a Japanese subgenre which can also be interpreted alongside possible world theories, and this article aims to show differences and similarities by interpreting Carroll's work. It highlights the presence of alienation, fantasy, focusing on Alice's process of becoming familiar with the new world and on her struggle to understand the phenomena of Wonderland. Moving away from the novel towards isekai, special attention is paid to the position of the reader and the protagonist*

[Keywords] *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland; Lewis Carroll; isekai; fantasy; reader; Roland Barthes; possible world theories; alienation; imagination; children's literature*

[1] Introduction

There are many possibilities when writing about Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*, which is why these novels are often referred to as philosophical goldmines. They are able to capture the attention of both adults and children. We readers often try to identify the purpose and the message of the stories and to come up with colourful and changing answers. This started to make me aware of the possible interpretations this tale offers. In Far Eastern culture, the core concept of Carroll's novels is a common one; a child falls into the unknown and receives help from magical or unusual beings. The concept is at the heart of many tales, but even so, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is one such tale that has captured many hearts, even in Japan.

Japanese traditions and culture are heavily influenced by the Western world, and this influence began after World War II when Japanese society's eyes started to drift towards Europe and the United States. Japanese people began to take pride in their culture and lifestyle, but at the same time, the Western lifestyle started to influence them and became alluring to follow. Japanese society began to change, becoming more open towards the West. Japanese art and the country's overall lifestyle, which was unique and different, started to be well-known in the West. During the 1980s and 1990s, the connection started to deepen among the younger generations, through a new form of art: Japanese animation and comics, also known as *anime* and *manga*. The Western desire to get to know these Japanese art forms is no longer particularly rare; indeed this interest has become strong, and some Westerners want to know even the most trivial details about Japanese culture. This desire has been seen before, in the 19th century, in the form of "Japonisme". This word, first used in the discussion of Japan's influence on France from 1854 to 1910, was coined in 1872 by the influential art critic Philippe Burty (Weisberg 120). The world-famous artist Vincent Van Gogh was also influenced by the movement, and viewers can discover Japanese motifs more or less hidden in his works. For example, in his painting *Self-Portrait with a Bandaged Ear* (1889) we can spot Mount Fuji and a geisha in the background. Even his themes (nature, workers and everyday life) are based on the work of the Japanese artist Hokusai, who mostly made woodblock prints addressing the same topics. Hokusai's pieces were among the first Japanese artworks to become available to a Western audience, but they were also made with this intention in mind; they were whitewashed, because Hokusai's main goal was to sell the prints through Dutch traders. The process of whitewashing was needed because he wanted to make sure his pieces were sold, and he sought to paint a more exotic picture of his country (Weisberg 122). Hokusai's job and life revolved around his art. He sold his art, so his works represented his livelihood. This is another reason why the Dutch traders were important; Hokusai saw the opportunity of a better life. He was able to make a living from his art, but after an accident caused by fire, his quality of life deteriorated and he tried to better his circumstances. The reason I mention Hokusai is that he was one of the fathers of manga art, his work was often based on myths and fantastic creatures, and his prints were the first that made Europeans inter-

ested in Japanese art. The effect of this trend was most widespread in visual art, though it was also represented in various other areas, such as gardening or performance art. Over time, this trend slowly moved towards Japanese pop culture, namely anime and fantasy, which took over the Western world once again.

This is where fantasy and isekai gained their opportunity to show off their strengths and possibilities. Readers do not necessarily need to have a similar cultural or social background; the works provide them with the information they need to analyse and find pleasure and joy in the stories, and that is precisely how they can reach a wider audience. This article tries to answer the question why *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Alice Through the Looking Glass* qualify to be a stepping stone, the starting point on a bridge that could connect Eastern and Western audiences. I focus mainly on the readers' responses, and I demonstrate the different interpretations and opportunities that Carroll's novels offer.

[2] The Theories of Wonderland

If we talk about analysing a book, in this case *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, we should think about its genre. This work is mainly considered to be a piece of children's literature, and it is one of the most well-known fantasy books. As Bettelheim states in *The Uses of Enchantment; The meaning and importance of Fairy Tales*:

Fantasy fills the huge gaps in a child's understanding which are due to the immaturity of his thinking and his lack of pertinent information. [...] The normal child begins his fantasizing with some more or less correct observed segment of reality, which may evoke such strong needs or anxieties in him that he gets carried away by them. Things often become so muddled in his mind that he is not able to sort them out at all. But some orderliness is necessary for the child to return to reality not weakened or defeated, but strengthened by this excursion into his fantasies. (61)

This quote leads us through all the concepts I mention here. First of all, fantasy; according to Rosemary Jackson, who draws on Todorov's definition, fantastic texts and fantasy can be described as follows:

[...] the purely fantastic text establishes absolute hesitation in the protagonist and reader: they can neither come to terms with the unfamiliar events described, nor dismiss them as supernatural phenomena. Anxiety, then, is not merely a thematic feature, but is incorporated into the *structure* of the work to become its defining element. Todorov insists that it is this systematic writing in, or *inscription*, of hesitation which defines the fantastic. (16)

Most of the scholarly literature about fantasy is based on Tzvetan Todorov's work from 1950, *Introduction to Fantastic Literature (Introduction à la littérature fantastique, 1950)*, and both Jackson and Todorov state that good fantasy should show something that is nearly real and enhance the fantastic in it, making both the reader and characters hesitate

(Jackson 16). The world of fantasy only opens itself up to those who know the real world and its rules. In the case of children, their understanding is limited, and they are at a life stage where they are just starting to explore and learn about the world. This can cause anxiety, and children's fantasy novels can help children lift this pressure. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is a perfect example. Alice is full of anxiety, and her concept of reality is relatively easy to bend. With her very limited knowledge, she falls into a new world. She has some ideas about social rules, but her knowledge and personality are fragile. Even so, she knows the importance of intelligence:

“I wonder how many miles I've fallen by this time?” she said aloud. “I must be getting somewhere near the centre of the earth. Let me see: that would be four thousand miles down, I think--“ (for, you see, Alice had learnt several things of this *Alice's adventures in wonderland* sort in her lessons in the school-room, and though this was not a *very* good opportunity for showing off her knowledge, as there was no one to listen to her, still it was good practice to say it over) “--yes, that's about the right distance--but then I wonder what Latitude or Longitude I've got to?” (Alice had not the slightest idea what Latitude was, or Longitude either, but she thought they were nice grand words to say.). (Carroll 7-8)

She wishes to speak and act like an adult, but she is not yet knowledgeable or experienced enough to do so. During the course of the novel, we see Alice as a pre-teen or teen. Her body is constantly changing, not only as a teen but also with the help of magical potions and sweets, and she also adjusts her opinions to fit what other people want to hear. However, this starts to change at the end of the first novel, when she begins to speak her mind and form solid arguments. At the beginning of the novel, however, at the time when she meets the Caterpillar, she realises she does not even know who she is.

After falling into Wonderland, her body immediately changes; she grows large, then becomes small again, showing a lack of permanence. As an adult, the rules and expectations placed on her are entirely different. She will forget about daydreams and childish fantasies and secure a place for herself in the world, a goal which she achieves during the trial at the end of the book. During the course of the novel, it is easy to see that this is much easier said than done, and if it is done by force, her mind could shatter. We can consider Wonderland a place where this transformation from childhood to adulthood can be made smoothly, without harm. This can also be said about fairy tales and other children's books too. Let us consider Peter Pan, where Neverland's golden boy has to face the need to grow up, or the tales about princes and princesses where marriage and love mark the beginning of adult life. Children's literature is a perfect tool to exhibit how different paths yield different outcomes. If you are good and can follow the good path, you shall receive your reward – that is, happiness – but if you act wrongly, you will be punished for your wrongdoings.

According to Bettelheim, Alice's fall into Wonderland takes on a new meaning. She finds herself in a fantastic tale and lives through the story as a child, but we cannot forget how dangerous this is. If she does not grow up, she will be stuck in Wonderland, and she

will lose herself. That is why the seed of self-acceptance is there, and her journey to find herself is crucial. If she is unable to distance herself from her childish ideas, her mind could shatter, and she could remain naive and ignorant of reality forever (Bettelheim 12–13).

Even so, the idea of falling into a fantasy world makes it much easier for children to fantasize about a journey similar to Alice's. This is one of the reasons why Alice is a perfect example of a fairytale heroine. She has a body that can perform miraculous deeds, she is easy to accept, and she becomes everything a child could wish for (Bettelheim 57). Let us recall the very beginning of the tale; how Alice immediately grows up or shrinks into a small child as needed, but becomes normal-sized when that is the most convenient. Also, seeing animals who can speak is not shocking for her. She stops, but she immediately accepts this fact and develops strong bonds, saves countries and time itself, meanwhile managing to find herself as a person and fix her concepts of important things. Despite this, she is avoiding becoming lost in the new world and remembering the original one; Wonderland forces her to do so. At one point she has the opportunity to take care of a baby who is considered to be a pig by its mother but is not initially seen as one by Alice. As Alice also starts to see the baby as a pig, the baby consequently starts to turn into one. Alice decides that motherhood is too strange, and she is not up to the task. Here the reader can see a new stage of age development; being a mother, who is ready to sacrifice herself for her children. Alice sees the responsibilities and duties of motherhood but realizes she is not ready for them.

A similar event occurs when she meets the pigeon. In this particular case, she is seen as a snake who tries to steal the eggs from the nest, appearing as a threat to the older women and mothers with her youth and desires. By the end of the first book, we have seen Alice in every life stage, and in every traditional role women usually play. The careless, helpless child, the awkward teen who has difficulty understanding the adult world, and Alice in the young adult stage, when she learns to put herself first and learns her boundaries. She can be seen as a woman who can be a threat to families, luring the father figure or the child away, yet she can also be a diligent worker who tries to push on and achieve her goals even if it means giving herself up. We see the stage when those who are dragging her down no longer matter, and lastly, with the help of her sister, the reader can see the picture of an elderly, complete Alice. The presentation of these images has its benefits for the children reading the novel. Separating life stages and showing how you can play various roles are a frequent feature of various tales, including *Little Red Riding Hood*. Here, we see the growing child, as well as the grandmother who is in the last stage of her life, and who accepts and adores the young. But the stage of the grown woman is missing. Her role can be seen as someone who sees her own child as a threat, who wants the child's position in life and is afraid of the process of aging; in this case, there is no acceptance.

Works of children's literature are written by adults, and are often written for both adults and children. Marah Gubar, paraphrasing Townsend, writes the following: "Regarding the term [children literature], they [scholars] point out that the possessive 'children's' falsely implies that young people own or control a body of texts that are generally

written, published, reviewed, and bought by adults, and often read by them as well” (Gubar 210). Everything is based on what the authors of the narratives think about children; they try to craft the tale to fit that image. The idea of a child is often simple and pure, yet despite this, children’s books are often full of sarcasm, sexuality, and concepts that are not necessarily understood by children (Gubar 211).

In a fictional, fantastic world, the logic we know from the real world loses its validity, yet when reading Carroll’s work, we try to understand Wonderland. We can see in the two novels that the concept of space and time in Wonderland is completely different from ours. We started with the concepts of fairy tales and fantasy, where strangeness meets concepts or situations that we are already familiar with. This can produce a sense of the “*uncanny*”. One of the first people who wrote about this sensation was Sigmund Freud, in 1919. Freud’s essay “The Uncanny”, also known under its original German title “Das Unheimlich”, locates the strangeness in the ordinary, which can be manifested in things, sensations, experiences, and situations (Freud 1). Rosemary Jackson writes the following, taking into account Freud as well as Kayser and H el ene Cixous’s critique of Freud’s essay:

It “only presents itself, initially, on the edge of something else. [...] for the uncanny is in effect *composite*, it infiltrates itself in between things, in the interstices, it asserts a *gap* where one would like to be assured of unity.” [...] the uncanny as a *mode of apprehending* links fantasy to grotesque art: “The grotesque is a structure... [...] it is the estranged world, our world which has been transformed’. The uncanny, however, removes structure. It empties the ‘real’ of its ‘meaning’ [...]. (39)

Children are looking for something familiar yet at the same time unheard of in their storybooks; a great fantasy therefore has some similarities with reality, but at the same time includes some impossible things as well. The presence of both at the same time can cause the shivering sensation of the uncanny. The line between reality and delirium starts to fade, and the reader’s unconscious mind starts to panic and grasp for familiar concepts. Reality and fantasy try to unify, but time and characters are threatened with dissolution in fantastic texts, the ground rules are in danger, and indeterminacy becomes constant. “Classical unities of space, time and character are threatened with dissolution in fantastic texts. Perspective art and three-dimensionality no longer hold as ground rules: parameters of the field of vision tend towards indeterminacy [...]” (Jackson 27). At this point, the relationship between realism and familiarity is evident.

In the case of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, the role of the Cheshire Cat should be highlighted. He often upsets both the reader and Alice, only to bring the logical order back later on. His purpose is to show the concepts of Wonderland and to make the reader and Alice familiar with them. During this process, he makes us think about basic concepts, but due to his personality as a character, we start asking questions. For example, in the case of the character Nobody, we use a common word, but what if it becomes a name? And why do we have to be careful how we talk about him? Because of this name-related issue, this volume can be considered Nominalist. Nominalism is based on Plato, and it

can be described as the belief that name and form are the same. If you know the name, you will know the form, the purpose, and its existence. Roger W. Holmes writes the following on this:

Alice seems to be a Nominalist, suggesting that names are tags by which we can conveniently denote objects without having to point. But a few pages later she comes to the Wood-where-things-have-no-names and quickly discovers what the Medieval Realists knew: that names have a connotation as well as a denotation. (136)

During the encounter with Humpty-Dumpty in *Through the Looking Glass*, the difference between the Realist and the Nominalist becomes even sharper (Irwin 143). Throughout the two novels, there is a lingering question about meaning and names: the necessity of giving names and the meanings of names are questioned. Later, we find the answer: yes, names are necessary, because they keep something human. During the conversation with the Duchess, Alice realizes that a person is neither more nor less than the name they are given, because society only sees the name as a label, and treats people as if their name described everything about the person behind the name. Furthermore, how they are treated and the opportunities they are given are matched to this prejudiced idea. Based on their name they start to transform into the equivalent of this one-sided description, in addition, the transformation of the original person is happening in every case even if the prejudiced idea is opposed to the original personality. This is often referred to as a “logical absurdity” (Holmes 134), which is a perfect example of how children have a hard time separating themselves from others. With the previously mentioned aids, children can discover the difference between “I” and “not I”, and they can seclude themselves from their milieu. Rosemary Jackson says the following:

At the heart of this confusion is the problematic relation of self to other, the ‘I’ and the ‘not-I’, the ‘I’ and the ‘you’. Todorov divides the contents of fantastic literature into two groups: the first dealing with themes of the ‘I’, and the second dealing with themes of the ‘not-I’. Fantasies in the first group are constructed around the relationship of the individual to the world, with the structuring of that world through the I, the consciousness which sees (through the eye), perceives, interprets, and places self in relation to a world of objects. This relation is a difficult one in the fantastic: vision can never be trusted, senses prove to be deceptive, and the equation of ‘I’ with the seeing ‘eye’ proves to be an untrustworthy, indeed frequently a fatal affair. (29)

Humpty Dumpty brings a new problem into this equation – the problem of language and intent, or more specifically, the lack of intent. “‘When I use a word,’ Humpty Dumpty says in rather a scornful tone, ‘it means just what I choose it to mean — neither more nor less’” (Carroll 169). For example, he uses the word ‘glory’ with an entirely different meaning to what it is supposed to mean, yet he expects everyone to know HIS meaning. For him, glory means the following: “‘I don’t know what you mean by ‘glory’,” Alice said. Humpty Dumpty smiled contemptuously. ‘Of course, you don’t—till I tell you. I meant ‘there’s a nice knock-down argument for you!’” (Carroll 364). To develop this idea further,

let us imagine that someone could come up with an existing phrase or concept, attach a different meaning to it, and expect everyone to know what they mean as a new way of using the word, and join their attempt at language renewal. To do this, a wider audience needs to be familiarised with the word and the new concept behind it, but in the case of Humpty Dumpty, it is questionable whether he intends to let other people understand his meaning. Does he intend to make his concepts known to the world and spread them? Approaching Humpty's terminology from a different angle, a stranger has very little chance of knowing the meaning he attaches to it; however, if he persists, Humpty has a chance to spread his concepts, and at some point he may be able to engage in a conversation with mutual understanding (Irwin 144).

The linguistic side of Carroll's work is much deeper than this essay can handle, but the topic is important nonetheless. In Humpty's case, sometimes his speech can be considered nonsense, because it is grammatically correct, it contains familiar words, yet it is still hard to understand, and furthermore there are no consequences or connections that are associated with our everyday life (Pitcher 594). George Pitcher, in his essay "Wittgenstein, Nonsense, and Lewis Carroll", describes nonsense as something that causes a fundamental and confusing error (593). He also distinguishes two types of nonsense: the type that is clear, which does not hide itself, and disguised nonsense, which he describes as follows: "Disguised nonsense has a surface air of plausibility and naturalness about it, so that it can take in even a sensible man. It has the semblance of sense. But when one examines it carefully and follows out its consequences, its inherent absurdity becomes manifest" (Pitcher 592). Humpty's speech can be considered disguised nonsense, because of its unique pattern and how he presents himself and the reasoning behind his words. With regard to nonsense, Alice is in a special position, as is the fantasy reader. In the case of Alice, she is young and still learning in every respect; her sense of nonsense is still developing, so it can easily be changed or even manipulated. This is why she can easily accept Wonderland and adapt to it. On the other hand, the readers of the fantasy books are prepared to accept and even conquer the nonsense of the new worlds and to have fun with it.

[3] The Possibilities of *Alice*

Let us imagine that we are finally in Wonderland, and this strange world is our reality. We have rules, of course, which are set up by the author, and "Wonderland now exists in its own ontological space" (Garrett 24). Therefore, we own a pocket dimension in the form of a book. Laws, concepts, philosophy, animals, and people are all similar, yet at the same time illogical and foreign. Lewis Carroll's work can be used to explore the possible world theories which claim that our actual world is only one world among many. We call it "actual" not because it differs in kind from all the rest, but because it is the world we inhabit. We can imagine many worlds where certain things happen differently, yet there are some things which remain the same (for example that $2+2$ always equals 4). Every statement can be true in a different world if it is possible in ours (Ryan and Bell 7). Garrett, assessing

definitions of how we can differentiate between various types of possible worlds, writes the following:

‘Possible Worlds’ presuppose a difference between actual and possible existence (or states of affairs). ‘Fictional Possible Worlds’ refers to ensembles of nonactualised possible states of affairs. ‘World’ refers to a closed state of affairs that can be defined in relation to other closed states of affairs. ‘Actual World’ refers to a realised possible world that is perceived by human senses. ‘Textual Actual World’ refers to a possible world that represents the actual world within fiction, but is not a simple model or imitation. (2)

However, this other world is rather strange, and the link between the real and fictional world is made through allegorical association, mostly via ideals and ideas.

Relating to possible worlds, there is another theory that is often discussed: the counterpart theory. According to Alice Bell, we can think about people like frames, and inside the frames, the content can differ to a certain degree (Ryan and Bell 26). I would like to demonstrate this with an example: I am a student now focusing on my research, but I could also say I am a veterinarian, and it would not be a lie, because according to counterpart theory I can assume that there is a world where there is a “me” who is a veterinarian. She is a distinct individual, yet similar enough to be considered my counterpart. Nevertheless, the statement about my counterpart still holds some sort of truth, because in some world I might be a veterinarian. The reason this should be mentioned lies in one of Alice’s traits; the narrator states that she likes to think of herself as two. This can be considered a confession of a mental illness; however, considering Wonderland and the phenomenon of the dream, we could say that Alice is a counterpart, and this can be seen as the meeting of different Alices, who merge into one.

The falling of Alice is brought up several times, and she hints at how she knows this story will one day be written as if Alice knows about the outside world. This leads us to the topic of *isekai*. But what is *isekai*? According to Curtis Lu,

It’s a tough and unsatisfying way of life, and you wonder, *Is this ever going to end?* A sudden wave of dizziness hits you, causing you to stumble. Your trip into the open road, a truck coming full speed right towards you, and you close your eyes. When you open them, you find yourself surrounded by gigantic trees you have never seen before. An unfamiliar animal scurries away from you, causing you to regain your senses. You know it in your mind and your heart. You’ve finally escaped the concrete jungle that was holding you captive to a mundane life. You’re in a new world with new rules where you can begin anew. This is what’s called *isekai*. (2)

Isekai can be translated as “different world”, and as mentioned before, *isekai* as a genre takes place in a different world. The protagonist is often young (mostly a high school student), or if they are older, they often transform into their younger self or even into a different child. The *isekai* genre is just one of the many sub-genres in Japanese media. It can easily be mixed with multiple genres, and the protagonist is often dropped into

a world based on another book, or perhaps a movie. In one of the most commonly known examples, the protagonist falls into a game. Their existing knowledge is often not that useful, or it is too useful (meaning the protagonist becomes overpowered) in the given situation, and the things they are familiar with start to change. The story comes to life again, and power falls into the hands of the narrator. The world treats the protagonist and the reader as unknown acquaintances, and the only certain thing to them is the uncertain. Since *isekai* is so transformative and malleable, audiences can find whichever story suits their personal interests and needs. These qualities seem to suggest that *isekai* is a revolutionary genre with the power to satisfy millions (Lu 6). The author has complete freedom with whatever world they decide to create, which means that no two stories are the same. Moreover, *isekai* is easily accessible to people from various backgrounds, resulting in stories that are both easy to relate to and also effortless to consume. The genre was born in Japan, but it is now popular throughout the entire world.

In *isekai*, we can observe abstract concepts without the interference of our own world, since anything and everything is possible in a fictional world. Moreover, the writer can make it a real test of ethics and morals. In *isekai*, the main character still has the education of our world. He or she is still trying to match their behaviour to what they know, but the pressure of the new world begins to bring out their true personality. Usually, the reader has the same upbringing as the protagonist, and can therefore sympathize with their struggle. At the same time, when the character breaks under pressure, the reader may be judgemental or ask themselves: could I withstand this pressure, or would I do the same? In *isekai*, the individual starts to realize and confront the rules of the new world. They encounter new scenarios that are often violent, for example fighting monsters, various creatures, or humans. They are usually much more powerful in some ways, so when they face a life-and-death situation, their conscience (or the lack thereof) will decide their fate. Most *isekai* incorporate the concept and power of magic, and use the possibilities of fantasy to their fullest. Garrett writes the following in reference to Ryan and Ruth Ronen:

Discussing fictional texts in terms of possible worlds allows us to talk about ‘truths’ asserted in those texts (be they possible, impossible, actual, alternate, non-actual or counterfactual) without reducing the text to a mere representation of the world we live in. This establishes a new textual actual world with its own laws, norms and knowledge — at once complicating and, to a degree, strengthening fiction’s ontological structure because impossibilities become important world-building devices. Therefore, fictional possible worlds can describe impossible states of affairs with a set of modal restrictions (world-building rules) that makes the non-actual possible world ‘true’ in and of itself. (45)

Alice is trying to assert herself in a new world, where everything is new to her. She often questions herself and her surroundings, but the biggest question is whether Wonderland can exist without her or not.

One of the main concerns is how to balance her own world and the eccentric world of Wonderland. Wonderland is illogical, often scary, yet she must try to be herself, the Alice

that everybody knows back at home. Considering Alice's age and this inner conflict, I consider *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* to be a Western example of *isekai*. She knows the differences between the two places (home and Wonderland) and tries to adapt; moreover, she discovers the new world alongside the reader.

[4] *Alice through the Japanese Glass*

Alice's tales have inspired plenty of stories over time. We can think of the movie *Sucker Punch* (2011), directed by Zack Snyder, where mental instability brings the characters into a different world, where they can try to solve their problems. But Snyder was not the only one to see an opportunity in the concept of Wonderland.

We can give more examples, such as *Alice in the Country of Hearts* (ハートの国のアリス～Wonderful Wonder World～) and *Lost Alice: Destined lovers in Wonderland* (2016), a Japanese female-oriented visual novel and an otome game. The game is a re-imagining of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. The popularity of *Alice in the Country of Hearts* is shown by the fact that multiple sequel games have been made, and many manga series based on it have been published. An original video animation adaptation was announced for release in 2008, but it was postponed, and an anime film adaptation was produced at a later date. But before continuing the list of relevant adaptations, I shall also explain the basics of anime terminology, to understand more about the following paragraphs and to show how widespread Carroll's influence is.

Japanese animation has its own terminology, and Christopher Bolton's book *Interpreting Anime* introduces a few different concepts – for instance, the difference between an anime episode, an OVA, and a full-length anime movie – and it manages to delineate the segmentation of the genre. An anime is usually 21–25 minutes long, including an opening and an ending, which are attention grabbers with catchy songs. Most of the OVAs are longer than 25 minutes, but they retain the opening and the ending segments (Bolton 1). The next category is the otome game, also referred to as a female-oriented visual novel. Otome, meaning virgin or pure woman, usually refers to the personality of the consumer, who has little or no romantic experience. The games are full of attractive men and the storylines are mostly neglected, considered less important than the possibility of an emotional response. These novels often offer a safe space and the chance to escape reality, to heal emotional scars, or to feel wanted in a romantic way. To support this, the players can replace the character's name with their own. There are examples of this in *Alice in the Country of Hearts*, where the name is set, but the responses to various scenarios are up to the player, and based on their decisions the story can have a romantic or tragic ending. This kind of escapism is unique to Japanese culture, but it was quickly picked up by a Western audience as well. Bolton also shows that anime, manga and art can all be used as a form of escapism (20–24).

The next adaptation is *I Am Alice: Body Swap in Wonderland*, a new ongoing series in 2022 that is retelling the story of *Alice in Wonderland* in a uniquely hilarious light: Alice switches bodies with a boy, and together they must journey on a crazy quest through

Wonderland. In *Alice in Murderland* (2014), the focus is on the concept of the tea party. Japan has a rich tea culture, but in Alice's case, it becomes a murderous game of survival.

One of the most popular adaptations is *Pandora Hearts*, by Jun Mochizuki (2009). The main protagonist Oz falls into Abyss, which is the equivalent of Wonderland. In the original setting, it would not be a problem, but this Wonderland is the home of human-eating monsters. Here he is saved by Alice, but the character of Alice splits into two: the greedy, black-haired little girl with anger issues who can turn into a black rabbit, and the white, modest, clever Abyss who suppresses every unpleasant emotion. Later on, we discover that Abyss is from the future, and she tries to protect herself from the future pain that changed her into the monster she is now. In this adaptation, Alice is the embodied version of Abyss, also known as Wonderland, and without her, the whole world collapses. This manga raises questions such as what would happen without Alice, and whether Wonderland could survive on its own.

The last adaptation in our discussion is called *Queen of Hearts in Wonderland*, created by Narumi Yuki and Yohachi (2019). This ongoing manga is an *isekai* based on the viewpoint of none other than the Queen of Hearts. The Queen's original soul is dead, and in her body is a girl who loved the original story of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Her goals are to change the fate of Wonderland and to protect Alice, who is surprisingly presented as a boy. The Queen's new personality is liked by her subjects, and Alice has deeper feelings towards her. As mentioned before, the series is still presently ongoing in English (May 2022), and the ending is uncertain at this time, but the recent chapters show how hard it is to be transferred from one world to another, especially if you know your fate and love the story itself. As a reader of Carroll's novel, the Queen wants to keep the ending and the events the same, but at the same time, she has human emotions and wants to live, be happy, and be loved.

There are countless other Alice adaptations, but almost all have the same issue: the sexualization of children. Japanese art has a tendency to sexualize minors or adults with youthful appearances. There are even dedicated words – which have become the names of genres – to describe the look of such people, i.e. *shota* (cf. “young boy”) or *loli* (cf. “young girl”), as well as the fans of the look, i.e. *shotacon* and *lolicon*. Bolton also touches on these genres briefly and writes about how American scholars have had to testify in child pornography trials because of the indecency of the artwork (285). Pornography trials are not that common in Japan, and these genres are quite popular, despite their immorality (as seen from the Western point of view). And here is the problem with Alice: the obsession with this little girl and how they use her character. During my research about the retellings of Carroll's work, I often encountered *hentai* (porn, drawn/animated porn) showing Wonderland's heroine. Japan is often seen as a country that is fond of rules, a society that functions like clockwork and prioritizes the collective over the individual. This is exactly why sexual diversities and anomalies are common in Japanese society. Bolton refers to this as sexual anxiety (III), and it is not uncommon to find *hentai* about snakes and beasts having forced intercourse with powerless humans, or empowered people using weak beasts to pleasure themselves. These themes can also be discovered within the universe of Alice adaptations.

[5] The Uncommon Nonsense

“And what is the use of a book’ thought Alice, ‘without pictures or conversation?’” (Carroll 6) – Alice asks this question at the beginning of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Although the journey of Alice has been illustrated by various artists, this question helps us discover a new layer of the story. Alice finds joy in reading not because of the text itself, but for other reasons. According to Roland Barthes, the pleasure of reading is not something we can easily describe, since it is influenced by the text, our mood, the environment, tastes, and our ability to understand what is written (52). Yet every reader is driven by the desire to learn, which is a passion that cannot be extinguished, and this encourages us to skip through some snippets of text, to play with the text, and to unravel its mystery. These connect the readers, yet we have to distinguish between two types of readers. One pays attention to the twists and turns of the story, focuses on the length of the text and ignores the subtleties of language. The other type slips over nothing, pays attention to language, and prefers the linguistic side of the text; the story itself does not matter, only the way it is written (Barthes 53–54). Yet Alice and most children are somehow different; they are visual, and they need pictures to captivate their minds and help them learn about the magic of books. Alice's method of reading and her choice of books can be discussed, but not judged. Barthes states that as readers, we are not to decide on the quality of the text and should not comment on other people's preferences. We should simply find out whether a text is for us or not. Barthes states that the reader is on a search for a very fundamental feeling, which he defines the following: “that's it for me! This is ‘for me’” (Barthes 13). And this is the point where a connection can be built between different individuals, because pleasure can be a bridge that spans cultural and other differences. The pleasure of the text makes the historical, cultural, and psychological background of the reader disappear, while the strength of taste, values, and memory, as well as the reader's relationship with language, are pushed into a crisis. In fantasy and *isekai*, the reader's location and culture do not matter. The writer provides us with a story, but the real power lies in the hands of the reader, and in the strength and charm of the characters.

In the case of the Japanese interpretations, there is harmony between pictures and texts, and both help us to understand the stories presented. They can be considered “cartoons” or “comic books”, but their content is also made for an adult audience. We can see in the descriptions that the settings of the stories are different, but most of Carroll's characters are easily recognizable, even if they are drawn in different styles. Japan has changed Alice's gender, yet the name has remained the same. It is the same with the other characters: the Hatter always has a silly hat, the Cat has its grin, and the White Rabbit is always late with his pocket watch in his hand. In the case of Alice, she always has a new world or a nonsense situation to which she needs to adapt. Using a young protagonist has its merits, as children have the power and courage to ask questions. They have the ability to grow into anything, and this is what charms the readers of *isekai*: the endless possibilities children can have. In *Pandora Hearts*, the two sides of Alice are shown. On the one hand, she wants to be at her home and tries to fight off everything that has the possibility of preventing that. She is partly a monster of Wonderland, but her rational

side is the one that rules her life. On the other hand, Abyss shows the possibility of losing ourselves in fantasies and in the future. The inspirations for these works are the same; Alice always falls into the unknown, and the new versions of her stories excite readers as much as the original works do. The readers can meet their childhood favourite in a different setting while experiencing a new, possible version of the stories or create one that suits their taste.

But there is a question that still needs to be answered: why are authors choosing children as protagonists? Nostalgia is one of the reasons, but more importantly, children's minds work differently, they pick things up and learn much quicker than adults, as they have not yet closed their minds toward the magical and the fantastic. As mentioned before, this has a dangerous side. The fantastic can distort the mind, making it hard to see the difference between reality and imagination. Even if children's upbringing is normal, just like Alice's, when they encounter the uncommon, they can adapt. The audience and the reader follow this process of adaptation and join in with the journey, rediscovering the joy and excitement of emotions that are not rooted in culture, age, or time. It is only up to our fantasy and our curious mind to discover and see the uncommon as a place of many possibilities, and as a long journey that can free our minds.

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**[news,
announcements]**

Miroslav Černý, a member of the editorial board of the *Ostrava Journal of English Philology*, has already published six books of poetry. His poems have been translated into several languages. Here we publish five of his poems, translated into English by Chris Hopkinson, the language editor of our journal.

PĚT BÁSNÍ / FIVE POEMS

Written by Miroslav Černý

Translated by Christopher Hopkinson

Logistika

přečkat noc
na ničem jiném nezáleží

infinitivem ubránit
podíly na zisku
pádem odzbrojit samotu
když budeš chtít
založíš novou dynastii

v imanentním modu
to znamená
že svého syna připravíš
na válku

a kdo ví
třeba právě tím bude
spasena zem

Logistics

getting through the night
nothing else matters

using verbs to maintain
a share of the gains
using nouns to disarm solitude
if you want to
you can start a new dynasty

in the immanent mode it means
you'll prepare your son for war

and who knows
maybe that will
save the earth

Dire Straits

může to být pravda

ano znám ten samostříl
i tu flotilu co kotví u břehu
a rychle nabírá vodu

možná jsme pouhé terče
v něčích plánech

hroty šípů jsou kameny
na hracím poli
a život po smrti není
než další mělčina

na obzoru

Dire Straits

it could be true

yes I know that crossbow
and the flotilla anchored by the shore
fast taking on water

maybe we're mere targets
in someone's plans

the arrowheads are stones
on a game board
and life after death is just
more of the shallows

on the horizon

Průvodci

jsou dva
jeden pro časy míru
druhý v dobách války

oba němí
žijí spolu u mě doma

doprovázejí mě do práce
z práce
spoléhám na ně
na trampu světem

každé ráno vídávám v zrcadle
černý knírek
a kamennou tvář

prý umí křísit mrtvé

když jsem ale v koncích
a labyrint kolem se hroutí
stejně padám na kolena
a modlím se
k muži
co bydlí o patro výš

v hodinách ve věži
s kloboukem
ze slámy

Guides

there are two of them
one for times of peace
the other in times of war

both mute
they live together in my home

they go to work with me
and home from work
I lean on them
in my journey through the world

each morning I see in the mirror
a black moustache
and a stony face

it's said they can raise the dead

but when I'm at my wits' end
and the labyrinth around me is collapsing
still I fall to my knees
and pray
to the man
who lives on the floor above me

in the clock tower
with a hat
made of straw

Bez diskuse

jeho poslední slova byla
„Ježíš loves jalapeños“
čímž definitivně ukončil debatu
o tom jestli existuje Bůh
jakým jazykem hovořil Adam
a proč důležité okamžiky
vždycky pálí dvakrát

No Discussion

his last words were
“Jesus loves jalapeños”
which put a definitive end to the debate
on whether God exists
which language Adam spoke
and why important moments
always burn twice

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