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Linguistics and Translation Studies

Hedging Expressions in Different Sections of English and Czech Medical Research Articles. A Comparative Study

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Abstract

Hedging is a frequent phenomenon occurring both in spoken and written language to modify the strength of propositions and also their directness. This paper analyses the occurrence and communicative functions of hedging devices in English and Czech research articles drawn from peer-reviewed medical journals. Since scientific articles are not homogenous in structure, the frequency of hedges in the different sections according to the IMRAD format was examined. The research revealed that the most heavily hedged sections in both languages are Discussion and Introduction, followed by Methods in the Czech corpus and by Results in the English corpus. The least heavily hedged section is Results in the Czech articles and Methods in the English ones. However, the communicative functions of hedges are the same in both languages.

Keywords: Hedging, medical discourse, research papers, IMRAD structure

1. Introduction

In most cases, speakers do not express themselves categorically and directly but instead show their relationship to propositions, objective reality and recipients by using various linguistic means depending on the pragmatic effect the propositions are desired to have. When the force of the utterance is to be intensified, speakers use so-called *boosters* (Holmes 1984), or, in different terminology, *strengtheners* (Brown and Levinson 1987), *intensifiers* (Quirk et al. 1985), and *up-graders* (House and Kasper 1981). When the force of

utterances is to be weakened, speakers use so-called *hedges* (Holmes 1995, Lakoff 1972), or, expressed differently, *downtoners* (Quirk et al. 1985), *weakeners* (Brown and Levinson 1987), *down-graders* (House and Kasper 1981), and *softeners* (Crystal and Davy 1975). This paper focuses on the latter concept, hedging – i.e. cases in which speakers or writers attenuate the pragmatic force of their statements in order not to be too direct or exact, rather taking into account what effect their assertions may have on the recipient. Further, they present statements as their personal beliefs and thoughts, which are open to discussion.

Scientific writers do not have to express themselves precisely and explicitly in all situations. One of the reasons for this is their intention to indicate a certain level of uncertainty and doubt about their claims, especially when the accuracy of facts cannot be assured. In such a case, they use hedging expressions, and as a result their statements become more tentative, leaving space for other possible interpretations. In this way, the use of hedges contributes to the dialogic and interactional character of scientific communication.

Meyer (1997) compares the functions of hedging in oral communication and written academic discourse and explains the “paradoxical difference” between them. Hedging in spoken interaction is frequently considered a typical feature of a “powerless speech-style”, whereas one of its functions in written academic discourse is to “strengthen the argument” (21). According to Meyer, this contradiction rests in the fact that the function of spoken face-to-face communication is to “establish, modify and maintain interpersonal relationships rather than to discuss a topic or solve a problem exhaustively and efficiently. This should give more weight to politeness phenomena and should make hedging more desirable and acceptable” (21). Conversely, the aim of academic discourse is to produce “falsifiable” statements. “Claims should be made as strong as possible. The stronger they are, the easier they are to falsify” (21). He also states that the hedging devices used in spoken language differ to a great extent from those used in written academic discourse, or are even unacceptable in such written discourse, e.g. *sort of, I think, I’m afraid, as you may call it*.

Focusing on research articles, hedges are realized in various ways, e.g. as modal adverbs (*possibly, perhaps, probably, etc.*), modal adjectives (*possible, (un)likely, probable, etc.*), modal nouns (*assumption, possibility, suggestion, etc.*), modal verbs expressing possibility (*might, could, would, etc.*), epistemic verbs (*assume, seem, appear, suggest*), approximators (*approximately, roughly, about*), and introductory phrases such as *to our knowledge*.

This paper aims to investigate the phenomenon of hedging as one of the most frequent metadiscourse markers. It compares the occurrence and communicative functions of hedging devices in a corpus of English and Czech research articles to find out differences in the distribution of these linguistic means. Since scientific articles are not homogenous in terms of the occurrence of hedging, this study examines the frequency of hedges in the different sections of articles according to the IMRAD structure, and English and Czech medical research papers are compared from this point of view.

Research articles from the field of medicine were chosen because there have been many studies (Bazerman 1988, Hyland 1998, Varttala 2001, among others) examining the use of hedging in hard and soft sciences claiming that hedging is more prevalent in the latter. Arguments and explanations in soft sciences are not defined as precisely as in hard sciences, where the writers attempt to be as objective and neutral as possible; they are also more detached compared to authors in soft knowledge fields. Claims in soft sciences are

more open to negotiation and discussion because research results may be influenced by contextual factors. However, as we shall see later, hedging is also a frequent phenomenon in hard sciences.

2. Hedging in Scientific Discourse

Hedging devices are frequently used by scientific writers to reduce the illocutionary force of their claims. There has been a certain shift in understanding of what the language of scientific discourse should look like. Originally, when such discourse was associated with precision, it was thought that information should be presented as explicitly and exactly as possible. Yet, as evidenced by Hyland (1994), “research from a variety of disciplines has revealed how academic discourse is both socially situated and structured to accomplish rhetorical objectives [...]. Writing is a social act performed in a specific context for a particular audience [...], and thus the impersonal style which appears to minimise the involvement of social actors also marks the interpretive viewpoint of the writer” (239–240). Even though the situation has been changing recently, and the opinion that academic discourse is full of impersonal claims and objective statements has been left behind, the authors of scientific papers still cannot neglect the requirement for accurate thinking and the fundamental role of reason, as Daneš (82) points out.

Further, the use of hedges causes scientific language to be more dialogic. This indicates that writers take into account the readers and include them in the discussion about the arguments presented. Thus, the communication and transmission of scientific knowledge is an intersubjective and shared activity, and participants in this process constitute a discursive community. Hedging as a communicative strategy thus focuses not only on individual readers, but also on a particular research community by which the scientific author wants to be accepted. He knows that it is not only the argumentation presented in his text that matters, but also the way it is presented. In this connection Hyland (1996) states that “while writers seek to gain recognition in their field by making the strongest claims they can, such claims are likely to challenge existing assumptions of the discipline and undermine colleagues’ research agendas” (434). Therefore, scientific authors use hedging expressions to diminish the imposition and minimize the possible threat their assertions may pose to other members of the scientific community. This is confirmed by Swales, who states that hedges are devices for “diplomatically creating space in areas heavily populated by other researchers” (175). When the author hedges his statements, he shows, *inter alia*, a certain degree of distance from them. At the same time, he expresses modesty and also open-mindedness towards the claims of other researchers. In short, “hedges help negotiate the perspective from which conclusions can be accepted” (Hyland 434).

Some authors have expressed a completely different view of hedging by stating that the use of attenuating devices in scientific texts weakens the strength of arguments presented in the articles (cf. Holtgraves and Lasky 1999; Hosman 1989, *i.a.*). Similarly, Hosman and Siltanen (2006) point out that hedging in scientific texts is assessed negatively by recipients and weakens the argumentation.

Apart from associating hedging with imprecision and vagueness, conveying the author’s modesty, and mitigating the writer’s assertions due to reasons of politeness, there is also

another interpretation of the pragmatic function of attenuating expressions, one which is mentioned by Salager-Meyer. She maintains that such expressions can also be considered “ways of being more precise in reporting results” (3). She continues that “hedging may present the true state of the writers’ understanding, namely, the strongest claim a careful researcher can make” (3). This view is not a novelty in the approach to hedges; however. Rounds (1981; 1982) explains that the function of hedges is not only to make claims fuzzy, but that their use is also associated with negotiation of the objective presentation of the state of knowledge being discussed, which means the precise formulation of scientific claims. The phenomenon of hedging seems therefore to be rather dualistic in nature, as Clemen puts it: “Despite, or perhaps, because of their mitigating effect, hedges can increase the credibility of a statement (e.g. in academic texts). It is in this sense that hedging is better seen in the scope of discourse analysis as opposed to its narrower semantic aspect as prototypical modifier“ (244).

In his study focusing on the pragmatics of politeness in scientific writing, Meyers (1989) proposes that the use of hedges in this discourse belongs among politeness strategies. In this way he advances the theory of politeness formulated for the first time in 1978 by Brown and Levinson (1987) and the concept of “face”, or public self-image. Positive politeness is connected with the effort to maintain or improve face, and thus gain recognition. Negative politeness is characterized by the effort not to be threatened and imposed on by others. Thus, Brown and Levinson understand a scientific claim as a face-threatening act. Hedging may be, in this context, a way in which a scientific writer may avoid conflict. However, this theory of politeness has been criticized by several scholars, e.g. by Daneš (2000) and Schmidt (1980), who claimed that politeness should not be reduced to the “mitigation of face-threatening facts” or to “strategic conflict avoidance”. Schmidt even stated that this theory is a “pessimistic, rather paranoid view of human social interaction in language, viewing politeness as a response to threats of face rather than as an essentially positive phenomenon” (104). Another strongly criticized aspect of Brown and Levinson’s theory of politeness is its alleged universality. However, as Daneš points out, it cannot be applied to all cultures, since politeness is culture-specific (for more details on this issue see Daneš (2000)).

As has already been mentioned elsewhere (for more details see Kozubíková Šandová 2016), many studies concentrating on the phenomenon of hedging in academic discourse in different languages have been published (cf. Clyne 1991, Salager-Meyer 1994, Čmejrková and Daneš 1997, Kreutz and Harres 1997, Vassileva 1997, del Olmo 2005, Martín-Martín 2008, Varttala 2001, i.a.). All these studies confirm the assumption that hedging is linguistically and culturally determined.

3. Corpus Description and Methods

This study analyses a corpus of randomly chosen research articles that were published in British and Czech medical journals with an impact factor (*The British Medical Journal*, *BMJ Open*, *The Lancet*, *Česká a Slovenská neurologie a neurochirurgie*, and *Epidemiologie, mikrobiologie, imunologie*). The periodicals were published in 2014 and 2015. The sub-corpus created from British articles contains 60,619 words, and the Czech sub-corpus

consists of 60,638 words. Only the Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion sections were included in the word count and comparative analysis. Abstracts, tables, references, and notes were omitted. Medical research articles written only by English and Czech native speakers were chosen for this study.

As regards languages, English was chosen because it is the most important and most frequently used language within the international research community. Czech was chosen since it is the author's mother tongue and also because it is in a completely different position compared to English. The number of native speakers of Czech is much lower and the research community is therefore very small. It is interesting to compare these two languages, to identify the differences in the use of hedging devices, and also to determine the extent to which English has influenced Czech in this area.

In both sub-corpora, all hedging expressions were identified, categorized and compared with the aim of determining the occurrence of hedges in different sections of medical research articles and examining the differences between the British and Czech corpus. Since scientific articles are not homogeneous in terms of the occurrence of hedges in the different sections, the frequency of hedging expressions according to the IMRAD structure was examined.

Hedging devices represent a very heterogeneous group of expressions, ranging from lexical and grammatical to syntactic means, or, as Brown and Levinson (1987,146) put it, they can be realized in an "indefinite number of surface forms". Some scholars take a wider approach to hedging and include a variety of language means which other scholars do not consider hedges at all. Moreover, hedging is regarded as a pragmatic phenomenon, so it is equally important to take into consideration the specific context in which a potential hedging expression is used. This study adopts a framework proposed by Hyland (1996), which considers epistemic verbs (e.g. *seem, appear, suggest*), epistemic modal verbs (e.g. *might, may, could*), epistemic adjectives (e.g. *possible, likely, probable*) and epistemic adverbs (e.g. *possibly, perhaps, probably*) to be the most frequent means expressing hedging. Approximators (such as *about, around, roughly or approximately*) were also included in this analysis because they modify the illocutionary force of propositions.

4. The Occurrence of Hedges in Different Sections of Research Articles

In this section I will discuss the incidence of hedges in different parts of medical research papers, as they are not distributed evenly throughout all parts of the papers. Both English and Czech research papers are structured in the same way: Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion.

The content of the sections of British and Czech articles is also more or less the same. In the Introduction there is a description of the topic of the article and a presentation of research aims. The methodology of the research is described in Methods. Empirical findings and quantitative results are presented in Results, and finally in the Discussion section a more detailed interpretation of research findings appears, together with a comparison to previous research into the same topic, the limitations of the results, and also implications for future research.

What constitutes a difference between the English and Czech corpus is the length of particular sections of the articles, as can be seen in Table 1 below. The shortest section in the English scientific texts is the Introduction, with a mere 5,715 words in total, while in the Czech articles it is the Results section, with 9,649 words in the whole corpus. The longest section in the English articles is Methods. In the Czech texts, it is the Discussion section. As various parts of the research articles differ in length, the occurrence of hedging expressions was counted as the frequency per 1,000 words in each section.

Section	English research articles	Czech research articles
Introduction	22.75 (5,715 words)	12.23 (10,306 words)
Methods	7.33 (20,750 words)	4.73 (17,321 words)
Results	7.89 (14,331 words)	2.49 (9,649 words)
Discussion	25.53 (19,823 words)	15.41 (23,362 words)

Table 1 Hedges in particular sections of research articles (normalized frequency per 1,000 words / number of words)

If we look at the difference between the least hedged and most heavily hedged parts of the articles, we find out that in the English corpus it is 18.2, while in the Czech corpus the difference is 12.92. This means that in the Czech corpus hedging expressions are distributed somewhat more evenly.

The most heavily hedged section in both corpora is Discussion, even if in the Czech corpus hedges do not appear as frequently as in English. These results indicate that more than on the results *per se*, authors focus on the interpretation and discussion of the results and attempt to situate them in the wider context of other research results on the same topic. Also, they hypothesize more about what the findings may mean and attempt to formulate more general explanations. It may also happen that the authors are not sure about their results and prefer not to formulate precise claims. All these explanations are reflected in Examples 1 and 2 from the Discussion sections.

(1) *Alternatively, the trend **may be** due to increasing under-recognition of severe mental illness in people with intellectual disability, although the **relatively** high crude incidence rates we found **suggest** that this is not the case. Another explanation **would be** that the true incidence of severe mental illness is falling, **possibly** owing to improvements in public health that have reduced precipitating factors.* (EA 11)

(2) *Secondly, people with hypertension and peripheral arterial disease **may be more likely** to be screened for cardiovascular disease than people without those disorders.* (EA2)

Hyland (1998) states that “one function of hedges is to contribute to a relationship by alerting readers to the writer’s perspective towards both propositional information and to

the readers themselves” (5), which means that hedges are employed to show the author’s attitude both to the proposition and the recipients.

In the following example from the Czech corpus, the authors discuss the limitations of their study. Viewed in the wider context of this article, it also reflects authorial modesty.

(3) *Limitem této studie je však **relativně** malý soubor pacientů s **ne zcela přesně** srovnatelnou vstupní velikostí úchytky šilhání v době vzniku potíží mezi studijní a kontrolní skupinou.* (CA 19)

Using a hedging device, in this case a modal verb expressing epistemic modality, the authors express subjective uncertainty and assumptions about possible factors that influenced the results of their study (Example 4).

(4) *Dalším faktorem **mohl být** podstatně nižší věk našich pacientů ve srovnání se studií CRYSTAL AF a výše zmiňovanou observační studií Zieglera et al.* (CA 2)

Scientific authors sometimes approximate their research results to an ideal or usual state of knowledge, and in this way they aim to express themselves with precision. They modify the strength of their claims by using hedges that weaken the force of their arguments (Examples 5 and 6).

(5) ***Approximately** 50% of prescriptions for antipsychotics in primary care to people without intellectual disability are given in the absence of a record of severe mental illness [...].* (EA 11)

(6) *Příčinou **humánních** kamylobakterových infekcí je **zhruba** v 90% *Campylobacter jejuni* [...].* (CA 14)

Another recurrent feature in the Discussion sections of medical research articles are hedges that weaken the presence of the author in the text. This is a face-saving strategy of the writer, who aims to avoid criticism from other scientific writers. To illustrate:

(7) *[...] although the severity of disability **seems to be** milder than previously.* (EA 3)

(8) ***Zdá se**, že nevýhodu prostorové ohraničenosti má i měření přímého průtoku krve mozkem [...].* (CA7)

The principal communicative function of the Discussion section in both corpora is to summarize research findings and explain results, to draw conclusions, to refer to previous research and to raise questions concerning possible future developments. As Salager-Meyer puts it, “it is in this last section of research papers that writers speculate, argue, contrast and extrapolate from the described results, and at the same time avoid stating results too conclusively so as the readers can note that the authors are not claiming to have the final word on the subject” (19).

The second most heavily hedged section of medical articles in both corpora is the Introduction, where scientific authors formulate their hypotheses and the aims of their research and try to anticipate objective results – while also remaining aware that they are putting forward a single study which cannot be exhaustive and definitive and therefore cannot produce answers to all possible questions. The Introduction contains preliminary hypotheses and assumptions which the authors usually hedge to create some space for interpreting the findings. They introduce their research topic, place it within the context of other work on the same topic and previous research, and explain the need for carrying out such research. Thus, on the one hand, the author shows that he is taking into account the previous work on the topic and (usually) that he respects it, but on the other hand he diplomatically states that there are some gaps in the earlier research which should be filled. This holds for both the English and Czech corpus. To illustrate:

(9) *Having an accurate model for predicting future dementia in population based settings **would be** beneficial for several reasons. Firstly, targeting whole population for modification of behaviour and reduction of risk factors **might not always be** cost effective [...]. A complementary approach **could be** to target high risk individuals by developing a model to accurately identify these individuals as early as possible without being too broad in risk selection.* (EA 13)

(10) *Longer IPIs **may** reflect subfertility, which has been found of be associated with cardiovascular disease (CVD).* (EA 9)

(11) *Několik málo předchozích studií referuje záchyt FiS u cca 3-4% mladých pacientů do 50 let v době přijetí pro akutní iCMP.* (CA 2)

(12) *Pokud by se potvrdila hypotéza, že mezi těmito demencemi existují specifické rozdíly v postižení prostorové orientace a že tyto rozdíly lze účinně měřit, **mohlo by** testování prostorové orientace napomoci v diferenciální diagnostice syndromu demence neurodegenerativní etiologie.* (CA 15)

In the other two sections the English and Czech data differ in terms of the occurrence of hedges. In the English corpus, the third most heavily hedged section is the Results section, followed by Methods; in the Czech corpus it is the other way round, and the least heavily hedged section is Results. However, the difference between the Results and Methods sections in the English texts is not particularly marked. The Czech Results sections were the shortest sections, and were limited only to the presentation of the results of the quantitative analysis; the commentary on the results followed in the Discussion section. Thus, the Czech authors of medical research articles present their results in a more straightforward way than the English writers.

The Results sections in the English articles also presented quantitative results; however, we can also find brief interpretations of these outcomes in the Results sections, especially when the results were not accurate or were rather surprising and the authors might have felt the need to justify them (Examples 13 and 14).

(13) *Although an interaction between lamotrigine and folic acid had not been anticipated, **it seemed** that folic acid was associated with an impaired lamotrigine response in the first 12 weeks.* (EA 6)

(14) [...] *this was not observed in any other sensitivity analyses, **suggesting** that this inverse association **may be** due to chance.* (EA 2)

The Methods sections were the least hedged part in the English corpus. The reason is that the authors simply described their methodology and did not wish to make any firm claims before having at least some research results. Apart from the methodology, the authors also described laboratory instruments, equipment and other devices used for the research. The authors utilize hedges in the Methods section if they are not sure about the methodology used and also when they expect some problems which may occur when they apply a particular research procedure.

(15) *A significant test result suggests that the categorical model is a better fit to the data and a linear time trend assumption **may not be appropriate**.* (EA11)

(16) *After 12 weeks, new treatment for depressive symptoms **could be** initiated as clinically appropriate if a response to allocated treatment was considered to be inadequate or if new symptoms emerged.* (EA 6)

(17) *Výhodné **může být** otevření velké cisterny, čímž mozeček dále poklesá. [...] Je to manévr, který je **většinou** nutný pro realizaci samotného přístupu. Bohužel je málo známo, že **asi v 1% případů může vzniknout** závažná porucha žilní drenáže s hemorhagickou infarzací mozečku a **možnými** fatálními následky.* (CA 5)

(18) *Transkalózní přístup **může být** v indikovaných případech velmi výhodný.* (CA 5)

5. Conclusion

As has been shown, hedging appears quite frequently as a communicative strategy in medical research papers, even though it has often been argued that the language of scientific texts is exact and matter-of-fact. A corpus of English and Czech medical articles which were excerpted from peer-reviewed impact-factor medical journals was examined to determine the occurrence and communicative functions of hedging expressions in particular sections of these scientific papers.

Hedging in medical texts performs several pragmatic functions that were very similar in both corpora. Generally, scientific writers do not want to make claims that could sound categorical, definitive, or face-threatening. Rather, they use hedges to indicate that their assertions are open for dialogue and that they want to involve the reader in the argumentation process. Further, by employing hedging, the authors also reduce their involvement with the scientific claims made in the texts.

Overall, the English scientific authors employed a higher number of hedging devices than the Czech authors and also a wider range of devices. As regards the incidence of hedges across the different sections of research articles, there are slight differences between the two corpora. These differences concern the Results and Methodology sections (see Table 1), and are connected with the character of the articles as such: in the Czech Results sections only quantitative analysis is presented, whereas in the English articles the quantitative analyses in the Results sections are usually accompanied by interpretations and commentaries on the results. The Methodology sections usually contain descriptions of methods used in the particular study, equipment etc.; in the Czech articles, additionally, brief preliminary comments on the possible research results may be found.

The most heavily hedged sections (both in the English and Czech corpus) are Discussion and Introduction, because the writers pay particular attention to the valid interpretation of their claims and research results. Moreover, they hypothesize more about what the results may mean and about possible consequences for future research. What differs is the occurrence of hedges in the other two sections. In the English articles, hedges appear more frequently in Results than in Methods, while in the Czech corpus it is the other way round. This indicates that the presentation of research outcomes is more straightforward in the Czech medical papers. Focusing on the difference between the most and least heavily hedged sections of the articles, we can see that the difference is greater in the English texts, which means that the distribution of hedges in the Czech corpus is more balanced.

The findings of this study mentioned in the previous paragraph are in line with similar research conducted by Varttala (2001), but are different from those presented by Salager-Meyer (1994). According to her results, the two most heavily hedged sections are Discussion and Results. Martín-Martín (2008) focused on the occurrence of hedges in psychological research texts in English and Spanish. As regards distribution across the individual article sections, he found that there were no major differences. In both languages, hedges occurred in the Conclusion and Discussion sections most frequently. These findings may be connected with the specific content of those particular sections and also with what exactly we consider to be a hedging device – because, as I have mentioned, hedges have diverse surface forms. Also, some authors take a wider approach to hedges and consider, for instance, the passive voice in some contexts as an attenuating device.

To sum up, hedging is an important phenomenon and an integral part of any scientific text because it allows scientific writers to present their claims with modesty and appropriate precision. Thus, hedging should be regarded as positive since it makes the writer's arguments more dialogic and open for discussion. It also develops a relationship between the author and the text recipient. However, the results of this study are not conclusive, and further research in hedging in scientific discourse from different points of view is needed.

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Superdiversity of Digital Discourse through the Lens of Linguistic Anthropology

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Abstract

In his seminal 2003 essay 'Language as Culture in U.S. Anthropology: Three Paradigms', Alessandro Duranti assesses the development of the American anthropological tradition, which he divides into three historically related paradigms spanning the period from Boasian anthropology to recent studies connecting anthropology with other disciplines. Following these integrative tendencies, this paper employs Duranti's paradigmatic lenses to examine the increasing complexity and diversity of (not only) the Internet-mediated communication subsumed under the term 'superdiversity'; previous paradigms are revisited in the context of current research across related disciplines in order to investigate to what extent and in what ways superdiversity constitutes a new challenge – theoretically and methodologically – to the study of language in society and culture with a particular focus on digital discourse and social media.

Keywords: superdiversity, linguistic anthropology, sociolinguistics, multimodality, interaction, paradigm shift, social networking sites, virtual communities

1. Introduction

Following a protracted process of paradigm shift, sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology are well placed to engage with the contemporary social changes associated with superdiversity (Blommaert and Rampton 1)

Coined by Stephen Vertovec (2007), the term 'superdiversity' emerged in the light of the growing migration of people and the process of globalization that followed the events of

1989, further supported by the emergence of mobile communication technologies, which has resulted in the precipitation of demographic diversity on one hand and a new diversity of (online) communicative environments on the other. The combination of these two forces brings about increasing levels of complexity and mobility – a challenge encompassed in the term ‘superdiversity’ as an “emerging perspective on change and unpredictability in ever more intensively encroaching social and cultural worlds” (Arnaut & Spotti 2). In fact, superdiversity has been recently brought under the spotlight by a considerable number of contemporary scholars collaborating as part of *The International Consortium for Language and Superdiversity* (InCoLaS), which brings together 13 research centers whose collective effort has made inroads in several domains, including social work, institutional policy, urban and national politics, and (social) media (see Arnaut et al. 2016, 2017 for an overview; Blommaert and Rampton 2011).

In this line of thought, social media are defined broadly: “as digital applications that build on the ideological and technological premises and foundations of Web 2.0 (e.g. Herring, Stein and Virtanen 2013) that allow the creation, exchange and circulation of user-generated content (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010) and enable interaction between users (Leppänen et al. 2015, 3). Social media thus engage with superdiversity in three main ways. First, given the lack of predictability stemming from the new patterns of migration flows combined with augmented means of communication facilitated by technological developments, there is an increasing degree of unpredictability in users’ linguistic, social, cultural, religious, ethnic, familial backgrounds and country of origin. This also means that groups, communities, and other social constellations that bring these users together can be superdiverse in their own right (Leppänen and Häkkinen, 2012). Second, social media grounded in digital discourse¹ provide their users not only with a site and affordances for performing communicative practices, but also virtually unlimited sets of semiotic and linguistic resources for meaning-making as well as evaluation which is constitutive of the ‘post-panoptical’ sociality of social media manifested in a lack of centralized mechanisms of control by the authorities in power. Instead, there is “a shift to forms of grassroots, ‘bottom-up’ and peer surveillance. These are often polycentric in that participants can orient to, and shift between, several competing and complementary orders of normativity” (Leppänen et al. 2014, 114; cf. Blommaert 2010, 37–39). Social media thus represent loosely regulated communicative spaces divorced from strict adherence to ‘standard’ linguistic norms; their social and normative structures are jointly negotiated and enforced by the participants themselves in hardly predictable ways – a symptom of late modernity (Coupland 2010; Leppänen 2009). It follows that the third facet of superdiversity in social media illustrates the lack of predictability in the deployment of linguistic and other semiotic resources that are, in fact, circulated and recycled “in various ways in countless rhizomatic digital media practices mushrooming on the internet” (Leppänen et al. 2015, 4). It comes as no surprise that the metaphors associated with superdiversity build on the notions of flow, fluidity and movement so as to deconstruct the understanding of language and society as something stable and fixed – “whereas bilingual talk used to be analyzed in terms of juxtapositions between grammatical systems (i.e. code-switching), it is now being reconceptualized as bilingual practice that transverses language” (Androutsopoulos

and Juffermans 2). According to Blommaert (2013), these changes render the traditional vocabulary of linguistic analysis insufficient:

In superdiverse environments (both online and offline), people appear to take any linguistic and communicative resource available to them – a broad range, typically, in superdiverse contexts – and blend them into hugely complex linguistic and semiotic forms. Old and established terms such as ‘code-switching’, and indeed even ‘multilingualism’, appear to rapidly exhaust the limits of their descriptive and explanatory power in the face of such highly complex ‘blends’ [...]. And not only that: the question where the ‘stuff’ that goes into the blend comes from, how it has been acquired, and what kind of ‘competence’ it represents, is equally difficult to answer. Contemporary repertoires are tremendously complex, dynamic and unstable, and not predicated on the forms of knowledge-of-language one customarily assumes, since Chomsky, with regard to language. (8)

Although the term *code-switching* has not been entirely discarded (e.g. Leppänen 2012), such ‘multilingual’ encounters have been approached in various contexts associated with superdiversity as *polylingualism* (Møller 2008), *metrolingualism* (Otsuji and Pennycook 2009), *translanguaging* (Creese and Blackledge 2010), or *transidiomatic language practices* (Jacquemet 2005). For example, in their analysis of young adolescents in superdiverse urban societies, Jørgensen et al. (2011) claim that “[t]he notions of ‘varieties’, ‘sociolects’, ‘dialects’, ‘registers’, etc. may appear to be useful categories for linguists. They may indeed be strategic, ideological constructs for power holders, educators, and other gatekeepers [...]. However, what speakers actually use are linguistic features as semiotic resources, not languages, varieties, or lects.” (29). In addition, these semiotic resources involve complex indexicality – they are associated with particular sociocultural values, so, for instance, “values associated with ‘English’, ‘Turkish’, and ‘Danish’ by the local majorities in London, Lefcosia, Ankara, and Copenhagen, are probably different [and] susceptible to challenges, re-valuation, or even opposition” (29). Zooming in on their use of social media, Stæhr (2014) argues that Copenhagen adolescents negotiate and align to these values and normativities through metapragmatic activities such as *crossing* (Rampton 2005), *self- and other-initiated corrections* (Schegloff et al. 1977), *stylizations* (Rampton 2006), and *metapragmatic commentary* (Agha 2007).

Against this backdrop, Blommaert (2005, 2010) champions an ethnographic approach to superdiversity, in which signs are seen as *traces of multimodal communicative practices within a sociopolitically structured field which is historically configured*, with three main points:

- *Ethnography is intrinsically historicizing*, because any form of effectively performed (and ethnographically monitored) communicative practice can only be made meaningful because of its (Bakhtinian) histories of production and uptake by nonrandomly positioned actors. Contrary to what is widely assumed, ethnographic research is the exact opposite of synchronic, snapshot-based inquiry [...].
- The theoretical backbone for the first point can be found in the neo-Whorfian, Hymesian and Silversteinian tradition of linguistic anthropology – not elsewhere, for its

roots (like those of any intellectual enterprise) are not accidental nor freely exchangeable. What was said above about the meaningfulness of the sign is an exact empirical reformulation of that central concept in this tradition: *indexicality*. [...].

- In addition, the effort is driven by an *ethnographic understanding of social 'structure' as dynamic, fragmented and essentially stochastic*, i.e. 'chaotic': while the general vector of change can be determined, the actual outcomes of processes of change are relatively unpredictable, even if they appear 'logical' post factum. Random aggregates of processes generate nonrandom outcomes, and *change is the 'system' we observe*. Note that this is a departure from established Durkheimian-Parsonian understandings of 'structure' as that which dominates the 'large' ('macro') processes in social life. Practically speaking: 'structure' can reside in the exceptional, the near-invisible, rather than in the dominant. The politics of a place is not readable in a self-evident way from the volumes of particular signs displayed in that place [...]. (Blommaert 2016, n. pag., original emphasis)

This paper locates the point of departure for approaching superdiversity in the American tradition of linguistic anthropology mainly for two reasons. First, this tradition builds on a strong connection between ethnography and language analysis which provides fertile ground for the investigation of linguistic practices in the context of superdiversity; and second, "linguistic anthropology has very little institutional presence outside the US, and it is hard to find any graduate programmes in linguistic anthropology in Europe. Intellectually, this potentially increases the need for non-US linguists interested in society and culture to talk to other kinds of social scientist, while at the same time, it also means that there is less oversight of the reproduction or revision of canonical frameworks and procedures, leaving quite a lot of room for innovation (even though this may be quirky and short-lived)" (Rampton et al. 7). This paper can be seen as a small contribution to this transatlantic dialogue; however, before discussing the place and contributions of the superdiversity of digital discourse in the contemporary vocabulary of linguistic analysis, it is necessary to provide at least a brief overview of the notion of diversity in this perspective and its historical paradigmatic developments. Duranti's seminal distinction (2003) will serve as a main point of reference in this effort.

2. (Super)diversity and linguistic anthropology

Undoubtedly, diversity has been a central concern in sociolinguistics as well as linguistic anthropology for most of the 20th century; Dell Hymes (1972) argued that "[d]iversity of speech has been singled out as the main focus of sociolinguistics" (38) particularly with respect to language choice and language change, while Duranti (1997) claims that "[l]inguistic anthropologists have been concerned with similar issues, but they have also faced the complex question of the relation between language and thought [...]" (51); thus, "the notion of diversity ties together the earlier discussions of linguistic relativity and the more recent discussions of language contact and language mixing" (83). Despite the differences, both programs converge in the assumption that variation is a norm rather an exception; something that is largely ignored by formal grammarians who assume that speech

communities are homogenous, and by structural linguistics treating formal properties of language independently. Indeed it was thought that social and linguistic features pertain to separate categories around which a theoretical scaffolding could be built on stable and linear correlations (e.g. Labov's 1963 study of Martha's Vineyard).

However, Hymes (1969 [1999]) eventually contested the ideas of fixedness and stability, saying that "the relationship of cultures and communities in the world today is dominantly one of *reintegration* within complex units" (32). Later, Gumperz and Hymes (1972) defined social and linguistic features "not as separated-but-connected, but as *dialectic*, i.e. co-constructive and, hence *dynamic* (qtd. in Blommaert 2013, 7, original emphasis), which corresponds with Silverstein's (1985) formulation of the 'total linguistic fact': "the total linguistic fact, the datum for a science of language is irreducibly dialectic in nature. It is unstable mutual interaction of meaningful sign forms, contextualized to situations of interested human use and mediated by the fact of cultural ideology" (220). These are symptoms of an epistemological turn towards more context-sensitive, situation-based, and activity-oriented empirical approaches to groups of social actors and the ways they operate with linguistic, semiotic, and discursive resources in achieving their communicative goals: "named languages have now been denaturalized, the linguistic is treated as just one semiotic among many, inequality and innovation are positioned together in a dynamics of pervasive normativity, and the contexts in which people orient their interactions reach far beyond the communicative event itself" (Blommaert and Rampton 1). This has marked a fundamental shift defying the correlational orthodoxies and rethinking the oeuvre of social and cultural theorists such as Bakhtin, Bourdieu, or Foucault – as will be shown in the following chapters.

However, this is not a first paradigm shift in the history of linguistic anthropology; Duranti (2003) presents a critical review of linguistic anthropology in the U.S. tradition as a trajectory of its historical reassessment, seeing the "lack of internal debate among linguistic anthropologists conducting very different kinds of research" (335). For this ambitious endeavor he employs Kuhn's influential notion of 'paradigm' (1962) in order to highlight the quintessential characteristics of each approach, or more specifically, the areas of incompatibility or lack of agreement across paradigms):

The first paradigm, initiated by Boas, was mostly devoted to documentation, grammatical description and classification (especially North American indigenous languages) and focused on linguistic relativity, the second paradigm, developed in the 1960s, took advantage of new recording technology and new theoretical insights to examine language use in context, introducing new units of analysis such as speech event. [...] The third paradigm, with its focus on identity formation, narrativity, and ideology, constitutes a new attempt to connect with the rest of anthropology by extending linguistic methods to the study of issues previously identified in other (sub) fields. (Duranti 2003, 323)

Duranti acknowledges that the relationship between paradigms is complex and problematic in two ways: between the theoretical and methodological foundations of each paradigm, and between the individuals or groups of researchers who are not always willing to fully commit to one paradigm over another. Consequently, he proposes a six-dimensional

definition of ‘paradigm’; that is, “a research enterprise with a set of recognizable and often explicitly stated (a) general goals, (b) view of the key concept (e.g. language), (c) preferred units of analysis, (d) theoretical issues, and (e) preferred methods for data collection” (324):

	First paradigm	Second paradigm	Third paradigm
General goals	The documentation, description, and classification of indigenous languages, especially those of North America (originally part of ‘salvage anthropology’).	The study of language use across speakers and activities.	The use of linguistic practices to analyze the reproduction and transformation of persons, institutions, and communities across space and time.
View of language	As lexicon and grammar, that is, rule-governed structures, which represent unconscious and arbitrary relations between language as an arbitrary system and reality.	As a culturally organized and culturally organizing domain.	As an interactional achievement filled with indexical values (including ideological ones).
Preferred units of analysis	Sentence, word, morpheme, and from the 1920s, phoneme; also texts (e.g., myths, traditional tales).	Speech community, communicative competence, repertoire, language variety, style, speech event, speech act, genre.	Language practice, participation framework, self/person/identity.
Theoretical issues	Appropriate units of analysis for comparative studies (e.g., to document genetic classification or diffusion), linguistic relativity.	Language variation, the relationship between language and context.	Micro-macro links, heteroglossia, integration of different semiotic resources, entextualization, embodiment, formation and negotiation of identity/self, narrativity, language ideology.
Preferred methods for data collection	Elicitation of word lists, grammatical patterns, and traditional texts from native speakers.	Participant observation, informal interview, audio recording of spontaneous language use.	Socio-historical analysis, audiovisual documentation of temporally unfolding human encounters, with special attention to the inherently fluid and movement-by-movement negotiated nature of identities, institutions, and communities.

Table 1. A simplified overview of Duranti’s three paradigms (2003).

The table shows that the object of inquiry has increased in scope as well as complexity (from grammar to language in context and later to various social constructs and processes). Whereas early-days research studied language solely in physical and territorialized environments (e.g. family, tribe, nation, state), today the research foci have been expanded to mobile modes and transnational spaces of communication in order to understand the changing context of local and translocal language practices. In this respect, superdiversity coincides mainly with Duranti's third paradigm, as it offers fresh perspectives on old issues (cf. Blommaert 2015a; Silverstein 2015; Arnaut 2016) but also "an 'umbrella' notion under which it seems possible to tackle the interaction, thereby also emphasizing the importance of the communication technologies that enable and intensify the present-day global flows of people, discourses, and signs" (Androutsopoulos and Juffermans 2).

Unlike in Kuhn's original concept of the incommensurability between concurrent paradigms, Duranti (2003) holds that earlier paradigms are not entirely replaced by new paradigms; in fact, new and old paradigms can co-exist and complement one another, which results in what Peter Galison (1999) calls 'trading zones' – the convergence of different scientific beliefs and approaches based on coordination and the exchange of goods (e.g. information). Galison's trading zones bear a significant value today, especially in the wake of superdiversity pointing to an integrated view of digital language and literacy practices in our theorizing of language, discourse, and communication.

In fact, there have been multiple attempts at transferring the traditional principles and concepts from the domains of linguistics, anthropology, and ethnography to the settings of computer-mediated communication (CMC) in order to explore the new forms of social interaction and civic engagement marked by 'prosumption' – the conflux of consumption and production practices that characterize participation in the milieu of Web 2.0 (O'Reilly 2007; Leppänen and Häkkinen 2012). The general framework for research on the superdiversity of digital discourse (particularly the investigation social media activities and interactions) has been mostly associated with 'discourse-centered online ethnography' (Androutsopoulos 2008) because it typically zeroes in on the emergence of particular linguistic and discourse practices with attention to their communal aspects, their local and situated character, as well as the norms governing the deployment of semiotic resources across various genres and the holistic description of the communities in question (Kytölä and Androutsopoulos 2012). However other approaches also include *virtual ethnography* (Hine 2000), *network ethnography* (Howard 2002), *netnography* (Kozinets 2002), *webnography* (Puri 2007), *digital ethnography* (Murthy 2008), *cyberethnography* (Robinson & Schulz 2009), *internet ethnography* (boyd 2008), *digital anthropology* (Horst and Miller 2012), *cyberanthropology* (Knorr 2011), or *anthropology of the internet* (Hart 2004). Diversity in these approaches signals the necessity of adopting new comprehensive methodologies for anthropological research that will better interpret changing and emergent sociocultural worlds in the superdiversity of digital discourse. The following chapter aims to explain these efforts in greater detail through the paradigmatic prism suggested by Duranti.

3.1 Expanding the third paradigm

Researchers interested in the third paradigm focus on utilizing the study of language as a bridge to other disciplines in order to expand our understating of particular social and cultural phenomena, for example globalization or identity construction and negotiation. Unlike in previous paradigms, language is conceived of as a tool in gaining access to complex social processes contributing to the transmission and reproduction of culture and society which takes human agency in everyday encounters into consideration. However, seeing that language is just one semiotic conduit among many in the multimodal expanse of superdiversity of digital discourse, the current developments expand the agenda and principles of the third paradigm beyond the linguistic as its point of departure. Following Duranti's paradigmatic classification (2003), the current developments are described in terms of (a) general goals, (b) view of the key concept, (c) preferred units of analysis, (d) theoretical issues, (e) preferred methods for data collection.

3.1.1 General goals

The general goal is to use multidisciplinary frameworks to examine the reproduction and transformation of digital discourse and the role of social actors in such processes.

Historically, the research on language of digital discourse has paralleled the development of linguistic anthropology as outlined by Duranti. According to Androutsopoulos (2006, 2008, 2011; cf. Eckert 2012 and Leppänen & Kytölä 2017), there are three waves of studies which largely mirror Duranti's three paradigms.

The first wave of studies was concerned with features and communication strategies pertaining to the new media and the Internet, particularly new communication technologies and their effect on language, *but without taking the contextual factors into consideration* as in the first – *descriptivist* – paradigm, “[t]he data were often randomly collected and detached from their discursive and social contexts, and generalisations were organised around media-related distinctions such as language of emails, newsgroups, etc.” (Androutsopoulos 2008, 1). Nevertheless, this descriptive approach bore fruits in terms of establishing a fairly good understanding of the ‘language of CMC’ and its unique features such as the use of emoticons and acronyms, mechanics of conflating written and spoken features, and principal differences between synchronous (e.g. chat, instant messaging) and asynchronous (mailing, discussion boards) modes of communication (Herring 1996; Crystal 2001). Given the rapid development of communication technologies, the critique of this approach rightfully addressed the long neglected “interplay of technological, social, and contextual factors in the shaping of computer-mediated language practices, and the role of linguistic variability in the formation of social interaction and social identities on the Internet (Androutsopoulos 2006, 421).

The newly sparked interest in these overlooked aspects gave rise to a second wave of language-focused CMC studies that correspond with the concepts and practices of Duranti's second paradigm. Focus has shifted from medium-related to user-related patterns of language use; in other words, from ‘language of CMC’ to ‘computer-mediated discourse’ (Herring 2004). Data collection involved mainly direct contact with Internet

users by virtue of surveys, interviews, and participant observation. This has brought about one interesting corollary which will be further elaborated in the following chapters: “the same questions that linguists had to address in the 1960s, in the early days of corpus construction – such as the distinction between public and private language – have risen again in electronic form“ (Crystal 2011, 14).

Data interpretation started to draw from pragmatics, sociolinguistics and discourse studies in terms of contextualized actions, i.e. situated language use and linguistic diversity. In fact, upon seeing the growing linguistic diversity propelled by the new technologies, David Crystal has distanced himself from the term “Netspeak” as a unified form of language use on the Internet (i.e. ‘language of CMC’) that he coined in his 2001 publication:

The stylistic range has to recognize not only web pages, but also the vast amount of material found in email, chatrooms, virtual worlds, blogging, instant messaging, texting, tweeting and other outputs, as well as the increasing amount of linguistic communication in social networking forums (over 170 in 2011) such as Facebook, MySpace, Hi5, and Bebo. Each of these outputs presents different communicative perspectives, properties, strategies, and expectations. It is difficult to find linguistic generalizations that apply comfortably to Internet language as a whole. (Crystal 2011, 10).

It is necessary to bear in mind, given the growing linguistic variability provided by the Web 2.0 interface, that language is grounded in specific and visually organized environments, while verbal exchanges become more fragmented since they are more dependent on multimodal context. Typical Web 2.0 environments such as content-sharing and social networking websites are characterized not only by multimodality, but also by multiauthorship – their content is produced by virtually unlimited numbers of participants who, simultaneously and independently of each other, weave together intricate combinations of various semiotic modes; hence the need for an incorporation of the analysis of multimodality in the CMC research toolkit (Thurlow and Mroczek 2011, ix–xxv). Indeed, Androutsopoulos (2011) argues that clear-cut independent variables such as gender, region, and age are reflecting mere “scholarly conventions rather than the categories that are relevant to participants in online communication” (280), besides the fact that variables such as age and gender are scarcely accessible due to various degrees of anonymity. Instead, he holds that, in the light of the semiotic complexity and multidimensionality of the current web environments, the potential of variation analysis has been exhausted, and he proposes a new approach that is consistent with what can be called a third wave of studies on digital discourse.

The third wave stems mainly from the second as it attempts to reconcile the elusive “role of linguistic variability in the formation of social interaction and social identities on the Internet” (Androutsopoulos 2006, 421). Moreover, the third wave has been predominantly “interested in connections between online and offline social activities, by default defining (and accepting) diversity, heteroglossia, and complexity as research targets” (Leppänen & Kytölä 2017, 157; cf. Herring 2013). The Internet provides an immensely large repository of potential data about contemporary social practices across ethnical and national

boundaries, yet this rich source has been largely addressed with only more or less established verbally oriented methods, while the very nature of the Web remains multimodal:

Most notably, this applies to the exploration of the visual and multimedia features of the Web (as opposed to mainly verbal utterances and practices), both as a very significant source of cultural information and as an opportunity for improving the nature and depth of scholarly communications. So there is still a need for a more adapted and sophisticated tool or methodology to disclose this cultural data source in all of its apparent and less apparent modalities and to adequately address the interplay between these different expressive aspects as the prime generators of meaning. (Pauwels 2015, 65)

It is no surprise that there has been a growing demand for an integrated tool, a multimodal framework, for analyzing digital discourse beyond the linguistic, which, as previously argued, is just one semiotic among many. For this reason, all forms of communication and interactions (not just verbal) need to be taken into account, as they are constitutive of identity construction, impression management, self-presentation, etc. It is true that the multimodal nature of the Internet is largely limited to only two (super) modes, the visual and the auditory; modes appertaining to the tactile, gustatory, and olfactory senses are dismissed. However, the visual mode contains a plethora of expressive systems not frequently associated with ‘visual’, such as the textual elements (which have to be viewed or heard), typography, layout, and design features. At the same time, the auditory mode (spoken or sung texts, music, noises) also exhibits an increasing number of important aspects related to online communication. It is also necessary to pay attention to co-occurrences and arrangements of different modes such as music, soundtrack, spoken and written language, movement, gesture, set, material object, personal appearance, shot and framing, etc. (Bell and Gibson 566–567).

In order to address the need for a complex model for analyzing online environments, Pauwels (2011) conceived an analytical framework with a structured overview of multiple aspects of websites potentially containing sociocultural meanings in a broad sense. The framework is fully customizable: “new features or options of existing parameters may be added (paradigmatic aspect), while on the other hand the combination of choices that can be made within each of the parameters is virtually limitless (syntagmatic aspect)” (86). In this way, the framework can be easily adapted for a study of particular aspects of social media as well as social networking sites. It transpires from the model that meaning in digital discourse is indeed multilayered, since it is crafted from the rich multimodal and multisemiotic reservoirs of online environments. Interestingly, Duranti’s third paradigm mentions three theoretical concepts pertinent to the third wave of studies which are instrumental in unveiling the processes behind meaning-making on a multimodal basis. The concepts are *heteroglossia*, *entextualization*, and indirectly also *resemiotization*.

The notion of heteroglossia was originally introduced by Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) as “the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between differing epochs of the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles and so forth” (291). Since Bakhtin’s original definition, the term has been modified and utilized in various disciplines, including not

only literary theory, but also sociolinguistics (Lähteenmäki 2010) and linguistic anthropology (Duranti 1992; Smith 2004). What remains important here is that “heteroglossia addresses (a) the simultaneous use of different kinds of forms or signs, and (b) the tension and conflicts among those signs, based on the sociohistorical associations they carry with them.” (Bailey 2007, 257). Therefore, as Androutsopoulos (2011) contends, “heteroglossia does not *occur*, as one might say with regard to language variation, but is *made*: it is fabricated by social actors who have woven voices of society into their discourses, contrasting these voices and the social viewpoints they stand for. [...] Heteroglossia invites us to examine contemporary new media environments as sites of tension and contrast between linguistic resources, social identities, and ideologies” (282–283). In his analysis of the stylized usage of linguistic heterogeneity by a bilingual German musician on her *MySpace* profile, Androutsopoulos (2011) concludes that heteroglossia is particularly useful in (1) analyzing multilayered composition of webpages on multiple layers ranging from single semiotic forms to larger textual units (e.g. posts, videos, etc.); (2) unearthing the ways of juxtaposing linguistic resources to index social, historical, and ideological tensions and conflicts either by a single author or by contributions from multiple participants; (3) revealing the role of institutional and situational contexts that are at play; (4) exploring the global/national and global/local relations as new domains of heteroglossic tension (295).

Similarly to Androutsopoulos, Leppänen et al. (2014) argue that “[c]ommunication in social media involves not only resources provided by language(s), but also other semiotic resources – textual forms and patterns, still and moving images, sounds and cultural discourses – as well as the mobilization of these in processes of decontextualization and recontextualization. The language of social media is thus woven from multiple and intertwined semiotic materials” (113). Assuming that social media represent important platforms for interaction and cultural activities for many individuals as well as social or cultural groups, these platforms offer a plentitude of diverse formats for social interaction and identity performance. However, as has been argued above, identities are scarcely simplistic, transparent or even accessible in a digital environment in the traditional sense as fixed or stable categories such as gender, ethnicity, or age; instead, they are dynamically constructed, negotiated, and performed in communicative activities and interactions – identity is in fact “a situated outcome of a rhetorical and interpretive process in which interactants make situationally motivated selections from socially constituted repertoires of identificational and affiliational resources and craft these semiotic resources into identity claims for presentation to others (Bauman 2000 1). The processes of self-identification and self-perception are thus determined by the linguistic, semiotic, and discursive choices that (dis)associate the social actor with the notions of commonality, connectedness and groupness (Leppänen, Westinen, and Kytölä 2017; cf. Brubaker and Cooper 2000). By investigating five social media discourses (i.e. linguistic material on Facebook, visual material on YouTube and its discussion threads, visual material on web forum discussions, textual interventions on fan fiction sites, and multimodal resources in YouTube rap videos), they examined the processes of resemiotization and entextualization of various semiotic resources as crucial resources for ‘(dis)identification’ and the meaning-making performance of identity in social media in terms of affiliation with commonality, connectedness, and groupness, or, importantly, also disaffiliation from it, if the social actors perceive a communal digression

from their own values: “[t]he kind of semiotic resources that are available to participants in social media activities can be empowering as well as delimiting: they can both provide new opportunities for identification, agency and social action, in which the capacity to use a range of semiotic resources can play a key role, and also impose new divisions, hierarchies and exclusions” (Leppänen et al. 2014, 133).

Additionally, their analysis shows “the ways in which micro-level discourse practices are linked and contribute to global social and cultural processes of change, and have considerable relevance to new kinds of identifications and communality which do not always have a national, ethnic or local basis” (134). This is an interesting insight which testifies against the “widespread determinist fallacy, also prevalent in sociolinguistics, that [the ‘variables’ such as] gender, race, age or status influence the way we speak: *There is no such direct influence, simply because social properties of the situation are not directly involved in the cognitive processes of discourse production and understanding* (van Dijk 4, original emphasis).

In his response to Duranti’s (2003) essay, van Dijk is indeed particularly concerned with injustice done to cognition not only in anthropology, but also in discourse studies: “a study of language and discourse without explicit cognitive basis is empirically and theoretically reductionist and hence inadequate” (qtd. in Duranti 2003, 340). Put differently, without the sociocognitive interface, the gap between societal structures, social situations and interactions on one hand and the structures and strategies of text and talk on the other hand will never be bridged. Van Dijk welcomes the integrative tendencies of the third paradigm, that is, “the integration of the ‘macro’ categories previously banned from interactional studies in sociology and anthropology, such as the role of institutions, groups, power, and domination” (qtd. in Duranti 2003, 340–341). This of course includes not only the linguistic phenomena pertinent to digital discourse – including the specific linguistic forms (first paradigm), the use of language in concrete and culturally significant social encounters (second paradigm) and the role of language in understanding these encounters (third paradigm) – but also other semiotic phenomena constituting the multimodality of digital discourse – because, as Kress & Van Leeuwen (1996) contend, “the semiotic effects are cognizable in many domains and at various levels: at the level of *media* and the *dissemination* of messages – most markedly in the shift from the book and the page to the screen; at the level of *semiotic production* in the shift from the older technologies of print to digital, electronic means; and in *representation*, in the shift from the dominance of the mode of *writing* of the mode of *image*, as well as others” (6, original emphasis). Even Duranti acknowledges that “[I]anguage is no longer the primary object of inquiry but [...] an instrument for gaining access to complex social processes” (Duranti 2003, 332).

Current developments have been thus marked by a reliance on largely multi- and interdisciplinary approaches, including disciplines concerned with the socially situated use of language – such as interactional sociolinguistics, semiotics, discourse analysis, pragmatics, literary and literacy studies, ethnography, and culture studies. However, what needs to be stressed is also the ‘cognitively informed linguistic anthropology’ which, as heralded by van Dijk, is also suggested as an important contour of a next paradigm by Salzmann, Stanlaw, and Adachi: “This is not much a radical departure because [...] an interest in the relationships among language, thought, culture, and mind goes back to the earliest work

of Boas [...]. In short, cognitive linguistic anthropology uses language as the doorway to enter the study of cognition and the study of language-in-use: how people perceive the real physical world, the constructed social world, and the imagined conceptual world” (28–29). In the same vein, the study of cognition can also be extended to the study of the online – digital – world, and it can thus supply sufficient means to examine linguistic behavior in connection with sociocultural and sociocognitive discursive practices in digital discourse – particularly, but not exclusively, in social media networks and online communities.

3.1.2 View of language

Language is viewed as a multimodal social practice in heteroglossic and polycentric participatory culture.

As has already been indicated, language has recently been approached in linguistic anthropology as a social practice through which individuals communicate (i.e. Saussure’s parole rather than langue); that is, in the sense of Bourdieu (1982, 31): “A language is itself a set of practices that imply not only a particular system of words and grammatical rules, but also an often forgotten or hidden struggle over the symbolic power of a particular way of communicating, with particular systems of classification, address and reference forms, specialized lexicons, and metaphors (for politics, medicine, ethics)” (qtd. in Duranti 1997, 45). Bourdieu’s definition of language is convenient because it also converges with the two central tenets of cognitive linguistics, namely that language is an integral part of cognition (Lakoff & Johnson 1980) and symbolic in nature (Talmy 2000). If we accept Lakoff’s (1990) ‘cognitive commitment’ – if we embrace the link between language and other cognitive faculties – then any linguistic analysis must be carried out not only in respect to different levels of linguistic analysis, but also with respect to other mental faculties (40). This leads directly to the second tenet, which is here understood not in terms of Langacker’s cognitive grammar, i.e. “language is an open-ended set of linguistic signs of expressions, each of which associates a semantic representation of some kind with a phonological representation” (11), but in terms of *cognitive semiotics*², i.e. “language is investigated as a coordinative activity, where symbolic patterns are aligned and negotiated to facilitate and constrain social coordination” (Zlatev 4; cf. Tylén et al. 2010). Considering the fact that digital discourse is replete with multimodal symbolic patterns aligned according to various (usually communal) conventions and (usually technical) affordances, it is necessary to view internet users as social actors with varying degrees of competence in understanding and producing digital discourse with respect to these constraints. It may be argued that this competence actually corresponds to the *new literacies*, which can be briefly characterized as follows: “(a) new skills, strategies, dispositions, and social practices are required by new technologies for information and communication; (b) new literacies are central to full participation in a global community; (c) new literacies regularly change as their defining technologies change; and (d) new literacies are multifaceted and benefit from multiple points of view” (Leu et al. 3). Thus, in this theoretical framework, what is new about the term *practice* in cognitively informed digital anthropology is that the practices in digital discourse require certain background knowledge related to the mechanics of the discourse,

in order to co-create its participatory culture with a range of multimodal means provided by the respective technological affordances (cf. Procházka 2014, 2016).

What is interesting from the viewpoint of language is that the technological affordances that support the platforms for participatory culture have opened multimodal corridors of expression which has redefined the view of language use, as Kress insists (2003): “Other modes are there as well, and in many environments where writing occurs these other modes may be more prominent and more significant. As a consequence, a linguistic theory cannot provide a full account of what literacy does or is; language alone cannot give us access to the meaning of the multimodally constituted message; language and literacy now have to be seen as partial bearers of meaning only” (35). Therefore, the view of language as a social practice in digital participatory culture has to account for *heteroglossia* as outlined in the previous chapter, hence the notion of a *heteroglossic participatory culture*.

The term *participatory culture* involves an “ecological approach, thinking about the interrelationships among different communication technologies, the cultural communities that grow up around them, and the activities they support” (Jenkins 7). In an interview with Patricia Lange, Jenkins describes participatory culture as

a term that’s used to describe spaces that are very open for individual contributions, where there is a supportive environment where people can learn and grow and share what they produce. So [it is] everything from video blogging and YouTube, the gaming world to fan fiction. [...] [T]hese are sites where people learn together, create together, grow together, communicate together outside of some of the rigid formal structures that shape school in its current form. [...] [W]e throw ideas out into the world and we bring them back in an improved way because of our engagement with communities. (n. pag.)

In digital discourse, participatory culture, as the name suggests, involves collaborative participation in terms of sharing, commenting, liking, subscribing, uploading, checking in, embedding, remixing, re-appropriating, etc. – consumers become also producers, that is, *prosumers* (Miller 2011). Nevertheless, in order to participate in the digital participatory culture – to use language or any other semiotic vehicle – an individual is limited by not only by the technological constraints afforded by the ‘sites’, but also by his or her background knowledge, which can be further defined through another important term – *intertextuality*.

Since Ruth Wodak accentuated historicity in discourse studies (Wodak et al. 1990; cf. Wodak & Meyer 2001), it may be assumed that every text in every discourse has a certain history – every text may imbued with social, cultural, racial, emotional, and other tensions which are interpreted with all the knowledge the reader possesses, although not necessarily in consonance with the author’s intention. When entering and/or participating in digital discourse (and its participatory culture for that matter), several assumptions should be considered: (1) texts are not structures of presence but traces and tracing of otherness (Frow 45); consequently, (2) these other texts (intertexts) inform and limit new texts in specific ways which are pertinent to the new environment in which they are grounded; and finally, (3) recognizing intertextuality is also an act of interpretation (i.e. reconstruction of meaning). In Bakhtin’s idea of intertextuality (the polyphony of social and discursive forces),

heteroglossia is born because a social actor is “surrounded by the myriad responses he or she might make at any particular point, but any one of which must be framed in a specific discourse selected from the teeming thousands available” (Holquist 69).

Following Kress, this paper argues that the same assumptions should be extended beyond intertextuality to *multimodality*, that is, from textual elements to other constellations of interrelated semiotic elements and their complex combinations (multiplex, multilayered, and nonlinear objects) planted in different environments. It may be argued that specific words and other semiotic resources “come with social and historical associations from prior usage” and their meanings are constantly being shaped in new interactive situations (Bailey 2012, 502). Thus:

[w]e are confronted, in every actual example of discourse, by a complex construction of multiple historicities compressed into one synchronized act of performance, projecting different forms of factuality and truth, all of them ideologically configured and thus indexically deployed and all of them determined by the concrete sociolinguistic conditions of their production and uptake, endowing them with a scaled communicability at each moment of enactment. These dense and complex objects are the stuff of the study of language in society (Blommaert 2015b, 113–114).

Given their historicity, specific bits of discourse are subject to the scalar effect of recognizability – different audiences recognize different indexical values and meanings entailed by the same discourse, which, in fact, discloses the something about the author as well as the audience – “their positions in the stratified sociolinguistic economy that produced the discourse, enabling access to the resources required to create meanings that communicate with different people” (Blommaert 2015b, 113). Echoing Foucault’s ‘orders of discourse’ (1984), it follows that available resources for meaning-making are not accessible to all; those with a lack of access have limited options in participation in the production and transmission of particular discourses because their ability to recognize the historical trajectories of discursive material is restricted and their participative contributions may eventually result in an unintentional meaning effect, such as being misunderstood or disqualified as transgressive, irrelevant, or simply not true (cf. Procházka 2016; Oboler 2012).

The whole situation is further complicated by the *polycentric normativities* in the post-panoptical sociality regulating the use of particular resources for meaning-making in social media; instead of one normative center regulating participants’ activities, they can or are required to orient to several centers in their production and reception of digital discourse (Arnaut 2016, cf. Leppänen & Piirainen-Marsh 2009). The shift from centrally controlled norms to polycentric normativities is sometimes referred to as the ‘practice turn’ (Pennycook 2010; cf. Rampton 2006): “normativities are now also seen as the outcome of various communities of practice and as such they are more fluid and situational than norms which were linked to fairly well-established and territorially bounded speech communities” (Pietikainen and Holmes 9). Revisiting the Bourdieuan idea that “practices are actions with history, suggesting that when we think in terms of language practices, we need to account for both time and space, history and location” (Bourdieu 1977, 2), Pennycook adds that “practices are not just things we do, but rather bundles of activities that

are central organization of social life that is *acted out* in specific places” (2, my emphasis). Here, he departs from the notion of language ‘use’ accentuated by the third paradigm (seeing language as a ‘tool’ for accomplishing interactional achievements) because the word ‘use’ presupposes the pre-existence of language. Instead, Pennycook emphasizes the notion of ‘activity’: “what we do with language in a particular place is a result of our interpretation of that place; and the language practices we engage in reinforce our interpretation of that place” (2); in other words, language is a product of repeated stylizations and sedimentations rather than a predetermined object of analysis.

However, repetition in this way does not necessarily entail sameness or fixity; on the contrary, for Pennycook, it is creativity – “what if we suggest that the rules are not in fact rules but convergent effects of rule-breaking?” (41). Blommaert (2013) develops the argument further in the context of superdiversity: “what has become a ‘rule’ or a ‘norm’ [also] becomes an ideologically saturated behavioral expectation; but such ‘rules’ or ‘norms’ have no abstract existence, they only have an existence in iterative communicative enactment. People need to perform such ideologically saturated forms of behavior – their behavior must be iterative in that sense – but small deviations from that ‘rule’ have the capacity to overrule the whole of norm-governed behavior” (7). For example, in digital discourse, deviations from the ‘standard’ varieties of different languages and their combinations have resulted in more or less homogenous varieties, registers, and styles forming a coherent semiotic habitat pertinent to a specific part of participatory culture and its technological affordances and constraints (e.g. Thurlow and Mroczek 2011; Seargeant and Tagg 2014).

3.2.3 Preferred units of analysis

The preferred unit of analysis consists of communicative practices and multimodal artifacts.

Having outlined the insufficiency of monomodal analysis in the light of the prevailing multimodal superdiversity of digital discourse, it is more preferable to investigate *communicative practices* rather than solely linguistic practices pertinent to the third paradigm. As has previously been suggested, communicative practices are understood here in the linguistic-anthropological tradition (Agha 2007), which puts situated action first; linguistic conventions/structures are “just one (albeit important) semiotic resource among a number that are available to participants in the process of local language production and interpretation, and it treats meaning as an active process of here-and-now projection and inferencing, ranging across all kinds of percept, sign and knowledge” (Blommaert & Rampton 13). Consequently, it is more preferable to investigate the heteroglossic interplay manifested in communicative practices that give rise to multimodal ensembles (Kress and van Leeuwen 2001), referred to here as *multimodal artifacts* – artificially created aggregates of two or more modes forming a unitary whole with a sociocultural significance (e.g. user profiles, Facebook wall, mash-up videos, internet memes, comments on social networking sites, etc.).

Linguistic anthropology has always been interested in the sociolinguistic dimension of human communication and interaction, but the co-occurrence and arrangement of different modes and modalities stood on the periphery of interest until the emergence of the third

paradigm. Recent developments stemming from the third paradigm devote considerable attention to the processes of forging multimodal representations of persons, institutions, and communities in the heteroglossic mosaic of digital discourse. To decipher the heteroglossic mosaic constituted by the multimodal artifacts supported by rapidly developing technologies, the concepts of entextualization and resemiotization are useful because they unearth the principles of recirculation and appropriation of complex multisemiotic material which shapes participatory culture. Entextualization emerged from the domain of anthropology and discourse studies (Bauman & Briggs 1990; Silverstein & Urban 1996; Blommaert 2005), and resemiotization from the study of multimodality (Iedema 2003; Scollon & Scollon 2004). The former follows the trajectories of language (re)use and textual material as resources in meaning-making by decontextualization (extracting the material out of its context) and recontextualization (transplanting and adjusting the extracted material to a new context), while the latter follows trajectories of meaning-making processes across modes and modalities as well as across social and cultural boundaries, emphasizing the need for socio-historical insights into the complex processes behind meaning-making. Moreover, both entextualization and resemiotization provide an analyst with a toolkit for identifying the trajectory of reutilizing textual and other semiotic resources in meaning-making, and, by the same token, in reconstructing particular multimodal artifacts (Leppänen et al. 2014).

An analyst is thus able to examine how social actors co-create participatory culture by mobilizing and deploying linguistic and other semiotic materials not only in identity work, but also in making sense of relations and realities in ways that may complement and intertwine with their activities in physical, offline contexts. According to Leppänen & Kytölä, any ethnographically informed analysis related to the superdiversity of digital discourse (and particularly social media) needs careful consideration and close, long-term observation of the sites, actors, and discourses that are subject of investigation, which should include:

- ensuring that the investigation of complex social media practices is ‘multi-sited enough’ so that salient aspects of the discourses and phenomena in focus are convincingly covered;
- identification of meaningful nexuses of practice and sites of engagement (Scollon & Scollon 2004) in which particular multilingual or multisemiotic practices and styles emerge, thrive, circulate, are transformed, and possibly wither away;
- the delimitation and focusing of investigations to determine where to stop tracing the trajectories in qualitative research with the aim of holistic yet detailed description;
- treating digital practices as grassroots cultural production in which the borderline between producers and consumers of digital discourse is a blurred one, in a world where anyone with an internet connection and a digital device can copy, imitate, edit and circulate different discourses. (148–149)

Further, considering that social actors mobilize various resources in socio-cultural niches regulated by polycentric normativities, some degree of agency is always involved, as they also exert a certain degree of social power manifested (1) in their access and

competence in such activities, (2) in the legitimacy of their claims to reuse the semiotic material, and finally, (3) in the differential values attached to various types of semiotic material (Bauman and Briggs 74–76). This also broaches new ethical challenges which will be discussed in the next subchapter along with other theoretical issues.

3.1.4 Theoretical issues

Theoretical issues include mainly, but not only: the gap between the offline and the online, speed of change, and new ethical challenges.

3.1.4.1 The gap between the offline and the online

Online-offline dynamics pose an important challenge for ethnographically-informed digital anthropology because the Internet may be accessed from virtually anywhere and at virtually any time, making our understanding of spatial and temporal dimensions rather blurred in the light of its superdiversity – and, at the same time, it also blurs our understanding of what constitutes an ethnographic ‘field’ in this regard. For this reason, Varis maintains that “context and contextualization are a critical issue in digital ethnography [due to an increasing number of] polycentric environments in which little, if anything, can be taken for granted” (57). It follows that there is hardly any ‘one-size-fits-all’ or universal approach to digital ethnography, as the contexts vary enormously; rather, flexible and adaptive ethnographically informed approaches should be explored.

Technological affordances and constraints are, for example, one of the main problems for the contextualization of digital communication. In their study about Twitter users, Marwick and boyd introduce the notion of ‘context collapse’. Twitter, like Facebook and other similar social network sites, builds on a *networked audience* rather than a *broadcast audience*, meaning that the latter assumes one-to-many communication where a single broadcaster distributes content to a largely static, geographically bounded anonymous audience, while the former consists of a many-to-many model where audience members take turns in creating and producing content: “managing the networked audience requires monitoring and responding to feedback, watching what others are doing on the network, and interpreting followers’ interests” (Marwick and boyd 17; cf. Drotner 2005); furthermore, in such networked digital environments, people’s networks potentially include people from different social circles (e.g. not only family members, friends, co-workers, but also people they have never met offline). Thus, social media technologies “collapse multiple audiences into single contexts, making it difficult for people to use the same techniques online that they do to handle multiplicity in face-to-face conversations” (Marwick and boyd 1). This brings about significant changes to interpersonal interactions – social actors have to manage tensions between public/private, insider/outsider, and frontstage/backstage performances (Goffman 1959).

The ethnographic approach seems especially helpful in disentangling these contextual complexities shaping people’s communicative practices in digital discourse. In her ethnographic study, boyd (2008) distinguishes four technological properties that shape interaction in digital discourse: (1) persistence (online semiotic material is automatically

recorded and archived), (2) searchability (semiotic material can be accessed through searches), (3) replicability (digital content, made of bits, can be duplicated) and (4) scalability (the potential spread and visibility of semiotic material is great). It is especially searchability and scalability that facilitate the recontextualization and resemiotization of available resources, yet these factors also make the processes highly complex and unpredictable (cf. Rymes 2012). An ‘online corpus’ usually consists of ‘finished’ communicative products which are not only shaped by the immediately observable *online context*, but also by the *offline context* of the physical input. The physical, offline context in which digital activity takes place thus introduces a new layer(s) of normativity for communicative events, and, consequently opening a variety of self-, peer-, and state-imposed dimensions of ‘acceptability’, in a wide array of activities ranging from taking ‘selfies’ at funerals to fomenting political unrest through social media (e.g. during the Arab Spring) (cf. Varis & Wang 2011). It should be borne in mind that online contexts cannot be studied as a singularity; the context of digital communication cannot be reduced to seeming graspable concepts such as ‘Facebook’ or ‘Twitter’, since they are “by no means a consistent or static thing, but an ideological construct shaped by, among other things, the way in which users view this medium in relation to other media, [including offline media]. Hence, the online environments studied cannot be taken as self-explanatory contexts, but need to be investigated for locally specific meanings and appropriations” (Varis 58). However, activities in social media are not organized solely on the basis of local categories and precepts, but are increasingly *translocal* – “participants are orienting not only to their local affiliations but also to groups and cultures which can be distant but with which they share interests, causes or projects” (Leppänen and Häkkinen 18). The heterogeneity of digital discourse outlined in the previous chapters in fact articulates diverse and distinct nuances in how translocality manifests itself in different, situated, and context-bound instances of digital communication.

Turning back to boyd’s (2008) technological properties, persistence and replicability are also crucial for the ethnography of digital communication. The fact that online materials can be easily traced and located holds important implications for digital ethnographers; while the data might be anonymized with nicknames or avatars, it might be still retraced by virtue of its ‘googlability’. Difficult compromises in sacrificing ethnographic detail and accuracy in favor of safety have to be made: “It is the responsibility of ethnographers to see that they do not, for instance, jeopardize political activists in contexts where revealing their actions – or making it easier to establish their offline identities – might put them in danger, or that they are not inadvertently ‘outing’ people with stigmatized sexualities” (Varis 59). This also opens up a related issue about different understandings of what is ‘public’ and ‘private’; semiotic material might be publically available, yet its further use and reuse might be problematic, including for research purposes. In a similar vein, Crystal (2011) raises the issue of inaccessibility; when it comes to such outputs as email, chat, and text-messages, “people are notoriously reluctant to allow their private e-communications to be accessed by passing linguists. [...] The research literature is characterized by a great deal of theoretical speculation but relatively few empirical studies“ (13).

3.1.4.2 Speed of Change

Besides the ‘rapidly growing language corpus’ and the ‘diversity of language encountered on the Internet’, Crystal (2011) identifies ‘speed of change’ as one of the current challenges in research on digital discourses (10–15). It might be argued that the ‘speed of change’ is actually a cause of ‘the rapidly growing language corpus’ – Crystal (2011) in fact claims that digital language corpus now contains “more written language than all the libraries in the world combined” (10). The rapidity of change in digital discourse renders any linguistic generalizations rather dangerous, since they might be out of date as soon as they are written. This is because digital discourse remains grounded in an electronic medium – semiotic vehicles change not only on the basis of new technologies introducing new communicative practices (e.g. blogging, tweeting, etc.), but also according to the design of these technologies, that is, their user interface. Each interface is composed of what van Dijck (2013) calls ‘defaults’ – settings automatically assigned to a software application to channel user behavior in a certain way; however,

defaults in digital environments are not just technical but also ideological maneuverings; if changing a default takes effort, users are more likely to conform to the site’s decision architecture. A notorious default is Facebook’s setting to distribute a message to everyone, rather than to friends only [...]. Algorithms, protocols, and defaults profoundly shape the cultural experiences of people active on social media platforms, [including] the nature of our connections, creations, and interaction. Buttons that impose ‘sharing’ and ‘following’ as social values have effects in cultural practices. (32)

Thus, we may establish a fairly descriptive account of each social network site, but as soon as its architecture changes (e.g. Facebook introducing ‘Timeline’ in 2011, Twitter adding the URL shortener in 2010, etc.), the communicative practices are affected and possibly changed as well. Moreover, even smaller changes, for example in the layout, may bring about significant consequences. In his approach to multimodality, Kress (2009) ascribes layout the status of a mode, even though it does not ‘name’, ‘depict’, ‘enact’ or ‘indicate’ anything; “it does however ‘dispose’, organize and indicate aspects of the social/ontological ‘status’ of representations, as ‘known’ and ‘given’ or as ‘new’ and ‘unknown’”. In doing that, layout ‘orients’ viewers/interactants socially as ‘part of my group or not’ (92). An apt example is the Facebook-inspired redesign of the beleaguered Myspace layout in 2010, in an effort to stop its users from straying to its younger and much more successful competitor (Barnett 2010).

Indeed, social networking sites cannot be studied in isolation; individuals as well as organizations often coordinate multiple profiles grounded in different, yet heavily interconnected, platforms. An individual may, for example, present himself or herself on a personal website with all the information for supporters, partners, funders, etc. However, at the same time, he or she may use Facebook to communicate with family, friends, coworkers, etc.; Youtube, Pinterest, or Instagram to share visual content; LinkedIn to create and maintain professional connections, Twitter to contribute or just keep updated on

matters of interest; and a blog platform to convey more well-formed and sustained, albeit often informal, thoughts.

In other words, a change in one social networking site might also affect other sites, such as when hashtags became popular practice on Twitter during the 2007 California wildfires as a convenient means to distribute news about #sandiegofire; and subsequently, “the use of the hashtag was officially put into effect in July 2009 by the Twitter platform, to be followed in 2011 by Google+ and Instagram, whilst Facebook began to make use of this idea in June 2013” (van den Berg 4). The change might be also extremely abrupt, often due to external (offline) impulses. For example, in the wake of 2015 Paris attacks, a wave of mass compassion and support spread over social media – Facebook prompted its users to veil their profile pictures with a transparent French flag filter, Twitter became awash with hashtags such as #PrayForParis, #PrayForFrance, and for Parisians #PorteOuverte (“#OpenDoor”) to offer their homes as shelter for strangers stranded by the attacks (Buncombe 2015), and Instagram was reported to have 70 million people sharing their prayers for Paris within the first week after the attacks (Laurent 2015). As abrupt as it may be, Lee claims that “[u]nexpected design (or affordance) changes such as these pose real challenges for internet researchers [...] but they are also a perfect opportunity for tracing creative adaptations in people’s new media textual practices” (111). This claim might be of course extended beyond linguistic practices, as has been indicated in the previous chapters.

3.1.4.3. New ethical challenges

Given the rapid speed of change, new ethical problems and challenges emerge in an unprecedented manner (e.g. Buchanan 2004; cf. Markham & Buchanan 2012). Most of the ethnographical and anthropological challenges related to ethical considerations about the superdiversity of digital discourse stem from the elusive, often contested borderline between ‘public’ and ‘private’ in virtual space and its impact on informants, communities, and digital practices (e.g. Androutsopoulos 2013; cf. Kytölä 69–76; Stæhr 25–34). Of course, this has far-reaching ramifications for data collection, analysis, interpretation, and publication. Leppänen et al. (2015) identify three broad strands of ethical questions related to ethnographically informed social-scientific research on digital practices and discourses:

- Access to, observation of and collection of online (and offline) data; the self-positioning of the researcher(s); ethnographic approaches to the (online) communities in focus
- The researcher’s sensitivity towards controversial issues (when selecting appropriate data and rejecting inappropriate data for closer discussion)
- Granting the informants and authors of online data sufficient anonymity (or, alternatively, sufficient credit for their writings). (4)

The limitations of this paper allow only a brief discussion of the new ethical conundrums; therefore, attention is paid specifically to the cornerstone of anthropological and ethnographical enterprise – participant observation. Boellstorff et al. distinguish several fundamental areas in which ethnographers should consider the ethics of the impacts of

their research on informants: informed consent, mitigation of institutional risk, anonymity, deception, sex and intimacy, compensation, and accurate portrayal. First, informed consent in ethnographic research is handled differently than in, for example, biomedical or psychological research because there is virtually no risk of bodily harm or psychological distress; instead, ethnography carries what is sometimes called ‘informational risk’ – leaking private information. What is new for digital ethnography and research in online environments is the situation similar to that “in public areas, where it is not necessary to have every person in an interaction sign an informed consent form – just as there is nothing inherently unethical about taking a picture of a tourist in an open, general area at an amusement park, which is a public place although an admission fee is charged” (Boellstorff et al. 134–135).

Second, if there is a possibility of legal or contractual breach, “ethnographers should assess how to mitigate risks to informants when studying legally sensitive areas that might eventuate in a subpoena” (Boellstorff et al. 136); this applies especially to collected data with potentially incriminating content due to violation of Terms of Service (ToS) and/or End User Licensing Agreements (EULAs).

Third, as a matter of course, ethnographers should avoid an inappropriate disclosure of informant identities or confidential information, including potentially questionable or even illicit conduct. In order to avoid revealing an informant’s identity in published work, it is sometimes recommended to anonymize collective identities “since being able to identify a group often makes it easy to identify individuals in the group” due to the interconnectedness of social networks (Boellstorff et al. 137). However, in some online environments, identities are strongly bound to pseudonyms, so concealing or altering pseudonyms could potentially lead to the loss of significantly important data, even if anonymity is maintained. Case-to-case considerations have to be made.

Fourth, ethnographers should avoid deceptive practices such as assuming a false identity to obtain valuable data; participant observation implies “a certain level of intimacy with informants, in the sense of closeness and deep rapport (Boellstorff et al. 144); thus, it not only unethical to pose as, say, a member of the opposite sex, but also corruptive; such a subterfuge will often lead to inaccurate and dubious representations of both oneself and the subject of the research, rendering the collected data useless. Further, participant observation, by definition, also entails a certain degree of participation in the community – Boellstorff et al. 2012 concur with the traditional conception and disregard the ‘fly on the wall’ approach whereby the observer is hidden and not participating. Contrary to this view, a number of researchers advocate that in the socio-technical milieu of online environments, partial or zero participation (i.e. observation only) is permissible in some cases: “if used as supplementary method not dealing with individuals or sensitive data, but as a way to confirm insights about ways of conduct in a general sense (i.e. practices), a hidden approach could be defended” (Skågeby 416).

Fifth, it has been informally acknowledged that closeness between researchers and informants may result in sexual activity, but until recently this has scarcely received any attention (cf. Kulick and Willson, 1995) along with its unpredictable and frequently unforeseen consequences. Although it is relatively easy to avoid sex, especially in an online community that does not necessarily meet offline, issues of intimacy remain close to the very

core of ethnographic practices; ethnographers might be invited to participate in special events not generally shared with the uninitiated, and their subsequent course of action should uphold ethical standards (Kendall 2009). Another issue with intimacy arises again due to the interconnectedness of social networks; activities in social network sites might be easily tracked, hence the danger of unwittingly exposing sensitive data or negatively affecting further responses within the group or community (e.g. as a result of ‘friending’ some people while ignoring others). Priorities and relevant policies should be established at the outset of ethnographic research.

Sixth, ethnographic endeavors should be always carried out with minimal impact on the communities under study, but Boellstorff et al. (2012) hold that “we should go beyond neutral effect to strive for positive impact. ‘Doing good’ creates a favorable impression of researchers in general and ethnographers in particular, paving the way for future research” (146), yet informants or even the whole community should not become dependent on the researcher, and information about the finitude of the research should be communicated.

Finally, although it is often held to be an imperative of ethnography that it should present the most accurate and faithful portrayal of an informant’s lifeworld, i.e. “*his* native point of view, relation to life, *his* vision of his world” (Malinowski 25) – the feasibility of this endeavor has been recently disputed in the light of the postmodern turn in qualitative enquiry, resulting in what Clifford and Marcus (1986) call ‘a crisis of representation in the human sciences’, which “challenged classic ethnographic norms based on objectivist representation of culture. The postmodern turn unveiled the complicity of conventional social science methods in reinscribing historical oppression” (Jason and Glenwick 72). In response to these criticisms, the traditional ethnographic ontological and epistemological perspectives have been reassessed mainly with respect to recognizing researcher bias and subjectivity, giving rise to a critical approach to ethnography (cf. Brookfield 1987). To reconcile the dissonance, Duranti (1997) states that ethnography is, in fact, characterized by the ability to perform two apparently contradictory functions: “ethnographers must have the ability to achieve a reasonable degree of objectivity by ‘stepping back’ from one’s own cultural experiences in order to achieve an ‘etic’ perspective [as well as] the ability to identify with the community sufficiently so as to achieve an ‘emic’ perspective” (85–86). Further, some ethnographers go as far as asserting that

competence as insider does not make one an accurate observer. In fact, ethnography usually works best when concluded by *an outsider with considerable inside experience*. The reason is that the ethnographer’s job is not to replicate the insider’s perspective but rather to elicit and *analyze* it through systematic comparison between inside and outside views of particular events and processes. This task includes detecting tacit knowledge, something by definition is generally invisible to insiders. (Forsythe 2001, 149, original emphasis)

Considering that digital ethnography has been generally described as traditional ethnography adapted to the study of virtual/online communities (Hine 2000; Kozinets 2002), it should be borne in mind that it does not matter whether one opts for more traditional,

realist, ethnography or critical ethnography (Creswell 93–94) because ethnography is “not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretative one in search of meaning” (Geertz 5), and, as Boellstorff et al. argue, “this does not cast us into a postmodern morass in which all interpretations are equal. Like field sciences from astronomy to zoology, the fact that the value of ethnographic research is not predicated on replication does not mean there are no standards for assessment” (149). Of course, this brief overview only scratches the surface of the digital quicksand; the ethics of the digital social fabrics are constantly shifting as new methodologies emerge together with new technological affordances; therefore, “it is up to us, ethically, as scholars to create, seek out, propagate, and defend adequate standards” (149).

3.1.5 Preferred methods for data collection

Preferred methods for data collection in digital discourse adopt traditional procedures possibly with help of electronic techniques and tools.

Methods of data collection in research on the superdiversity of digital discourse draw on and combine procedures employed in previous paradigms with ethnographically sensitive techniques, approaches, and tools provided by computing services and technologies. Considering the length and breadth of superdiversity, it is virtually impossible to give a full account of the preferred methods due to the emergent character of the phenomenon in question; nevertheless, Androutsopoulos (2013) holds that regardless of framework, general issues related to the collection of online data include:

- The online data of interest to linguists is overwhelmingly written language data. CMC research is therefore confronted with the hitherto marginal status of written language in sociolinguistics [and linguistic anthropology], and at the same time contributes to raising the interest in written language data.
- Written language online is closely related to various semiotic resources, including typography, still and moving images, and screen layout; the media-richness of contemporary digital environments increases the impact of multimodality on meaning-making.
- Modes of digital communication introduce new base-level units in online discourse. Categories such as ‘message’ or ‘post’ must be taken into account when collecting and analyzing online data, and their relation to familiar syntactic and discourse-level units (sentence, clause, utterance, turn, adjacency pair) must be analytically examined.
- In CMC, social contexts can be invisible or only partially retrievable from digital exchanges themselves. Information on participants and their social relationships is often limited for both analysts and participants. New conventions of anonymous public exchange emerge, and traditional operationalization of socio-demographic may be of little use.
- Despite homogeneity at the level of hardware (‘it’s all bits and bytes’), digital language data can be strikingly heterogeneous, especially if researchers do not restrict to

data from a single mode but sample across the range of digital modes, each with their respective semiotic resources, that people use in their online practices.

- Finally, digital data is available in overwhelming amounts, making it difficult to select and focus on one specific sample or site of discourse. (237–238)

The situation is further complicated by the degree of involvement on the part of researcher. On one hand, data can be collected automatically even without visiting the web sites in question (a ‘screen-based’ approach); on the other hand, researchers may choose to elicit data in close contact and collaboration with social actors (a ‘user-based’ approach). Researchers are thus presented with insider (participative) or outsider (non-participative, ‘lurker’) perspective options, or the combination thereof (outsider with inside experience). Even though the insider perspective is generally encouraged in contrast with the outsider perspective, the benefits of their combination enable a greater degree of reflective observation as well as greater analytical scope corresponding with the degree of insider knowledge about the interactional and technical precepts of the communicative space in question, which is also helpful in recruiting key informants who might be instrumental in other methods of data collection traditionally accompanying observation – document collection and interviews. The former was historically limited mostly to textual material in the sense of the first paradigm, but audio and later audiovisual recording possibilities paved the way for documenting and analyzing social interactions on a multimodal basis. Thus, for instance, screenshots or snapshots may present a convenient rich container of structural and contextual information complementing textual material (e.g. log files) in both a synchronic and diachronic manner (i.e. taking screenshots or snapshots over a period of time). In digital discourse, document collection might be narrowed down to a specific online site (SNS, blog, forum, etc.) or multiple sites by virtue of refined search options and techniques by both general (e.g. Google) or specialized (e.g. Boardreader, Omigli, Blogpulse) search engines (Skågeby 415). The latter, online interviews, might be conducted synchronously (via e.g. instant messaging) or asynchronously (via e.g. email), yet both types carry several benefits as well as drawbacks in comparison with traditional face-to-face interviews (see e.g. Crichton & Kinash 2003)

As far as virtual communities are concerned, participant observation remains one of the most common qualitative methods for obtaining data. Besides SNSs, participant observation has also proved to be a highly useful method in anthropological explorations of a variety of virtual communities grounded in Massive Multiplayer Online Games (MMOGs) such as *World of Warcraft* (Nardi 2010) or *Second Life* (Boellstorff 2008). Additionally, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and other virtual learning social environments have also received significant attention from anthropologists (e.g. Flamenbaum et al. 2014). Nevertheless, each approach has to grapple with a number of challenges associated with superdiversity, namely: mobility, complexness, and unpredictability (Blommaert 2013). First, the fluidity of (virtual) communities – people might join the communities only for a short period of time, making it difficult to identify and track interactions constituting social practices, identity construction, relationships, and behavior patterns – all of which are motivated by internal as well as external forces driven by constant change, generating complex yet coherent systems. This creates a degree of unpredictability in what

may be observed, hence the need for closer ethnographic inspection preferably combined with other methods. Further, there is the inconsistent and fleeting of nature of social interactions – not all interactions are thematically relevant, coherent, or acceptable within the purview of a community (e.g. trolling, flaming, phishing, etc.); moreover, some interactions are not archived or easily accessible (e.g. private chat exchanges). Finally, the overall shortage of information about the mechanics of community dynamics – there are “very little critical insights on what constitutes practice in these communities, how networked media facilitate existing or new practices and how online media practice intertwines with offline practice” (Akoumianakis 2011, 36).

Alternatively, advances in computational capacities offer some novel quantitative ways of collecting data, namely via data mining techniques. Countless Internet users are generating digital traces of their identity and activities on a daily basis, making ‘user-generated’ content as one of the defining characteristics of participatory culture. In the study of SNSs, social media mining is a useful method for collecting, analyzing and extracting meaningful patterns from these traces (Zafarani et al. 2014). Several tools and approaches have been systematically employed in this respect; for example, *content analysis* that reduces rich data sets into counts serving as a basis for the identification of overall trends and linguistic norms (Herring et al. 2006), *social network analysis* for delimiting the bounds of a community and delineating its participants’ relationships so as to operationalize social context in detail (e.g. Carrington, Scott, and Wasserman 2005), and *crawling agents* or *devices*³ for automatized collection of larger amounts of quantifiable data in a relatively time-efficient and cost-effective manner (e.g. Krishnamurthy, Gill, and Arlitt 2008). The combination of these approaches and tools enables cross-validation of information, facilitates the enrichment of data, and allows comparison of data from a variety of sources (for a full overview see Daniel 2011).

The latest methodological innovations frequently rely on conflating qualitative and quantitative methods in an effort to establish a comprehensive and non-reductive account of interactions in digital discourse. Although they are not frequently associated with the line of research followed in this paper, these multi-method models combine several approaches in concert with each other, and thus dispelling or mitigating the limitations of each approach, which might be helpful in addressing some of the challenges posed by superdiversity.

4. Conclusion

Interestingly, nearly all contributors to the mounting literature on superdiversity received their initial training in applied linguistics (in Europe) while only a small minority are trained anthropologists, yet much of the work done on superdiversity (not only of digital discourse) has been both directly and indirectly inspired by the American tradition and developments in linguistic anthropology and ethnography, especially the tradition established by Hymes, Gumperz, and Silverstein. In fact, both European-based sociolinguistics and US-based linguistic anthropology helped to dismantle the nation-state imagination (i.e. languages are separate entities delimited by national boundaries which define the criteria of belonging and membership of a national community; a view that identifies

the ‘transnational’ and ‘global’ flows as deviant patterns) (Blommaert 2015a, 82–83; cf. Arnaut 2016). Contemporary scholars interested in critical and ethnographic approaches to the social changes brought about by globalization (particularly in terms of social networks) have been loosely organized under the term *new sociolinguistics* (Heller 2007; Blommaert 2010), but its roots can be found in anthropology as its followers seek to provide a more holistic understanding of the increasing diversity of linguistic forms as well as the significance of space, culture, and social semiotics in multilingual environments, which highlights the convergence between linguistic ethnography and discourse studies (Leppänen & Kytölä 157). Indeed, superdiversity should be seen as a point of convergence or nexus of developments, and this paper focuses particularly on developments in research on communicative activities and interaction in digital discourse.

Mediated interaction has become available to people and communities around the world, leading to increased digital media communication that facilitates connectedness and enables collaborative content production via the affordances of computer and mobile devices. It is shown that the contemporary vocabulary in the study of language in society and culture is undergoing a considerable revision given the increasing granularity of diversity, both offline and online.

Digital communication is perceived as an interplay of various semiotic vehicles constrained by the respective communicative environment and its technological affordances. The focus is not so much on language systems as on languages as emergent forms from contexts of interaction, as well as on creative semiotic practices across the boundaries of culture, history, and politics. It is therefore necessary to accept a certain degree of unpredictability and uncertainty in the way that anything qualifiable as ‘deviant’, ‘aberrant’, or ‘unusual’ linguistic performance may, in fact, be quite normal in the given communicative space. In this endeavor, ethnographically informed approaches are favored, since the ethnographic enterprise avoids projecting *a priori* characteristics onto the object of inquiry and has the capacity to capture the perpetual changes in the superdiversity of digital discourse which are not entirely random, but are constitutive of the overall discourse coherence. Current approaches thus rely on their multi- and interdisciplinary nature, which helps researchers to unveil the complex concert of multiple modes and techno-social ideologies orchestrating meaning-making processes. Such integrative tendencies lend themselves to new methods of data collection since the traditional procedures might be complemented by exploiting computational capacities – particularly by data mining and its subsequent triangulation – to increase the volume of data and improve its validity and to address the pitfalls of (not necessarily linguistic) research in online environments, including the rapidity of change, the elusive border between ‘private’ and ‘public’ as well as between ‘online’ and ‘offline’, and new ethical challenges.

Generally speaking, the collaborative spirit of research on superdiversity maintains the inviting, explorative, unrestricted, and dialogical character of intellectual endeavor; “it is not a fight about ownership of terms and arguments, even less a quest for ‘European’ or ‘American’ genealogies of thoughts; it is the contrary: it is about sharing views in a joint process of construction” (Blommaert 2015a, 88).

Notes

¹ Although there are a number of competing terms that encapsulate Internet-mediated communication, such as ‘computer-mediated communication’ (CMC) or ‘computer-mediated discourse’ (CMD) (Herring 2004; see Crystal 2011 for a more comprehensive overview of terminology), this paper prefers the term ‘digital discourse’ (Thurlow and Mroczek 2011) due to the phenomenon of ‘de-computerization’, i.e. the emergence and increasing popularity of mobile technologies (smart-phones, tablets) with internet access.

² Cognitive semiotics is understood here in the sense propagated by the Centre for Semiotics (CfS) situated at the University of Aarhus, Denmark. The CfS has been interested in cognitive semiotics since the mid-1990s, and, according to Zlatev (2012, . 4), “CfS is the only academic institution so far offering an MA program in CS (both in name and content): ‘Cognitive Semiotics is first and foremost interdisciplinary program which draws on neuroscience, philosophy, logic, linguistics, anthropology, cognitive science and literary theory’” (4).

³ Crawlers are automated systems designed for large-scale downloading of web pages. Besides data mining (i.e. analyzing and/or statistically processing collected web pages), they are frequently used for web archiving and as components of web search engines which assemble and index a corpus of web pages, enabling a quick response to users’ queries.

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Genre and Multimodality: Multimodal Analysis of the Dutch National Ballet

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Abstract

The present paper analyzes multimodal features on a theatre website. Anchored in the methodology of John Bateman, the paper employs the GeM model to explore the interconnection of the visual and textual modes present on the Dutch National Opera and Ballet's website, with a special emphasis on the website's layout and its changes induced by the user's navigation across the multimodal document. The paper also focuses on the major issues and constraints of applying Bateman's model, originally created for print media, to the novel genre of theatre websites, and it attempts to determine the optimum and most effective application of the model in this particular genre.

Keywords: genre, institutional discourse, layout, multimodal analysis, multimodality, website

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1. Introduction

The vibrant world of theatre and dance has undergone profound changes over the past several decades, both in its artistic development and promotional practices. Once relying mainly on traditional means of attracting potential audiences, such as leaflets or newspaper and TV advertising, theatre and dance institutions have recently adopted the World Wide Web as the primary medium of their promotion. Although theatre performances may not be regarded as typical tradable products, the traditional opera houses – challenged by other forms of entertainment – have now adopted the affordances of new technologies, giving

rise to the novel genre of online presentations of theatres. While the global reach of the Internet enables theatres to engage the interest of more viewers than ever before, it also provides a powerful platform effectively combining textual (verbal) and visual elements and thus introducing new and refreshing possibilities of communication with potential audiences.

The multimodal character of documents, and the gradual decline of the verbal mode's dominance, have motivated extensive research of the typical features and mutual interplay of the modes as well as the new literacies shaped by the facets of web-mediated communication (Kress 2010; Kress & van Leeuwen 2006) and the analytical methods for their description (Bateman 2008; Thibault & Baldry 2006). The present paper applies Bateman's Genre and Multimodality (GeM) model, as extended by Hiippala (2013), as the most suitable analytical tool for exploring multimodal websites; the research aims to contribute to the further application of the model, which has so far been used primarily for analyzing static printed documents and films.

2. Corpus

The present article analyzes the characteristic features and constraints of applying the GeM model to the new, emerging genre of opera house websites – which are represented in the article by the Dutch National Opera and Ballet's website. The analysis of the website is limited to the English versions of two “gateway” pages, i.e. the Dutch National Opera and Ballet's main homepage (referred to below as the theatre's homepage) and the ballet company's homepage (see Figure 1); this enables us to take a unified approach to what is otherwise a very heterogeneous website structure and to carry out a more detailed qualitative analysis of selected data. The choice of webpages was also motivated by the expected high occurrence of multimodal features and combinations of graphic and textual elements; these seem to be most prominent on the “gateway” pages, where the content of the website is presented in the form of concise graphic and textual “appetizers”.



Fig. 1: Thetheatre's homepage

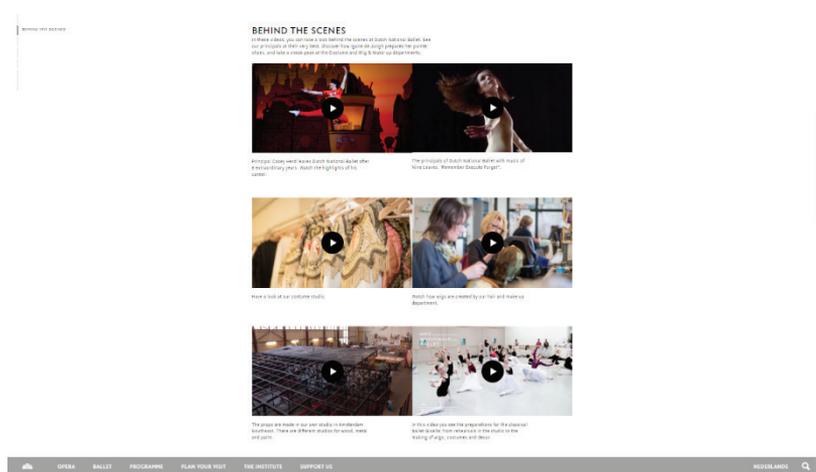


Fig. 2: Ballet company’s homepage – due to the length of the scroll, only the “Behind the scenes” section is presented

3. The Genre and Multimodality Model

Although originally created for printed documents, Bateman’s Genre and Multimodality (GeM) model attempts to offer a single set of analytical tools for describing the structure of any multimodal document and observing its deployment of semiotic modes. Using genre as its foundational notion, the GeM model strives to provide reproducible and evaluable analyses of diverse multimodal documents based on an empirical approach (Bateman 2–15).

The Genre and Multimodality model relies on four principal layers (each with their own basic units) and their mutual relations, enabling the analyst to systematically explore and describe the document from various perspectives and providing identifiers for further cross-referencing analysis:

- a) the base layer, which attempts to identify the basic elements that occur on the webpage and are to be analyzed in other layers;
- b) the layout layer, which studies groupings of base units and their structure, location, as well as their typographic and graphic features;
- c) the rhetorical layer, which describes the roles and relations of rhetorical segments and draws on Rhetorical Structure Theory by Mann and Thompson, later extended by Bateman (see section 3.3);
- d) the navigational layer, which analyzes how the reader is navigated throughout the document using navigational elements such as pointers or indices (Bateman 108).

The methodical segmentation of the data into four layers, as well as the annotation allowing cross-referencing across individual layers, enables us to describe each document from various perspectives and provides the basis for multimodal document corpora.

3.1 Base layer

The structure of the analytical model is grounded in the base layer, whose primary purpose in the analysis is described by Bateman (2008) as follows:

[...] to identify the minimal elements which can serve as the common denominator for interpretative and textual elements as well as for layout elements in any analysis of a page or document. Everything which can be seen on each page of an analysed document should be assigned to some base unit. (110)

The base units represent the smallest units that are present on the page and that are clearly separated from their surroundings by their layout. The clear specification of base units reflects the empirical approach of Bateman's model and enables it to provide a high degree of granularity. The base units thus serve as an indispensable part of the GeM structure and as the primary analytical units which may be easily referred to in other layers of the model. The set of Recognized Base Units (hereafter "base units") includes textual (strictly verbal) elements and visual (graphic, non-verbal) features, as defined by Bateman (110-111) below:

Table 1: Recognized Base Units of GeM

sentences, emphasized text, floating text, running heads
headings, titles, headlines
table cells, list items, items in a menu, list labels, footnote labels
page numbers, icons
sentence fragments initiating a list
footnotes (without footnote labels)
photos, drawings, diagrams, figures (without caption)
captions of photos, drawings, diagrams, tables
text in photos, drawings, diagrams
horizontal or vertical lines which function as delimiter between columns and rows
lines, arrows, polylines which connect other units

Although the selected corpus provides a wide range of base units on both homepages, the segmentation of the webpage into individual base units seems to be more dominant on the ballet company's homepage (see the data provided in the table below), which corresponds to the different roles played by both types of homepages.

Table 2: Distribution of base units

webpage	base units	text (headlines/ sentences)	visual (photos/graphics)
theatre's homepage	16	9 (9/0)	7 (1/6)
ballet company's homepage	111	62 (36/26)	49 (12/25)

While the theatre's homepage functions predominantly as a "shop window" promoting the website's content and enticing the reader to enter the website, the ballet company's homepage serves primarily an informative communicative purpose. Both analyzed homepages demonstrate the multimodal character of the website, which regularly combines textual features with photos, videos and icons. Although the ratios found in both the theatre's homepage and the ballet company's homepage (9:7 / 62:49 respectively) indicate a slight prevalence of textual (verbal) features on the website, the textual units are mostly limited to the section headlines or short titles serving as generic links in navigation bars. Moreover, the theatre's homepage is dominated by a gif covering the whole webpage (see Figure 1) and thus creating the most salient element on the page. It may be argued that the pictures and videos presenting the dancers and performances can be regarded as an essential means of attracting readers, as they arouse the interest of potential audiences and entice them to enter and further explore the institution's website.

The high occurrence of the base units on the ballet company's homepage may be attributed to the presence of longer texts and section headlines with specific links. They do not, however, result in excessive fragmentation of the webpage, as the base units are visually interconnected into larger structures (paragraphs, text-image combinations). The primary purpose of the segmentation of the data into base units thus lies primarily in their clear annotation and their deployment as default units in other layers.

3.2 Layout layer

As the base units are usually grouped into larger structures, the layout layer provides an analytical tool enabling us to recognize how this highly heterogeneous material is placed and visually clustered on a webpage. The layout layer is composed of three main parts (Bateman 115):

- a) layout segmentation, which identifies the minimal layout units distinguishing typographic, graphic and composite layout elements;
- b) realization information, which describes the base units' appearance in relation to their typographic (font family, size, colour, etc.) or graphic features (size or type: image, video, drawing, etc.);
- c) layout structure, which identifies larger structures formed by layout units, including the area model which represents the physical layout of the document, i.e. the exact position of each layout unit on the page.

The Dutch National Opera and Ballet’s homepages confirm the tendency of base units to be grouped into larger structures which are identified as visually motivated chunks through the reduced image resolution of the webpage (for more details see Bateman 2008 and Reichenberger et al., 1995). The resulting organization of the layout units is shown in the layout structure represented by a tree diagram grouping the individual portions of the document. For the purpose of the analysis, the entire webpage is identified as the largest segment – the layout root, which describes the entire document and further branches into layout chunks, represented by the sections of the webpage – and the individual layout leaves, which function as terminal nodes in the layout tree. A model layout structure for a video layout leaf is presented below. Figure 2 represents a part of the “Behind the scenes” layout chunk L1.4 (for the whole layout chunk see Figure 1), which is divided into two layout leaves: L1.4.2.1 (Video1 complex) and L1.4.2.2 (formed by the accompanying text). It was also proposed to record the “sub-leaves” L1.4.2.1a (the video itself) and L1.4.2.1b (the “Play” button) for the purpose of further analysis in the remaining layers.



Fig. 3: Layout structure of a video layout leaf (print screen of the section included)

The reoccurring positioning of both verbal and visual layout units is supported by the underlying grid, which unifies the visual field and contributes to the regularity of the webpage design (Bateman 83). Both homepages deploy a modular grid which divides the webpage using horizontal and vertical lines and thus creates a matrix of cells – modules – where the multimodal material may be placed (Samara 27). The layering of the content of the page also encourages the use of a hierarchical grid, which reflects the flexibility of placement and the dynamic character of the page (see Figure 3).

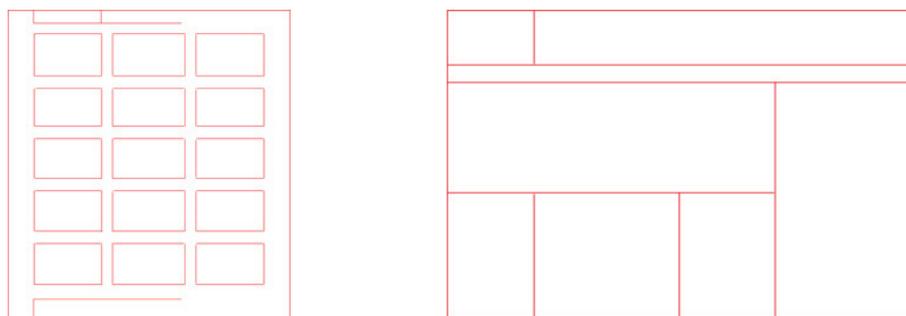


Fig. 4: Examples of modular (left) and hierarchical (right) grids according to Bradley (2016)

The regularity and rhythm of the webpages' layout is additionally achieved by the parallel structuring of the layout units, which prevents the pages from becoming over-segmented (Tomášková 170). The parallel sets of units were more prominent on the ballet company's homepage, which reflects the greater segmentation of the webpage as well as its predominantly informative communicative purpose (the identical navigation bars are not included in the analysis). The ballet company's homepage presents four different sets of parallel layout units (6+2+2+3) which show similarities in their structure: the majority of the units are realized as a combination of textual and visual features (photo + accompanying/descriptive text, video + descriptive text), while the theatre's homepage, due to its very low degree of segmentation, does not display any parallel units at all.

While the use of parallelism and grids contributes to the visual unification of the webpage and primarily helps the readers to identify the relationships among individual units more clearly, the area model provides the information about the spatial organization of the textual and visual units in the layout structure. Unlike social semiotic approaches (e.g. Kress and van Leeuwen), the area model does not predefine any function for a particular layout area, but rather plays a fundamental role in the study of the cross-layer character of the GeM analysis and the rhetorical relations among individual layout units (Hiippala 58–60).

The area model of the "Behind the scenes" section of the ballet company's homepage is characterized primarily by the multilayer character of the webpage. While the superimposed layer of the bottom and side-scroll navigation bars is marked in red (see Figure 4), the surface layer (marked in black) demonstrates a very regular rectangular organization, centred in the middle column of the webpage. The simple and clearly arranged area model reflects the uncluttered design that is typical of the entire ballet company's homepage, which enables the reader to fully concentrate on the information provided.

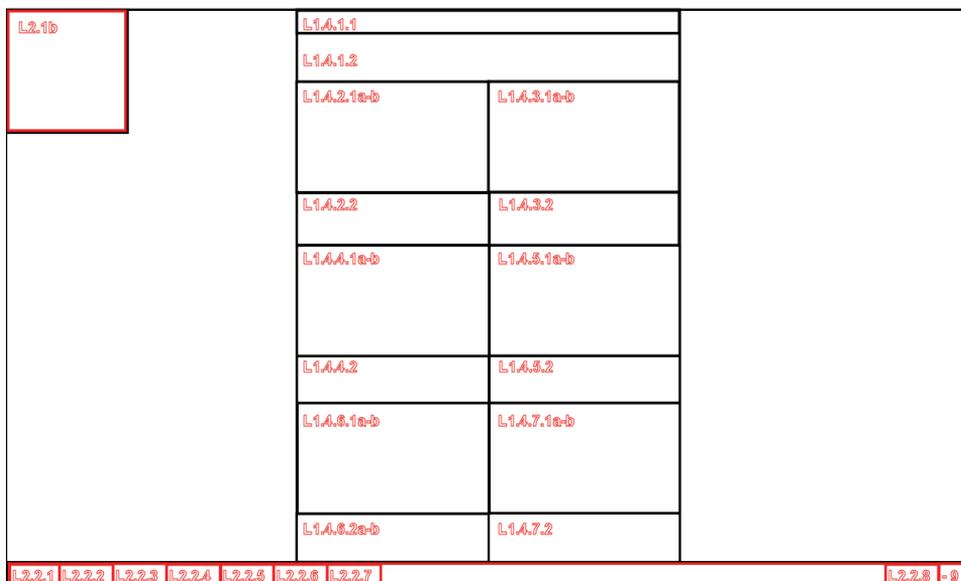


Fig. 5: Area model of the “Behind the scenes” section (with identifiers of individual layout/rhetorical units)

3.3 Rhetorical layer

The aim of the rhetorical layer, the third part of the GeM model, is to identify how the textual and visual elements combine to achieve the intended communicative purpose of the entire document (Bateman 144). The rhetorical layer is grounded in Rhetorical Structure Theory – initially developed by Mann and Thompson, who defined a set of rhetorical relations which may hold between individual portions of text (so-called text spans), and which are recursive in nature. While the asymmetric rhetorical relations refer to the configurations between a nucleus carrying the basic information and a satellite which provides additional information, the symmetric relations hold between spans that are of equal importance. As an extensive description of all relations is not possible within the scope of this article, only the ELABORATION, ENABLEMENT, JOINT and RESTATEMENT relations will be described in this section (for more detailed definitions see Mann and Taboada).

Rhetorical Structure Theory which relies on the sequential order of the text spans. Bateman therefore proposes the extension of the model, which enables us to analyze the relations between spans that are adjacent in any direction. Moreover, the preference of symmetric (multinuclear) relations is given to the combinations of multimodal elements to avoid assigning a nuclear/satellite role to a particular visual or verbal element (Bateman 158–162).

The recursive character of the rhetorical relations is demonstrated on the ballet company’s homepage, where individual sections of the webpage (“Behind the scenes”, “News”, “Company”, etc.) may be identified as an ELABORATION relation. In the ELABORATION relation, additional information or detail is provided for a nucleus,

which we can observe e.g. in the expansion of the headline by an introductory text to the “Dutch National Ballet” section. As the individual sections share the ENABLEMENT features (which allows readers to perform the action described by the nucleus), they are at the same time involved in the multinuclear JOINT relation, which links spans with the same function. The same pattern may be observed at the lower level of segmentation, as seen in the rhetorical structure of the “Behind the scenes” section (see Figure 5).

The central segment of the above-mentioned section is the introductory sentence of the paragraph (S1.4.1.2a), which enters into an ELABORATION relation with the following sentence (S1.4.1.2b). The segment is further elaborated by its satellites – six spans of similar structure (video + descriptive text). While the spans offer additional, more specific information on the introductory paragraph, they may also be considered ENABLEMENT spans, as they clearly allow readers to truly “look behind the scenes” and provide readers with the technological affordances (i.e. videos) which enable them to perform actions described in the text itself (“see our principals”, “take a sneak peek”) and to discover what usually remains hidden from audiences.

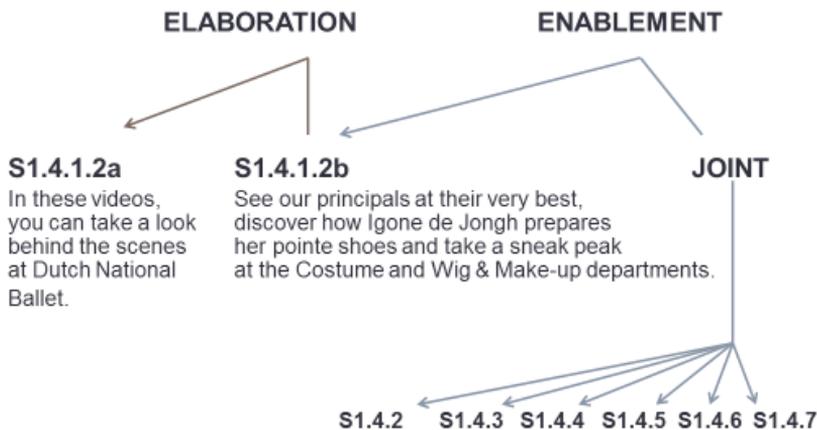


Fig. 6: Rhetorical structure of “Behind the scenes” section

The multimodal character of the ballet company’s homepage and the regular combination of textual and visual elements accentuates the preference for the RESTATEMENT relation mainly in the video-text complexes of the “Behind the scenes” section. The proximity of the video and the accompanying text suggests that they form one complex unit and as such should be interpreted together. The RESTATEMENT enables us to see them both as nuclei of the relation, and suggests that the content of the textual and visual units is re-expressed. Other forms of visual elements, especially icons such as the “Play” button in the video-text span, may also enter the ENABLEMENT relation with the video span, thus allowing the reader to actively use the technological aspects of the page (see Figure 6).

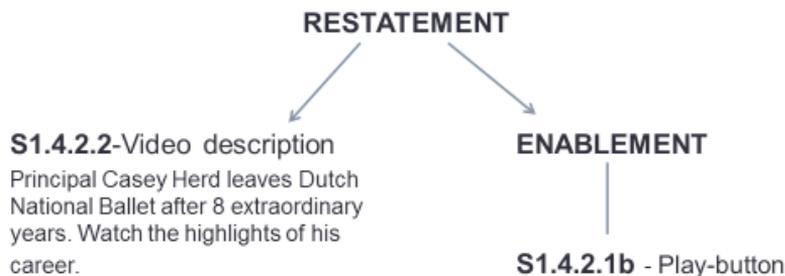


Fig. 7: Rhetorical structure of S1.4.2.1a-behind-the-scenes-video1 segment

The rhetorical structure of the “Behind the scenes” section represents the recursive rhetorical organization of the individual sections on the ballet company’s homepage, where the introductory paragraph is typically elaborated by a series of spans, and where photos/videos enter the RESTATEMENT relation with their respective accompanying texts. The frequent use of ELABORATION and RESTATEMENT relations may, in a sense, reflect the gradual unfolding of the content on websites that are built as a network of interconnected hypertexts, simultaneously mirroring the parallel organization of the rhetorical relations that correspond to the webpage’s layout structure.

3.4 Navigational layer and layout changes

The cross-layer character of the GeM model is exemplified mainly in the navigation layer, which identifies the segments that tell readers how to navigate through the document and connect the texts with their continuations elsewhere on the website. The navigational units comprise pointers, entries and indices that refer to the relations between rhetorical segments and layout chunks either within one page, across the whole document or outside it (Bateman, Henschel and Delin 118). While the navigation layer of the original GeM model was based primarily on the use of page numbers and “document deictic expressions” such as pointers (Henschel), web-mediated documents largely rely on links as the means that direct how the readers consume the document. Due to space limitations, the present paper focuses specifically on the layout changes which result from the readers’ active usage of the web-mediated document.

Unlike traditional printed documents, where pointers serve only as navigational cues, the readers’ interaction with the document through links may result in visible alterations of the webpages’ layout structure and the area model. The Dutch National Ballet and Opera’s website presents a great variety of layout changes, including simple underlining, contrastive colouring or colour covering of the activated segments, as well as scrolling-down (or side-scrolling) menus of navigation bars.

As web-mediated documents allow the presentation of units on different layers within a single webpage, the superimposition of individual layout units may be seen as another typical feature of layout alterations resulting from the navigation on the website. The activation of a bottom navigation bar link on the theatre’s homepage divides the page into two

layout chunks: the gif presenting the performance is shadowed, and the second navigation bar/column is superimposed over the bottom half of the webpage (see Figure 7) so that one layout unit partly or fully covers the underlying ones. The frequent reorganization of the layout supports the lively and ever-changing nature of the website, while the use and regular alteration of bright colours (orange, light green, light blue) for colouring the segments creates a striking contrast to the generally simple black and white typographic elements

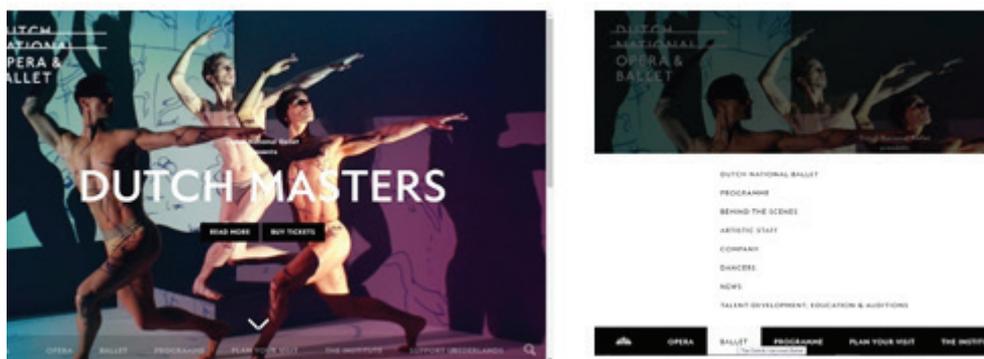


Fig. 8: Layout change on the homepage

4. Conclusion

The inherently multimodal character of theatres' websites requires a complex approach to the analysis of the both visual and verbal elements present on the webpages. Bate-man's Genre and Multimodality (GeM) model provides a suitable analytical tool for the systematic analysis of the webpages within the scope of the four individual layers as well as in their cross-layer interpretation. Although the model was originally developed for the purpose of analyzing printed documents, its variability and adaptability also enable it to be applied to theatres' websites.

The distinctive affordances of web-mediated documents pose considerable challenges primarily in the analysis of the layout and navigational layers, where the websites' fluidity is most prominent. While overlapping elements are a regular occurrence in print documents, web-mediated genres are characterized by the frequent superimposition of elements, i.e. the presentation of multimodal content on several layers of a webpage. The resulting "layering" of visual and verbal material requires the individual annotation of the features separately for each of the layers as well as their clear distinction in the area model and the realization information if the size, colour or other (typo)graphic features of the elements are modified.

Moreover, the users' navigation throughout the document may visibly alter the layout of the webpage, as manifested especially in the underlining, colouring or side- and down-scrolling of the individual elements. The alteration of the rhetorical layer is rather rare, resulting mainly from the appearance of further textual rhetorical segments if the cursor is placed over them (the examples of such segments were limited to the texts entering the

ELABORATION relation with their accompanying headlines if activated by the user). The current preference for scroll webpages may also impede the unambiguous perception of the layout and rhetorical segmentation, as only a part of the whole webpage may be presented at once. The relations that hold between the segments thus may not be seen clearly, while at the same time this may enable a wider range of their interpretations than originally intended.

The main contribution of Bateman's Genre and Multimodality (GeM) model is manifested in its application to the base and layout layers, where it provides a transparent and systematic segmentation of a webpage which may serve as a foundation for the further analysis of visual and verbal elements as well as their mutual relations. Although the use of the GeM model for a precise interpretation of such relations is rather limited, the model seems to offer effective tools for the analysis of the rhetorical layer owing to Bateman's extension of the original Rhetorical Structure Theory to incorporate visual features (especially images and videos), which enables a deeper analysis of elements that play a crucial part in theatre presentations.

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Literature and Culture

Life from behind the Veil: The Troubled Magic of Blackness in the Early Poetry of Langston Hughes

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Abstract

The essay deals with the concept of “blackness” in the early poetry of Langston Hughes. It identifies the inspirational impetus of W.E.B. Du Bois and then goes on to explore three mutually related fields of associations: blackness as the night, as a shadow and as depth. The analysis shows the sophistication of Hughes’s poetics and the complexities of its seeming simplicity. The author seeks to reaffirm Hughes’s achievement in articulating the black experience in the first half of the 20th century.

Keywords: Langston Hughes, American poetry, Harlem Renaissance, W.E.B. Du Bois, the concept of blackness

1. Introduction

When W.E.B. Du Bois published his ground-breaking collection of essays *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), his goal was to revive the conciliatory and gradualist tone of the earlier program of B. T. Washington¹ and provide a new and provocative perspective on black life in America around the turn of the century. His book thus had not only historical, philosophical and sociological significance: it was an attempt to synthesize the cultural and spiritual imprint blacks had left in American history and help the African American community as well as those beyond to articulate the core tensions within “Black folk” as they are perceived “within and without the Veil.” (Du Bois *Souls*, 3). Du Bois’s crucial

metaphor of the “Veil” which separates the Blacks from the Whites and the Blacks from “Opportunity”, i.e. from fully identifying with America, may be seen as an invitation to a new generation of black artists to reconceptualize the vision of American “blackness” as a *pars-pro-toto* metonymy of the troubled, shadowy existence of the African Americans alongside the Whites.

In that sense, the notion of “blackness” in relation to the African Americans shows a great semantic potential to be exploited in black writing. This notion also plays a central role in the early verse of the key poet of the Harlem Renaissance, Langston Hughes (1902–1967), a poet to whom W.E.B. Du Bois offered the first publication platform in his *Crisis*.² Hughes reflects, albeit indirectly, on some of Du Bois’s central ideas about the “soul” of the African American community, and offers a distinctive poetic articulation of black life in America in the first half of the 20th century.

In this essay I shall focus on the semantic richness of Hughes’s concept of “blackness” in his early poems published between 1921–1930,³ when he introduced his characteristic poetic style and established himself as a poet of the “black vogue” of the Harlem Renaissance.⁴ I want to show the inner tensions of Hughes’s treatment of this issue and the poetic mastery hidden behind his declaratory simplicity.

2. The night was black, too: the double paradox of being black and American

The core tension of being black in Hughes’s poetry is a troubling ambiguity: being “black” separates “Negroes” not only from the rest of the American society and the key ideals it represents, but also from themselves, since their identity has been essentially defined “from behind.” Being black is thus an enigma unto itself: the simple reference to skin color launches a game of paradoxical meanings.

In “A Black Pierrot”, the “Veil” of blackness makes it impossible to impress a (supposedly white) lady: the Pierrot disappears into the “night” that is just as black and mysterious as the enchantment of this “white” entertainment. In the end, the Pierrot becomes exhausted and his separation is confirmed: his love potential can only be realized within the group of the stigmatized “colored.” In the end, the Pierrot goes on to seek a “brown love”:

I am a black Pierrot:
She did not love me,
So I crept away into the night
And the night was black, too.

I am a black Pierrot:
She did not love me,
So I wept until the red dawn
Dripped blood over the eastern hills
And my heart was bleeding, too.

I am a black Pierrot:
She did not love me,
So with my once gay-colored soul

Shrunken like a balloon without air,
I went forth in the morning
To seek a new brown love. (Hughes 31)⁵

In fact, “night” seems to be a crucial association of blackness in Hughes’s early poetry: black life is a “night” life of blues bars and cabarets, hidden and mysterious, inhabited with “dark” musicians and “night-veiled” girls (Cf. “Danse Africaine”, 28). Their nocturnal existence clashes with the world of “light”, but also with being “white” or “bright”. The rhythm of black life seems to be turned upside down: the end of the “day” turns into its beginning. The “night” liberates the energy of Hughes’s “Negroes”: the night unleashes moments of joy, free dreaming and “gayness”:

[...]
Sun’s going down this evening –
Might never rise no mo’.
The sun’s going down this very night –
Might never rise no mo’.
So dance with swift feet, honey –
 (The banjo’s sobbing low)
Dance with swift feet, honey –
 Might never dance no mo’. (“Song for a Banjo Dance”, 29)

[...]
Droning a drowsy syncopated tune,
Rocking back and forth to a mellow croon,
I heard a Negro play.
Down on Lenox Avenue the other night
By the pale dull pallor of an old gas light
He did a lazy sway
He did a lazy sway
To the tune o’ those Weary Blues.
With his ebony hands on each ivory key
He made that poor piano moan with melody.
O Blues!
Swaying to and fro on his rickety stool
He played that sad raggy tune like a musical fool.
Sweet Blues!
Coming from a black man’s soul.
O Blues! (“The Weary Blues”, 50)

[...]
White ones, bright ones,
What do you know
About tomorrow
Where all paths go?

Jazz-boys, jazz-boys –
Play, plAY, PLAY!
Tomorrow... is darkness.

Joy today. ("Harlem Night Club", 90)

Jazz and blues music communicate the complexity of the "black soul" driven by the "black and white" contrast of the "Negro" otherness: indeed, the musician in "The Weary Blues" makes the "poor piano moan with melody" with his "ebony hands on each ivory key."

Since the mentioned words "night", "white" and "bright" rhyme, Hughes exploits their inner tensions and often confronts them in rhyme pairs. The magic of the "night" (or "blackness" in general) is thus transformed into the mystery of the strange, unexplained contrast between being "black" and the opposing words or concepts. However, this difference is not always presented as an opposition: in fact, it often seems to be just a juxtaposed inner tension.

In "Winter Moon", for instance, the contrast between the "whiteness" of the moon and the "blackness" of the night is the only semantic tension of the poem. Nevertheless, the poetic effect is satisfactory:

How thin and sharp is the moon tonight!
How thin and sharp and ghostly white
Is the slim curved crook of the moon tonight! (35)⁶

In "Walkers with the Dawn", the African Americans are "not afraid of night,/Nor days of gloom,/Nor darkness – /Being walkers with the sun and morning" (Hughes 45). Again, the semantic tension of the text is created by this supposedly "simple" contrast. In "Song", a black person is commended to go behind the seeming opposites and embrace their inner tensions and paradoxes. The contrasts of the rhyming pairs create the essence of the text's poetic effect: all these words in the poem represent semantic tensions or downright opposites. A dramatic rhythmic pause at the end underlines the final climax:

Lovely, dark, and lonely one,
Bare your bosom to the sun.
Do not be afraid of light,
You who are a child of night.

Open wide your arms of life,
Whirl in the wind of pain and strife,
Face the wall with the dark closed gate,
beat with bare, brown fists –

And wait. (45)

A similar instance of this use of rhyming pairs can be found in "To a Dead Friend": there the contrast between the moon sending "its mellow light/Through the purple blackness of the night" with the morning star being "palely bright" stands in a sharp opposition to the sadness of the lyrical subject, for whom "no joy can be/Happiness comes no more to me,/For you're dead" (Hughes 26).⁷

The simple association of “night” with “stars” in Hughes’ early poetry launches yet another wordplay of paradoxical collocations with “Star-Spangled” America and its inaccessible ideals. In “Stars”, the Harlem night is defined by the opposition of the poverty and the “sweep of stars over Harlem streets/little breath of oblivion that is night.” The addressee of the poem, a “dark boy” is challenged to take “just/One star” out of this “little breath of oblivion,” i.e. the night (85).

Hughes addresses the issue in a more direct way in a poem called “America”: America as “the star-seeking I” is contrasted with the lyrical “I” as the voice of the voiceless: namely, the blacks and the Jews who also happen to seek “the stars” (52–53). In “Star Seeker”, “the flame white star/has burned my hands/Even from afar.” The tension of the poem is again pointed by a dramatically contrasting rhyming pair: “I sought a singing star’s/Wild beauty./Now behold the scars” (64).

The South as the archetypal region of black American presence transforms the motif of the “stars” into a series of intriguing opposites: the beauty of the starry Southern nights conflicts with the gloomy sadness on the part of the lyrical subject. Such “stars” no longer provide orientation, and they lose any reference to the world of dreams and ideals: they merely sadden and hurt:

[...]
 Love
 Is a bright star
 Glowing in far Southern skies
 Look too hard
 And its burning flame
 Will always hurt your eyes. (“Love Song for Lucinda”, 68)

[...]
 Cotton and the moon,
 Warmth, earth, warmth,
 The sky, the sun, the stars,
 The magnolia-scented South.
 Beautiful, like a woman,
 Seductive as a dark-eyed whore.
 Passionate, cruel,
 Honey-lipped, syphilitic—
 That is the South.
 And I, who am black, would love her
 But she spits in my face. (“The South”, 26–27)

The night thus uncovers a troubling ambiguity: the lure and magic of black as a color clash with the perception of “blackness” as a painful stigma and a deficiency. This creates an almost schizophrenic sense of a “double-consciousness” which W.E.B Du Bois poignantly articulates in *The Souls of Black Folk*:

After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this

American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro... two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (9)⁸

This “two-ness” of the black consciousness is reflected in the “shadowy” aspect of the black existence: “a dark body” becomes a “shadow” of the “white” existence, as well as a “shadow” unto itself. The “blackness” thus acquires yet another meaning.

3. *A naked shadow/ On a gnarled and naked tree: blackness as a double-edged shadow*

“Song for A Dark Girl”, a “simple” story of hanging/lynching a “black young lover/To a cross roads tree”, climaxes in a reference to the crucifixion of a “white” Jesus. The brutality of the event becomes “visible” through the negative: indeed, the “blackness” of the lover prevents him from being identified with Christ:

Way Down South in Dixie
(Break the heart of me)
They hung my black young lover
To a cross roads tree.

Way Down South in Dixie
(Bruised body high in air)
I asked the white Lord Jesus
What was the use of prayer.

Way Down South in Dixie
(Break the heart of me)
Love is a naked shadow
On a gnarled and naked tree. (104)

The “naked shadow” of love sums up multiple “darknesses”: the darkness of the vulnerable “black” girl facing such brutality, the individual story of the “dark” lover, and the “darkness” of the crucifixion, which in the Christian tradition is seen primarily as a redemptive narrative. The “dark girl” is left with a (dark) song and unanswered or (perhaps) unanswerable prayers. This inner drama of a “broken heart” contrasts with the seeming un-reality of the black “shadow” existence.

The shadowy existence of the black lyrical I in “As I Grew Older” is a one of separation: the “dreams” contrast with the situation of the “wall” standing “between me and my dream”:

[...]
Dimming,

Hiding,
The light of my dream.
Rose until it touched the sky –
The wall.

Shadow.
I am black. [...] (93–94)

The situation of “blackness” in the poem prevents the light from coming in and makes it difficult to fully accept oneself as a “dark” person whose “darkness” is created from the outside. The tone of the poem changes to a seemingly optimistic “call to action”:

[...]
I lie down in the shadow.
No longer the light of my dream before me,
Above me.
Only the thick wall.
Only the shadow.
My hands!
My dark hands!
Break through the wall!
Find my dream!
Help me to shatter this darkness,
To smash this night,
To break this shadow
Into a thousand lights of sun,
Into a thousand whirling dreams
Of sun! (Hughes 93–94)

This call, however, uncovers a deep ambiguity: the light “of the sun” that is to come in “to break the shadow” may refer both to the liberation of the blacks as well as to the problematic identification with the tokens of the dominant “white” culture, i.e. being defined from the outside and essentially again as a shadow.

In “Shadows”, the corporate person representing the black community (“we”) finds itself in “shadows” created by the “narrow space of stifling air/That these white things have made” (Hughes 34). The rhetorical effect of the poem is energized by the contrast between the “stifling” aspect of the “shade” and the dynamism of the poem:

[...]
We run,
We run,
We cannot stand these shadows”
Give us the sun. [...] (34)

The “dark” existence of the blacks in U.S. society in Hughes’s early poetry calls to mind the Jungian concept of “shadow” (*Schatten*) as the projecting screen of “darkness”

in collective existence¹⁰. In an often anthologized poem “I, Too”, the black represents the “darker brother” on the edge of the society (“They send me to eat in the kitchen/When company comes [...]”): Hughes’s almost naïve conclusion (“Besides/They’ll see how beautiful I am/And be ashamed –/I, too, am America.”) sounds optimistic, but it aims at uncovering the “darker” side of the “white” shadow of the American Dream, i.e. the black existence alongside the white majority. Indeed, this creates sophistication in simplicity: the adverb “too” is not only affirmative, it is also a sign of the shadow of the black man: “I, **too**, am America.” (46, emphasis is mine).

In “House of the World”, a poem published shortly after the analyzed period (in 1931), the lyrical subject looks for a house “where the white shadows/Will not fall.” The answer in italics seems to be both a resignation and an affirmation.

*There is no such house.
Dark brothers,
No such house
At all.* (138)

Emily Bernard argues that “[...] this poem wearily cedes the impossibility of ever extricating black identity from the constancy of the white normative gaze” (180). However, the poem may be read in a wider perspective. It is the privilege of the “dark” existence to uncover and discover a universally valid anthropological dimension: a sense of existential depth.

This experience of depth and profundity of the “Negro” existence represents the third key aspect of blackness in Hughes’s early poetry.

4. *My soul has grown deep like the rivers* – blackness as a journey towards existential profundity

In the earliest poem Hughes published in W.E.B. DuBois’s *Crisis*¹¹, “The Negro Speaks of Rivers”, the speaker of the poem associates black existence “depth” and “antiquity” reflecting on the “dusky” aspect of blackness:

I’ve known rivers:
I’ve known rivers ancient as the world and older than the flow of human blood in human veins.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.
I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.
I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.
I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln went down to New Orleans,
and I’ve seen its muddy bosom turn all golden in the sunset.

I’ve known rivers:
Ancient, dusky rivers.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers. (23)

Structurally speaking, the final three lines join the three crucial themes (the antiquity of the rivers, black existence across the continents and the depth of the “dusky” rivers) and present the “Negro soul”¹² as a reflective identity taught by aged-old experience facing hardships and the scorching sun. The described forms of black existence have created a sense of silent presence and resilience whose core lies “deep” beyond the boundaries of time and place.

Hughes connects the “depth” of the black soul with the immemorial time of its African origin; with Africa as the “unknown” continent in the context of the Euro-American civilization that tends to ignore its specific values. Hughes’s “Negro” affirms his deep seated wisdom acquired by aged-old experience of slavery:

I am a Negro:
Black as the night is black,
Black like the depths of my Africa. (24)

In “Lament for Dark Peoples”, the “dark” peoples represent the *pars-pro-toto* metonymy of a much deeper phenomenon of modernity, i.e. a sense of existential alienation within an anonymous civilization:

I was a red man one time,
But the white men came.
I was a black man, too,
But the white men came.

They drove me out of the forest.
They took me away from the jungles.
I lost my trees.
I lost my silver moons.

Now they’ve caged me
In the circus of civilization.
Now I herd with the many –
Caged in the circus of civilization. (39)

The alienation of the “caged” men (referring to the inhuman forms of treatment of the blacks in the past) represents a deeper existential longing of “the many” losers of the modern civilization with whom the black man “herds”. As such, the destiny of “blackness” of the “colored” people stands also for the aged-old patient process of liberation within the entire human race. In Hughes’s short poem on the “Lincoln Monument: Washington”, Lincoln, as the “Old Abe”, has been similarly “quiet for ten thousand centuries [...] Quiet for a million, million years” (Hughes 103). However, his resilience stands against time as a silent witness for the timeless truths of a dignified human life:

[...]
And yet a voice forever
Against the
Timeless walls
Of time –
Old Abe. (103)

In that sense, Hughes poetically rearticulates a famous statement of W.E.B. Du Bois, who associates the fate of humanity with the fate of the colored people: “Most men in the world are colored. A belief in humanity means a belief in colored men” (“Negro”, 110).¹³

The ultimate “depth” of Hughes’s “blackness” is the wisdom acquired in this patient process of age-old transmission of traditional “black” cultural forms, especially stories and music. Typically, in “Aunt Sue’s Stories”, the wisdom of the child is nurtured from the depth of the troubled black existence, since the stories did not come “out of any book at all” but “right out of her life” (24). The labelling of Hughes as a “blues poet” does not just point to the innumerable references to blues as a music form with a very peculiar rhythmical structuring: Hughes also refers to the “depth” of the existential longing expressed in the blues. In “The Weary Blues”, the singer “in a deep song voice with a melancholy tune” articulates a sense of “depth” beyond himself: the longing represents an unstoppable process of liberating the inner tensions of the performer right from the center of his/her personality:

The singer stopped playing and went to bed
While the Weary Blues echoed through his head.
He slept like a rock or a man that’s dead. (50)

The final allusion to death amplifies this sense of existential depth: a paradoxical longing to be immersed and bathed (cf. “Suicide”, 82) in the “immemorial” depth of death, well beyond one’s own comprehension. In that sense, the black experience acquires the universality of a symbol: it stands for the reverse side, it is a “night” and a “shadow” to be embraced in the orchestra of America (and the world). Thus the mentioned components and “shades” of “blackness” in Hughes’s poetry describe a full circle.

5. Conclusion – being a “Negro” and a poet

As we have seen, the exploration of “blackness” lies at the core of the lyrical power of Langston Hughes’s early poetry. For Hughes, “blackness” is both the core of the inspiration but also the existential need to be communicated in poetry. In that way, he follows his programmatic essay published in the early period, “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain”: being a “Negro poet” is a destiny and a mission of its own. “Blackness” is not an “additum” to a more universally conceived idea of poetry. In fact, Hughes is shamed” for those blacks who hide their “blackness” because they “want to be poets”:

So I am ashamed for the black poet who says, ‘I want to be a poet, not a Negro poet,’ as though his own racial world were not as interesting as any other world. I am ashamed, too, for the colored artist who runs from the painting of Negro faces to the painting of sunsets after the manner of the academicians because he fears the strange unwhiteness of his own features. An artist must be free to choose what he does, certainly, but he must also never be afraid to do what he must choose.¹⁴

Hughes thus “freely chose to be “a Negro poet” to discover the peculiar radiation and the depth of the “souls of black folk.” The impetus of W.E.B. Du Bois finds a distinctive lyrical genius, for whom blackness is a multi-faceted combination of the joyful and the tragic that turns into a peculiar magic. His apparent simplicity is a sophisticated poetic “persona”, which helps him make the most of the simple means he uses, i.e. rhythmic structures, rhyme, parallelisms and graphic effects.

Hughes became a poet *through* his blackness, not *in spite of* it. It is his “strange unwhiteness” that makes him a poet of a universal significance. In that sense, his work has not lost its appeal even fifty years after his death.

Notes

¹ Here I am referring especially to the famous “Atlanta Exposition Speech” of 1895 or “The Future of the American Negro”, published in 1900.

² “Hughes himself also recognized the profound influence of W.E.B. Du Bois, the author of one of the first books Hughes read on his own and whose journal, *The Crisis*, Hughes’s grandmother read alongside the Bible in her home. The intellect, the education, the integrity, the commitment, the appreciation of what Du Bois termed “the sorrow songs” – these elements of Du Bois’s character all inspired and propelled Hughes in his quest for personal, racial, and human fulfillment and dignity” (Tracy 10).

³ In this way, I focus on the conception we find in the classic edition of his oeuvre, *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes* edited by A. Rampersad and D. Roessel (first published in 1994). Although Hughes published and edited two major collections of his poems in this era, *The Weary Blues* (1926) and *Fine Clothes to the Jew* (1927), I leave aside their conceptual structuring and focus solely on the individual poems in chronological order. All page numbers in the text refer to this edition.

⁴ The literature about the Harlem Renaissance is enormous; nevertheless, I would like to highlight some important recent studies in the field: *The Harlem Renaissance*, ed. H. Bloom. (Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 2004), Pochmara, Anna: *The Making of the New Negro: Black Authorship, Masculinity and Sexuality in the Harlem Renaissance* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011), *Temples of Tomorrow: Looking Back at The Harlem Renaissance*, ed. Geneviève Fabre and Michel Feith (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001).

⁵ Hughes’s poems are quoted from the above-mentioned edition: *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes* edited by A. Rampersad and D. Roessel (New York: Vintage Classics, 1994).

⁶ A similar instance of this dramatic “black and white contrast” can be found in “Angels Wings”: the tension between the stock whiteness of the angelic images and the “mire” of the black existence

(associated with the stereotypical association of the blacks with “dirt and darkness”) creates the very core of its poetic effect:

The angels wings is white as snow,
O, white as snow,
 White
 as
 snow.

The angels wings is white as snow,
 But I drug ma wings
 In the dirty mire.
 O, I drug ma wings
 All through the fire.
But the angels wings is white as snow,
 White
 as
 snow (Hughes 118).

⁷ Other instances of the mentioned rhyming pairs can be found in “My Loves”, “To Midnight Nan at Leroy’s”, “Port Town”, “Mulatto” and “Negro Servant”.

⁸ Cf. a similar conclusion reached by James Smethurst in his study of Countee Cullen and Langston Hughes: “[...] there is an endless regress in which the possibility of a double-consciousness is asserted, but without the comfort of any stable features or boundaries. This contradiction between concealment and revelation resembles that of Du Bois’s notion of “the veil” and a “double-consciousness” that prevents or inhibits genuine African American self-reflection and self-consciousness, while provoking endless introspection about the nature of the self and identity.” Cf. “Lyric Stars: Countee Cullen and Langston Hughes” in *African-American Poets. Volume I*. Ed. H. Bloom. (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2009), 189.

⁹ Houlden, Leslie. “Jesus in History and Belief.” *Companion Encyclopedia of Theology*. Ed. P. Byrne, and L. Houlden. (London: Routledge, 1995), 177 ff.

¹⁰ Further on this topic see Carl Gustav Jung: *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung. Part I: Archetypes and Collective Unconscious. Volume 9*. Transl. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 262 ff.

¹¹ The poem first appeared in June 1921.

¹² “Soul is a synthesis of the essence of Negro folk art redistilled... particularly the old music and its flavor, the ancient basic beat out of Africa, the folk rhymes and Ashanti stories—expressed in contemporary ways so definitely and emotionally colored with the old, that it gives a distinctly Negro flavor to today’s music, painting or writing—or even to merely personal attitudes and daily conversation. Soul is the contemporary Harlem’s négritude, revealing to the Negro people and to the world the beauty within themselves” (Rampersad 403).

¹³ Cf. also the discussion of W.E.B. DuBois’s contribution to the “black consciousness” in Nico Slate’s *The Prism of Race* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 31ff.

¹⁴ The essay was first published in *Nation* in 1926. I am quoting from an internet source: (http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/g_l/hughes/mountain.htm).

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“H-o-m-o-s-e-x-u-a-l”

Edward Albee and Homophobic Theater Criticism

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Abstract

As Edward Albee has been regarded as one of the most provocative playwrights of the 20th century, his works have been the subject of heated discussions. Theater criticism has had a special focus on Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?, a drama about the encounter of two married couples. This play has been given several labels: the work of a genius, pornographic, extremist, cynical, pessimistic, etc. – but after the premiere some critics came up with a special category for such works: homosexual theater. According to their point of view these works have a hidden agenda, namely, to attack the foundations of the “normal” (that is: heterosexual) society. My paper examines the sociological/political circumstances among which such criticism could have emerged.

Keywords: Edward Albee, McCarthyism, homosexuality, Lavender-scare, American drama

In 1962, Richard Schechner, the soon-to-be director and important theatrical theoretician, went to the Billy Rose Theater to see the latest work by a young American dramatist. After the performance he wrote a vitriolic piece of criticism of the play for *The Tulane Drama Review*:

The American theater, our theater, is so hungry, so voracious, so corrupt, so morally blind, so perverse that Virginia Woolf is a success. I am outraged at a theater and an audience that accepts as a masterpiece an insufferably long play with great pretensions that lacks intellectual size, emotional insight, and dramatic electricity. I’m tired of play-long “metaphors” – such as the illusory child of Virginia Woolf – which are neither philosophically, psychologically nor poetically valid. I’m tired of

plays that are badly plotted and turgidly written being excused by such palaver as “organic unity” or “inner form.” I’m tired of morbidity and sexual perversity which are there only to titillate an impotent and homosexual theater and audience. I’m tired of Albee. (qtd. in Paller 176)

Nearly every researcher of American drama would agree now with the statement that *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* transformed Albee overnight from an off-Broadway experimenter into an American classic (McCarthy 59). Besides, the play had a two-year run and won two prizes: therefore Schechner’s criticism seems to be unfounded. Almost each sentence of his opinion contains something controversial that is worth examining. Certain parts of Schechner’s argument may easily induce a sophisticated discussion (for example about the issue whether the son in *Who’s Afraid* is entirely fictional or not), while other parts we can easily dismiss (Schechner’s remarks that Albee’s works are without intellectual depth and dramatic suspense suggest a rather superficial interpretation). However, it is the last sentence of the quotation which contains the most important ideas, where the critic asserts no less than the view that the work of the dramatist is low in quality because it belongs to homosexual theater, and theater culture itself is corrupted and immoral if it tolerates such phenomena.

How can *Who’s Afraid* be characterized as a text that belongs to “homosexual theater”? It is important to remember that Schechner was not at all alone in his opinion; in fact it was not *Who’s Afraid*, but rather *Tiny Alice* that had become the target of a serious attack by Philip Roth, who called the play a homosexual day-dream and threatened the readers that the age when homosexual characters appear on the stage undisguised was near (Paller 178).¹ One year after Schechner’s criticism, the star psychologist of the 1960s, Donald Kaplan, published a paper of over thirty pages on the subject of “homosexual drama,” identifying *Who’s Afraid* as the prototype of this genre. Kaplan argues that such plays result from the rebellion of some spoiled children who could not bear the fact that they do not get what they want, and also cannot accept that they are sometimes made to subject themselves to the norms of the society. Therefore, Kaplan comes to the conclusion that this kind of theater is written by egocentric authors with an unstable identity, so the experience the audience may gain here is nothing but humiliating for a “normal” (that is: heterosexual) American (Paller 178).

Considerably more examples of such opinions might be cited, but these clearly support my argument that the critics were not so much interested in the text or the production as in the author himself, or to be more precise, in the playwright’s sexuality. The schema that the above-mentioned critics use is simple; the homosexual writer creates in the “homosexual genre,” whose frame he cannot abandon. The essence of the genre is camouflage, since “perversion” (that is, the homosexual relationship) wears the mask of innocence, and leaves traces only for those who have been initiated. The critics, however, just like the code-breakers of the Second World War, are familiar with this language; they cannot be tricked, so they are able to draw the society’s attention to the dangers these text contain.

Tennessee Williams reacted strongly to what might be called “code-breaking hermeneutics” in an interview, in which he argued:

I've read things that say that Blanche was a drag queen. Blanche DuBois, ya know... that George and Martha in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* by Albee were a pair of homosexuals... these charges are ridiculous!... If I am writing a female character, goddamnit, I'm gonna write a female character, I'm not gonna write a drag queen! If I wanna write a drag queen, I'll write a drag queen... (Devlin 189)

We have two points of argument here contradicting each other. One point of argument assumes that the author's personal intentions just "slipped into" the text unwillingly, therefore every work can be decoded by means of information about the author. In contrast, the other point of argument claims that the author is the true master of his/her text, and nothing appears in the text against his/her intention. It would be easy to point out the weaknesses of both of these arguments, but since literary theory has already done so in several ways, it would be redundant to do so again. The real question behind such arguments is why homosexuality became such an important issue for theater criticism, and what the real reasons for Schechner's anger were.

Schechner's argument is very much connected to the process of the witch-hunting started by Joseph McCarthy and his Committee (HUAC). Surprisingly, the narrative provided by most historians about the actions of the HUAC lacks some important information. Although they examine the "Red Scare" in every detail, just a few scholars seem to know about another kind of menace, the "Lavender Scare." For example Gary A. Donaldson's *The Making of a Modern America* devotes a chapter to the history of Cold War America in which the author gives a seemingly detailed summary of the politics of Joseph McCarthy according to which the senator launched an investigation against (only) communists and leftist intellectuals (Donaldson 40–44). This view is shared by Arthur Miller, who in the instructions to *The Crucible* connects the plot of the play to the politics of the 1950s and shows that the word "communists" works in the same way as the term "witch" did in the 17th century: it conjures up a fear of the uncanny while launching a mindless, endless, irrational hunt and also serving certain political (and therefore very real) agendas.

Miller and Donaldson share the misconception that the HUAC investigations were "only" about communists. In an appearance on *Meet The Press*, where politicians had to answer journalists' questions, McCarthy said that in his view the State Government was full of people who are "communists or worse" (Doherty 88, emphasis added). The question what "worse" means should have been asked, but unfortunately it was not. Today, thanks to David K. Johnson's book, *The Lavender Scare. The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government*, we have some idea of what McCarthy meant by that particular word. Johnson's research showed that besides fighting against the red demon, the senator and his associates launched another campaign behind the scenes – a campaign against gay citizens (Johnson).² Alongside the Red Scare, another threat appeared, termed the Lavender Scare, playing on the perceived danger of homosexuality. The 1950s and 1960s saw the emergence of a new terminology for gay people; they were "security risks" (Johnson 14). Besides being repulsive, the gay subject was now to be regarded as a dangerous, destructive agent who threatened the integrity of the nation from inside.

The Kinsey reports and the “secret box” of sexuality

It would be a serious mistake to say that homophobia appeared exclusively as a result of the senator’s activities. In the 1930s several attempts were made to exclude homosexuals from the public sphere (see Chauncey 331–355); in the army, physicians screened soldiers on the basis of their sexual orientation. According to official reports the procedure was extremely humiliating, and the recruits had to answer disturbing questions. However, one must note here, the aim of the procedure was not the stigmatization of gay people; rather, the “experts” thought that though gay people could manage in everyday life, in the army they would be exposed to such high levels of stress that their frail nerves would not be able to cope with it. At this stage, homosexuals were not dangerous psychopaths in the investigators’ eyes – as the fact that gay people were subsequently discharged with honor proves. However, by the 1940s the conditions for gay people went from bad to worse; policemen started to patrol in New York’s Central Park, harassing men who “looked suspicious”, and the owners of gay bars were threatened (see Bérubé). Under the Truman government workers were investigated several times, during which not just their political orientation was examined but their sexual orientation as well (Donaldson 41). Moreover, the Pervert Elimination Campaign (launched by the Truman administration) provided a wide range of interpretations for the term “pervert”.³ All this shows that McCarthy radicalized an existing discourse on the boundaries of “normal” sexuality – a discourse which after the 1940s became more and more aggressive. Anything that differed from the norm became suspicious and a problem for society – therefore it needed to be investigated and categorized. In 1948, Alfred Kinsey published his research under the title *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, a report that ignited an angry debate on the nature of the “legal” ways of love. This research shocked the public since it revealed not only that American men who had been interviewed had committed adultery and paid for sex, but also – even more importantly – that 37 percent of them admitted having sexual relations with a partner of the same sex.

The scandal that followed the Kinsey reports provides an excellent field of research for sociologists who share a Foucauldian perspective. The discourse on sexuality itself became dangerous; even mentioning it in public could constitute a threat to American morals. In his work on the American theater of the Cold War period, Bruce McConachie shows that the metaphor of containment is of great importance in this area. According to McConachie, the National Security Act which was introduced in 1947 creates a metaphor in which the Nation appears as a container. The United States appears as a “box” containing values and secrets to be protected at any cost. Therefore, according to the Act, it is of great importance to restrict the rights of civilians in the name of national security; every citizen is a member of the nation, and everyone must be accounted for (McConachie 11).

The nation/container contains other, smaller containers, the most important of which is the family – which contains the American Character. Following McConachie’s argument, sexuality could be also described as a container, or to be more precise, a closed, dark box which can be located somewhere inside the family but outside the American character. There is a reason why I call it a box: in the 1930s the psychiatrist William Reich created a device called the Orgone Box. This machine was approximately the size of a refrigerator,

and what it did was the “production” of orgasms. Reich’s work was banned ten years later. The problem with it was exactly the same as with Kinsey: both of them legitimized the discourse on sexuality. Naturally, for that very reason Kinsey had followers who, in the name of a sexual revolution, tried to save American men and women from moral corruption by describing certain positions and techniques in detail. At the end of the 1950s a journalist from *Time Magazine* described the whole country as one big Orgone Box, since nearly everyone was talking about sexuality (See Reumann 202). It seemed that criticism of Kinsey’s work would never stop; among the self-appointed “experts” we can find physicians, theologians, literary critics, and even a secretive Mrs. W. who described herself as an American wife and mother. As a result, citizens – in the guise of everyday arbiters of normality – started to notice certain phenomena that had previously been considered unimportant. Moreover, sexual perversion (including homosexuality) became the enemy that needed to be stopped, and it was considered very important to recognize deviants before it was too late. Robert Corben argues that in the 1950s, to determine one’s sexual orientation became as important as identifying one’s race (Corbert 9). The gay individual, who had been ridiculed in secret, was now to be rejected or/and saved (a task for women and psychologists), since the spread of the “disease” threatened the integrity and the future of the nation. Homosexuality was characterized as an illness similar to alcoholism; the so-called experts considered themselves capable of identifying gay people on the basis of certain symptoms (weakness, instability, traumatized behavior), and – because such an individual represented a threat for the whole society – forcing treatment on him/her. However, addiction was not frightening enough to be used as a parallel with homosexuality. In her book, the *American Sexual Character: Sex, Gender, and National Identity in the Kinsey Reports*, Miriam G. Reumann cites medical reports from the 1960s, according to which gay individuals were described as repulsive and pathetic abominations of nature; in 1963 the American Psychiatric Committee described homosexuality as a psychopathological self-disorder, which develops as the effect of emotional abuse (Reumann 174).

Even the parallel with alcoholism is more threatening than it initially appears. The addict is often described as a person who can be manipulated easily, and therefore the unknown enemy might exploit him in the war on capitalism. It is not surprising that McCarthy initiated a new kind of comparison in the 1950s; homosexuals are just like communists. Both the reds and the queers are hiding themselves. Both create unique subcultures that are hard to define, both communicate through symbols, and their main desire to create an international brotherhood which, in the case of the gay community, is called the *homintern* (Higgins 287). While investigations were launched against homosexuals, journalists tried to direct attention to McCarthy’s error; however, according to some commentators it was not the absurdity of the process that was problematic but the fact that the senator failed to realize that gay people were in fact much worse than communists. Senator Kenneth Wherry addressed the government with a rhetorical question: “Could you imagine a worst threat against the U.S. than the perverts?” (Johnson 21). Also, politicians defended the firing of 600 employees from public office as a result of the necessary “purging” of perverts (Johnson 21).

Stories from Europe about homosexual conspiracies just worsened the situation;

though these affairs had taken place in the distant past, the hysterical atmosphere of the 1950s was able to breathe new life into them. For instance there was the story of Philip Eulenburg, a member of Wilhelm II's court who was condemned for homosexuality and treason. Such stories helped link treason to homosexuality in the mind of the average American; for example, Westbrook Pegler, referring to the Eulenburg story, announced that homosexuality was "worse than communism. This is like cancer" (Johnson 35). The homosexual character underwent fundamental changes in the public mind during these years; initially the homosexual was viewed as suffering from psychological illness, then he became a traitor, and then he was identified as the embodiment of the illness itself, without any ideological background. Cancer is not the most appropriate metaphor here; the metaphor of a virus would be more apt, since there is no cure; homosexuality hides itself and spreads invisibly until it destroys the American character, the family, and the Nation itself. Eventually homosexuality was separated from communism, therefore even when the Red Scare seemed to fade, there was no change in the attitude towards gay people; at times it seemed that the situation worsened. In Boise, Idaho a panic in 1955 started when the Idaho *Daily Salesman* reported the arrest of three men who allegedly had sexual relationships with young boys. To unveil all the "homosexual cycles" the police interrogated hundreds of suspects. According to a columnist of *Time Magazine* the citizens of Boise were shocked by the thought that their town had become a home for the "homosexual mob". In his book titled *Is Homosexuality a Menace?* Guy Mathews writes about gay refugees who, after having been exiled from Washington, went to New York to take up jobs in offices and theaters (Mathews 138–39).

All the above does not justify Schechner's outburst, but it does provide a perspective on the political context which may help us today to understand the reasons for it. Being aware of the hysteria, the young theater critic thought that the fact that the author of *Who's Afraid* was gay had relevance for the play. The general discourse about perverts and deviants created an interpretive strategy which – just like positivism – puts the author in the center; with the obvious exception that in this case only one characteristic of the author is relevant. Sexual orientation hence becomes so important that if the audience lacked information about it, they could easily misunderstand the play. Moreover, the stakes are very high, as such texts hide dangerous, subversive meanings that can manipulate the reader. Gay characters, just like "real" gay people, disguise themselves, thus creating theater inside the theater – but authors leave traces, so the informed audience member can see the truth behind the mask. Knowing that the author is a homosexual in their eyes means knowing how to break the codes, find the real meaning, and eliminate the threat; and it would seem that this also becomes the main objective for some theater critics confronted by the plays of Edward Albee. For this reason, interpretations similar to Schechner's critique began to proliferate; according to C.W.E. Bigsby, one member of the Pulitzer Prize advisory board, W.D. Maxwell, agreed with the young critic's opinion (Bigsby 257). Stephen J. Bottoms cites the drama critic Howard Taubman, who wrote an article in *The New York Times* on the "homosexual influence" on Broadway, and pays much attention to *Who's Afraid* (Bottoms 102). In 1964, Tome Driver, in his review on *Who's Afraid*, argues that we can see homosexual couples on the stage (Driver 38). After the film version of the play appeared, the number of these speculations increased, and Albee admitted to William

Flanagan in an interview that he had once written a letter to a critic of *Newsweek*, asking him to check his information. The answer was: the critic always knows the play better than the writer ("Edward Albee: The Art")

It might be true that a critic has a more sophisticated opinion on a certain work than the author (since as a judge, the critic has a more objective position), but this time the credit must undoubtedly go to Albee. A professional close reading of the text does not provide any evidence of the character's (latent) homosexuality.⁴ It is strange, however, that if the critics had wanted to attack Albee because he was gay and wrote about homosexuality, they could have done it by focusing on *The Zoo Story*. As I am about to show in the following part of my paper, the playwright's first successful work offers a sophisticated, sarcastic and serious criticism of the sexual politics and norms of the 1960s.

"Is he?"

The Zoo Story – "which was written in 1958, passed from friend to friend, from country to country, from manuscript to tape to production (in Berlin in 1959) before it made its way back to the United States" (Weales 22) – made a most effective debut in the history of American drama, according to C.W.E. Bigsby (Bigsby 129), and "was one of the first American plays to sensitize audiences to the explosiveness of Off Broadway" (Roudané 44). Although it ignited many discussions, it was not labelled as illicit or inappropriate, despite Jerry's constant remarks about sexuality.⁵ Jerry speaks about his pornographic cards, and when he learns that Peter used to have the same kind of toys, he starts interrogating Peter about whether he threw them out after his wedding. Jerry is obviously interested in Peter's love life and he is very eager to know the reasons why Peter no longer needs the cards. He is making Peter uncomfortable, and Peter prefers to avoid the subject. Then Jerry moves on to another story: he starts to describe his "fat, ugly, mean, stupid, unwashed, misanthropic, cheap, drunken bag of garbage" (Albee 25) landlady, and her affections towards him ("and somewhere, somewhere in the back of that pea-sized brain of hers, an organ developed just enough to let her eat, drink and emit, she has some foul parody of sexual desire. And I, Peter, I am the object of her sweaty lust.") (Albee 25). After describing his landlady as an animal, Jerry focuses on her dog; the main characteristic of the red-haired dog is, that "it's certainly a misused one... almost always has an erection... of sorts. That's red, too" (27)

It is important to keep in mind that the play contains the above thoughts in a social context where sexual behavior has a political reference, and anything that is out of the ordinary becomes dangerous. (The sociologist Pitrim Sorokin declared in 1956 that the most dangerous enemy of the U.S. was not China or the Soviet Union but the sexual revolution, because the latter transforms the character, creating a threat to ethical norms.) (Reumann 13). Clearly Jerry goes against ethical norms when he starts to discuss the delicate subject of sexuality with a stranger. Mentioning the pornographic cards can be understood as an ironic reference – namely, Jerry referring to Peter's poor sexual life. Therefore, in an ironic interpretation, Jerry could be seen as a "sexual freedom-fighter", who sacrifices himself to create a "real" human being from the vegetable-like editor, Peter, who was exiled from his home to the park. But the text does not remain within the heterosexual frame, since suddenly Jerry makes a surprising confession about his own past:

JERRY: to have sex with, or, how is it put ? ... make love to anybody more than once. Once; that's it ... Oh, wait; for a week and a half, when I was fifteen ... and I hang my head in shame that puberty was late ... I was a h-o-m-o-s-e-x-u-a-l. I mean, I was queer ... [Very fast] ... queer, queer, queer ... with bells ringing, banners snapping in the wind. And for those eleven days, I met at least twice a day with the park superintendent's son ... a Greek boy, whose birthday was the same as mine, except he was a year older. I think I was very much in love ... maybe just with sex. (Albee 24)

According to Michael Paller, the appearance of a character who speaks about his homosexual past on stage breaches the norms in itself. Moreover, this character regrets nothing in his past but being a late bloomer, and he speaks hatefully about a woman (making it plausible to think that he has the same opinion about all females). Furthermore, in the end, this character could seem heroic since he sacrifices himself to save Peter.

Though I agree with Paller's argument, I think the real provocation is in Jerry's remark saying that he *was* a homosexual. According to this wording, now he is no longer a homosexual, since he has had relationships with women; but if this is so, the question arises where we can find the borderline between heterosexuality and homosexuality. By raising that question, the play touches the most sensitive nerve of the contemporary discourse on sexuality. As Miriam G. Reumann argues, after the Kinsey reports the border between homosexuality and heterosexuality seems to have become increasingly blurred. Even the differences between the sexes had become uncertain. While at the beginning of the 1950s scientists agreed that one act of homosexual intercourse did not make anyone homosexual, this perspective suddenly changed, and every unconventional relationship between two individuals of the same sex was regarded as a form of perversion. A special taxonomy arose to characterize gay people on the basis of the time they had spent in such relationships; a person can be an experimenting, an obsessive or compulsory homosexual. However, the main point is that any deviance from the norms places individuals into one of the three categories, declaring them deviant for life; only the seriousness of her/his condition can be evaluated differently. The same person who was harmless at the beginning of the 1940s became a dangerous pervert; this is precisely the reason why John Cheever characterizes the climate of the 1960s as a time when "everyone worried about homosexuality".

They were worried about other things, too, but their other anxieties were published, discussed, and ventilated, while their anxieties about homosexuality remained in the dark: remained unspoken. Is he? Was he? Did they? Am I? Could I? seemed to be at the back of everyone's mind. (Cheever 157)

The same questions arise regarding Jerry's character. If he is not homosexual, it is hard to define his earlier relationship with a young Greek man; though in the other case, as a gay person, how could he have had those one-night stands he is bragging about? The blind spots of the semiotic system responsible for recognizing the national threats become obvious: either, under a certain threshold, there is no need to asseverate the breaking of the norms (but where is that threshold precisely?), or the signs of heterosexuality are not objectively reliable. The war against perversion promised to restore order by fixing and defining the

correct categories, but the only result it was able to achieve was to make their use more chaotic. During the 1940s it was easy to characterize a gay individual; he was feminine, vulnerable, a little ridiculous, easy to recognize, yet in spite of his queerness he meant no harm. As soon as homosexuality became a security risk, there was no definite way to read the word “deviant”, just as there was no objective method to recognize communist agents. Everybody could be like “that”. This chaos caused serious problems during the war against the Lavender Scare; one woman reported several of her colleagues because she suspected that they were lesbians. She could support her suspicion with no facts but one: she felt uncomfortable in the company of those women. Marcelle Henry became suspicious because, just like Jerry, he had too many partners; hence she asked before the committee how a heterosexual could be as much of a threat as a homosexual.

In conclusion, the narrative that could serve as a foundation of the discourse that divides human beings on the basis of their sexuality is itself a kind of zoo story: it is constantly being referred to, though never being told openly. Therefore, it would be more appropriate to use the metaphor “witch-hunt” to describe the Lavender Scare, rather than the Red Scare. At the end of Miller’s play *The Crucible*, it becomes obvious that there is no ending of the hunt, since there is no proper definition of the term “Witch”. After a certain period of time, nearly everyone can be suspected of having the Devil as a Master. Jerry’s character is provocative in many respects – but most of all because he raises the most disturbing question pertaining to a paranoid subject area: “Is he (gay)”?

Notes

¹ According to Gerald Weales, the beginning of the play might support Roth’s opinion, since we can find homoerotic remarks in the dialog of the characters, but – Weales argues – these jokes and insults have little importance throughout the play. One respondent to Roth’s article pointed out that the writer-publicist is completely wrong about Albee’s play, since homosexuality is not at all disguised; namely “Tiny Alice” refers to the male anus in the gay community.

² At the beginning of his book, Johnson points out that though the witch-hunt against homosexuals sparked a hysteria that pervaded the whole society, yet only a few historians have recognized the seriousness of the Lavender Scare. It would seem that even the pioneering scholars of queer theory have very little information about this; Alan Sinfield addresses the problem of the campaign against homosexuals during the Cold War, but he thinks that this happened only in the army. See Alan Sinfield. *Cultural-Politics: Queer Reading* (New York: Routledge 2005, 40–59). There are just a few works that share Johnson’s agenda of investigating the sexual politics of this time thoroughly; without doubt, the books of John D’Emilio (with a special focus on *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of the Homosexual Minority, 1940–1970*) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983) and David Savran belong among the pioneering works in the field.

³ David K. Johnson describes the case of a young man, Scott, who was harassed by policemen in the name of the Campaign. While walking in Central Park, Scott wanted to use the toilet, but going into one he noticed a suspicious-looking man, so he decided to wait outside. When he wanted to enter the men’s room again, a policeman stopped him and asked for his credentials. It turned out that

the suspicious-looking man was an undercover policeman, and the fact that Scott wanted to avoid him made him suspect Scott of being a pervert (Johnson 61).

⁴ Suppose we accept that because Martha and George are struggling, and torturing each other, they are homosexuals; following that logic, that would mean that *all* the fighting couples in dramatic and literary history are also gay... and if this is so, we should immediately start to reconstruct the Western canon.

⁵ However, politics did not entirely leave the play unmentioned; Prescott Bush called the work “filthy” and “infected by Communism.” Philip C. Kolin. “Albee’s early one-act plays: A new American playwright from whom much is to be expected.” In Stephen Bottoms (ed.): *The Cambridge Companion to Edward Albee* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, 17.)

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The Kennedy Assassination against the Grain

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Abstract

This study focuses on a singularly revisionary take on the Kennedy assassination undertaken by an independent filmmaker. In his 2003 mock-documentary Interview with the Assassin, Neil Burger experiments with the JFK image in its most celebratory aspect, e.g. the President's martyrdom, and with the limits of representations allowed for and encouraged by mainstream docudrama. His endeavor is worth analyzing because it marks a significant shift in John F. Kennedy's posthumous cinematic career, from the hagiographic tendency to a genuinely iconoclastic perspective, and also because it succeeds where historiography has only attempted to raise questions about the constant appeal of a major national cultural construct.

Keywords: myth, revisionism, docudrama, mock-documentary, image making, Kennedy assassination, New Frontier, Camelot

John F. Kennedy is considered to be the first American politician to have fully grasped and used the potential of visual media for politics and the first American President of the television age. His family background made him aware of the tremendous influence moving pictures may exercise on public memory and behavior, whether used for pragmatic or artistic purposes. Given the advantageous relationship he enjoyed with the camera and the privileged place of cinema in the American entertainment industry, it comes as no surprise that the American public's interest in John F. Kennedy's life, career and tragic death has manifested itself to a significant extent through this popular culture medium.

John F. Kennedy owed his political career to a concert of factors: his family background and influence, his unquestionable personal merits, and the historical context. The

tragedy of his death and its extensive coverage added to his popularity and turned him into a national hero and an icon of international scope. The backdrop of this complex cultural process was a society thriving on illusions, a socio-cultural phenomenon which Daniel Boorstin theorized as early as 1961, in his famous “image” concept. In his view, an image or “pseudo-event” is an artificial, staged, duplicitous and self-validating “synthetic novelty,” whose existence is made possible by an exacerbated desire to experience new, exciting, extraordinary events (Boorstin 10–12).

My understanding of the JFK image is that of a multilayered cultural construct steeped in reality, yet living a life of its own at the juncture between perception and deception. The first layer of the Kennedy image took firm shape during John F. Kennedy’s presidential campaign and could be summed up in the “New Frontier” slogan, which coagulated the young candidate’s solutions to the various challenges of the nuclear age. “Camelot,” which Jacqueline Kennedy envisaged days after her husband’s murder to encapsulate the Kennedy years as an epitome of uncompromising excellence, constitutes the second stratum. Finally, the various revisionist approaches to the Kennedy administration and JFK’s personal life represent the third, “Camelot-inside-out” level. In short, the popular memory of John F. Kennedy comes down to an accretive construct still in the making and equally un-making.

Contemporary historians acknowledge John F. Kennedy’s charismatic personality and his post-mortem potential to inspire, despite unflattering revelations about his personal life and instances of proactive presidential leadership. The Kennedy image, of the young, resourceful, enlightened, wise, level-headed President, whose second term in office would have made a big difference to the course of American and world history had he not been assassinated, endured in the public memory, even though it has long ago ceased to constitute the basis for historical analysis of his administration (Giglio 287, Dallek 711). The legendary aura Jacqueline Kennedy created around her husband’s personality and presidency could not be washed away by subsequent criticism because the public was not willing to discard a national symbol which had reached international prominence and which responded to their self-aggrandizing wish to have lived in a place and time made magical by an exceptional leader (White). From a pragmatic point of view, the paradoxical American monarchy, which Jackie Kennedy had established, was sanctioned into imaginary existence by the American public, who accepted and perpetuated the symbolical construct because it made the workings of the federal government more comprehensible and because it was their own way to pay their respects to the slain President (Bradley 71–72).

The positive and negative avatars of John F. Kennedy co-exist and will continue to co-exist as long as there is a public for each perspective. The success of the multi-faceted Kennedy image is due on the one hand to its underlying American-ness, as manifested in the New Frontier symbolism, and on the other hand to its audience-friendliness, which has turned it into an object of prevalent mass consumerism (Brown 106).

The undying appeal of all things Kennedy may also be accounted for in terms of a popular fascination with images as “pseudo-events,” in Daniel Boorstin’s understanding of the term. His 1961 seminal work, *The Image: a Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, postulated the existence of an exaggerated thirst for the un-usual, the un-common and the

extra-ordinary in American society, to the extent to which people have come to accept simulacra instead of real events because they meet their “extravagant expectations” (Boorstin 3).

The reason for this reversal is to be found in a contrastive analysis of real and pseudo-events. The difference between the two categories turns out to be not qualitative but one of degree. Pseudo-events appear more theatrical and thus more enjoyable than real events, like a televised debate compared to a mere speech. Taped material is more comprehensible, because it is staged primarily to entertain an audience, and only incidentally to inform them. Moreover, being conceived for dispersion, it addresses large audiences and it can be replayed, thus strengthening its initial impact (Boorstin 39–40).

The “Great Debates,” as the four televised debates between John F. Kennedy and Richard M. Nixon came to be known, constitute one example of a pseudo-event. Boorstin relies on Theodore White’s account of the first and most decisive debate to argue that television was not the real test for presidential skills because the medium did not allow the two candidates to tackle the questions as intellectual challenges but rather represented opportunities to project a certain image. Nixon tried to approach each question methodically and faced his opponent as he spoke, while Kennedy, more aware of the potential of television for politics, adopted a more general, discursive approach and always looked into the camera, thus facing the large audience at home. Moreover, in what has become a cliché statement, the camera loved Kennedy and exposed Nixon’s shortcomings (Boorstin 42–43).

John F. Kennedy’s televised funeral represents another, equally powerful, example of a pseudo-event. Even without the Lincoln-esque packaging, it would have stood out as an extended magnifying image of an event that was much too real, too violent and too tragic for people to witness it without it being previously choreographed. The Zapruder film itself could be seen as the closest translation of the Kennedy assassination because, as Umberto Eco argues, not even live broadcasting can be trusted to capture an event objectively and in its entirety, since recording does not afford a holistic perspective, but is confined to a particular, subjectively chosen angle. Interpretation is thus inevitable even at a subliminal level (107).

That the evaluation of the Kennedy legacy cannot be dissociated from the dramatic and sudden end of John Kennedy’s life has become a widely shared belief. The idealization of the President’s life and achievements began even before the funeral, with extended television coverage of the events preceding the funeral and the main TV channels replaying over and over again footage of the most important moments in Kennedy’s political career. Television offered the first textbook history lesson about President Kennedy and his times, except that it represented “history of a special sort,” i.e. “nonlinear history,” since chronology was abolished as a rule. Thus, on TV, Kennedy’s 1960 speech before the Great Ministerial Association in Houston preceded his 1956 race for the vice-presidential nomination and his press conferences mingled with funeral-related moments and the thoughts of ordinary people on the streets, all revolving around the already iconic image of Kennedy’s coffin, in what was aptly termed as “proleptic history with a vengeance: life viewed through the lens of tragic death” (Bradley 36).

The Kennedy image-making machine had been determinedly set in motion at the beginning of John Kennedy’s career in public office. The intricate process of turning him into

an appealing image could be explained in Daniel Boorstin's terms, as the transformation of a hero into a celebrity or "the human pseudo-event" (47). It should be noted, however, that John Kennedy's quality of a hero was partly gained on the World War II South Pacific Front, partly enhanced by subsequent coverage of the events. "Camelot" added an extra layer of glamour to the "New Frontier."

Subsequent revelations of image-making taking place throughout John Kennedy's career and afterlife did not manage to dispel the magic he had cast over audiences at home and abroad. "Camelot-inside-out" could invalidate neither the "New Frontier," nor "Camelot." According to Boorstin's argument, "even after we have been taken behind the scenes we can still enjoy the pleasures of deception" and "the more we know about the tricks of image building [...] the more satisfaction we have from the image itself," since "the elaborate contrivance proves to us that we are really justified (and not stupid either) in being taken in" (195). Full exposure of the pseudo-event as an entity half-way between a fake and doctored reality is not met with disenchantment, but with increased fascination at its disingenuousness. Seeing the strings used by puppeteers backstage to operate the puppets is not acknowledging the illusionary quality of the show, but believing in the ability of its artistry to provide a more fulfilling alternate dimension of existence. By the same token, revisionist thinking in the Kennedy case has rolled the snowball of illusions further, instead of causing it to melt.

The preoccupation with John Kennedy, in its main manifestations—hagiographic, debunking and balanced—continues to reveal itself in popular culture as well as among academic historians. The Kennedy image, in its now three co-existent shapes, the "New Frontier," "Camelot," and "Camelot-inside-out," remains an object of popular fascination because it addresses an audience still willing to be mesmerized and acquiescing to an ongoing escapist experience. In Daniel Boorstin's own words, "while we have given others great power to deceive us, to create pseudo-events, celebrities and images, they could not have done so without our collaboration" (260). The author diagnosed this tendency in American culture as "social narcissism," and explained it as an abandonment of the initial American ideals in favor of "images of our making, which turn out to be images of ourselves" (Boorstin 257).

JFK's posthumous film career is restricted (with one, albeit significant, exception) to one Hollywood genre: docudrama. The list includes the following titles: *PT-109* (Leslie H. Martinson, 1963), *Executive Action* (David Miller, 1973), *JFK* (Oliver Stone, 1991), *Nixon* (Oliver Stone, 1995), *In the Line of Fire* (Wolfgang Petersen, 1993), *The Rat Pack* (Rob Cohen, 1998), *Thirteen Days* (Roger Donaldson, 2003), and *Path to War* (John Frankenheimer, 2002). Watching these films separately and as a generic category reveals the fact that their portrayal of the Kennedy image limits itself to the first two layers of this cultural construct and almost without exception omits its third stratum. I argue that the reason why JFK docudramas preferably draw on the triumphant and hagiographic layers of the Kennedy image, the "New Frontier" and "Camelot," respectively, and only marginally, if at all, touch upon the unsavory Camelot-inside-out is because the nature of the docudramatic genre requires that the subject matter selected for enactment be packaged in such a way as to foreground the prevalence of good over evil, heroes over villains, and reassuringly closed over open-ended narratives.

The only exception to this rule is a film about the Kennedy assassination, *Interview with the Assassin* (2003). Written and directed by Neil Burger, this small budget production stands in Oliver Stone's conspiratorial thematic lineage, but bypasses the docudramatic code and adopts another hybrid cinematic form, namely the mock-documentary formula. Like docudrama, mock-documentary relies on the historical record or social contemporary realities for its subject matter. Unlike docudrama, which utilizes the melodramatic mode of emplotment, mock-documentary engages documentary codes and conventions, but does so ironically, in an attempt to expose recurrent cultural clichés and the artificiality of the belief in a one-to-one correspondence between the documentary image and reality (Roscoe and Hight 6–8).

Based on Bill Nichols' classification of documentary, mock-documentary's formal roots are traceable to two documentary categories: the expository and the observational modes. While the former develops according to a problem solving logic, builds an unmediated relationship with the audience and posits the objectivity of the filmmaker, the latter limits itself to closely registering aspects of everyday life, hence its claim to a transparent depiction of reality, a status of total detachment on the part of the filmmaker, and an "idealistic (voyeuristic) spectator position" (Roscoe and Hight 18–19).

Unlike docudrama, whose relation to documentary material is meant to ensure its factual relevance, mock-documentary taps into the documentary representational code in order to assimilate it from a critical perspective. In doing so, "appropriation inherently constructs a degree of latent reflexivity towards the genre" (Roscoe, Hight 50). Furthermore, viewers' engagement with mock-documentary presupposes a complex relationship, predicated on a creatively subversive acknowledgement of documentary conventions on the part of the audience. On the one hand, spectators are invited to watch a mock-documentary "as if it were a documentary," while on the other hand, they are required to be aware of the fictional nature of this cinematic form. This paradoxical type of viewer response affirms so as to be able to consciously flout the same documentary paradigm which accounts for the reflexive dimension of the genre, explaining why the genre targets a consummate audience (Roscoe, Hight 52).

Interview with the Assassin grafts this general mock-documentary profile onto a tragic event which has become a popular culture staple: the Kennedy assassination. The film begins with a framing narrative strategy which draws attention to a minimal story-within-a-story Chinese-box cinematic structure. Ron Kobelesky reveals the source of the story which viewers are about to watch and the context in which he produced this story. A recently laid-off cameraman, Ron, who lives with his wife and daughter in San Bernardino, California, is approached by his neighbor across the street, Walter Ohlinger, a former Marine, with the request to register a confession he has to make. Walter has just been diagnosed with terminal cancer and, having no more than a couple of months to live, he wants to talk about a secret he has kept for almost forty years. The cinema verite style which the director adopted makes Walter's confession even more eerie: "I was in Dallas on November, 22nd. I was the second gunman" (Burger). His deadpan tone and unflinching facial traits make the audience wonder whether his words are to be taken at face value or whether he is delusional. The immediate piece of material evidence Walter can show Ron is the shell of the bullet he claims to have fired and which he has kept in a bank safe. The

cameraman takes the shell to a local laboratory to test it for the time when it was fired. Specialist Stephen Wu informs Ron the bullet was most probably fired in 1963, but recommends further tests for more accurate results. Jokingly, he asks Ron whether it is the bullet which killed JFK and gets a negative, derisive answer.

Walter anticipates Ron's distrust and proceeds to prove his claims. He mentions his former commanding officer in the Marines, John Seymour, who chose him for the job of killing Kennedy, and tells Ron that he is the only one who could corroborate his story, if he were still alive. Walter does not seem unnerved that his only chance of ever having his story confirmed is lost. He does have a plan B. In order to put it into practice, he suggests he and Ron go to Dallas first. Back to Dealey Plaza, four decades after the fact, Walter reenacts the role he played in the Kennedy assassination. He points to the picket fence on the Grassy Knoll and acknowledges it as the place where he positioned himself and from where he shot the bullet which killed Kennedy. Asked what his feelings are, his reply betrays total detachment: "I don't feel nothing" (Burger). Walter has remained the same person whose thoughts during those long seconds before the shooting could only register his hunger: "I was thinking food. I was hungry" (Burger). Nothing could derail Walter from the task he had assumed. He was told what to do and he did it without having second thoughts or feeling remorseful afterwards. Although he describes his deed as part of the professional sniper's job, he does admit that killing Kennedy made him feel empowered in a way nothing else did: "You kill the most powerful man in the world. That makes *you* the most powerful" (Burger). Ironically enough, a couple passing through Dealey Plaza in search of Kennedy-ana asks Walter to take a picture of them: forty years later the sniper takes another shot. He then poses with the tourists, to humor Ron, who has noticed the whole irony of the situation and wants to save the moment on camera.

The trip to Dallas has helped Ron become more familiar with Walter's personality and the nature of his story, but has not brought him any closer to its validation by a third party. Walter decides that a visit to Jimmy, his old Marines comrade and Bay of Pigs veteran, might further his purpose, which turns out to be true. The veteran keeps referring the cameraman to Walter, his only input being that his friend "knows the secrets" and "some of them are true" (Burger). This incident functions as an extradiegetical comment on the part of the filmmaker about the story's potential for ambiguity. However, Jimmy does provide Walter with a piece of information which completely changes the latter's strategy, namely the fact that John Seymour has not died and is in fact living in Norfolk, Virginia.

Back to California and ready to embark on a journey to locate Seymour and discover why he ordered Kennedy's death, Walter listens to a threat-message and decides he could only have received it as a result of Jimmy having warned his former commanding officer (who is at present hospitalized in Bethesda Naval Hospital). After a violent confrontation with a police officer, whom Walter thinks has been following them around, Ron begins to suspect that Walter's pathological behavior is getting out of control. Yet, he tacitly agrees to continue to accompany him. The next trip takes them to Washington, D.C. Walter manages to get himself and Ron admitted to a public event where the current President of the United States is scheduled to be present. The tension builds up as Ron realizes in horror that Walter is carrying a gun and has made his way through the crowd to the first row. He desperately cries out that "he's got a gun" and in the ensuing chaos, the two manage to

leave the scene. This is the moment when Ron parts ways with Walter. Back home, Ron is determined to call the FBI and tell them all he knows about his neighbor. He does not have time to carry out his plan because Walter bursts into his house and threatens him with a gun. Things precipitate and Ron shoots Walter dead in self-defense. Prior to his trial, Ron refuses to provide his lawyer with elaborate information about his connection with Walter, on account that it was not going to do him any good. The screen goes blank and the audience is presented with a brief denouement in the form of an epitaph: "Ron Kobelesky was convicted of conspiracy and sentenced to three years in prison. The shell was confiscated by the police from Steven Wu and booked into evidence. It was later reported missing and is now considered lost. Ron Kobelesky died in prison on May 8th, 2001, of multiple stab wounds. At this time there is no suspect in his murder" (Burger).

Interview with an Assassin constructs an open-ended scenario which allows for at least three interpretive options, depending on the narrative agent we choose to foreground: the implied filmmaker, Walter or Ron. The implied filmmaker is an elusive entity, whose presence is overtly specified in Ron's opening statement about the actual circumstances in which he became associated with Walter, half-way alluded to in the very few instances when a second cameraman zeroes in on Ron, thus drawing attention to a superimposed recording body, and covertly suggested by the concluding remarks projected on a black screen. If we focus on the implied filmmaker, the interpretation will be concerned with the constructed-ness of the cinematic text, i.e. it will analyze its meta-narrative bent. The viewers' conclusions will address the reflexive dimension of mock-documentary and affirm the failure of documentary's original realist claim. The audience's expectations of a definite answer, given the documentary conventions employed by the film, are thwarted by the viewers' awareness of these conventions being just that: mere representational codes which are once again proven to be artificial.

If we focus on Walter, the interpretation will have to incorporate the notion of unreliable narrator, since some aspects of his story are difficult to believe, no matter how hard one might try to suspend one's common sense and think from within a conspiracy-haunted mind. Walter is an unsympathetic character for the obvious reason that he is the alleged relentlessly cynical murderer of John Kennedy and also because his confessing initiative leads nowhere and leaves the audience no less in the dark than they were at the onset. Considered in itself, Walter's 'case' represents yet another example of a delusional individual whose self-aggrandizing project fails pathetically. His paranoid excesses, even if justified by his professional background, do not shed light on the character's original statement. Nor do they account for Ron's death. While it is remotely possible that Ron was silenced by the same nameless, dark forces which killed Kennedy and worked out the perfect cover-up for the assassination, one cannot but realize that those same forces were aware of Walter's helplessness to expose a system his only knowledge of which was that it existed...

If we focus on Ron's destiny, the interpretation will lead us to conclude that he was unfortunate enough to associate himself with the wrong person. He fell victim to his own naïveté and to unfavorable circumstances, which he could have better assessed and handled had he not first fallen prey to illusions of material gain and personal grandeur.

Interview with the Assassin's dispassionate documentary format and hand-held camera technique, together with its minimalist cast and linear yet inconclusive narrative, concur

to its status of mock-documentary. The subversive element does not target the subject matter, which is treated most seriously, but the documentary frame, in an attempt to critically address the limits of representation and interpretation with particular respect to the Kennedy assassination. Director Neil Burger has stated that it was not a factual argument he sought to make, but that his aim was to play upon the documentary code in connection with a controversial topic. When asked what his personal opinion was about the Kennedy assassination, his answer was: "I just don't know." In Burger's own words, the thematic center of the film is "about truth and meaning and what you believe" (Curry).

Unlike Oliver Stone, who has claimed both factual and fictional value for his representation of the Kennedy assassination, Burger has laid stress on the meta-narrative dimension of his film, without neglecting the story. *Interview with the Assassin's* appeal does not reside in the docudramatic code and character-driven narrative, but in the filming technique, whose end product is an uncut video-like thriller which defies a conclusive ending. The viewers' engagement is not so much with the protagonists, who are unsympathetic characters, but with the documentary conventions. The promise of factuality which the documentary code makes entertains expectations of a definite and definitive answer on the part of the audience up to the end, when the final laying bare of the mock-documentary technique validates the disparate technical winks which the filmmaker has artfully inserted in the cinematic fabric, such as the presence of an omniscient cameraman.

The question of which layer of the JFK image this mock-documentary portrays is irrelevant from each of the three interpretive perspectives mentioned above. Even if one insists on seeing Camelot-inside-out enacted in *Interview with the Assassin*, one would be dissuaded from contemplating the idea by the following facts: the implied filmmaker's role is to make oblique meta-narrative comments; Walter has remained the same insensitive professional killer, whose only feelings before the Kennedy shooting were reduced to mere basic sensations of hunger and whose more elaborate argument that he sought empowerment by killing the most powerful man in the world is void of any qualitative evaluation, since his demented gesture addressed the office of the American presidency and not its actual occupant; and finally, Ron's only motivation is to get a breakthrough story featuring a stranger who gunned down America's President-celebrity. His endeavor is driven by mercantile motivation, targeting audiences interested in sensationalist scenarios, and it cannot therefore incorporate any personal or objectified JFK image bias.

Interview with the Assassin persuades through the documentary code it uses and ultimately abuses. It dramatizes an uncompromising distrust in the documentary mode of representation and, by extension, it engages docudrama critically, with respect to its factual component, and most dismissively, if not derisively, with respect to its melodramatic code. If films like *Executive Action* and *JFK* exert their docudramatic persuasion along such lines as 'this is what happened in the Kennedy assassination and this is the way in which things unfolded,' *Interview with the Assassin* relies on a paradoxical, dissuasive type of persuasion which seeks to suspend the audience's belief in 'what really happened' and therefore in the possibility of recording the un-recordable. To conclude, Neal Burger's film offers a unique and fresh perspective on a historical figure and media event as well as on its mainstream docudramatic packaging and, in the process, raises questions about the

various forces involved in the constant refashioning of a popular culture product of mythical proportions.

Note

This study constitutes an integral part of the following book: Raluca Lucia Cîmpean, *The Image: Profiles in Docudrama* (Lanham, MD, London, UK: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015).

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Correlation of Fact and Fiction in Biographies of Henry James: Moral and Aesthetic Vision

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Abstract

The paper focuses upon the history of both academic and fictional biographies of Henry James – a writer well known for his complex vision of the balance of private/public in life-writing. The proliferation of biofictions in the 2000s (D. Lodge, C. Tóibín and others) is viewed as a result of James's conscious self-mythologizing, which is related to fictional elements in academic biographies (L. Edel, F. Kaplan et al.) The complicated and multidirectional process of myth-making and myth-destruction is symptomatic of the current situation with regard to biographies of Henry James, which obviously sets the current situation apart from earlier stages of development (1990s–2000s), when fictionalizing determined the main vector.

Keywords: Henry James, life writing, (auto)biographies, biofictions, public/private, fictionalization, mythmaking, demythologizing

Henry James (1843–1916) is a case of an artist whose life was completely dedicated to creative work – so writing Henry James's biography is, first and foremost, writing the history of his literary experiments. Life and art formed an organic whole for James, both being consciously constructed by him. Neither can be interpreted without the other.

Writers' biographies have always attracted the attention of a broad readership. This literary genre touches upon ever-topical problems of the correlation of art and life, of the subjective and the objective. It evokes reflections about the nature of genius and the role of biographical circumstances in its consummation or failure. Another issue that is important

for every writer's life-writing is the degree to which it is permissible for a biographer to penetrate into the private life of an artist. The latter issue is specifically relevant in our times, characterized by the predominance of publicity.

During recent decades, writers' biographies – specifically fictionalized ones, or *biofictions* – have been proliferating, remaining on bestseller lists for a long time. The English-speaking cultural space, with its long-sustained tradition of life-writing, is no exception. Let it be recalled here that it was the British biographer Lytton Strachey who paradoxically remarked: “We do not reflect that it is perhaps as difficult to write a good life as it is to live one” (qtd. in “Leon Edel”).

In 2006 David Lodge gave an astute explanation for the popularity of writers' biofictions:

The biographical novel – the novel which takes a real person and their real history as the subject matter for imaginative exploration, using the novel's techniques for representing subjectivity rather than the objective, evidence-based discourse of biography – has become a very fashionable form of literary fiction in the last decade or so, especially as applied to the lives of writers [...] It could be taken as a symptom of a declining faith or loss of confidence in the power of purely fictional narrative, in a culture where we are bombarded from every direction with factual narrative in the form of ‘news’. It could be regarded as a characteristic move of postmodernism – incorporating the art of the past in its own processes through reinterpretation and stylistic pastiche. It could be seen as a sign of decadence and exhaustion in contemporary writing, or as a positive and ingenious way of coping with the ‘anxiety of influence’. (Lodge)

Henry James has been a favourite subject for biographers. In the early 2000s, several biofictions inspired by his life and work were published: David Lodge's *Author, Author* (2004), Colm Tóibín's *The Master* (2004), and Alan Hollinghurst's *The Line of Beauty* (2004). Henry James is the central character of the first two works. *The Line of Beauty* is set in the 1980s and narrates the story of a gay man who is writing a postgraduate thesis on Henry James, more or less consciously searching for parallels between his life and James's art (see: Antsyferova 119–129). There was also Emma Tennant's *Felony: The Private History of 'The Aspern Papers'*, which gave an account of James's relationship with the American novelist Constance Fenimore Woolson. Closely intertwined with the historical background of James's well-known tale *The Aspern Papers*, the book features among its characters not only Henry and Constance, but also Claire Clairmont, a former lover of Lord Byron and the possessor of his letters, and the notorious Shelleyite Edward Silsbee – the prototype of the unscrupulous narrator of *The Aspern Papers* who would stop at nothing to take hold of the precious papers. The main narrator is Georgina, a thirteen-year-old great-niece of Claire Clairmont, which adds a specific poignancy to the story of various misdemeanours connected with literature. Close parallels between the theft of Byron's letters and James's growing unease with his own messages left at the disposal of the American lady-novelist create a curious interplay of real-life and fictitious motives, of fatal continuity between James's life and his writing. *Felony* was published in 2002 and reissued as a paperback in the spring of 2004. In 2005 the South African writer Michiel Heyns published *The Typewriter's Tale*, narrated from the point of view of James's

fictional secretary and focusing upon the writer's involvement, between 1907 and 1910, in a love affair between two of his friends, the novelist Edith Wharton and Morton Fullerton.

At this juncture, biographers' specific attention to Henry James might be accounted for by the anniversaries of his birth and death, in 2003 and 2016 respectively. However, this is not the only reason. There is something more to this American classic which makes his life such a "juicy story". Certainly it is not connected with any specific adventure in his life, in the form of unexpected turns or collisions. His experience was filled with observation and writing. If his life was adventurous, the only adventure was an intellectual one.

Here I would like to propose at least four main reasons for Henry James's popularity with biographers. All of them are connected with both ethics and aesthetics.

The primary challenge for James's biographers is to write about an author who had such an ambivalent attitude to the craft and ethics of the literary biography genre. James made his own attempts at writing biographical narratives. In 1879 he published an essay about the American Romantic writer Nathaniel Hawthorne in the series "English Writers". Later, in 1903, James authored a biography of a famous American sculptor, *William Wetmore Story and His Friends*, where much attention was paid to Story's literary colleagues and friends – Robert and Elizabeth Browning and James Russell Lowell.

However, as early as in 1872, in his review of Hawthorne's *French and Italian Notebooks*, James wrote with bitter irony about the necessary limits for biographical studies, as if anticipating his own contradictory postmortem popularity:

These liberal excisions from the privacy of so reserved and shade-seeking a genius suggest forcibly the general question of the proper limits of curiosity as to that passive personality of an artist of which the elements are scattered in portfolios and table-drawers. It is becoming very plain, however, that whatever the proper limits may be, the actual limits will be fixed only by a total exhaustion of matter. There is much that is very worthy and signally serviceable to art itself in this curiosity, as well as much that is idle and grossly defiant of the artist's presumptive desire to limit and define the ground of his appeal to fame. The question is really brought to an open dispute between this instinct of self-conservatism and the general fondness for squeezing an orange dry. Artists, of course, as time goes on, will be likely to take the alarm, empty their table-drawers, and level the approaches to their privacy. The critics, psychologists, and gossip-mongers may then glean amid the stubble. (James, "Passages").

It is quite obvious that these 1870s observations about the borderlines between private and public, about the insatiable curiosity of biographers and their hunger for sensation, anticipate the most pressing problems of today's cultural life, characterized by intrusive publicity and the overwhelming ubiquity of the mass media. It is equally evident that James's own attempts at writing a biography of his literary confrere made him very much alert to the moral issue of possible invasions into privacy. Not without reason did James consider William Shakespeare the luckiest and the most accomplished literary genius, with so little known about his life that "we shall never touch the Man directly in the Artist" (James, "Introduction" 1220).

James's animosity towards biographers found its most dramatic and vivid expression in *The Aspern Papers* (1888). James's letter to his nephew in 1914 is also often cited in this connection: "My sole wish is to frustrate as utterly as possible the postmortem exploiter – which, I know, is so but imperfectly possible [...] I have long thought of launching, by a provision in my will, a curse not less explicit than Shakespeare's own on any such as try to move my bones" (*Henry James: Letters* 806).

The second aspect of James's magnetism for biographers is connected with the intriguing scenario of his postmortem popularity. This, to a certain extent, was foreshadowed by a specific method of self-representation acquired by James, which might be termed automyth-making, or self-fictionalizing, which eventually produced the Cult of the Master (Анцыферова: 378–416). One of the first explicit symptoms of this myth was the book published by Simon Nowell-Smith *The Legend of the Master* – a collection of reminiscences about Henry James. In his preface, Nowell-Smith celebrates H. G. Wells as the creator of the first written source of this legend, referring to the notorious pamphlet *Boon* (1916).

The very title of Nowell-Smith's book testifies to the indissoluble connection between James's life and his art: the writer continued to live not only on the pages of his works, but also as a legend, as a mythological figure. This edition presents Henry James not so much as an author, but as a partaker of Anglo-American "literary mores", to use a term coined by Boris Eikhenbaum (Эйхенбаум 429). Reading about Henry James makes us surmise that the writer, whose whole existence was filled by and confined to his creative work, shaped his life in accord with literary conventions, creating a myth about himself. As Norman Page aptly put it, "the master of the art of fiction was to the very end himself the object of a largely unconscious fictionalizing process" (Page xvi).

The ways of Henry James, as registered by his contemporaries, are so idiosyncratic that they often suggest self-parody. In his everyday life Henry James seemed to play off his habitual reputation as an artist deeply immersed in the search for *le mot juste* (G. Flaubert), painfully trying to capture all the nuances of human psychology. For instance, along with his contemporaries, Henry James was introduced to a new form information technology – the telegraph. It is well-known that Marcel Proust's cables were as long as his letters. Henry James appropriated this genre of writing in a different way. Here is the text of James's telegram addressed to the American artist Edwin Austin Abbey: "Will alight precipitately at 5.38 from the deliberate 1.50" (qtd. in Lucas 268). A telegram to Amy James can also be cited. Sent from Southport, it refers to the stage adaptation of James's novel *The American*: "Unqualified triumphant magnificent success universal congratulations great ovation for author great future for play Comptons radiant & his acting admirable writing Henry" (qtd in: Seymour 75). Numerous epithets and parallel constructions run counter to commonly accepted norms of cable-writing.

In his introduction to *Henry James: Interviews and Recollections*, Norman Page writes: "James had no Boswell, but the collective testimony of those who knew him is very extensive; attempts to record his conversation are particularly numerous, and probably no other major novelist is known to us so fully in his habit as he talked. As with Dr. Johnson, however, the bulk of this material relates to his later years" (xi). Over the years Henry James became a memorable and characteristic figure, evoking very distinct associations. The

famous artist and illustrator W. Graham Robertson (1866–1948) found a curious visual parallel:

In the 1890s [Henry James] was in appearance almost remarkably unremarkable; his face might be anybody's face; it was as though, when looking round for a face, he had been able to find nothing to his taste and had been obliged to put up with a ready-made 'stock' article until something more suitable could be made to order expressly for him. This special and only genuine Henry James's face was not 'delivered' until he was a comparatively old man, so that for the greater part of his life he went about in disguise" (Page 14).

However, Robertson's irony seems to be an oversimplification. It would be more accurate to speak not about an expressive self-image finally found by the writer during his "major phase", but about his *attainment of biography*. Yuri Lotman's observations seem very appropriate here: in the second part of the nineteenth century, biography "becomes a more complicated notion than just a chosen mask. A biography implies some inherent history. In so far as history at that time is perceived as a movement from the unconscious to the conscious, a biography is taken as an act of gradual self-education directed at intellectual and spiritual insight" (Лотман 372).

James's subordination of his life to his literary vocation became one of the major factors in transforming his biography into a hagiography. The myth about James's selfless and profitless worship of Art made him a cult figure for a group of devoted admirers and apprentices from the 1880s onwards. They included Paul Bourget and some literary novices who were destined to carve themselves a place in the history of English literature – Joseph Conrad, H. G. Wells, Ford Madox Ford, and Stephen Crane. According to Ann Margolis, this heterogeneous group served as an alternative reading audience for James, giving him support and, probably, inspiration (62).

An outrageous literary scandal was connected with one of this group. In the 1910s H. G. Wells rapidly morphed from a devoted Jamesian into his harshest critic. Insulted by James's criticism in the article "The Younger Generation" published in *The Times Literary Supplement* (March and April, 1914), Wells lampooned the Master in his pamphlet *Boon* (1916), notoriously comparing him to a "leviathan retrieving pebbles", to a "magnificent but painful hippopotamus resolved at any cost, even at the cost of its dignity, upon picking up a pea which has got into the corner of its den" (Wells 51). Twenty years later, when this violent controversy had become a fact of history, Wells wrote in his *Experiment in Autobiography* (1934) about Henry James: "He was the most consciously and elaborately artistic and refined human being I ever encountered [...] All this talk I had with Conrad and Hueffer and James about the just word, the perfect expression, about this or that being 'written' or not written, bothered me, set me interrogating myself, threw me into a heart-searching defensive attitude [...] in the end I revolted altogether and refused to play their game" (qtd. in Seymour 73). (This well-known aesthetic and ideological conflict is recalled here to reconstruct the latent dramatism of James's life – not necessarily in relation to his sexuality, as has often been supposed recently.)

The third reason for biographers' unrelenting interest in Henry James is the paradoxical combination of his extreme privacy with his huge epistolarium. James pedantically destroyed all letters addressed to him, but he could do nothing to his own letters. His letters, together with his own fictional works, formed a basis for several academic biographies, which in turn inspired later fictionalizers. Even the way in which James's archives became available to scholars and the general public was dominated by conflicting forces, generated dramatic tensions and had what James would call "the story in it".

The first major biography of Henry James was a five-volume work by Leon Edel, who took twenty years to write it (1953–1972); the last volumes were awarded the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award. Due to his authorship of this "canonical" biography, along with two hundred other papers on James, Leon Edel remained the most influential James scholar, dominating this field of research up to his death in 1997, or at least up to the mid-1970s. Michael Anesco, in his book *Monopolizing the Master: Henry James and the Politics of Modern Literary Scholarship*, explains "how [Edel] gained – and assiduously worked to maintain – his peculiar advantage: controlling others' access to the James archive" (Anesco xii). I would add that the canonical and authoritative status of Edel's biography somehow correlated with the domination of "New Criticism" in the U.S. humanities: it was a time of ideological conformity and unanimity.

Michael Anesco presents the history of Henry James's legacy in a panoptic fashion. The first lines of his book present a clear-cut comparison of critics with parasites; he then convincingly demonstrates that "James's contemporary acolytes [...] and the next generation of modernists [...] attempted to appropriate the Master's aura, wanting to transfer or borrow his cultural capital to shore up their own artistic agendas" (xii). Along with this, "running in tandem – and very much at odds – with these early moves to canonize James were other critics who wanted to discredit the criteria advanced by the Master's disciples for the validation of his cultural capital" (120). Here Anesco aptly highlights the contradictory nature of the appropriation, both aesthetic and academic, of James's legacy. Intrigues, suppression and concealment are shown to be an integral part of this process. Stating that "restrictive energy of rare force resulted from barely concealed self-interest on Edel's part and protective family scruples on James's" (170), Anesco makes "Edel the Ubiquitous" the central character (mainly satirical) of the last chapter, which is entitled "The Legend of the Bastard". Hence we learn, for example, about the egregious degree of Edel's authoritative possessiveness. Among other things, this manifested itself in the way he evaluated papers sent to him by the journal *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* for reviewing: "[He was] very selective in what he was willing to entertain, and was especially hostile to anything that might be seen going against the grain of his own writing on James" (qtd. in Anesco 174). Thus, the hidden controversies over the Master's archives added to the latent dramatics of his postmortem fate.

The fourth reason for biographers' unquenchable interest in Henry James has much to do with the more or less overt fictionalizing that was a distinct feature of James's life-writing from his postmortem years well into the late 20th century. If H. G. Wells intentionally depicted a grotesque figure of Henry James in his *Boon*, Leon Edel was not a stranger to fictionalizing either. In his 1985 interview, he compared his main impetus for writing a biography to falling in love, and confessed that his interest in James arose rather from

working with family archives than from reading his novels: “Everything seemed filled with mystery and promise; there were all kinds of answers in those papers to the puzzles and secrets the novelist had left behind, residues of his complex being” (“Leon Edel”).

Thousands of letters shed light on new, previously unknown sides of Henry James, and soon Edel understood that he would have to depart from the customary pattern of life-writing: “As I kept finding surprises of one sort and another, I created a kind of fluid non-chronological episodic story. I’d startled too many hares in the published volume to be able to turn back to conventional chronological biography. I was creating a serial and it could be a cliffhanger if my material allowed for this” (“Leon Edel”).

Along with the experience of James’s play “Guy Domville” being booed by the audience in 1895, Edel was also the first to discover another biographical episode that was rich in fictional possibilities: it was James’s “strange friendship” with Constance Fenimore Woolson, which Edel interpreted as follows: “She an old maid who loved him, he a fastidious bachelor who was being kind to her but keeping himself distinctly at a distance” (“Leon Edel”).

Most probably inspired by Andre Maurois, Edel treats life-writing as an art rather than as journalism, as a process needing “the biographical imagination, the imagination of form. As biographers, we are not allowed to imagine our facts” (“Leon Edel”). In other words, the biographer must have a knack for a good plot. Still another fundamental idea of Edel is that the life-writing craft is conditioned by an ability to find a link between a talent and its accomplishments: without this link the whole material risks falling apart and becoming a chaotic aggregation of concurrent events and gossip.

Edel highlights that a biographer, unlike a novelist, is not omniscient: “The difference between a novelist and a biographer resides in the biographer’s having to master a narrative of inquiry. Biography has to explain and examine the evidence. The story is told brushstroke by brushstroke like a painter, and the biographer often has to say he simply doesn’t know – he cannot fill in the gaps.”

Edel was sure (and he was absolutely right) that new time demands new biographies:

Like humans, biographies grow old. New generations need new versions of past history in the generation’s new language. In the past thirty years our attitudes toward sex – toward the physical being of men and women – have changed drastically, and most biographies were written before these changes occurred. We have had the new feminism. And we have also the ‘new biography’. (“Leon Edel”)

Indeed, new biographies of James were on their way. In 1990, partly inspired by the 150th anniversary of James’s birth, two monographs were published not only presenting new facts and interpretations of James’s life, but also resonating with the time when these life-narratives were written – the cultural situation of postmodernism with its blurring of the dichotomies of mass/high culture, fiction/non-fiction, etc.

Henry James: The Imagination of a Genius (1992) by Fred Kaplan propounded pivotal postmodernist ideas: the poststructuralist thesis of “the death of the author”, the repudiation of the author as a generator of meanings. Kaplan based his life-narrative, just like Edel before him, mainly on James’s letters – though he focused on previously unpublished

letters. (From May 4, 1973, when according to the will of Alexander James, the great-nephew of the novelist, Edel's monopoly was broken and restrictions on access rescinded, more than twelve thousand letters were discovered and made available for researchers.) However, Kaplan made ample reference to the *trivia* of James's everyday life. In this biography the artist's personality was represented as a derivative from narratives, marginal narratives at that. It was intended to wipe away the customary binaries of essential/non-essential or art/hackwork, and to blur a seemingly evident sexual self-identification. The main source of the creative process was to be found in James's partly subconscious negotiations with the reading audience, his royalties either confirming or disconfirming his success. In the context of James's letters, his bachelorship was interpreted in explicitly homoerotic terms.

Hence the image of Henry James, as represented by Kaplan, was substantially trivialized, whereas the subtitle of the book "*The Imagination of the Genius*" foregrounded the generic feature of an artist, his "otherness". The gabble of the dying James was interpreted as a final escape into one of his imaginary worlds, the one that was the freest from conventions and limitations. Here imagination began to correlate with a liminal psychological condition, which invoked Michel Foucault's ideas.

The second biography, *Henry James: The Young Master* (1996), was written by Sheldon Novick. Again following Edel, Novick emphasized the proximity between biography and art: The author compares himself with James. The biographer overtly borrows his analytical instrument from his biographical object: Novick presents James in the light of different viewpoints (just as Emma Tennant would do later). His new type of biography claims to be very close to *autobiography*: the writer's life is presented as if perceived by the writer himself. In one way or the other, the biographer tried to fill in *lacunae* in the tentatively autobiographical portrait. For instance, Sheldon Novick insisted that James loved young men.

The proclaimed proximity between Novick's biography and the Jamesian method justified ample fictionalizing on the biographer's part. That gave the biographer a right to proffer his own interpretations for some well-known episodes. Novick was one of the first to write about James's assumed homosexuality – yet, as if fearing his own shocking assumptions, the biographer hid these passages among the notes. Firstly, he reconsidered James' friendship with Oliver Wendell Holmes. The future distinguished jurist was said to be the young James's first intense sexual experience (Novick, *Henry James: The Young Master* 109–110, 471). Reminiscences were used as the main source of information, validating retrospection as the main structural device: the biography was presented as recollections dictated by the ageing writer to his amanuensis. The reader can almost feel the hidden dramatic tension of the life-narrative, created by the undercurrent of clandestine and meticulously concealed passions which the biographer reads *into* the lines of James's letters and autobiographical writings. In the preface to his second volume, Novick declares that he has taken "a fresh look at the primary materials" and, contrariwise to the conventional view of James as "a passive, fearful man, detached observer of life around him" the biographer foregrounds "an active and engaged man, passionate and energetic, for whom relationships were the ground of life and the subject of his art" (Novick, *Henry James: The Mature Master* xi–x). Again, Henry James is treated more like a fictional character

to be construed by the author than a real person whose life was documented in numerous non-fictional texts.

Thus, when turning to Henry James's life, the biographers of the new millennium (a period in which biofiction has come to the fore) have to deal with the following specificities: (1) James's personal aversion towards invasions of his privacy, and his firm belief that the essence of art should be sought not in an artist's life, but in his work; (2) the paradoxical combination of James's extreme privacy with his huge epistolarium and dramatic tensions around his archives, worthy of the *The Aspern Papers*; (3) James's propensity to self-fictionalizing and self-mythologizing; (4) fictionalizing as an intrinsic feature of all preceding writing about James, both fictional and non-fictional.

Significantly, David Lodge, an author well-versed in literary matters, remarked: "Writing, and preparing to write *Author, Author* was an entirely new compositional experience for me: instead of creating a fictional world which wasn't there until I imagined it, I was trying to find in the multitudinous facts of Henry James's life a novel-shaped story. But its climax was always to be the failure of *Guy Domville* and the contemporaneous triumph of Du Maurier's *Trilby*" (Lodge, "Author's Curse").

Consequently, Lodge's novel is focused on the 1880s and 1890s – probably the most dramatic period of James's life. The novel is structured retrospectively and begins with the last days of the dying James. Characteristically, in Lodge's novel Henry James uses a manner of speech similar to his own idiolect, and appropriates his own characters' fates, which can be viewed as an instance of the postmodern blurring of fictional and biographical.

However, Max Saunders states that "there is nothing postmodern, or even modern, about biography or autobiography seeping into fiction." He notes that "James himself based characters on novelist friends, drawing on William Dean Howells for Lambert Strether and Henry Adams for his friend Waymarsh in *The Ambassadors*" (Saunders 125). Comparing two "master narratives" (biographical novels about the Master – David Lodge's *Author, Author* and Colm Tóibín's *The Master*), Saunders concludes that "all critical biography of writers is necessarily a hybrid form." Incorporating into his survey Ford Madox Ford's biography *Joseph Conrad* (1924), Saunders convincingly illustrates the fact that a typical form of a biography "is a four-part hybrid, fusing biography, autobiography, fiction and criticism [...] To some extent both Lodge and Tóibín are producing such four-way hybrids. But... where Tóibín allows fictional biography to do the work of literary criticism, Lodge increasingly fuses novel with lecture on literary technique in *Author, Author*" (Saunders 126). Thus, from the 1990s onwards, all biographies of James, whether overtly novelistic or more documentary in nature, flaunt their semi-fictional status and resort to Henry James's narrative technique.

Predictably, the best-selling version of Henry James produced by the openly gay Irish author Colm Tóibín cannot omit the issues of James's Irish roots and his presumed homosexuality. In an interview given to Michael Wood for *London Review of Books* Tóibín expanded upon the distinctive features of a gay artist's psychology and declared that, just like Shakespeare, Whitman and Kafka, James "dramatise the lives of isolated male protagonists who are forced to take nothing for granted, who are in danger of being discovered and revealed" admitting that "it is astonishing how James managed to withhold his homosexuality from his work" (Wood 2004).

At first sight, the main import of *The Master* is exactly that. The Henry of Colm Tóibín abstains from participation in politics (the Civil War), from sexuality and the expression of emotion (both for men and women). The main personage, i.e. Henry James, seems devoid of compassion and empathy; he shuns active participation in life and deep attachments. Presumed homoerotic motifs (James's long-ago feelings for the homosexual Paul Joukowsky and his mixed attraction and repulsion for the handsome American Norwegian sculptor Henrik Andersen, as well as an attraction to an Irish valet named Hammond) are described in the novel rather equivocally, via innuendo. While a whole chapter is devoted to James's reaction to Oscar Wilde's trial, James is absolutely reserved about it. However, the overall impression of Tóibín's version of James's life is that the main reason for Henry James's melancholy, coldness, and aloofness has a somewhat more complicated nature than his repressed homosexuality. As Hermione Lee puts it, "*The Master's* crafty structure is more interesting, and less obvious, than the outing of Henry James. It becomes apparent that James... has repeatedly resisted demands, controlled intimacy and avoided commitment in order to do his writing" (Lee "Great Pretender"). This appears to be one of the most unexpected and inspiring surprises for critics and readers. What actually happens is that the gay author does not confine himself to revealing the homoerotic propensities of his hero, but instead addresses himself to more universal problems of the genesis of art, devotion to art and personal responsibility to "live all you can" – which is very close to the core of James's own writing. This makes Tóibín's novel very congenial to its subject. Along with the aptly incorporated narrative technique of Henry James and the deft adaptation of his style to the tastes of modern readers, it can be considered the main factor in its best-selling status and favourable reviews.

Given the proliferation of biographical writings about James, it is not surprising that the latest biofiction about him, *The James Boys: A Novel Account of Four Desperate Brothers* (2008) by Richard Liebmann-Smith, is a clear-cut parody, or a pastiche, or a humorous "alternative history". In his debut novel, this famous American humorist posits what would have happened if two American intellectuals, the brothers Henry and William James, had been the brothers of the American outlaws Frank and Jesse James. The author daringly sends Henry James, then a correspondent for the *New York Tribune*, to the American West, instead of to Paris, and makes him get involved in the infamous heist at the First National Bank in Northfield, Minnesota. R. Liebmann-Smith admits that he owes the germ of the story to the famous American historian Otis Pease, who, while teaching a course in 19th century American history, used to say jokingly that "the story of America in the 19th century could be encapsulated in the story of the James brothers. William and Henry in the east and Frank and Jesse in the west" ("What if?"). In Liebmann's version two real-life younger brothers of Henry and William James, Rob and Wilkie, become, quite fantastically, the real-life bank robbers Frank and Jesse James. The powerful travesty dimension of the book offers rich possibilities for further study.

As for the more recent publications in the biographical vein, there have been quite a few – either reviewing James's own books relating to the autobiographical genre, or exploring his fiction as an indirect autobiography.

In 2013 Michael Gorra took "an original approach to this great American progenitor of the modern novel, combining elements of biography, criticism, and travelogue in

re-creating the dramatic backstory of James's masterpiece, *Portrait of a Lady* (1881)", as is written on the website amazon.com. Gorra's book is also defined as "a revelatory *biography* of the American master as told through the lens of his greatest novel" (italics mine), which makes it pertinent to the topic of the discussion in this paper.

The main body of all the numerous reviews of Gorra's book is given to the reviewers' thoughts, recollections and interpretations of *The Portrait of a Lady*, confirming that Gorra's *Portrait of a Novel* has performed a very important cultural task, bringing its readers back to the pages of James's middle-period masterpiece. As for the presumably innovative character of Gorra's research, James Wood states: "*Portrait of a Novel* is effectively a new biography of James, with *The Portrait of a Lady* at its centre. Gorra describes the entire arc of James's life, unobtrusively (this is made possible by the fact that James wrote it as a youngish man, and rewrote it, in 1906, as an oldish man); but he does so in order to tell the story of the novel – both as a critic and as a biographer" (Wood, 2012, 3–6).

Highlighting the important biographical dimension of Gorra's research, Hermione Lee notes that "James's biographers always compare Isabel and her novel to his own life," the early death of his lively, clever cousin Minny Temple seen as the main inspiration for the novel that provoked the invention of Isabel, whose "unlived future goes on in his head" (Gorra 30). The reviewer recapitulates various biographers' (before Gorra) approaches to *The Portrait of a Lady* and sees Gorra's main contribution in his refusal to view the novel's heroine exclusively as epitomizing James's private feelings and thoughts. According to H. Lee, Gorra finds a wider sociopolitical significance in Isabel's story:

In a crowded field of biographical interpretation, Gorra argues that *Portrait* is 'a critique of American exceptionalism'. The historical paradox for Americans is that they believe in a republican egalitarianism – all are created equal – and in the freedom to pursue, competitively, individual happiness. Isabel (leaving America, turning down a nice English lord and a determined Bostonian, choosing Osmond because she thinks he is a free agent) insists that she must be free to write her own plot. She will not be measured by what surrounds her – clothes, houses, money, traditions. She believes 'in her own autonomy, her own enabling isolation: a belief, and a dream, that all her later experience will challenge' [...] In Europe Isabel 'learns that her own life' has already 'been determined'. She finds that for her, as for America, there is no such thing as a 'fresh start' or a 'city on a hill' or a 'new world'. Other ways of reading Isabel – as a young woman afraid of sexual experience, as an innocent fallen into corrupt hands, as an enactment of James's passion for Europe, as a characterisation of solitude – take second place to this political interpretation. (Lee, "Portrait")

Thus, the reviewer emphasizes that Gorra's reading of the novel runs counter to habitual biographical explications of *The Portrait of a Lady*, and welcomes this more objective, sociopolitical interpretation eschewing biographical and critical clichés – which actually resonates with the main trend of James' recent life-writing, which I would see in the prevalence of myth destruction over myth-making.

In March 2016 Anne Boyd Rioux, a professor of English at the University of New Orleans and the biographer of Constance Fenimore Woolson, came up with "five flickering myths" about Woolson's relationship with Henry James. Rioux rebuts the stereotypical

conceptions (1) of Woolson being a second-rate author belittled by the Master, (2) of her unrequited love for James, (3) of her being just one of James's admirers whose attraction he indulgently accepted, (4) of James compelling her to destroy his letters, (5) of James wantonly destroying her papers and drowning her black dresses in the Venetian Lagoon. In her eristic short article, Rioux foregrounds at least two important issues: (1) versions of biographers composing life-narratives of counterparts unavoidably contradict each other: one is due to overshadow another; (2) the ethics of fictionalizing often run counter to the entertaining thrills of belles-lettres. It is no wonder, after being treated by so many biographers-fictionalizers, that Henry James's life-story has obtained a mythological status which needs to be demythologized by conscientious scholars. The reverse process has set in.

Michael Anesco guides his readers in the same demythologizing direction in his above-mentioned book *Monopolizing the Master: Henry James and the Politics of Modern Literary Scholarship*. To date, it is not only the life of Henry James that has become a source of material for myth-making; the very process of James's biography-writing has become mythologized, the central "cultural hero" of this myth being Leon Edel, whom M. Anesco seeks to disavow.

Hopefully, this is not the end. As we have seen, the complicated and multidirectional (often reversive) process of myth-making and myth-destruction seems to be symptomatic of the current situation in Henry James life-writing. And that obviously sets it apart from an earlier state of affairs (1990–2000s), when fictionalizing determined the main vector of the process.

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Poundoptikum

Obrazy modernistického básníka v současné próze

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Abstract

K současné (post)kultuře lze přistupovat jako k zásobárně obrazů, které vznikly v průběhu hry s obecně uznávanými kulturními hodnotami zosobněnými umělci a jejich díly. Esej představuje obrazy amerického básníka Ezry Pounda, jednoho z ikonických představitelů „vysokého“ modernistického umění, s nimiž se lze setkat nikoli pouze v životopisných a historických prózách, ale rovněž v kriminálních, detektivních a konspiračních příbězích, postmodernistických vyprávěních a vědecké fantastice. Kulturní a historická kontextualizace má ukázat různé způsoby, jakými současná (post)kultura zachází s odkazem modernismu

Abstract

Contemporary (post)culture can be approached as a reservoir of images playing on widely acknowledged cultural values and their embodiments in particular works of art and their creators. The essay presents images of the American poet Ezra Pound in contemporary prose; images of this iconic representative of “high” Modernist art can be found not only in biographical and historical fiction but also in crime, detective and conspiracy stories, in Postmodernist narratives and science fiction. By providing cultural and historical context the essay aims to show various responses of contemporary (post)culture to the legacy of Modernism

Klíčová slova: modernismus; populární kultura; populární žánry; Ezra Pound; kulturní kritika

Keywords: Modernism; popular culture; popular genres; Ezra Pound; cultural criticism

Angloameričtí modernisté ve svých dílech znovu objevovali či (vy)nalézali antiku, středověk a ranou renesanci. Za svůj přijali předpoklad Augusta Wilhelma Schlegela (1767–1845), že člověku naprosto modernímu se otevírá transcendentální pohled na dávnověk (Sperlinger 25). Modernisté v „dávnověku“ hledali hodnoty a následování hodné vzory, jejichž nová konfigurace měla pomoci vytvořit autentickou protiváhu modernosti. Pro představitele současné (post)kultury ovšem stojí modernismus na samotném horizontu kulturní představitosti. Současná (post)kultura vnímá modernismus jako dávnověké trosky, pozůstatky čehosi dříve zřejmě významného, k nimž se vydáváme ze zvědavosti nebo pro artefakty, jména a obrazy, které vystavujeme v muzeích nebo kabinetech kuriozit.

Mnohé literární postavy v soudobé próze, které jsou osobností Ezry Pounda (1885–1972) inspirovány, nebo ji mají přímo zosobňovat, takové exponáty skutečně připomínají. Pro množství a značnou rozmanitost zde budou Poundovy obrazy v současné próze představeny prostřednictvím zjednodušené obdoby Poundovy ideogramické metody. Jde o postup spojování konkrétních obrazů do komplexního celku (ideogram)¹, který má v tomto textu vystihnout soudobou představu o Poundovi v její složitosti, s jejími zásadními rozpory a nejasnostmi. Pound ideogramickou metodu popisoval jako „shromažďování nezbytných součástí myšlenky“ (Pound, „ABC of Economics“ 239) a zdůrazňoval, že „ideogram je v jistém ohledu mnohem určitější [...] než nějaká vřezávková definice“ (Pound, *Guide to Kulchur* 165–166). Následující stránky nebudou věnovány analýze, jejich záměrem je usouvztažňovat a ukazovat, nikoli dokazovat.²

V *Pařížské manželce* (*Paris Wife*, 2011) americké spisovatelky Pauly McLainové (*1965), životopisné próze (biographical fiction), v níž Elizabeth Hadley Richardsonová (1891–1979) popisuje z „vlastního“ pohledu své manželství s Ernestem Hemingwayem (1899–1961), se obraz Ezry Pounda příliš neliší od básníkova portrétu v Hemingwayově *Pohyblivém svátku* (*A Moveable Feast*, 1964, restaurovaná edice 2009), autorka pouze zvýrazňuje modernistovu excentričnost. Poundův obraz výstižně charakterizují slova jedné z vedlejších postav: „Pound je ďábel, namyšlený a napůl šílený se svými řečmi o knihách a o umění“ (McLainová 100). Je to ovšem ďábel neškodný; Ezra Pound v románu působí jako zábavná, v zásadě ovšem plochá postava, jejíž úlohou je udělovat Hemingwayovi užitečné rady a obětavě pracovat jako jeho neplacený literární agent. Autorka v „Poznámce ke zdrojům“ tvrdí, že „se chtěla zaměřit hlouběji spíše na citové životy postav a přinést nový pohled na jednotlivé historické události a zároveň zůstat věrná faktům“ (McLainová 367). Stěží ovšem uvěřit, že se mohl odehrát např. následující rozhovor:

„Vytváříš něco nového,“ řekl mu jednoho dne Pound ve své garsonce.
„Nezapomeň na to, až tě to začne bolet.“

„Bolí mě jen to, že musím čekat.“

„Čekání ti pomáhá se zklidnit. To je základ. A bolest svým způsobem všemu napomáhá.“

Ernest si jeho moudrost uložil do paměti stejně jako všechno, co kdy Pound řekl.
(McLainová 151–152)

Jelikož jde o životopisný román, nelze autorce vyčítat, že s podrobnostmi nakládá mnohdy svévolně. Podstatné ovšem je, že Hadleyin vztah k Poundovi byl mnohem

složitější, společensky se s ním kvůli manželovi sice stýkala, ve skutečnosti si ho ale nevážila a nedůvěřovala mu (Lynn 216). Samotné manželství Hemingwayových je líčeno se značnou naivností, ostatně dobře patrnou v citovaném úryvku. Za věrohodný tento román mohou považovat snad pouze čtenářky červené knihovny – pro náročnější z nich byl ostatně zřejmě napsán.

Koncepce rozsáhlého románu irské spisovatelky Orny Rossové (vl. jm. Áine McCarthyová, *1960) *Tanec časem* (A Dance in Time, 2008) je o poznání složitější. Nosnou část knihy představuje životopisná próza o dramatickém životě Iseult Gonneové (1894–1954), jejíž matka Maud (1866–1953) byla múzou a milenkou irského modernistického básníka Williama Butlera Yeatse (1865–1939). Paralelně vypráví vlastní příběh fiktivní spisovatelka, autorka textu o Iseult, který má zřejmě osvětlovat její vlastní život. Spisovatelčin rukopis k vydání připravila její odcizená dcera, jež je autorkou rámcového vyprávění a poznámek pod čarou, jimiž si s matkou dosti nevybíravě vyřizuje účty. Složitost narace – tři příběhy tří žen ve třech časových rovinách – Rossové bohužel neslouží k práci s estetickou distancí, která by mohla posílit dojem autentičnosti, je využita zřejmě pouze k tomu, aby román neobsahoval pohnutý příběh jeden, ale hned několik odlišných.

Podobně jako McLainová, i Rossová zobrazuje Ezru Pounda jako napůl démonickou osobnost, která s oblibou šokuje okolí. Iseult se s básníkem poprvé setkává na literárním večírku u Yeatse:

„Kočičí chcanky a dikobraz!” říká Ezra Pound. „Lidem musí dojít několik JEDNODUCHÝCH faktů.” Naklání se, aby si vidličkou nabodl bramboru z talíře uprostřed stolu. „A měli by si pospíšit, aby nebylo pozdě něco UDĚLAT.” Rozvaluje se v židli, aby mohl rozžvýkat svůj úlovek. (Ross 403)³

Na sobě má „cizokrajný” pestrobarevný oděv, v uchu náušnici, k manželce Dorothy se chová přezíravě, k ostatním pouze nevybíravě. Srší energií, která ho nutí „každých pět minut vyskočit ze židle a mávat rukama jako splašený větrný mlýn” (Ross 403). Pound se v té době skutečně oblékal nezvykle a sebevědomou energičností pobuřoval úzkoprsou britskou společnost (Tytell 51–53; srov. Moody 69–70); nešlo ale o samoúčelný projev sebestřednosti, snažil se zaujmout a poté upoutat pozornost k obsahu toho, co sděloval. V románu Orny Rossové ovšem Pound pouze mluví, aniž by cokoli podstatného vyjádřil; jeho obraz zde působí jako – snad nezamýšlená – karikatura.

Iseult Pound svým záparem přitahuje, básník se stane jejím důvěrníkem a mentorem. Poundovy rady spřáteleným autorům, kteří ho požádali o pomoc s literárními texty, byly vždy věcné, podrobné a konkrétní⁴. V tomto románu ovšem modernista Iseult častuje pouze obecnými frázemi; veškeré „užitečné pokyny” (Ross 488), s nimiž ji seznámí, jsou obsaženy v jediném odstavci. Pound zde není umění a kultuře cele oddaná osobnost, ale především manipulátor a lovec, který naivní Iseult svede a zklame (Ross 511–512, 521–525).

Na rozdíl od životopisných fantasií McLainové a Rossové je román *Přestupky* (Transgressions, 2011) založen na důkladném studiu pramenů. Jeho autorka, americká univerzitní učitelka, kritička a editorka Caroline Zilboorgová (*1948) se v něm rozhodla využít svého dlouholetého profesního zájmu o život a dílo americké modernistické básnířky

H[ildy].D[oolittleové] (1886–1961). Zilboorgová koncipovala a poznámkami opatřila kritické vydání modernistčina autobiografického románu *Pobídni mě k životu* (Bid Me to Live, 1960, 2011) a připravila k vydání korespondenci Doolittleové a britského modernistického básníka a romanopisce Richarda Aldingtona (1892–1962). Námětem *Přestupků* je právě milostný vztah těchto autorů.

Román, odehrávající se převážně v Londýně mezi lety 1911 a 1916, sleduje životní a uměleckou cestu těchto osobností, jež obě výrazně ovlivnil Ezra Pound. Americký básník se s Doolittleovou přátelil už ve Spojených státech, po jistou dobu s ní byl dokonce zasnouben (Moody 34–39). V Londýně, kam roku 1911 přesídlila, se stala významnou představitelkou imagismu, Poundem iniciovaného avantgardního básnického hnutí (Moody 180–181). Pound, který ji přesvědčil, aby svá díla podepisovala iniciálami, Hildu Doolittleovou rovněž seznámil s Aldingtonem.

Zilboorgová vcelku věcně líčí konkrétní události, přičemž odolává pokušení redukovat Pounda na výstřední postavičku oživující vyprávění. V *Přestupcích* je americký básník vykreslen jako osobnost spojující protikladné vlastnosti: je dominantní i pokorný, velkorysý i ješitný, lehkomyšlný i zcela vážný, sebejistý i bezradný, neklidný i soustředěný, přitažlivý a zároveň odpuzující. Tento „světaneznalý světák“ (Zilboorg 11) působí v době, kdy se román odehrává, jako „složená postava, směs Jamese McNeilla Whistlera, Peera Gynta a vítězných i poražených hrdinů básní a příběhů Williama Morrisse“ (Zilboorg 24). V nejsvětlejších okamžicích je „zuřivě výřečný, roznícený myšlenkami o poesii, unášený poesii myšlenek“ (Zilboorg 125), nikdy ale neztrácí jistou důstojnost.

Jako román ovšem *Přestupky* vyznívají přinejmenším rozporně. Autorka zřejmě příliš spoléhala na přitažlivost témat, k nimž patří bolestné hledání sexuální a kulturní identity a autentického pojetí umělecké tvorby, přátelství, milostných vztahů i manželství a život bohémské komunity v Londýně před první světovou válkou a v jejím průběhu. Svě vyprávění pojala jako prostý chronologický popis událostí a jejich reflexí, který postrádá zřetelnou dramatickou stavbu. Život H.D. byl bez pochyb bouřlivý, vzhledem k introspektivnímu zaměření její osobnosti se ale většina konfliktů odehrávala v jejím nitru.⁵ Vnitřní sváry a proměny je však konvenční popisné vyprávění schopno zachytit jen stěží, což ostatně modernisté dobře věděli. Jelikož text navíc zatěžují časté vsuvky vysvětlující většinou literární kontext, připomíná spíše než román převyprávěný akademický životopis.

V *Přestupcích* sice Pound není věrohodnou literární postavou, jeho obraz je však historicky v celku přesný, což nelze tvrdit o románu populárního amerického historika a autora bestsellerů Thomase Fleminga (*1927) *Dobyvatelé oblohy* (Conquerors of the Sky, 2003). Záměrem této rozvláčné prózy zřejmě bylo postihnout hlavní události dějin amerického letectví ve 20. století prostřednictvím dosti bulvárního líčení propletených osudů řady protagonistů, kteří se dělí výhradně na idealisty a chamtivé pragmatiky. Jedna z ústředních postav, letecký inženýr Frank Buchanan, se v červnu roku 1914 setkal v Londýně s Ezrou Poundem, který se přišel podívat na letecké závody. „Snílek-projektant“ (Fleming 53) Buchanan se s Poundem spřátelil⁶ a po jistou dobu ho navštěvoval v jeho bytě v londýnském Kensingtonu, kde básníkovým obdivovatelkám vysvětloval principy letu. Jejich cesty se sice brzy po začátku první světové války rozdělily, Buchanan ale „největšího básníka 20. století“ (Fleming 341) dlouhá léta hmotně podporoval a jeho dílo mu až do konce života sloužilo jako zdroj síly a inspirace (Fleming 144, 540–541).

Ezra Pound se živě zajímal o bouřlivý rozvoj moderní vědy a techniky, v kritických esejích často používal analogie např. s fyzikou či biologií (Pound, *ABC četby* 15, 16, 18, 19), za „vědecký“ považoval i základ své ideogramické metody (Pound, *ABC četby* 23). Proto nepůsobí Flemingova snaha Pounda nalézat literární analogie k Buchananovým aeronautickým pojmům (Fleming 50) zcela nepatřičně. V románu, jehož autorem je historik, se ovšem kupodivu vyskytuje řada dějinných nesrovnalostí; Pound se v té době svým obdivovatelkám příliš nevěnoval, nepobýval v Londýně, ale trávil s manželkou Dorothy „pracovní“ líbánky v Sussexu (Moody 250; Wilhelm 154). Nelze se rovněž domnívat, že se Pound nasazení v první světové válce umyslně vyhnul, jak naznačuje jedna z postav⁷; modernistický básník se snažil do bojů zapojit jako dobrovolník, byl ovšem odmítnut, jelikož měl americké občanství (Moody 261).

Flemingovo pojetí Pounda jako básníka je pokřivené, v románu je vizionářským básníkem, jehož „sen o civilizaci vykoupené uměním“ (Fleming 53) zničí válka, přikloní se proto k estétství a začne „vnímat literaturu a umění nikoli jako vortex přetvářející svět, ale úkryt před světem, který zešilel“ (Fleming 53). Skutečnosti však odpovídá pravý opak tohoto tvrzení; roku 1921 Pound napsal: „Symbolistická pozice, umělecká povznesenost nad záležitosti tohoto světa, je teď k ničemu“ (cit. in Redman 252; srov. Guziur, *Příliš těžké lyry* 39–43, 75–77). Není pravděpodobné, že by Fleming proměnu básnickových názorů, již katalyzovala první světová válka, zcela dezinterpretoval neúmyslně. Autor zřejmě zábrany vůči svévolnému nakládání s historickou osobností necítí; postava Ezry Pounda v románu slouží pouze k tomu, aby Flemingovi pomohla vykreslit Franka Buchanana jako idealistického snílka.

Podobně, ovšem s jistou elegancí a nesrovnatelně větším literárním umem, použil postavu Ezry Pounda známý americký autor kriminálních románů Elmore Leonard (1925–2013) v románu *Pronto* (1993)⁸. Protagonista Harry Arno, stárnoucí miamský bookmaker, se před mafiánskými zabijáky i zákonem⁹ snaží ukrýt v italském městečku Rapallo. Toto přímořské letoviště, kam se původně chtěl uchýlit na odpočinek, nezvolil Harry náhodně. V různých obdobích svého života zde pobýval Ezra Pound, jehož životem i personou je Harry fascinován. Básníka poprvé viděl jako americký voják roku 1945 v zajateckém táboře u italské Pisy, kde byl Pound v té době držen, znovu roku 1967 v Rapallu, které Harry začal navštěvovat zřejmě pouze proto, aby Pounda ještě jednou spatřil (Leonard 77, 182–187). Bookmaker se domnívá, že jeho život je s básnickovým jakýmsi těžko popsatelem způsobem spjat. Jak ale naznačuje jeho přítelkyně, bývalá barová tanečnice Joyce, sám Harry zřejmě tuší, že jde o pseudoromantický blud (Leonard 188–189). Pound je pro Harryho představa, již si vytvořil s pomocí básnickových životopisů z několika mlhavých vzpomínek, a jako takový je coby románová postava zcela přijatelný.

V detektivním románu *Amatérský popravčí* (The Amateur Executioner, 2013) plodných autorů holmesovských pastišů Dana Andriacca a Kierana McMullena je Ezra Pound součástí plejády slavných historických i smyšlených osobností Anglie mezi světovými válkami. K protagonistům románu dále patří umělci T.S. Eliot (1888–1965), W.B. Yeats, G. B. Shaw (1856–1950) a Alfred Hitchcock (1899–1980), politikové Lord Balfour (1848–1930) a Winston Churchill (1874–1965) a četné holmesovské postavy, včetně Sherlocka Holmese samotného. Žánrově takřka povinnou řadu podivných vražd se zde snaží objasnit americký novinář Enoch Hale, jemuž v tom pomáhá básník T.S. Eliot, který je fascinován

vraždami a patří k vášnivým čtenářům detektivek.¹⁰ Haleovi se přes veškerou snahu případ objasnit nepodaří, nevědomky to však umožní Sherlocku Holmesovi. Zatímco většina známých postav této inteligentní a vtípné hříčky, která ob stojí i jako nenáročný detektivní román, nepůsobí nijak křečovitě, persona Ezry Pounda se pouze v příhodný čas objeví, poslušně splní svou úlohu, tj. objevit tělo další oběti a být vyslechnut policií, a odejde (Andriacco a McMullen 64–65, 69–70). Proslulého básníka připomíná pouze jménem.¹¹

Poundův život nebyl skoupý na dramatické události; některé z nich nejsou zcela objasněny a dodnes podněcují dohady. Vhodnou obětí autorů tzv. konspiračních příběhů se básník stal zřejmě i proto, že k zastáncům konspiračních teorií bývá sám řazen. Nekonvenční – a mnohdy záměrně provokativní – názory na kulturní, hospodářské a sociální dějiny mu vysloužily rozsáhlé heslo v dvousvazkové akademické encyklopedii *Konspirační teorie v amerických dějinách* (2003). Zde se lze dočíst, že „byl šířitelem konspiračních teorií, z nichž některé se týkaly kacířských středověkých náboženských kultů, jiné moderní války a mezinárodního peněžnictví, přičemž tento druhý typ často démonizoval Židy. Pound nakonec tyto prvky spojil do jednoho velkolepého konspiračního mýtu” (Kimsey 592).

Za představitele konspiračních teorií Pounda považoval i autor kultovních mystifikačních románů a odborník na okultismus, tajné společnosti a spiknutí všeho druhu Robert Anton Wilson (1932–2007) (Wilson a Hill 5–6, 39, 59, 121, 171, 205, 280, 344–345). Tento svérázný myslitel, jehož názory a postoje jsou neoddelitelně spojeny s volnomyšlenkářstvím amerických šedesátých let 20. století, Poundovo básnické a kritické dílo celý život studoval a byl jím výrazně ovlivněn (Wilson, *The Illuminati Papers* 66)¹². V kultovní Wilsonově románové trilogii vydávané pod souborným názvem *Illuminatus!* (1975)¹³, na níž se autoricky podílel novinář a romanopisec Robert Shea (1933–1994), Ezra Pound jako postava nevystupuje, pouze o něm spekulují někteří protagonisté (Wilson, *Illuminatus* 1 159). V trilogii *Schrödingerova kočka* (Schrödinger's Cat, 1979–1981)¹⁴ jménem Ezry Pounda podepisuje šprýmař Markoff Chaney provokativní vzkazy, jelikož se ale děj odehrává v alternativních vesmírech, odkazuje toto jméno k „alternativnímu” Poundovi, básníku a folkovému zpěvákovi, který zřídka opouštěl rodné Idaho (Wilson, *Schrödinger's Cat* 40–40, 232, 301–302). Wilsona ovšem za autora konspiračních románů považovat nelze, byl satirikem, který prostřednictvím výsměchu konspiračním teoriím kritizoval západní myšlenková paradigmatata.

Postavou konspiračního románu v běžném slova smyslu se Ezra Pound stal v próze investigativního reportéra a spisovatele Jima Hougana (*1942) *Přijď království Tvé* (Kingdom Come: A Novel of Conspiracy, 1995)¹⁵. Pound zde vystupuje jako dobový vůdce mocné Magdalénské společnosti (The Magdalene Society), jejímž posláním je ochraňovat potomky, které zplodil Ježíš s Marií Magdalénou, a uskutečnit proroctví s nimi spojená. V prorockých spisech Magdalénské společnosti se píše o sjednocené Evropě; snahou o dosažení tohoto cíle román vysvětluje Poundovy sympatie k italskému fašismu (Hougan, *Kingdom Come* 246–247).

Jak známo, Pound byl roku 1945 zatčen italskými partyzány, kteří ho předali americké armádě, po výslechu byl držen v armádním zajateckém táboře u italské Pisy, odkud byl převezen do Spojených států, kde měl čelit obžalobě z vlastizrady. Jelikož byl shledán nesvéprávným, k soudnímu řízení nikdy nedošlo a básník byl internován ve washingtonské Nemocnici sv. Alžběty pro duševně choré zločince (Tytell 276–289). Tyto události

román vykládá jako plán Magdalénské společnosti zachránit zdiskreditovaného vůdce před trestem smrti (Hougan, *Kingdom Come* 254–255). V Nemocnici sv. Alžběty se Pound vrátil ke své vůdcovské roli a začal koncipovat nové plány, z nichž nejdůležitější bylo vytvoření tajné společnosti, která by byla součástí americké špionážní organizace (Hougan 256–258). Americká Central Intelligence Agency, oficiálně založená roku 1947, tedy vznikla jako zástěrka pro poválečnou Magdalénskou společnost (Hougan, *Kingdom Come* 259).

Jim Hougan vychází z nesporně zajímavého faktu, že jeden ze zakladatelů C.I.A. James Jesus Angleton (1917–1987) za studií na Yaleově univerzitě vydával v univerzitním literárním časopisu *Furioso* díla radikálních modernistických autorů, včetně Ezry Pounda, s nímž se přátelil a jehož roku 1937 navštívil v italském Rappalu (Holzman 10–32). Podle některých spekulací Angleton, který za druhé světové války v Itálii velel tajné americké kontrašpionážní jednotce, svého mentora dokonce navštívil v zajateckém táboře u Pisy (Holzman 57–66). Postava Ezry Pounda v románu ovšem působí zcela nevhodně, Hougana totiž modernistický básník nezajímal jako osobnost a autor, který ostatně k soudobým křesťanským církvím pociťoval silnou averzi a příliš si nevážil ani Ježíše (Pound, “Ecclesiastical History“ 61–63)¹⁶, ale pouze jako soubor životopisných údajů.

Podobně absurdní úlohu hraje Ezra Pound v konspiračním thrilleru amerického spisovatele Eda Salvena (*1948) *Pátrání po Illuminátech: Román – Památce Ezry Pounda* (In Search of the Illuminati: A Novel – In Honor of Ezra Pound, 2009), jenž popisuje hledání zakázané básnickovy knihy *Illumināti* (The Illuminati). Pound zde není vůdcem všemocné tajné organizace, ale její obětí; autorství textu osvětlujícího praktiky illuminátů modernistovi podle tohoto románu vyneslo dlouholetou internaci v Nemocnici sv. Alžběty (Salven 108–109).

S několika postavami jménem Ezra Pound se lze setkat i v současné fantastické literatuře, například v románu Michaela A. Armstronga (*1956) *Most přes Peklo* (Bridge Over Hell, 2012). Jedná se o v pořadí patnáctou knihu odehrávající se ve sdíleném prostředí (shared universe), které původně koncipovala americká spisovatelka a editorka Janet Morrisová (*1946) pro sbírku povídek *Hrdinové v Pekle* (Heroes in Hell, 1986). Základní východisko – představa, že známé historické i fiktivní postavy v Pekle pokračují ve svých životech – je dále rozvíjeno různými spisovateli; k významným žánrovým autorům některého z příběhů Hrdinů v Pekle patřili např. Gregory Benford (*1941), C.J. Cherryhová (*1942) a Robert Silverberg (*1935).¹⁷

V Armstrongově románu si téměř téměř každý obyvatel Pekla přeje toto místo opustit; touží po tom i Washington A. Roebling (1837–1926), stavitel Brooklynského mostu. Podle pekelného ombudsmana Jóba mu to bude umožněno, pokud se tři američtí spisovatelé – první moderní básnička Emily Dickinsonová (1830–1886) a modernisté Hart Crane (1899–1932) a Ezra Pound – podrobí zkoušce a budou vykoupeni. Úkolem Ezry Pounda je obstát v mravně ospravedlnitelné válce a napsat nové dílo, jakýsi protipól k jeho proslulé „krvavé“ „Sestině: Autafort“ (Sestina: Altaforte, 1909), která je v Pekle všeobecně známa (Armstrong, *Bridge Over Hell* 97–98). Modernista musí coby žakěř vstoupit do služeb trobadora Bertrana de Born (zemřel roku 1215), jehož masku si ve své básni na počátku 20. století nasadil, a složit „nekrvavou“ „Sestinu: Ráj“ (Armstrong, *Bridge Over Hell*

196–198). Americký básník ve zkoušce ob stojí, z Pekla ovšem neodchází do Ráje, ale milovaných Benátek (Armstrong, *Bridge Over Hell* 284)¹⁸.

Pound v tomto románu sice většinou slouží Satanovi, sleduje přitom však vlastní pochybné cíle (Armstrong, *Bridge Over Hell* 102–103); je líčen jako téměř všehoschopný, marnivý a slávychtivý oportunist, který nakonec porozumí hodnotě mravní odpovědnosti a povinnosti. V navazující Armstrongově povídce, která je součástí sedmnáctého svazku série nazvaného *Básníci v Pekle* (Poets in Hell, 2014), se však lze setkat s Poundem opět v Pekle a v Satanových službách (Armstrong, “All We Need of Hell“ 347).

Zatímco v Armstrongových prózách působí postava Ezry Pounda pouze nahodile, v knize kanadského romanopisce Kanea X. Fauchera (*1977) a amerického spisovatele Toma Bradleyho (*1954) *Epigonesie* (Epigonesia, 2010) rovnou jako oběť post-modernistického znásilnění. Pound zde vystupuje jako brakový zloduch, který prostřednictvím okultních věd a moderních technologií oživí pět spisovatelů: Američany Henryho Millera (1891–1980), Charlese Bukowského (1920–1994) a Huntera S. Thompsona (1937–2005) a Francouze Louise-Ferdinanda Céline (1894–1961) a Antonina Artauda (1896–1948) (Faucher a Bradley 11).¹⁹ S jejich pomocí zamýšlí přivést zpět k životu nejnadanější osobnosti světových dějin, jejichž přítomnost má zahájit jakousi novou renesanci (Faucher a Bradley 386–387). Nápad, dostatečně nosný snad coby základ krátké hříčky, autoři zpracovali jako post-modernistické metavyprávění o čtyřech stech stranách, tvořené převážně úmornými monology šestice spisovatelů, kteří zde dávají průchod frustraci ze života v digitální době.

Zcela svévolně s Poundovým obrazem nakládá také americký spisovatel Gregory R. Hyde v novele *Libra Ezry* (A Pound of Ezra, 2013).²⁰ Próza, zřejmě zamýšlená jako antiutopické podobenství, se odehrává v budoucnosti v blíže neurčené společnosti uspořádané podle pravidel fiktivní Poundovy knihy *Libra Ezry*.²¹ Obyvatelé této země nevyznávají žádné etické hodnoty a neřídí se mravními pravidly, živoří na pokraji smrti, již nezřídka dávají přednost před životem. Autoritu si zachovali pouze umělci, znučení a zvrácení estéti, kteří své bližní považují doslova za látku uměleckého ztvárnění (Hyde 14–18). Hydeův text, očividně silně inspirovaný snímkem *Salò aneb 120 dnů Sodomy* (Salò o le 120 giorgnate di Sodoma, 1975) Piera Paola Pasoliniho (1922–1975), nemá s Poundovými myšlenkami společného zhora nic a lze ho považovat za příklad kulturního oportunismu.

Zřejmě jediným skutečně hodnotným ryze žánrovým dílem, v němž vystupuje postava inspirovaná Ezrou Poundem, jsou *Hyperionská Cantos* (Hyperion Cantos) amerického spisovatele Dana Simmonse (*1948).²² Tento originální a působivý román, který svého času obrodil vědeckofantastický subžánr vesmírné opery (space opera), se odehrává staletí po zkáze Země, v předvečer konfliktu hrozícího zničit lidskou planetární Hegemonii. Dílo popisuje osudy několika poutníků cestujících na planetu Hyperion k tajemným Hrobkám času (Time Tombs), v nichž přebývá vražedná bytost zvaná Stír (the Shrike). Koncepce první části románu vzdáleně připomíná *Canterburské povídky* (The Canterbury Tales, závěrečná dekáda 14. stol.) středověkého anglického básníka Geoffreyho Chaucera (1342/43–1400); rámcové vyprávění, zahájené prologem a popisující některé události cesty, je přerušováno vypravováním jednotlivých poutníků, kteří si navzájem líčí své životní příběhy; podobně jako v Chaucerově díle je příběh každého z poutníků stylově výrazně odlišný a spadá do jiného dobového (sub)žánru populární literatury.

Na Ezru Pounda jako historickou postavu odkazují ve svém vypravování dva poutníci. V příběhu Brawne Lamiové, jejíž jméno vzniklo spojením příjmení Keatsovy snoubenky Frances Brawneové (1800–1865) a jména ústřední postavy známé básnickovy skladby „Lamia” (1820) (Keats 414–432), se lze dočíst, že první historickou osobností, kterou se vědci pokusili přivést znovu k životu v novém těle, byl právě Ezra Pound:

Námi vytvořená osobnost byla umíněná až k absurditě, plná předsudků mimo jakoukoli racionalitu a z funkčního hlediska šílená. Trvalo nám rok poupravování, než jsme zjistili, že ta osobnost byla přesná: byl to originál, kdo byl šílený. Génius, ale blázen. (Simmons, *Kantos* 285)

Rekonstruované osobnosti jsou používány jako jakési jádro, které je obklopeno vrstvami dálkově ovládané umělé inteligence (Simmons, *Kantos* 285–286); Poundova osobnost byla ovšem příliš svéhlavá a vzdorná, časem se stala zcela lidskou, podařilo se jí silou vůle ovládnout implementovanou umělou inteligenci a utéci se svým kybernetickým tělem na svobodu (Simmons, *Kantos* 324).

Poundovo básnické dílo i některé jeho myšlenky v Simmonsově románu zmiňuje Martin Silenus, básník fascinovaný tvorbou a posedlý touhou dokončit básnickou skladbu o zániku lidstva nazvanou *Hyperionská Cantos* (Simmons, *Kantos* 191, 198).²³ Jeho životní dílo ovšem – stejně jako Poundova *Cantos* – zůstane neúplné. Některé Silenovy názory na jazyk i kombinace jeho charakterových vlastností jsou nepochybně inspirovány Poundovou osobností;²⁴ Simmonsův básník však nepůsobí jako Poundova karikatura, je svébytnou a v celku přesvědčivou literární postavou. Poundovské analogie v románu nevyznívají nevhodně rovněž proto, že *Hyperionská Cantos* mají výrazné mýtotočivé ambice, vycházejí z antických eposů a středověkých, renesančních a raně novověkých epických básní a jsou prostoupena láskou ke klasickým dílům západní literární tradice.

K dílům žánrové literatury má blízko i *Král* (The King, 1990), román jednoho z nejoriginálnějších amerických prozaiků druhé poloviny 20. století Donalda Barthelmea (1931–1989). Tento vlivný povídkář sice vydal čtyři romány, ty se ovšem od jeho kratších próz nijak výrazně neodlišují, zpravidla jde o fragmentární texty, vynalézavě si pohrávající s očekáváním čtenářů, které často ztvárňují frivolní nebo triviální témata vysoce intelektuálním způsobem (a naopak). *Krále* lze snad popsat jako jakousi rytířskou fantasií, nekonvenční vyprávění o zániku rytířství, velmi volně vycházející ze *Smrti Artušovy* (Le Morte D'Artur, 1485) Sira Thomase Maloryho (nar. 1415–18, zemř. 1471).²⁵

Artuš a jeho rytíři se v tomto textu ocitají ve 20. století v prvních letech druhé světové války. Věčný král rychle stárne a slábne, tíží ho pocit bezmoci, protože v moderní globální válce není coby zosobnění tradičních rytířských ctností příliš platný.²⁶ Moderností se Artuš nemůže přizpůsobit ani postavit, přestává být schopen plnit roli životního mýtu a pro mnohé – např. Winstona Churchilla (Barthelme 81) – představuje anachronismus. Vítězství ve válce lze zřejmě dosáhnout pouze pomocí moderního Grálu, kterým je jaderná bomba.

Artuš a jeho družina se potýkají nejen s všudypřítomnými důsledky modernosti,²⁷ starosti jim působí i modernisté. Např. Modrý rytíř si stěžuje, že nebyl šťastný ani v lůně, protože jeho matka poslouchala modernistické opery rakouského skladatele Albana Berga

(1885–1935) a nahlas předčítala z výbojného časopisu britských avantgardních umělců BLAST (Barthelme 73–74), který vydával malíř a prozaik Wyndham Lewis (1882–1957) a v němž publikoval významné texty Ezra Pound. Americkým básníkem se románové postavy zabývají poměrně často, pravidelně totiž poslouchají jeho válečné rozhlasové pořady, vysílané italským fašistickým Římským rozhlasem. Z Poundových rozhlasových pořadů si Barthelme vybral to nejhorší: napodobuje básníkovy časté antisemitské výpady a jedovaté invectivy vůči americkému prezidentu F.D. Rooseveltovi (Barthelme 7, 55, 63). Modernistův hlas – moderní technologií přenášený z nepřátelského území – v románu nejspíše symbolizuje hrozbu naprostého mravního rozvratu²⁸; Guinevere Pounda označuje rovnou za „zloducha“ (Barthelme 141).

Jako hlas je Ezra Pound přítomný rovněž v experimentálním románu španělského pozdního modernistického prozaika a kritika Juliána Ríose (1941) *Poundemonium* (Poundemonium, 1986).²⁹ Ríos proslul monumentálním jazykovým dobrodružstvím – rozvíjícím umělecký odkaz *Života a názorů blahorodého pana Tristrama Shandyho* (The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman, 1759–1767) Laurence Sterne a především *Plaček nad Finneganem* (Finnegans Wake, 1939) Jamese Joyce – nazvaným *Larva: Babel noci svatojánské* (Larva: Babel de una Noche de San Juan, 1983), na něž *Poundemonium* navazuje. Obě prózy mají stejnou strukturu a vystupují v nich totožní protagonisté, kteří mají zároveň být autory různých jejích částí; básník Milalias je tvůrcem joyceovských textů, které představují páteř románů, tyto prózy opatřil takřka stejně rozsáhlým poznámkovým aparátem básníkův mentor Reis (rovněž označovaný jako Herr Vypravěč), fotografická alba a mapy jsou dílem Milaliasovy přítelkyně Babelle. Tyto tři postavy se různou měrou dělí o autorství závěrečných textových fragmentů, jež se organicky – „larválně“ – vyvíjejí z konkrétních slov či obrátů Reisových poznámek k Milaliasovým prózám.

Ríiova próza je časově i místně přesně vymezena; 1. listopadu 1972 se tři protagonisté dozvídají o Poundově skonu a navštěvují různá místa v Londýně, kde básník pobýval. Nejde ovšem o popis konkrétních lokalit, spíše o záznam zkoumání Poundova jazyka. Nesčetné poundovské ohlasy a odkazy jsou ostře konfrontovány s dobovým jazykovým vědomím; životnost modernistových slov je prověřována mnohdy s tak agresivním zápalem (Ríos, *Poundemonium* 26–27, 45, 46, 89), až lze nabýt dojmu, že budou rozbita. *Poundemonium* ovšem skutečně představuje poctu Poundovi, byť joyceovsky neuctivou, básníková slova totiž nakonec ve všech zkouškách obstojí. Poundův odkaz podle Ríose zřejmě spočívá nikoli v konkrétních myšlenkách, ale specifickém přístupu k jazyku a pojetí tvorby.³⁰

Umělecky nejhodnotnější román, v němž vystupuje protagonista inspirovaný Ezrou Poundem, je bez pochyb *STITCH* (1965) amerického prozaika a kritika Richarda Sterna (1928–2013). Tento autor patřil k silné generaci spisovatelů židovského původu, která se v americké literatuře prosadila v padesátých a šedesátých letech 20. století. Ačkoli Sternovy prózy nijak nezaostávají za díly jeho kolegů a přátel Bernarda Malamuda (1914–1986), Saula Bellowa (1915–2005) a Philipa Rotha (*1933), nedosáhly bohužel nikdy tak širokého čtenářského ohlasu. Zřejmě pro intelektuální náročnost a vyhraněnost postojů jsou Sternovy práce obdivovány zejména jeho kolegy spisovateli a oceňovány především kultivovanými čtenáři.

STITCH se odehrává během několika měsíců na počátku šedesátých let 20. století v Benátkách; román popisuje život tří amerických protagonistů, kteří do italského města z

různých důvodů přesídlili. Umění naprosto oddaná básnířka Nina se potýká s hmotnou nouzí, snaží se uhájit také vlastní citovou i uměleckou nezávislost a zároveň rozvrhnout své životní dílo. Bývalý obchodník Edward, který podlehl dojmu, že jeho americká existence postrádá smysl, a proto veškeré rodinné úspory utratil za roční pobyt v Benátkách, doufá, že zde pochopí, co v životě a umění má trvalou hodnotu. Sklonek svého života v tomto městě tráví i Thaddeus Stitch, světoznámý avantgardní sochař, jenž po čtyřicet let přetvářel ostrov na benátské laguně jménem Sant' Ilario v monumentální dílo, zachycující celé kulturní dějiny lidstva. Stitch – osobnost natolik výrazná a významná, že její jméno je v názvu knihy uvedeno velkými písmeny (Rowland XI) – se od Ezry Pounda odlišuje v několika ohledech. Kromě zvoleného uměleckého média především tím, že sochař za své sympatie vůči italskému fašismu zaplatil deseti lety vězení; románové postavy proto nemají podezření, že se umělec trestu za své činy vyhnul. Stitch netrpí sklíčeností, která od počátku šedesátých let sužovala Pounda, duševně je zcela zdravý, ačkoli ve stáří podobně jako modernistický básník dává před slovy přednost mlčení a své dílo považuje za pochybené (Stern, *STITCH* 27, 41). Na rozdíl od Pounda není Sternův sochař posedlý touhou prosadit vlastní představy o spravedlivějším hospodářském uspořádání, je zcela soustředěný na své osudové téma: vztah života a kultury. Jinak ovšem Stitch představuje historicky i psychologicky mimořádně přesný portrét amerického básníka.³¹

Stitch je svrchovaný tvůrce, nadaný nepotlačitelnou a všepohlcující vůlí ztvárněním předávat životné myšlenky a hodnoty. Jeho tvůrčí i životní síly jsou téměř vyčerpány, proto může své životní dílo hodnotit s kritickým odstupem. Je velikán – jeho umění je stejně velké jako jeho mravní selhání a omyly; Stitchova zpupnost a povýšenost je stejně upřímná a pravdivá jako jeho lítost a pokora. Život a umění nelze rozdělit; oblundnost některých sochařových – a Poundových – činů podle Sterna pochází ze stejného zdroje jako mravní vznešenost jeho díla: z nadání utvářet svět podle vlastních uměleckých představ.

Nina si hodnotu Stitchova díla i závažnost jeho chyb uvědomuje, nedomnívá se ovšem, že je pro ně nutno zahrnout ani sochaře jako osobnost, ani jeho práci. Setkání se Stitchem jí umožní umělecky dospět, nestane se ale poslušnou mistrovou žačkou, spíše jeho kritickou pokračovatelkou. Převezme jeho všezahrnující umělecký záměr a sochaře s jeho dílem učiní součástí své vlastní práce, stejně jako to kdysi udělal Stitch se svými předchůdci. Ačkoli si starý umělec její práce považuje, vytýká jí nedostatek přirozené lásky, která jako jediná podněcuje přirozené předávání hodnot (Stern, *STITCH* 158); Nininy básně se podle Stitche vyznačují převahou racionality a vůle. I básnířka proto musí žít a tvořit s vědomím, že samotný základ jejího díla obsahuje zřejmě neopravitelnou vadu.

Pro Edwarda, vůči němuž pocítuje Stitch silnou averzi, je charakteristická převaha citů, které jsou ovšem velmi nestálé. Není nekultivovaný, je schopen rozpoznat hodnotné v životě i umění; uvědomuje si závažnost hodnot, nikoli ale jejich závažnost. Benátkami i životem prochází jako věčný turista, který pro horečnou touhu uvidět a zažít všechno nakonec skutečně nespátí a neprožije nic. Během svého italského pobytu neustále vyhlíží Rubikon, když ale řeku nakonec překračuje, mine ji bez povšimnutí.³² Setkání se Stitchem vnímá Edward jako návštěvy muzea, kam se chodívá za pozůstatky dávno minulých dob, které s dnešním životem souvisejí jen vzdáleně. Nepříjemné „poučení“ o podstatě umění a povaze lidského života a rovněž příkré hodnocení jeho osobnosti, kterých se mu od Stitche dostalo, není schopen či ochoten pochopit. Představu o sobě samém se Edward

snaží uhájít osobními útoky na Stitche, k nimž využívá také sochařova antisemitismu a údajného fašismu, o nichž se dozvěděl ze sochařových životopisů.³³ Nina je sice pohlcena vnitřním životem, naučí se ho ale ztvárňovat v díle; Edward zůstane rozptýlen vnějším životem a světem, příležitosti k duševnímu přerodu promarní, a nakonec přijde o všechno, na čem mu alespoň částečně záleželo.

Stitch chápe sám sebe jako posledního představitele určitého pohledu na svět, svědka zániku kultury založené na rozlišování, uchovávání a předávání,³⁴ která ryze lidským způsobem doplňovala a rozvíjela přírodu (Stern, *STITCH* 49). O zvonici na benátském Náměstí sv. Marka, jež byla mnohokrát vážně poškozena, ale pokaždé znovu vystavěna, Stitch říká, že „byla nezničitelná, dokud měla Evropa paměť. Dokud byla Evropou“ (Stern, *STITCH* 26). Nině sochař připomíná, že „skutečně záleží na lásce k tomu, co si pamatujeme. Paměť je láska. Nenucený přenos“ (Stern, *STITCH* 158).

Život věnoval tvorbě děl, jež měla utkvět v paměti; v poválečném světě, v němž převládá (post)kulturní amnézie, je ovšem jeho práce zbytečná. Stitch si uvědomuje, že se jeho dílo stalo nesrozumitelným; sám k sobě poznamenává: „Nastal konec Evropy. Nad mojí prací se tiše zavře voda. Jako by na tom záleželo. Jenže na tom záleží. Nejsou-li přeživší, nikdo si nepamatuje“ (Stern, *STITCH* 50). Jako by se zde naplňovala slova, jež Pound napsal v mládí své matce: „Krásná literatura zanikne před rokem 2000. [...] Přetrvám jako kurióza“ (cit. in. Carpenter 913).

Poznámky

¹ Poundovým pojetím ideogramu, který pro něho představoval ideální estetický i noetický model, jsem se podrobně zabýval v eseji „Obrazy dění, dění obrazů – Poundův ideogram a jeho analogie“ (Guziur, „Bob Dylan mezi obrazy“ 11–25).

² „Z těchto vět se nesnažím vytvořit monolineární sylogismus, nehodlám na čtenáře ušít tu starou známou boudu, žádného čtenáře nezamýšlím přesvědčovat, že jsem něco dokázal, nebo že po přečtení jednoho mého odstavce bude VĚDĚT něco, co se může DOZVĚDĚT pouze pečlivým zkoumáním jednoho nebo dvou tuctů faktů, které shromáždí a uspořádá“ (Pound, Jefferson and/or Mussolini 28).

³ Je pravděpodobné, že McLainová i Rossová znaly vzpomínkové prózy anglického prozaika a básníka Forda Madoxe Forda (1873–1939); Poundův přítel a mentor mladšího básníka barvitě líčí jako talentovanou, energickou a výstřední osobnost, „romanticky“ posedlou dobrým uměním (Ford 206–208, 219–221).

⁴ Například Hemingway jeho rady považoval za nejužitečnější, jaké kdy dostal (Lynn 165–167).

⁵ Není jisté náhodné, že Pound o Doolittleové mluvil jako o „Dryádě“ (Moody 35; Zilboorg 39).

⁶ I v tomto románu má Ezra Pound ďábelské rysy, konkrétně „ohnivý pohled mladého Mefistofela“ (Fleming 48).

⁷ Flemingův Pound se tomuto nařčení nijak nebrání (Fleming 53).

⁸ Roku 1997 vznikla stejnojmenná televizní adaptace s Peterem Falkem v hlavní roli.

⁹ Jde o první Leonardův román, v němž vystupuje postava šerifa Givense, jíž byl věnován oblíbený kriminální televizní seriál *Justified* (2010–2015, česky jako *Strážce pořádku*). Z románu Pronto ovšem seriál nevychází.

¹⁰ Bylo tomu tak i ve skutečnosti; kromě románů Raymonda Chandlera (1888–1959) měl Eliot v oblíbě díla Georgesa Simenona (1903–1989), Agathy Christieové (1890–1976), Dorothy L. Sayersové (1893–1957) a Petera Cheyneye (1896–1951) (Chinitz 155). K obveselení hostů Eliot s oblibou na večírcích přednášel z paměti dlouhé části slavných děl Arthura Conana Doylea (1859–1930) o Sherlocku Holmesovi (Ackroyd 167).

¹¹ Autoři detektivních a kriminálních příběhů se v současnosti předhánějí v neotřetosti prostředí a postav. V románu amerického spisovatele Barta Schneidera *Bezejmenná dáma* (Nameless Dame, 2012) se jedna z vedlejších postav, úspěšný policejní detektiv rozhodne po teroristických útocích 11. září 2001 zanechat svého zaměstnání, přestěhovat se na kalifornský venkov a věnovat se poesii, kterou zcela poblázní místní obyvatelstvo. Protagonista románu, soukromý detektiv Augie Boyer se během vyšetřování vraždy setkává s transsexuálním masérem, který si při práci nasazuje masku Ezry Pounda a recituje modernistovy básně (Schneider 1–8, 128–133).

¹² Wilson dospěl k následujícímu názoru: „V Mussolinim se Pound samozřejmě mýlil; když psal o ‚židech‘ (nebo ‚xest'anech‘) kolektivně, dělal ze sebe naprostého hlupáka; nemýlil se ale ohledně měny. Jeho ekonomické představy se podobají myšlenkám R. Buckminstera Fullera a vzrůstajícího počtu postindustriálních myslitelů“ (Wilson, *The Illuminati Papers* 109).

¹³ Jednotlivé díly – *The Eye in the Pyramid*, *The Golden Apple*, *Leviathan* – byly napsány mezi lety 1969 a 1971, knižně vyšly všechny roku 1975, souborně poprvé v roce 1984. Česky je vydalo nakladatelství Maťa, první dva v překladu Tomáše Hrácha pod názvy *Oko v pyramidě* (1998) a *Zlaté jablko* (2000), závěrečný díl *Leviathan* (2003) v překladu Petra Pálenského.

¹⁴ První svazek – *The Universe Next Door* – byl samostatně vydán roku 1979, zbývající – *The Trick Top Hat a The Homing Pigeons* – vyšly o dva roky později, souborně vycházejí od roku 1988.

¹⁵ Po celosvětovém úspěchu *Šifry mistra Lonarda* (*The Da Vinci Code*, 2003, česky roku 2003 a 2005 pod názvem *Da Vinciho kód*) Dana Browna (*1964) byl Houganův román znovu vydán jako *Magdalénská šifra* (*The Magdalene Cipher*, 2006).

¹⁶ Roku 1917 napsal: „Myslím, že svět se může dobře obejít bez křesťanského náboženství a zcela jistě bez všech placených duchovních. Rovněž si myslím, že ‚Kristus‘, jak je vykreslen v Novém zákoně (skutečný nebo fiktivní, na tom nezáleží), je nejhlubší filosofický génius, navíc v daném prostředí věrohodný; intuitivní, nezkušený člověk, který zemřel dříve, než dosáhl středního věku. Záležitosti, o nichž se v jeho filosofii nepřemýšlí, jsou právě těmi záležitostmi, o kterých by se nepřemýšlelo ve filosofii provinčního génia, člověka podrobeného národa. Schází zde jakýkoli smysl pro společenské uspořádání“ (Pound, „Provincialism“ 193).

¹⁷ Silverbergovy příspěvky o mytickém hrdinovi Gilgamešovi, z nichž první získal nejvýznamnější žánrovou cenu Hugo, autor roku 1989 vydal v přepracované podobě knižně pod názvem *To the Land of the Living*; v českém překladu vyšly v jednom svazku dva z nich: „Návrat domů“ a „Gilgameš v pustinách“.

¹⁸ Armstrong se zřejmě skutečně seznámil s několika modernistovými díly a životopisem, dopouští se ovšem zbytečných chyb, z nichž některé působí úsměvně, zaměňuje např. přídavné jméno za podstatné a místo o italské Pise píše o „Pisanu“ (Armstrong, *Bridge* 213).

¹⁹ Faucher je autorem textu, který Bradley opatřil rozsáhlým pseudoakademickým komentářem.

²⁰ Název představuje lacinou slovní hříčku odkazující na Shylockovu „libru masa“ (pound of flesh) ze Shakespearova *Kupce benátského* (I.3, 1596).

²¹ Tento tento text – v novele označovaný za „šilencovy zápisky“ – byl objeven v depozitáři jedné knihovny v polovině 21. století (Hyde 12, 51).

²² Jde o dvoudílný román, první svazek nazvaný *Hyperion* vyšel anglicky roku 1989, druhý s názvem *Pád Hyperionu* (*The Fall of Hyperion*) o rok později; oba díly dále vycházejí samostatně i souborně. Obě části jsou nazvány podle dvou verzí básnické skladby britského romantika Johna Keatse (1795–1821) „*Hyperion*” (1818–1819) a „*The Fall of Hyperion*” (1819). Český byl Simmonsův *Hyperion* vydán v překladu Jana Pavlíka roku 1996, *Pád Hyperionu* roku 1997 v překladu Davida Záleského a Tomáše Zábranského; roku 2010 vyšly české překlady souborně pod podivně počeštěným názvem *Kantos Hyperionu*. I v tomto, výrazně upraveném vydání se bohužel s poundovskými narázkami zachází poněkud svévolně; na př. slovo „*cantos*”, které znamená „zpěvy”, je používáno, jako by šlo o podstatné jméno v jednotném čísle, a skloňováno. V této eseji používám dle mého názoru přesnější překlad *Hyperionská Cantos*.

²³ Silenus se často odvolává na názory známých literárních autorit, které cituje vcelku přesně. Parafrazuje-li však myšlenky Ezry Pounda, jejich původce neuvádí; jeho interpretace jistého čínského znaku (Simmons, *Kantos* 162), je totožná s Poundovou (Pound, „*Mang Tsze*” 85).

²⁴ V jedné diskusi se čtenáři Simmons dokonce nepopřel ani názor, že Silenus „je” Ezra Pound. S přepisem debaty se lze seznámit na stránkách internetového časopisu *Event Horizon: Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror* (<http://astralgia.com/webportfolio/sfzine/chats/transcripts/022599.html>). Simmonsův zájem o Poundovo dílo zřejmě není nijak povrchní; jeho vůbec první publikovaná povídka „*Řeka Styx teče proti proudu*” (*The River Styx Runs Upstream*, 1982) představuje polemiku se slavnými Poundovými verši z „*LXXXI.*” oddílu *Pisánských Cantos*, které textu slouží coby motto (Simmons, *Styx* 13–23; srov. Pound, *Pisan Cantos* 98–99). V předmluvě ke své druhé sbírce povídek píše Simmons obdivně o Poundově básnické sekvenci „*Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*” (1920), již pokládá za „*podobenství vystihující nejen hrůzu první světové války, ale rovněž tragédie, již Amerika prodělala ve Vietnamu*” (Simmons, *Lovedeath* 9). Obě povídkové sbírky vyšly v českém překladu, který je však natolik nekvalitní, že Simmonsovy texty zcela znehodnocuje.

²⁵ Český vyšlo vyprávění nejprve zkráceně v překladu Jana Cahy pod názvem *Artušova smrt* (1960), kompletní dílo pod totožným názvem přeložil Ivory Rodriguez (první dva svazky 1997, závěrečný 1998).

²⁶ Jak shrnuje královna Guinevere: „*Tato válka nepatří k mým oblíbeným. [...] Je zde příliš mnoho soupeřících zájmů. Nic není jasné. [...] Pro Pána, ty intriky! V dřívějších dobách muži vyrázili, den a půl se mlátili po hlavách a to bylo všechno. Dnes jsou tu i onde vyslanci, tajné dohody s ještě tajnějšími dodatky, zrady, náhlé obraty, rány do zad –“* (Barthelme 4).

²⁷ „*„Nakupili hromadu mečů po padlých,“ pravil Sir Kay. „Sahá do výše sedmi chladniček navršených jedna na druhé.‘ Sedm chladniček,‘ poznamenal Artuš, ‚Váš obrat zní znepokojivě moderně.‘ ‚S tím se nedá nic dělat. Meče překovávají v chladničky, chladničky v meče – tak to dnes chodí.‘“* (Barthelme 131)

²⁸ Barthelme dokonce naznačuje, že Pound své pochybnosti o hodnotě vlastního díla a celkovou sklíčenost, které poznamenaly skloněk jeho života, předstíral, aby se po válce vyhnul trestu za vlastizradu. (Barthelme 67)

²⁹ Próza byla nejprve vydána s podtitulem *Homenaje a Ezra Pound*, tj. Pocta Ezru Poundovi, další španělská vydání ovšem podtitul vypouštějí, stejně jako anglický překlad, s nímž se zde pracuje.

³⁰ Ríos je zřejmě jediným prozaikem, který dokázal úspěšně navázat na umělecké podněty Joyceova pozdního díla; ačkoliv se životní cesty Ezry Pounda a Jamese Joyce ve dvacátých letech 20. století rozešly a ani jeden z umělců pozdějšímu dílu toho druhého nevěnoval příliš pozornosti, při četbě *Poundemonia* si lze uvědomit, že pozdní Joyce i zralý Pound se – každý jinými prostředky – snažili ukázat, jakým způsobem je možné používat jazyka jako jedinečného, specificky lidského smyslu, který slouží ke ztvárnění světa.

³¹ Stern se s Poundem stýkal poměrně často roku 1962, kdy pobýval jako hostující profesor na benátské univerzitě. Návštěvy u Pounda a jeho družky Olgy Rudgeové později popsal v několika esejkách (Stern, “Remembering Pound” 13–22; Stern, “A Memory or Two of Pound” 8–12; Stern, *Sistermony* 102–103).

³² Není jisté náhodné, že Edward připomíná některé postavy amerického spisovatele Henryho Jamese (1843–1916), zřejmě nevýrazněji Johna Marchera z proslulé psychologické novely „Šelma v džungli“ (*The Beast in the Jungle*, 1903). Richarda Sterna, společně s jižanskými autory Peterem Taylorem (1917–1994) a Elizabeth Spencerovou (*1921), lze ostatně považovat za jedny z mála poválečných amerických prozaiků, kteří Jamesův umělecký odkaz tvůrčím způsobem rozvíjeli.

³³ Lze se domnívat, že Edward a Nina zosobňují takřka neslučitelné podoby Sternova ambivalentního vztahu k Poundovi. Výmluvně v tomto ohledu působí komentáře obou postav k odlišným názorům té druhé (Stern, *STITCH* 133). V souvislosti s Poundovou podporou italského fašismu se Stern zamýšlel především nad následujícím problémem: „Jak by se Pound choval, pokud by žil v totalitním státu, a nikoli jako ctěný host? Doufám, že by statečně protestoval, dokonce s nerozumnou statečností. To se ovšem nikdy nedozvíme.“ (Stern, “Remembering Pound” 21–22; srov. Stern, *Sistermony* 102–103)

³⁴ Jak napsal sociolog a kulturní kritik Zygmunt Bauman (1925–2017): „Lhostejnost vůči trvání transformuje nesmrtnost z pouhé ideje v životní zkušenost a činí z ní předmět okamžité spotřeby: způsob, jakým žijete pro daný okamžik, z něho dělá ‚nesmrtnou zkušenost‘. [...] ‚Dlouhodobost‘, která je ze zvyku stále ještě zmiňována, je pouhou prázdnou skořápkou, jež neobsahuje žádný význam [...]. [...] Devalvace nesmrtnosti nemůže znamenat nic jiného než předzvěst kulturního převratu, pravděpodobně toho nejzásadnějšího bodu obratu v dějinách lidské kultury. [...] Opravdu, v průběhu lidských dějin se civilizační úsilí stalo proséváním a usazováním tvrdých jader trvalosti v prchavých lidských životech a pomíjivých lidských činech, ve snaze proměnit pomíjivost v trvalost, diskontinuitu v kontinuitu, a tudíž transcendovat limity vnucené nám smrtelností tím, že smrtelní muži a ženy se dali do služby nesmrtného lidského druhu“ (Bauman 200, 202–203).

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News, Announcements



Call for Papers

The Grotesque, Freakish and Bizarre in Anglophone Literatures and Cultures

11-12 October 2017, Trnava

Conference organized by the Department of British and American Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of SS. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Slovakia

The conference will offer a platform for the exchange of ideas regarding the representation of the uncanny, weird and bizarre in Anglophone literatures and cultures. We welcome topics that address:

- theory of the grotesque and the uncanny
- the grotesque in contemporary popular culture
- role of the grotesque in sci-fi and fantasy genres
- representation of freakish characters and monsters in canonical literary works
- representation of monsters in films and comics
- bizarre settings and plot twists
- body mutilations
- comparative analyses of the grotesque and bizarre in various literatures and cultures

Registration link: <http://bit.ly/UCMconference2017>

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Fee: The conference fee for all participants is **40€**. The fee covers conference materials, tea/coffee refreshments and reception on 11 October. Invoices will be sent to the registered participants upon receiving the abstracts.

Presentations: The conference language is English. The standard length for presentations will be 25 minutes (20 minutes for presentation, 5 minutes for discussion).

Publications

All accepted abstracts and papers by registered authors will be published in one of the following publications with ISBN:

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